IMAGINED NATION AND IMAGINED WOMANHOOD IN THE SHAW BROTHERS’ MUSICALS

BY

I-IN 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, 2016

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Gary G. Xu, Chair
Associate Professor Robert Tierney
Associate Professor Susan Koshy
Associate Professor Jose B. Capino
Abstract

My dissertation looks at Shaw Brothers’ historical epics and huangmei musicals that dominated the Chinese film market in the 1960s. Shaw Brothers’ historical epics and huangmei musicals often center on female characters. Sometimes the male protagonist is cross-dressed by actresses. Hence they are categorized as the female genre or the feminine genre. The female genre was pervasive not only in Hong Kong, but also in diasporic Chinese film markets including Taiwan (Republic of China), Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and North America. In this genre, the female characters are prominent. Although stories of the female genre take place in historical Chinese that is understood as a patriarchal society, in movies of the female genre, women are depicted to be powerful. My dissertation looks at the female genre from different aspects. I contend that the female genre is a product of its social-historical juncture of the 1960s. On the one hand, the genre reflects the Cold War atmosphere between Mainland China (People’s Republic of China) and Taiwan (ROC). The female characters are embodiment of an imagined nation to the Chinese diasporic audiences. On the other hand, the genre reflects social changes of Hong Kong after World War II. The female characters symbolize modern women who were gradually getting autonomous under social transition. However, though the female genre portrays prominent and autonomous women, I argue that these are after all imaginations because women in the feminine genre eventually have to be incorporated and disciplined under patriarchy.

My dissertation consists of four core chapters. Chapter one looks at the matriarch as an embodiment of the imagined nation China for the diasporic audiences. I argue that in the female genre, the image of homeland is gendered female. The matriarch symbolizes the motherland that is in danger and mobilizes the audiences to be loyal subjects of the imagined nation China. In chapter two I investigate gender in terms of two levels of cross-dressing—women who disguise
as a man on the first level, and actresses who cross-dress as male protagonist on the second level. I argue that the disguised women symbolize the modern women who transgress the gender boundaries. Though audiences experience excitement of transgression from these daring women, these women eventually have to be disciplined and confined. By looking at the cross-dressed male protagonists, I argue that they perform the “ideal men.” Gender is redefined in the female genre that femininity is considered to be superior to masculinity. Chapter three looks at how stories of the femme fatales in Chinese literature/history are retold in the female genre. History is re-presented in the female genre that the femme fatales are either redeemed or are portrayed with a more sympathetic perspective. I contend that the femme fatales symbolize the modern women who cannot be confined. And in the movies these dangerous women eventually have to be incorporated to support the patriarchy. The forth chapter investigates how the Shaw Brothers construct a modern empire of cinema from this genre of the past. I delve into Southern Screen Illustrated, the official magazine published by Shaw Brothers, and look at how Shaw Brothers publicizes the movies, the movie stars, and Shaw’s studio. I contend that the female genre is a genre that represents Shaw Brothers glorious studio system as well as Shaw Brothers’ modern empire.
Acknowledgements

I cannot fully express my gratitude to each and every person who has been helping and supporting me, without you nothing is possible. First and foremost, I own my deepest gratitude to Professor Gary G. Xu, my advisor and chair of my committee members. Not only did he provide treasurable advises and valuable materials to my research, he has always been extremely supportive in my graduate studies and always been trustworthy in ups and downs in my life. He has been trusting me with countless opportunities, guiding me with patience, enlightening me in thinking, and encouraging me while I encounter frustrations. To him, I own my deepest gratitude.

I am also grateful to my committee members. They are the greatest mentors I can ever ask for. They have witnessed my transformation and improvements in thinking, writing, and doing research during my graduate years. I own my gratitude to Professor Robert Tierney, who has provided insightful comments and suggestions on my writing. He always makes himself available, and has provided valuable advises on my research and job searching. I also want to express my thankfulness to Professor Susan Koshy, who has been the kindest and most heartwarming person. I am always encouraged by discussing my ideas with her. I benefit from critical theories in her seminars, and from there I developed preliminary ideas of my research. I am also grateful to Professor Jose B. Capino, who has always been inspirational in my writing process. His door is always opened whenever I encounter any difficulties in writing. And his encouragements are my power in writing. I own tremendous gratitude to my committee members.

I would like to express my thankfulness to professors in the East Asian Languages and Cultures at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I want to thank Professor Jerome
Packard for providing advises and being supportive in my job searching journey. Many thanks to Professor Kai-Wing Chow, Professor Brian Ruppert, and Professor Elisabeth Oyler for sharing advises on research and teaching. I want to give my special thanks to Professor Wenchi Lin from National Central University in Taiwan. He has been generous in sharing valuable resources on films and archives.

I am also thankful to my dear friends at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Yanjie Wang, Yiju Huang, Mei-Hsuan Chiang, Tonglu Li, EK Tan, to name a few. They are generous in sharing their thoughts with me. Many ideas of my project came from our brainstorming. They are the most supportive cohort in my academic and daily life. I also want to acknowledge my friends around the globe, including Yu-Han Chen, Yaqiong Cui, Sophie Qin, and Kailu Guan. I am grateful to have a group of friends who have been my emotional supports in my dissertation writing process.

Last but not least, I want to thank my entire family. They have been supportive to my graduate studies in every way possible. My father is a huge fan of historical epics and huangmei musicals. His memories and diasporic experience are initiation of my research. I thank my mother and dear grandmother who always have faith in me—although they probably do not understand a single word of my research, their sacrifices make them the matriarch of my life. There is my also my brother, who has always been around despite how far we are. To them, I dedicate my dissertation.
Table of Content

1. Introduction: The Female Genre and Shaw Brothers’ Movie Empire.........................1

2. A Nation That Is Gendered Female—Imagining The Matriarch.................................25

3. A Man Who Is Actually A Woman—Imagining Gender.........................................69

4. Redeemed Femme Fatales—Imagining Modern Women.....................................116

5. Shaw’s Empire of Imagination—Imagining Modern and Stardom........................163

6. Coda: Aftermath of The Female Genre..............................................................212

Figures..................................................................................................................225

Bibliography .........................................................................................................266

Appendix A: List of Names ....................................................................................277

Appendix B: List of Film Titles ................................................................................279

Appendix C: Filmography .........................................................................................283
Introduction: The Female Genre and Shaw Brothers’ Movie Empire

The fiftieth Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival is the most festive event of year 2013 in the Chinese film industry. The most memorable moment of the festival was when the best actors and actresses from the last fifty years joined the award and posed for the historical moment. To celebrate the first half century of the film festival, there was an exhibition showing the achievements of Chinese film industry since 1962. In the exhibition, several films were selected to represent its own time periods. *The Love Eterne* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963) was the first film chosen to represent the first decade of Golden Horse Award. It was a decade dominated by *Huangmei*\(^1\) musical films and historical epics. *The Love Eterne* is no doubt legendary in Chinese film industry. It was the winner of the second Golden Horse Award taking place in 1963. It has won the Best Feature Film, Best Director, Best Leading Actress, Best Editing, Best Soundtrack, and the one and only Special Award of Best Performer\(^2\). Ivy Ling Po was the only actress in Chinese film history who ever won the Special Award of Best Performer in Golden Horse Award: normally there are Best Leading Actor and Best Leading Actress awards, which are gender specific to either male protagonist or female protagonist. However, the gender-neutral Special Award of Best Performer was created specifically in 1963 because actress Ivy Ling Po cross-dresses as the male lead in *The Love Eterne*. As an actress, she cannot be nominated as the best actor, yet as the male lead, she cannot receive the best actress award either. Since Ling Po was too wildly popular at the time to be left out in the Golden Horse Award, the award of Best Performer was created. Another piece of evidence that shows popularity of *The Love Eterne* and Ivy Ling Po: Ling Po came to Taipei to participate in the second Taipei Golden Horse Film

\(^1\) 黃梅。
\(^2\) Records from the official website of Golden Horse Festival.
Festival in 1963. With Ling’s presence in Taipei, thousands of fans rushed to streets in the hope of seeing her in person. Her fans blocked the airport and streets that Ling was supposed to parade through, so she had to be protected by a police car. Taipei was hence called a “city in frenzy” by Hong Kong media. Peggy Chiao Hsiung-Ping recalls her memory of the time in “The Female Consciousness, the World of Signification and Safe Extramarital Affairs: A 40th Year Tribute to The Love Eterne:”

My heart was jumping for joy. What luck to run into her! Right at this moment, heaven and earth Changed before me. A mob of adults had obscured the sky, and I was staggering amidst the crowd, my feet not even touching the ground. Pressed on both sides by the crowd, I was swung left and then right. I struggled to stay afloat, as if I was drowning…the whole thing happened in about two or three minutes, Suddenly, the crowd dispersed, and I was lying on the ground.3 (75)

Even as a student in elementary school, the power of The Love Eterne and the power of Shaw’s movie star struck Chiao as well as Taipei city like a storm. The documentary in the fiftieth Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival also shows frantic fans in 1963. The popularity of Ivy Ling Po and The Love Eterne is inexplicable.

The Love Eterne was so popular at the time that almost everyone who lived through the time is able to hum a huangmei melody or to sing along with the movie. Ivy Ling Po is the forever Brother Liang—her nickname called by the female protagonist in the movie—in Chinese communities. Ling Po has been constantly invited to sing or perform Brother Liang in theatres, concerts, and film festivals even till very recently—a concert in memory of the fifty years of The Love Eterne was held in December 2013. The Love Eterne was adapted into a musical Butterfly

3 Chiao, “The Female Consciousness, the World of Signification and Safe Extramarital Affairs.”
Lovers 40’ at its fortieth anniversary with many of the original cast of the 1963 movie. Ling Po trouped around Taiwan and to Malaysia, Singapore, and Vancouver from 2002 to 2005 to perform the musical. On Thanksgiving of 2009, Ling sang/performe d The Love Eterne at a Los Angeles suburb. These evidences show that first, The Love Eterne was so wildly popular that it represents the time—the 1960s itself. Second, the influence of The Love Eterne has no time limit or geographical boundaries. It is still popular after fifty years after it is released, and Ling’s charisma as Brother Liang continues into her seventies. More importantly, The Love Eterne is a cultural symbol for the Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and overseas Chinese in Malaysia, Singapore, and North America. Third, the one and only gender-neutral Special Award of Best Performer in Golden Horse Award shows that gender is intriguing in this genre.

Quite different from what we understand as Chinese films today The Love Eterne is a huangmei musical adapted from huangmei theatre, a local theatre that originated in Anhui China. Some theatrical traditions remained in Huangmei musicals films, including the famous huangmei melody that can be easily memorized, theatrical movements that differentiates genders, costumes and makeup that indicate whether the male protagonist is a scholar or a general, or whether the character is vicious or comical. Yet while the traditional theatre is revived in the modern form of cinema, it has transformed in many aspects. For example, in a traditional theatre the settings are often symbolic whereas in huangmei musicals the settings resemble the real, and sometimes even surpasses realism and become extravagant. Moreover, as a film genre there are often filmic conventions, including cuts, shots, camera angles, mise-en-scene, and etc.. The melody of huangmei musicals is also revived so that it is similar to popular songs rather than theatrical melody. Most importantly, the huangmei musical has transformed from traditional art to modern form entertainment, and transformed from a local theatre to a global product. My dissertation
investigates a film genre that incorporates *huangmei* musical films and historical epics—a genre that is defined as “feminine” by famous Kungfu and action director Chang Cheh. I focus on *huangmei* musical films and historical epics produced by Shaw Brothers Studio from the late 1950s to the late 1960s. After Shaw Brothers produced its first *huangmei* musical *Diau Charn* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1958) in 1958, *huangmei* musicals and historical epics dominated Chinese cinema for almost a decade. My dissertation looks at why and how is this genre a “feminine” genre? Why is it popular? What kinds of roles do women play in the “feminine” genre? What kinds of images of women are depicted in the genre? How do the images of women collaborate in constructing an imagined nation China?

**Definition of the Female Genre**

“Feminine genre” consists primarily of *huangmei* musical films and historical epics. Broadly speaking, *huangmei* musical films and historical epics can be considered as Chinese costume drama/historical drama since they are framed in a historical past. Yet the term costume drama/historical drama does not reveal gender uniqueness of *huangmei* musicals and historical epics. *Huangmei* musical and historical epic are different from martial art movies, which is also defined as costume drama/period drama. *Huangmei* musical films and historical epics are referred as “feminine” by many of film critics. In “Bridging the Pacific with Love Eterne,” Romona Curry mentions that “the film genre of musical costume historical drama, coded […] as feminine by both Chinese and U.S. writers, in contrast to the more widely discussed (masculine) martial arts films.”⁴ In “Woman, Generic Aesthetics, and the Vernacular Huangmei Opera Films from China to Hong Kong” Chen Xiangyang also claims that *huangmei* opera films are

---

gendered female. Yet the definition of the feminine genre comes from its contrast to the male genre, the kungfu and martial art movies that dominated the 1970s, following the trend of the female genre. Director Chang Cheh depicts the era of huangmei musical films in his memoir *Reviewing Thirty Years of Hong Kong Cinema*:

> Chinese movies used to focus on female characters. Male characters are often ‘side dishes.’ At this stage, male characters did not even exist, but often cross-dressed by actresses. It is the zenith of female movies. The only ‘huangmei’ film I directed in Shaw Brothers—my one and only ‘huangmei’ film of a lifetime—*The Butterfly Chalice* might be the only ‘huangmei’ film that casts actors as male characters. The result of insisting on the principle—actors play male characters, and actresses play female characters—was that the box office was not particularly successful. I was in fact not suitable for directing this film genre, and I was not making any contribution for the sake of art. I later brought up the slogan of ‘masculine’ to be the leading trend of focusing on male characters. You can say that I ‘value male over female.’ Yet it is in fact a resistance to the trend of the time, and to break the myth that audience prefer watching female protagonists.

Despite the fact that *The Butterfly Chalice* (Chang Cheh, 1965) was in fact not the one and only huangmei film that casts actors as male characters, Chang brings up several crucial notions in this paragraph. First, the dominant trend that preexisted the prevalent “masculine” martial art

---


6 *The Butterfly Chalice* (Chang Cheh, 1965)

7 There are in fact many huangmei musical films that cast actors as male protagonists and actress as female protagonists. For example, the very first huangmei film *Diau Charn* (Li Han-Hsiiang, 1958), and other films such as *The Kingdom and the Beauty* (Li Han-Hsiiang, 1959), *The Return of the Phoenix* (Kao Li and Li Han-Hsiiang, 1963) *The Amorous Lotus Pan* (Chow Sze-loke, 1964), etc. Even Ivy Ling Po, the actress famous for cross-dressing plays female characters in *Inside the Forbidden City* (Kao Li, 1965) and *Dawn Will Come* (Kao Li, 1966).
genre was the “*huangmei*” genre. Second, in “*huangmei*” genre, it was common practice for actresses to cross-dress as male characters. From Chang’s comment, I categorize the genre that he criticizes as the “female genre” or the “feminine genre” since it is the element of “masculine” that Chang created in an attempt to contrast with the existing “*huangmei*” genre. Moreover, Chang’s quotation mark on “*huangmei*” can be interpreted on two different levels. First, “*huangmei*” is no longer the local theatre *huangmei*. It has been added new musical, theatrical, and cinematic elements to be a genre of itself. And second, “*huangmei*” as a genre indicates the genre with feminine elements that was popular in the late 1950s to the late 1960s. This genre includes not only *huangmei* musical films, but also many of the historical epics that obviously contain feminine qualities. Hence in my dissertation, the term the “feminine genre” or the “female genre” refers to *huangmei* musical films and historical epics.

*Huangmei* musical films and historical epics are strictly speaking different but in fact overlapping genres. Some critics differentiate *huangmei* musical films from historical epics from its music. In “Musical China, Classical Impressions: Preliminary Study of Shaws’ *Huangmei Diao* Film,” Edwin W. Chen states that films like *The Last Woman of Shang* (Yueh Feng, 1964), *The Goddess of Mercy* (Shin Sang-Ok and Lim Wan-Sik, 1967), and *Hsih-Shih, Beauty of Beauties* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1965) are not *huangmei* musicals because they “contain no significant musicalized narrative.”8 (54) Chen differentiates *huangmei* films from historical epics by the former’s musicalized narratives. Music is a crucial element of *huangmei* musical films since the word *huangmei* refers to *huangmei* tune, and *huangmei* musical hence refers to film sung in *huangmei* melody. Historical epic, on the other hand, sometimes contain musical elements, and the music is sometimes in *huangmei* melody. Some other critics differentiate *huangmei* films and

---

8 Chen, “Musical China, Classical Impressions.”
historical epics based on the content of the movies. In the introduction of *Period Drama, Huangmei Opera*, the editor Wu Hao categorizes historical epic as film that based on history and presents the “grand narrative” to diasporic audiences whereas *huangmei* opera films are mostly based on legends. While both ways of differentiating *huangmei* musical from historical epic are reasonable, there are reasons to look at *huangmei* musical and historical epic together as one film genre. First of all, many of the films cannot be categorized as one rather than the other. For instance, *Diau Charn* is a film that depicts Diao Chan’s sacrifice for a nation, and hence a film on “grand narrative.” Yet it is also a film with *huangmei* music from beginning to end. In addition, both *huangmei* musical film and historical epic share a group of directors, movie stars, screenwriters, music composers, costumes, makeup, and etc.. Famous director Li Han-Hsiang directed the historical epic *Empress Wu Tse-Tien* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963). He also specialized in producing *huangmei* musical films such as *Diau Charn, The Kingdom and Beauty* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1959), and *The Love Eterne*. Yueh Feng, the director of historical epic *The Last Woman of Shang* also directed many of *huangmei* musical films such as *Madam White Snake* (Yueh Feng, 1962) and *Lady General Hua Mu-Lan*. Because The similarities between historical epic and *huangmei* musical are more significant than their differences that they need to be looked under the same context. To show that historical epic and *huangmei* musical film are inseparable as a genre, we can take *Magnificent Concubine* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1962) and *Empress Wu Tse-Tien* as an example. While there is musical narrative in *The Magnificent Concubine* and hence it is categorized as *huangmei* film in Chen’s definition⁹, *The Magnificent Concubine* shares more similarities than differences with the historical epic *Empress Wu Tse-Tien*. These two films are

---

both directed by Li Han-Hsiang, the female protagonist are performed by actress Li Li-hua, the protagonists are both prominent and powerful women in Tang Dynasty, and hence they also share the same settings and similar costumes. Yet *Empress Wu Tse-Tien* is categorized as an historical epic because it has no musical narrative. It makes more sense to look at these two films as one genre—the female genre. Hence, I contend that neither the term historical epic nor *huangmei* musical can represent this film genre completely because just like *The Magnificent Concubine* and *Empress Wu Tse-Tien*, *huangmei* musical and historical epic share more similarities than diversities. They are both female-centered movies in terms of narrative, casting, and development of storylines. They both share theatrical elements in terms of gestures, makeup, movement and choreography. They both depict a historical time period, and they both re-present stories from Chinese literature, history, or legends. Although not always in *huangmei* melody, there are often Chinese style of music and dance in these two categories.

*Huangmei* musical films and historical epics should be categorized as the feminine genre not only because it is relatively feminine in contrast to the succeeding martial art genre, it is feminine also because the genre centers on women. The storyline focuses on and develops from female protagonist. Since stories in the female genre delineate pre-modern China that is often infamously patriarchal, and since stories are adaptations from Chinese history, literature, and theatre that are often written by male literati, people may expect this genre to reiterate patriarchal values. However, though created by male directors, the feminine genre centers on women and challenges patriarchal values. There are hardly any heroes in this genre, while movies on heroines can be revealed simply from film titles such as *Diao Charn*\(^\text{10}\), *Magnificent Concubine*\(^\text{11}\),

\(^\text{10}\) Diao Chan in pinyin. She is a famous beauty of Chinese literature *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

\(^\text{11}\) Yang Guifei in pinyin. *Yang Kwei Fei* is Chinese title while *Magnificent Concubine* is English title. Yang is a concubine of Emperor Tang Xuanzong.
Empress Wu Tse-Tien\textsuperscript{12}, Lady General Hua Mu-Lan\textsuperscript{13}, and The Last Woman of Shang\textsuperscript{14}. Most of these women play minor roles in history or literature, and they are hardly regarded as heroines. In the feminine genre, on the contrary, stories are revised to portray these female protagonists as heroines. Female characters are empowered. They actively participate in solving problems, saving people they love, or saving the entire country. The feminine genre centers on women to such an extent that some protagonists, though gendered male, are played by cross-dressed female movie stars. As mentioned earlier, Ivy Ling Po is especially famous for cross-dressing as male protagonist. Male actors, on the other hand, seldom play significant roles in the feminine genre, and they rarely become as famous as female movie stars. To reiterate, in my dissertation, I categorize huangmei musicals and historical epic in the same genre—the female genre. In the female genre, the protagonist is always female, and the story is developed from this female protagonist. The female genre is revisions of Chinese literature, history, or theatre. It is a re-presentation of the Chinese tradition in a modern form of cinema.

Many of the films in the female genre involve musical elements, such as huangmei tunes, singing, or dancing. But the female genre is different from musical films in Hollywood. Though music is essential in the feminine genre, it is different from musical films in the Hollywood. As Rick Altman claims in \textit{The American Film Musical}, “The musical, according to the industry, is a film with music, that is, with music that emanates from what I will call the diegesis, the fictional world created by the film (as opposed to Hollywood’s typical background music, which comes instead out of nowhere).”\textsuperscript{15} (12) Altman further states that the way to differentiate musical genre

\textsuperscript{12} Wu Zetian in pinyin. Empress Wu is the only woman who establishes her own dynasty in Chinese history.
\textsuperscript{13} Hua Mulan in pinyin. Hua is famous for being a woman warrior who disguises herself as a man. Her story is adapted to a Disney animation \textit{Mulan} (Tony Bancroft and Barry Cook, 1988).
\textsuperscript{14} The Chinese film title is Daji, a concubine who is blamed for the decline of Shang dynasty. The above five movies are named by its female protagonists in Chinese title.
from narrative films is to see if there is a “reversal of image/sound hierarchy” (71) because in musicals, “[e]verything—even the image—is […] subordinated to the music track.” In “Emotion By Numbers: Music, Song and the Music,” Heather Laing explains how music functions in the Hollywood musicals that music appears “when the need for emotional expression has reached a particularly high point.” From Altman’s definition, feminine genre can certainly be regarded as musical, but it is also different from the Hollywood musical. Like Hollywood musicals, there is “diegetic” music in feminine genre that brings the audience to an imagined world. Yet the feminine genre is itself a genre that portrays an imagined world with or without music. Although like the Hollywood musicals, music pauses narration and takes the camera and audiences’ attention to focus on the characters’ inner feelings in the feminine genre, dance on the other hand is not as important in the female genre. Since huangmei musical is adapted from local theatre, sometimes the music is accompanied with theatrical movement rather than dance. Moreover, how music functions in feminine genre is different from the Hollywood musicals: in the female genre, it is lyrics that make repetitive huangmei melody meaningful. The lyrics describe feelings of characters and play the role of narrating and describing what have happened between time leaps. Lyrics are sometimes poetic and can only be appreciated by intellectuals. Sometimes they are colloquial and can be easily memorized by common people. More often the lyrics are symbolic and full of puns to attract audiences with diverse backgrounds. Music is therefore not as important as the lyrics, and sometimes there are barely music elements in historical epics. Music in the feminine genre can be considered as a spectrum, there are huangmei musicals in which music dominates narrative, and there are historical epics in which there are sometimes music and dance inserted, and there are also films in between huangmei

---

musical films and historical epics in which music does not dominate the narrative but takes the attention away from the camera and audiences. In terms of how the story develops, the feminine genre is also different from the Hollywood musicals. As a genre, audiences who choose the Hollywood musicals expect to watch a lively story and see a happy ending. Audience of the feminine genre have different expectations. A happy ending is never guaranteed. And since stories of the feminine genre are originated from literature, history, and theatre, audience know what is going to happen before they go to movie theatres. Hence it is how the story is represented that attract the audience to movie theatres. In *The American Film Musical*, Altman argues that having a dual focus is essential in Hollywood musicals. He writes, “Instead of focusing all its interest on a single central character, following the trajectory of her progress, the American film musical has a dual focus, built around parallel stars of opposite sex and radically divergent values.” (19)

The feminine genre, unlike the Hollywood musical, is not “dual-focused.” As the name suggests, the feminine genre seldom focuses on male protagonist. Male protagonist is never as important as female protagonist in terms of narrativity. The male protagonist is often quite passive while female protagonist is active in solving problems. Due to this unique feature of sole-focus on female character, *huangmei* musical films and historical epics can be defined as the feminine genre.

**History of the Genre**

The era of the feminine genre started in 1958 when Li Han-Hsiang directed the first *huangmei* musical film *Diau Charn* in Shaw & Sons Company Limited\(^\text{18}\). The production of


\(^{18}\) According to director Li Han-Hsiang’s autobiography, he persuaded Rende Shaw, elder brother of Runrun Shaw and the one who established Shaw and Sons, to produce *Diau Charn*. In the original poster of *Diau Charn*, it is printed as A Shaws’ production. But in the later versions of poster, as well as the cover of DVD, it is printed as Shaw Brothers’ production. Shaw Brothers (HK) Ltd. was established in 1958, and took over most of Shaw and Sons business and became one of two large studios in Hong Kong. For more information on history of Shaw Brothers, see Chung, 2004.
Diau Charn, was experimental: due to popularity of the huangmei theatre film Marriage of The Fairy Princess (Shi Hui, 1955) in Hong Kong, Li persuaded Rende Shaw to produce Diau Charn, with a promise that it will be a film with singing in huangmei melody\(^\text{19}\). Diau Charn was widely popular in the film market and in the Asian Film Festival, and the ambitious Shaw Brothers soon decided to mass-produce this film genre. As Li reminiscences in his memoir Life of Cinema, the success of Diau Charn “began the wave of twenty years of huangmei film in Hong Kong.”\(^\text{20}\) Diau Charn is the first huangmei musical film produced in color.

According to Li, the box office of Diau Charn breaks the record of Chinese film market\(^\text{21}\) and reaches more than 300,000 Hong Kong Dollars (HKD). The success of Diau Charn leads to next phenomenal colored huangmei film The Kingdom and the Beauty (Li Han-Hsian, 1959). The Kingdom and the Beauty is produced by Runrun Shaw under the newly established Shaw Brothers studio with the budget of 500,000 HKD—a huge production comparing to 300,000 HKD box office of Diau Charn. The Kingdom and the Beauty was also a blockbuster. Since then, huangmei musical films become a promise on box office and launched the era of feminine genre.

Shaw Brothers (HK) Limited is the most influential studio specializes in producing huangmei musical films, and huangmei musical films have also made Shaw Brothers one of the most significant studios in Hong Kong and in Chinese cinema. The era of feminine genre is also the era of studio system. Shaw Brothers and Motion Pictures & General Investment Film Company Limited (MP&GI) are the two monopolized studios in Hong Kong in the 1950s and the 1960s. They have their own studios, equipment, contracted directors, actors and actresses,


\(^{20}\) Li, 1987.

\(^{21}\) Chang Cheh claims that before huangmei films, the box office can only reach five figures. Chang, 1989. Li, 1987.
training group to produce new movie actors and actresses, movie theatres to show the films they produce, and their own publishing company to publicize their movies. As director Chang Cheh recalls, Shaw Brothers is the “Hong Kong style Hollywood.” Feminine genre is the battlefield for Shaw Brothers and MP&GI. They compete with each other by producing films on the same story, and whoever releases the film first would win the audience. Film critics often refer the cut-throat competition as “twins case.” The Love Eterne is a product of “twin” films. Knowing that MP&GI is filming the love story of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, Shaw Brothers asks Li Han-Hsiang to make a film on the same story. Li’s The Love Eterne was released prior to MP&GI’s Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963) and swept over film market. Following The Love Eterne, The Lotus Lamp (Yueh Feng, 1965) is a twin movie of The Magic Lamp (Wong Tin-Lam, Tang Huang, Wu Chia-Hsiang, Evan Yang and Lo Wei, 1964). A Maid from Heaven (Ho Meng-hua and Chan Yau-san, 1963) is a twin movie of Seven Fairies (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963). Though the English title varies, the Chinese title for these “twin” films are the same. It is difficult to tell whether Shaw Brothers or MP&GI wins in this war of feminine genre, but Shaw Brothers have become a very successful studio due to the production of feminine genre. The competition between Shaw Brothers and MP&GI ended in March 1964 when two studios made a deal on solving their conflicts and promises not to make “twin films.” However, Loke Wan Tho, the head of MP&GI suddenly died in a plane crash in June of 1964, alone with many of the senior managers of MP&GI. MP&GI then loses its asset in competing

22 Chang, 1989. The title of chapter two is “Rising of ‘Shaw Brothers’—Hong Kong Style Hollywood.”
23 Seven Ferries is produced by Grand Motion Pictures Co., Ltd., a film studio established by Li Han-Hsiang in Taiwan, 1964, under the support of MP&GI.
24 Besides The Love Eterne that is clearly won by Shaw Brothers, Shaw’s The Lotus Lamp was delayed because of the actress Linda Lin Dai’s pregnancy and sudden death. Though audience hopes to see Lin’s final work, The Lotus Lamp was banned in Taiwan because the dance in the end resembles the yangge dance in communist China. Shaw Brothers’ A Maid From Heaven is released earlier than Li Han-Hsiang’s Seven Ferries. But MP&GI has successfully persuaded Li, the most important director of Shaw at the time, to leave Shaw and established his own company.
with Shaw Brothers and gradually fade out from movie production. Shaw Brothers, on the other hand, continued to produce many more movies in the feminine genre. Therefore, I focus mainly on Shaw Brothers’ production on the feminine genre in my dissertation.

The era of the feminine genre also coincides with the era of Mandarin Chinese films in Hong Kong cinema. In Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong, Mandarin Chinese is not the primary language. Before Shaw Brothers and MP&GI invested in Hong Kong film industry, there were numerous small-scale Cantonese studios in Hong Kong. These studios produced black and white films in Cantonese, including melodramas, martial art movies like Wong Fei-Hung, and Cantonese theatre casting famous theatrical performers. But these Cantonese films were often in bad condition, or as Chang Cheh refers to, Cantonese “scrap.” The reason that these Cantonese movies were not in good qualities is because the small-scale studios lacked sufficient capital. Hence in order to control their budget from renting expensive studios, they have to speed up their filming process within about a week. Shaw Brothers and MP&GI, on the other hand, are monopolized studios with sufficient capital and advanced equipment. They are capable of producing big budget colored films. The low quality of black and white Cantonese movies cannot compete with extravagant colored films produced by Shaw Brothers and MP&GI. In the 1960s, the number of Cantonese films gradually decreased while the number of mandarin films gradually increased. In 1971, there was only one Cantonese film versus one hundred and twenty-six mandarin films produced in Hong Kong. The 1960s is the time when monopolized studio

25 粵語殘片。Chang, 1989. Chang uses the phrase that Hong Kong people joked about. In fact, “crap” is a better translation.
26 Chang, 1989. For more information on history of Hong Kong cinema, see Chung, Po Yin. Xianggang Yingshiye Bainian. [Hundred Years of Hong Kong Cinema and TV Industry.] Rev. ed. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co. Ltd, 2011. Print.
drives out the small-scaled studios; when mandarin Chinese films gradually beats Cantonese films, and when colored film dominates over black and white films in Hong Kong. And the feminine genre plays an important role in the 1960s.

The history of Chinese diasporia is the background that enable mandarin Chinese films to dominate Hong Kong at this time. After the separation between Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan and People’s Republic of China (PRC) in mainland China in 1949, a large number of immigrants flooded to Hong Kong. Many of filmmakers, movie stars, and people who worked in film industry also relocated to Hong Kong after 1949. For example, famous director Yueh Feng and Li Han-Hsiang, or movie stars such as Li Li-hua, Linda Lin Dai, Betty Loh Ti, and Ivy Ling Po all came from mainland China. Their presence made it possible to produce mandarin speaking films in Hong Kong where Cantonese is the primary language. Meanwhile, Chinese immigrants from mainland expanded the need of mandarin Chinese films. Since Chinese immigrants relocated not only to Hong Kong, but also to Taiwan (ROC), Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and North America, Shaw Brothers targeted their films to diasporic Chinese audiences. Huangmei musicals and historical epics became popular because of the demand from diasporic Chinese audiences.

---

28 Most of films in feminine genre were produced in the 1960s. The number of feminine genre decreased in the 1970s while martial art genre began to be more and more popular. In the beginning of the 1970s, martial art films were produced in mandarin Chinese. Yet gradually they were produced with both Cantonese and mandarin Chinese for Hong Kong and the rest of diaspora film market. Chang, 1989.


audiences. Yet why was *huangmei* opera chosen rather than any other local Chinese operas? Prior to Shaw Brothers’ *huangmei* films, other local operas such as Cantonese opera, Amoy opera, or Shaoxing opera were also made into movies. But only *huangmei* musicals became a storm that swept global film market. Director Chang Cheh recalls in his memoir Runrun Shaw’s answer when he was once asked why *huangmei* was chosen rather than Peking opera in the films. Shaw replies, “it is because Peking opera does not have natural pronunciation, common people cannot understand it. *Huangmei* melody has natural pronunciation.” In other words, though Peking opera is a highly valued form of traditional Chinese art and is literally “Beijing opera,” it cannot be understood by most mandarin speaking people. Therefore, *huangmei* is chosen specifically because it has the potential to be a popular culture—it can be easily understood and remembered.

The 1960s is the time of the Cold War, and hence traces of the Cold War can be revealed in the female genre. The Cold War refers not only to the antagonism between the United States versus the Soviet Union, but also between capitalist nations versus communist nations. The antagonism between Republic of China (Taiwan) and People’s Republic of China is the Chinese Cold War. As Pui Tak Lee and Ain-Ling Wong terms in the introduction of *The Cold War and Hong Kong Cinema*, the Cold War between Republic of China (Taiwan) versus People’s Republic of China is the “small Cold War.” Since 1949, Hong Kong cinema is under the Cold War atmosphere, cinema became a battlefield between right wing versus left wing and between “democratic” China (ROC) versus communist China (PRC). In 1951, a strike occurred in Yung Hwa Motion Picture Industry Limited, many of the leftist filmmakers were expelled.

---

31 Famous movie star Ivy Ling Po plays in Amoy opera before joining Shaw Brothers. Besides, Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai is in Shaoxing opera (Yueju).
from Hong Kong by the British colonial government. Meanwhile, People’s Republic of China closed its film market to non-communist countries. The leftist studios in Hong Kong, such as the Great Wall Pictures Corporation and Feng Huang (Phoenix) Motion Picture Company, gradually lost their influence in Hong Kong. Taiwan (ROC) became the largest film market for Chinese films made in Hong Kong. The film market in Taiwan (ROC) is strictly speaking not a “free” market. Under the Cold War atmosphere, any leftist films or films made by leftist director or leftist movie stars are banned. In 1953, HK & Kowloon Union of Free Workers in the Film Industry was established, which later changes its name to HK & Kowloon Cinema & Theatrical Enterprise Free General Association in 1957. This is a rightist association which claims its loyalty to the “free” China—Republic of China in Taiwan. A regulation passed in Taiwan (ROC) in 1960 which states that only films made by members of the Free General Association can be released in Taiwan (ROC). A lot of filmmakers and movie stars joined Free General Association, including movie stars in Shaw Brothers and MP & GI, which both had close relationships with Taiwan (ROC). Mr. Loke died in the air crash in Taiwan at 11th Asian Film Festival in 1964 before he could realize his plans of investing in Li Han-Hsiang’s newly established Grad Motion Pictures in Taiwan. Li’s Grand Motion Pictures made a huge contribution to Chinese cinema in Taiwan. Shaw Brothers hold celebrations of National Day on October Tenth each year and

---


35 Li Han-Hsiang left Shaw Brothers and established Grand Motion Pictures in Taiwan. Mr. Loke planned to invest in this film studio. The plan eventually failed because of Mr. Loke’s sudden death. Grad Motion Pictures eventually ends up having economic crisis, and Li left Taiwan and rejoined Shaw Brothers. For more details on Grand Motion Pictures, see The History Changing Five Years. Chiao, Peggy Hsiung-ping. Gaibian Lishi de Wunian: Guolian Dianying Yanjiu. [The History Changing Five Years: Research on Grand Motion Pictures.] Taipei: Wanxiang publishing, 1993. Print.
publicized them on *Southern Screen Illustrated*[^36], a magazine owned by Shaw Brothers. Shaw Brothers’ movie stars also traveled to Taiwan (ROC) frequently to participate in president Chiang Kai-Shek’s birthday celebration[^37] or to perform to the army. Under the circumstance of the Cold War, Shaw Brothers’ had to self-regulate the films and movie stars to serve the ideology of Free General Association.

On the other hand, Hong Kong society was under significant changes during the time. After 1949, Hong Kong gradually became industrialized. The major industries in Hong Kong was labor-intensive industries, such as textile and clothing. Female labors became stable and inexpensive sources for labor-intensive industries[^38]. Women left home to work in factories, and hence gradually had certain degree of economic power at home. Shi Wenhong writes in “Popular Culture and Consumer Life in Hong Kong”[^39] that more and more working women in the 1960s causes higher and higher consumption. Studying from advertisements in Hong Kong, Shi claims that in the 1950s and 1960s, “living condition in Hong Kong improved a lot after the War, advertisements of luxurious goods and non-daily necessities emerged in large number with a lot of varieties.” (611) Under these social changes, there were more and more “modern” women with economic independency, and they looked for role models not only on the screen in the imaginary world of cinema but also in the actual world they live in. The female genre hence

became the medium for women looking for their role models from the female characters in the movies, as well as from female movie stars in the actual world. Yet on the other hand, although the “modern” women are depicted on the screen, these “modern” women are after all being produced by male producers, male directors, and male screen writers. Hence women are depicted as “modern” yet not threatening to the patriarchal society in the female genre.

The female genre is the product of these social-historical conjunctures—the Chinese diasporic audiences in countries rather than China, the Cold War atmosphere, and emerging capitalism and popular culture. These factors are not only social-historical background of the female genre; they are also reasons the female genre dominated film markets in the 1960s. The feminine genre is popular at the time because on the one hand, it collaborates the nation building for the diasporic audiences. Since many people became diasporic subjects, the feminine genre became the realm for them to create an imagined community. In a sense, the female characters in feminine genre became the embodiment of a pan-Chinese nation. On the other hand, the feminine genre is a product of “modern” at the time. The female characters are “modern woman” in the disguise of historical costumes.

The Shaw Brothers had a vision while making movies, especially movies of the female genre. The vision is similar yet different from the “China Dream.” In articles published in Southern Screen Illustrated, Shaw Brothers state their mission in reviving Chinese film industry. In “Shaw Brothers’ Magnificent 1961,” the reporter claims that Shaw’s mission is to take Mandarin Chinese movie in Hong Kong from the previous downfall to its zenith, to “take up the responsibility of glorifying the art of Chinese cinema,” “no matter how hard it is and no matter how much it costs.” (114) In another article “Movie Industry in Hong Kong,” the reporter

---

claims that Shaw Brothers is the giant in Hong Kong cinema who “produces excellent movies to 15,000,000 overseas Chinese audiences.” (32) In Shaw’s publishing, Runrun Shaw, the president and producer of the Shaw Brothers, states his mission to promote “Chinese” cinema. Shaw Brothers endeavors to produce high quality mandarin Chinese movies in order to represent Chinese cinema to the world and to compete with movies or studios in other countries. Movies in the female genre are chosen for this specific purpose and thus often represent Chinese movies in participating in various film festivals. In other words, the female genre showcases China to the world.

My dissertation looks at the Shaw Brothers’ historical epics and huangmei musicals that dominated Chinese film industry from the end of 1950s to the 1960s. I look at how the female genre reflects and represents its social-historical background. I investigate the female genre from four different aspects: What does the female protagonist represent? How does gender work in the female genre in which male protagonists are insignificant? How are stories of the femme fatales in Chinese history retold in the female genre? And why is the female genre regarded as a modern product? I argue that historical epics and huangmei musicals create an imaginary space for audiences to experience a grandiose “China” in the image of woman. Because this grand China appears in the image a magnificent woman, women are magnified, sanctified, and glorified and consequently serves to imagination of the “modern” women who gradually gains autonomy during the time. Nevertheless, since these imaginations are created by male directors/producers under the patriarchal/patriotic Cold War atmosphere, these prominent women in the female genre have to eventually be disciplined and serve or sacrifices for the sake of the nation.
Chapters

In the chapter “A Nation that is Gendered Female—Imagining the Matriarch,” I look at how the female protagonist in the female genre embodies the imagined nation China for the diasporic audiences. I look at *The Grand Substitution* (Yen Chun, 1964), *Beyond the Great Wall* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1964), and *The Magnificent Concubine* (Li Han-Hsian, 1962), and argue that the image of the matriarch is the embodiment of the imaginary collective nation. In the female genre, the homeland for the diasporic audiences is gendered female—the motherland rather than the fatherland. The image of the matriarch reflects the Cold War atmosphere, and the ultimate sacrifice from the matriarch mobilizes every subject—in the movie or in front of the screen—to be a loyal subject to the imagined collective nation. Although this imagined China appears in the form of a woman, I argue that it is different from self-orientalization because the hierarchy of the West versus the East is reversed in the female genre. The matriarch appears to be glorified and more superior not only to men but also to Western culture. However, while the matriarch appears to be the glorified and symbolizes autonomous modern women on the screen, she eventually has to be sacrificed for the sake of the patriarchal nation.

In chapter “A Man Who is Actually A Woman—Imagining Gender,” I look at the intriguing issue of cross-dressing in historical epics and *huangmei* musicals. There are two levels of cross-dressing: on the first level, female character disguises as man in order to access social mobility; and on the second level, the male protagonists are cross-dressed by actresses. From movies *Lady General Hua Mu-Lan, The Perfumed Arrow* (Kao Li, 1966), and *The Love Eterne*, I look at the first level of cross-dressing. I contend that the disguised female protagonists transgress social boundaries and hence represent “modern” and “progressive” women. In the female genre, the past is imagined to be conservative. Thus from gender transgression, the
audiences are able to imagine their life as “modern” in the contemporary society. I also look at
cross-dressed male protagonists in *The Love Eterne* and *The Mirror and Lichee* (Kao Li, 1966). I
argue that in the female genre, gender is redefined with new meanings. The cross-dressed male
protagonists are the imaginary “ideal men” with no sexual desire. Whereas in the female genre,
men are no longer superior to women, and masculinity is no longer superior to femininity.
Because of cross-dressing in the female genre, there are often implicit gender puns that indicate
transgressions of heterosexual normativity. However, by examining closely on the movies, I
argue that heterosexual normativity will eventually be restored in movies situated in imagined
patriarchal China.

In the chapter “Redeemed femme fatales—Imagining Modern Women,” I look at how
history is retold in movies of the femme fatales. In the female genre, stories of the femme fatales
are retold and these notorious women under Chinese history and literature are redeemed or are
portrayed with a more sympathetic perspective. From *The Last Woman of Shang, Three Sinners*
(Yen Chun, 1962), and *The Amorous Lotus Pan* (Chow Sze-Loke, 1964), I investigate how the
femme fatales Daji, Yan Xijiao, and Pan Jinlian are depicted in Chinese literary tradition, and
how their stories are retold in the female genre. In the female genre, these notorious femme
fatales finally have chances to narrate their stories to the audiences and revise their images in
Chinese history and literature dominated by male intellectuals. Although authenticity is crucial in
the female genre, I argue that it is not authenticity that matters, it is how these stories are
represented in the movies that make the films significant. The female genre delves into the
femme fatales’ psychology to justify or rationalize their actions. I contend that the femme fatales
in the female genre symbolize “modern” women who now have autonomy in modern society.
Although stories of the femme fatales symbolize “modern” women and although voices of
women are heard in the female genre, I also argue that these transgressed women ultimately have to be incorporated and disciplined under patriarchy.

In the chapter “Shaw’s Empire of Imagination—Imagining Modern and Stardom,” I “zoom out” from movies of the feminine genre and examine Shaw Brothers’ modern empire of cinema through *Southern Screen Illustrated*, the magazine published by Shaw Brothers. In this chapter, I look at how the female genre as a genre of historical past represents Shaw’s modern empire of entertainment. Delving into *Southern Screen Illustrated* between 1957 to 1967, the ten years of rise and fall of the female genre, this chapter is a descriptive chapter on how the movies, the movie stars, and Shaw Brothers studio are publicized in the magazine. I argue that whereas movies of the female genre serve a pedagogical purpose for diasporic audiences on not only moral lessons but also lessons on *authentic* Chinese history and literature, the magazine serves as a pedagogical tool for audiences on how to see the movies, how to understand the movie stars, and how the Shaw Brothers represents modern entertainment. In terms of publicizing the movies, I contend that the magazine serves as an educational purpose for audiences to understand the movies prior to entering the movie theatre. Hence how the story is presented to the audiences is more important than how the story develops in movies of the female genre. From how *Southern Screen Illustrated* publicizes the movies, *authenticity* is crucial in films of the female genre. I contend that this is related to Shaw Brothers’ ambition of showcasing (the imagined) China to the world. Furthermore, in this chapter, I also look at how *Southern Screen Illustrated* publicizes the movie stars of the female genre. From publicizing of four movie stars—Li Li-hua, Linda Lin Dai, Betty Loh Ti, and Ivy Ling Po—I argue that the magazine brings movie stars from movies of the past to the modern world. In Shaw Brothers’ publication, who the movie stars actually are is not as important as how they are publicized, which ultimately serves to reinforce the movie
stars’ images on the screen. From articles in Southern Screen Illustrated, I also look at how the Shaw Brothers endeavors to build an empire of modern by presenting international collaborations, targeting to global film market, and participating in international film festivals. By looking at Southern Screen Illustrated, I hope to demonstrate a more complete picture of Shaw Brothers’ empire of modern entertainment.

Since the female genre is made in Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong, in my dissertation, all names of movie stars, directors, or authors are kept in their original form, while names of characters in movies are in Pinyin. I keep the original form of names in case the diasporic subjects lose their originality. My study can be regarded as Sinophone study since this is a study of diasporic Chinese’s narrative of China. If the names are not in pinyin, they can be found in appendix with pinyin and Chinese characters.
2.

A Nation That is Gendered Female—Imagining The Matriarch

People who may not have been to China, but they certainly have an imagination of China. This imagination could be Jet Li with astounding martial art skills, Jackie Chen speaking pidgin English in action movies, Maggie Cheung in a fancy cheongsam/qipao, or Zhang Ziyi with her extravagant gown and slanted eyes. These are imaginations imprinted by movies and movie stars. For people who do not live in China or who have never physically accessed China, movie is a medium that can easily circulate around to generate imaginations of China. In *Sinascape: Contemporary Chinese Cinema*, Gary G. Xu argues that cinematic production replaces literary cultures in representing China to the western world in the twenty-first century. This is undoubtedly a phenomenon in the century in which images have become more and more reachable and presumably more persuasive. Yet cinematic images that represent a nation were no less powerful in previous decades. Feminine genre serves as a representation of a “nation” in the 1960s. In the case of feminine genre, the representation of a nation is intriguing because the audiences are subjects in diaspora. For diasporic audience, cinematic images serve as their imagination of a collective nation without geographical boundaries. This chapter looks at a recurring female image in feminine genre—the image of a matriarch. I argue that the image of a matriarch is an embodiment of an imagined nation “China” for Chinese diasporic audiences. The image of matriarch on the one hand empowers women as well as Chinese culture it represents, yet on the other hand ultimately urges women to be loyal subjects of the nation.

---

Collective Imagination and Chinese in Diaspora

The idea of the nation is quite a modern concept in China. It appears in the late Qing period, and was developed in the twentieth century. The component of a nation requires a group of people, often with similar ethnic background, living within a territory and having rights to form a government that deal with issues related to the people. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson talks about how people in a nation form a collective national identity. Anderson states that mediums such as daily newspapers or television news, and living experiences such as national holidays collaborate in constructing a collective national identity for people living within certain geographical boundaries. For people in the diaspora, things are different: they are not bounded within a national boundary, and they do not share the same national holidays or the same pieces of news on newspapers and televisions. How do they form an imagined community based on their ethnic background, not national identities?

The spread of electronic images in diaspora groups is a key factor in forming imagined communities beyond national boundaries. For Chinese diasporic audience in the 1960s, Shaw Brothers’ feminine genre was one of the media that created a collective imagination of a nation. After 1949, which marked the separation between Communist China (People’s Republic of China) and “Free China” (Republic of China in Taiwan), many Chinese became diasporic subjects. Immigrants flooded to Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Asian countries such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. Being in the diaspora means being nostalgic to a homeland that no

---

43 The first “nation” in China was established in 1911 in China by Sun Yat-sen. Before then, China was an empire instead of a nation.
longer exists—their homeland has been forever changed and is drastically different from what they have imagined. The feminine genre helps diasporic Chinese to picture an imagined China, a historical China that can only live on the people’s imagination. Shaw Brothers (HK) Ltd. was established in 1958. Since the Mainland China gradually closed its door to Hong Kong films in the 1950s, Shaw Brothers can only target their films to Chinese diasporic audiences. As a product at this historical juncture, feminine genre delineates a cultural China for diasporic Chinese. They are adaptations from Chinese history and literature, as if China was reincarnated in film versions.

The wild popularity of feminine genre shows the demand from Chinese diasporic market. Shaw Brothers’ movies are popular in Chinese communities in the 1960s. They have become a collective memory for Chinese in diaspora. Gary G. Xu writes about Tsai Ming-Liang’s experience as a Malaysian-Chinese diasporic director and states that Shaw Brothers’ cinema is a diasporic experience for people with Chinese heritage.

“Tsai’s encounter with Chinese-language films is indicative of the importance of Shaw Brothers’ Chinese-language film production and distribution to the ethnic identity of the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia. No matter how deeply rooted the Chinese communities were in their adopted countries, they still shared a belief in the continuity and homogeneity of Chinese culture, which was in no small part based on the images in Shaw Brothers films. Making Mandarin films in a Cantonese-speaking world about a nation no longer accessible under Mao’s rule, Shaw Brothers’ practice was already highly nostalgic and diasporic. Shot against a clearly artificial and expressionistic studio setting that

---

includes out-of-production bridges, palaces, inns, waterfalls, and stretches of the Gobi Desert, most Shaw Brothers films, especially those huangmei opera adaptations, create an impression that Chinese communities everywhere share the same cultural heritage based on identical visual codes.” (98)

These “visual codes,” are the Chinese symbols in feminine genre, including artificial “Chinese” landscape, architecture, and Chinese costumes. Besides the “visual codes,” feminine genre also provides common knowledge of Chinese history, literature, traditional values, and an imagined homeland that no longer exists. These seemingly “Chinese” cultural symbols generate an imagined collective identity for Chinese diaspora audiences.

Many scholars have also argued that Shaw Brothers’ cinema create an “imagined China” for Chinese in diaspora. Romona Curry claims that The Love Eterne offers diasporic Chinese an “envisioned homeland” (182) in “Bridging the Pacific with Love Eterne.” Poshek Fu writes in “Introduction: The Shaw Brothers Diasporic Cinema” that,

“Indeed Shaw Brothers was most successful in projecting this pan-Chinese community through constructing the consciousness of cultural China in its films—an imagined homeland expressed by principally an invented tradition, a shared past, and a common language—that appealed to the nostalgia and nationalism of Chinese audiences around the world.” (12)

Both Curry and Fu agree that Shaw Brothers’ cinema creates an imagined nation “China” for Chinese audiences in the diaspora. Yet what kinds of images are represented in this imagined homeland China? Looking carefully at historical epics and huangmei musicals films, it is evident

47 Fu, 2008.
that the image of the matriarch becomes the representation of the imagined nation. In this chapter, I will look at *The Grand Substitution* (Yen Chun, 1965), *Beyond the Great Wall* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1964), and *The Magnificent Concubine* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1960) and show the female embodiment of a nation in the feminine genre.

**The Matriarch**

The matriarch is a recurring image in the feminine genre. As I define here in my dissertation, the matriarch is mother of the nation\(^{48}\). Whereas the role of a mother is based on her personal relations to a spouse father and a son/daughter; the matriarch’s relation is national rather than personal. It is her relation solely to the nation that makes her the matriarch. The matriarch may have a spouse, but her spouse often does not play an important role in the storyline. It does not matter if the matriarch has a child because for her the nation is her child. What matters to the matriarch is her role as a mother of the nation. As a mother of the nation, the matriarch often has to suffer or sacrifices herself for the nation. In a sense, it is her suffering for the nation that makes her the matriarch.

**The Grand Substitution**

In feminine genre, a nation in danger is often the background for the storyline. The nation in danger is a reference to imagined China during the Cold War. The endangered nation tries to mobilize each subject, male or female, to protect and save their own nation. *The Grand Substitution* (Yen Chun, 1965) is a complex film that pictures the nation in danger. As a film that combines elements of the *huangmei* musical and the historical epic, *The Grand Substitution* depicts a scholar, Cheng Ying, who is hired by the old Prime Minister, Zhao Shun, to help rule the country. Zhao, being loyal and courageous, offends the treacherous yet powerful Tu Angu

\(^{48}\) Mother of the nation, *guomu* in Chinese. 國母
and hence leads to a slaughter of the whole Zhao family. Zhao’s daughter-in-law happens to be the sister of the emperor, princess Zhuangji. Zhuangji survives and gives birth to a baby boy, Zhao Wu. In order to save the last bloodline of loyal Zhao family, Cheng helps to sneak out baby Zhao from the palace. Knowing that the baby is lost, Tu announces that if no one surrenders baby Zhao within three days, he will execute all babies of the same age within the entire country. Struggling between conscience and feelings, Cheng decides to surrender his only son who is at the same age as baby Zhao, and raises Zhao Wu as his own child. Zhao Wu is raised under the name of Cheng Wu, and is adopted by Tu. At the age of fifteen Zhao Wu discovers his true identity and in the end kills Tu in revenge.

At the first glance, *The Grand Substitution* does not seem to be “feminine” at all since it is a story of patriarchy—a story of heroic Cheng and Zhao Wu. However, *The Grand Substitution* is in fact a story of matriarchy due to the “feminine essence” of huangmei musical film. *The Grand Substitution* develops around a patriarchal theme that there should be a son to carry on the family name and bloodline of the loyal Zhao. For this purpose, Cheng is willing to sacrifice his only son and save “the heir of the loyal and conscience.” Nevertheless, despite the family name, the patriarchal lineage of father-son is never carried on. Zhao Wu’s birth father and grandfather of are both dead, and Cheng Ying’s son is also dead. The father-son relationship turns out to be a surrogate lineage instead of a blood-related one. In the end, Cheng Ying tells Zhao Wu to stay with his birth mother, “Your mother have tastes the bitterness for fifteen years, and waited for the coming of this day. You have to be nearby your mother.” It is Princess Zhuangji who proposes that Zhao Wu can be Cheng’s adopted son so that Cheng’s family name will be carried in the future. Though accepting the propose in tears, Cheng then stumbles back to

---

49 Quotation from the film. My translation. The lyrics and dialogues in the films are my translation if not further indicated.
his cottage in the mountain, leaving Zhao Wu reunited with his mother. Cheng gives all the credits to Princess Zhuangji, the matriarch in *The Grand Substitution*. Besides, though Cheng Ying seems to be a hero who sacrifices his son for the nation, it is a feminine duty—raising Zhao Wu—that he fulfills. More intriguingly, the fifteen-year-old Zhao Wu is cross-dressed by the female star Ivy Ling Po. It could be argued that it is mother and daughter who are reunited in the end and makes it a matriarchal story. In the movie, before Zhao Wu knows his true identity, he asks Princess Zhuangji, “Do you have a son or a daughter? I can teach him/her martial arts. After he/she learns martial arts, he/she can revenge for your family.” Though having a son to carry the family name is the central theme in *The Grand Substitution*, a daughter is never left out in terms of paying back familial vendetta.

A nation in danger mobilizes its people as well as audience to be loyal subjects. In *The Grand Substitution*, when Zhao sends Gongsun to invite Cheng to their think tank, Gongsun tries to persuade Zhao, “The rise and end of a nation is every single man’s responsibility. Besides, once the nation is overturned, it will be too late to regret for the overturned dynasty.” This comment reminds not only Cheng but also audiences of his/their responsibility for the nation in danger. Moreover, there are other people who are willing to sacrifice or help Zhao simply because of his “loyalty and conscientiousness.” Tu once sends out an assassin intending to assassinate Zhao Shun. The assassin releases Zhao and commits suicide because he discovers that Zhao is a loyal official. In another episode, a soldier secretly helps Cheng to escape with the

---

50 It is interesting that when Cheng says that Zhuangji “tastes the bitterness” for fifteen years, he uses the phrase *hanxin ruku*, which often refers to mother raising a child.
51 Cheng’s wife disappears from the story after Cheng turns in his only son and goes to lives in the mansion that Tu prepares. Cheng’s wife is important in the first part of the film because it is her who persuades Cheng to lay aside his familial duties and work for the nation.
52 Third person singular in Chinese, *ta*, is gender neutral.
baby from palace because he knows that baby Zhao is “an heir of the loyal and conscience.” Gongsun also sacrifices himself to protect baby Zhao. In order to trick Tu to believe that Cheng would give up baby Zhao, Gongsun and Cheng even invent a play of hiding Cheng’s baby as if it were baby Zhao, and sacrifice his life for the same reason. These people’s sacrifices reflect the value of Zhao’s “loyal and conscience”—as long as it is for the good of a nation, it is worth every subject’s sacrifice.

The image of the matriarch is the embodiment of the nation. In *The Grand Substitution*, Princess Zhuangji is the matriarch that embodies the nation. Zhuangji is the survivor of Zhao family, and meanwhile the one carrying the hope of the family’s future. She is literally the matriarch of the Zhao family. Zhuangji plays a significant role in the movie. When Zhao Wu discovers his real identity, he runs out with a sword in his hand in the hope to revenge immediately. Cheng Ying stops him and proposes a plan in which Zhuangji has to be in presence and witness the revenge. The revenge scene shows that Zhuangji is the matriarch. In this scene, old general Wei who comes to assist the revenge of Zhao family asks Tu, “Do you know that there is a survivor in Zhao family?” Tu is surprised and asks who it is. At this moment, Princess Zhuangji appears on the top of stairs. Tu, standing at the bottom of the stairs, raises his head as if watching the presence of an empress/goddess. [Figure 1.1] Zhuangji gracefully descends from the stairs and announces that “We have been tasting bitterness for fifteen years and waited for today.” This statement is the preface of revenge. General Wai is referring to Zhao Wu as the survivor of Zhao family, but Zhuangji’s presence has to come before the revealing of Zhao Wu’s identity.

---

54 Tasting the bitterness is the literal translation. It is the same phrase used in footnote 6. It can also mean suffering.
Since the matriarch is the embodiment of the nation, her suffering thus symbolizes the suffering of the nation. Zhuangji suffers from witnessing her husband being forced to commit suicide. She suffers from the sorrow that her elder brother gives the order to kill every single person of her husband’s family. She suffers from separating from her own baby after giving birth to him only for a few days. She suffers from the bereavement of her child since she assumes that Cheng surrendered her son for his own. She suffers from betrayal of trusting her child to righteous Cheng but then being informed that the baby is dead. She suffers from the hatred to Tu and waits for a revenge that may never be fulfilled. She suffers from living in royal ancestral temple/cemetery for fifteen years, reminiscing her late husband, her child, and the whole Zhao family. The matriarch’s suffering can be understood by a Chinese phrase “guochou jiahen\textsuperscript{55},” meaning national enmity and familial grudge. Her suffering combines family grudge and national enmity—it is familial grudge that transforms into national enmity. Princess Zhuangji’s suffering is no longer sufferings of her own. Her sufferings are sufferings for a nation and sufferings of a nation. Hence her familial grudge is the national enmity and should consequently mobilize every national subject.

\textit{Beyond the Great Wall}

Another \textit{huangmei} musical film \textit{Beyond the Great Wall} (Li Han-Hsiang, 1964) also depicts a nation in danger. \textit{Beyond the Great Wall} is a story of one of the four beauties in Chinese history\textsuperscript{56}, Wang Zhaojun. Zhaojun is selected to be imperial consort. But since she refuses to bribe the royal painter, Mao Yanshou, the emperor never intends to see her due to the deceptive portrait. She waits for three years in her chamber, experiencing cold and lonely life in

\textsuperscript{55} 国仇家恨。
\textsuperscript{56} The four beauties of Chinese history are Xi Shi, Wang Zhaojun, Diao Chan, and Yang Guifei. Their stories have been adopted into films in feminine genre by Li Han-Hsiang. And they all appear as matriarchs of a nation.
imperial palace. One day, the emperor overhears the sound of her lute and found stunningly beautiful Zhaojun by following the music. The emperor discovers Mao Yanshou’s treacherous deeds and is furious with him. The emperor falls in love with her and abandons the system of portrait. Mao, worrying of his life, escapes from imperial palace and arrives at nomad kingdom Xiongnu. Mao tells the king of Xiongnu, Shanyu, that the emperor sends him with Zhaojun’s portraits in the hope to establish marriage alliance with Xiongnu. Since Shanyu had an unforgettable glance at Zhaojun when he was in Han court, he happily consents and sends presents to the emperor. The emperor refuses the humiliating marriage alliance angrily. Shanyu initiates war because Mao tells him that the emperor does not keep his promise. Seeing many people die from the war, Zhaojun decides to sacrifice herself for the peace of two countries. When she arrives Xiongnu kingdom, she makes Shanyu promise for permanent peace in the future, kills Mao Yanshou, and eventually commits suicide.

Similar to The Grand Substitution, the nation—Han dynasty/China⁵⁷—is also in danger in Beyond the Great Wall. There are two kinds of threats to Han: one from the outside and the other from the inside. The threat from outside is the belligerent Xiongnu, while the danger from inside is the treacherous official Mao Yanshou. The emperor sends General Wang Long with soldiers to protect Zhaojun on her way to Xiongnu. On their way, General Wang discusses the threats of their nation with the soldiers. He complains,

“Marriage alliance does not work well. There has been nine times of marriage alliance with Xiongnu ever since Han dynasty was established. There are sometimes a few years of peace, but marriage alliance is more often easily broken. It is humiliating enough to send

---

⁵⁷ As mentioned, the idea of nation is not clear in pre-modern China. Yet the idea of the dynasty slightly overlaps the idea of nation in modern sense. Han dynasty can be considered as “a nation China” because the word “han” also refers to ethnic majority of Chinese people. In this sense, “Han” is the nation that needs to be protected from barbarous tribes. In this chapter, the word nation is therefore interchangeable with dynasty.
royal princesses to marry nomad kings, let alone the treasures that accompany the beauties.”\textsuperscript{58}

General Wang’s complain shows Han/China in danger: marriage alliance is always considered as a humiliation to China. Wang further states that now the nation “has no fierce generals, but full of traitors like Mao Yanshou.” This scene should also be understood visually: it is shot with the background of the Great Wall, a symbol of resistance to foreign power. [Figure 1.2] A soldier asks General Wang, “We have the unbreakable Great Wall, how is it possible that we can’t fight against Xiongnu?” General Wang replies, “The Great Wall is hard to break, but it is more difficult to avoid traitors such as Mao Yanshou!” The Great Wall is a loaded cultural symbol for Chinese diasporic audience. The Great Wall is a cultural symbol of a united nation. It is believed that the first emperor of Chinese history who firstly unified China has combined different parts and pieces of walls built by preceding separate states to build the Great Wall. Hence it symbolizes a strong national power and a unified nation. Moreover, since it was fortresses built to prevent foreign/nomadic invasion, the Great Wall is a symbol that signifies a unified China versus the barbarous other. For Chinese diasporic audiences, the Great Wall is a nostalgic cultural symbol of imagined community China. More intriguingly, this scene shows that \textit{Beyond the Great Wall} is creating a new interpretation of the Great Wall. The soldiers and General Wang regard the Great Wall as a solid protection from foreign forces. It is therefore not simply a problem of weak national defense. Since General Wang comments that it is even more difficult to prevent the traitors within the country, this scene therefore reflects the movie as a national allegory in the Cold War. During this time, it is not foreign forces that threaten the imagined nation China; it is traitors of culture that endangers the imagined nation. If we consider the Great

\textsuperscript{58} Quotation from the film. \textit{Beyond The Great Wall}, Dir. Li Han-Hsiang. Perf. Linda Lin Dai and Zhao Lei. Shaw Brothers. 1964.
Wall as national boundaries of an imagined nation, the traitors of culture are thus beyond protection of the Great Wall. If we zoom out and look at this scene as a Shaw Brothers’ production in the 1964, the Great Wall also reveals the essence of Shaw Brothers’ *huanmgei* musicals and historical epics. The Great Wall is obviously an artificial background painted in the studio. It symbolizes Shaw Brothers’ re-creation of an imagined community for the Chinese audience in diaspora.

In *Beyond the Great Wall*, Zhaojun appears as the matriarch of the nation. She is the ideal spouse for the emperor: she makes him a better emperor than he was. At the beginning, the emperor is indulged in women and cares nothing about the nation. He is not satisfied with numerous women in palace and desires to have more beauties through portrait system. After he falls in love with Zhaojun, the lustful emperor becomes reasonable. All of a sudden, he realizes her sufferings in the empty palace, and decides to abolish the portrait system. This decision not only saves young women from being confined in palace, but also saves the emperor from bad reputation of being lustful. Being the matriarch, Zhaojun shows sympathy to people. There is a group of soldiers and maids accompany Zhaojun to Xiongnu. On the way, a soldier and a maid escape together because they cannot get used to food and weather in Xiongnu. They tell Zhaojun and General Wang that they were engaged before they were drafted to palace. If the maid stays in Xiongnu, they will never be able to get married or to go back to their aged parents. The general, representing the strict order, commands to execute the couple in order to punish the deserters. Zhaojun, being the compassionate matriarch, decides to release the couple out of empathy. Zhaojun later dismisses all her maids when they arrive at Xiongnu so that they can go back and be reunited with their families. Zhaojun’s compassion shows that she is a matriarch of
the nation with love to her subjects. Hence due to love and sympathy for Zhaojun, her maids
decide to stay with her in Xiongnu rather than go back to their families.

As a matriarch, Zhaojun saves the nation by sacrificing herself voluntarily. Seeing the
emperor is tormented by the war, Zhaojun stands out and tells the emperor that she is willing to
sacrifice because she cannot bear to witness people suffering. She actively sacrifices for the
nation instead of being sacrificed by the nation. When Zhaojun arrives at Xiongnu, she demands
to meet Mao Yanshou in person. When she sees Mao, she asks him several crucial questions: “do
you remember who I am?” and “do you remember where am I from?” She then asks Mao the
same question again, “do you remember who you are?” and “do you remember which dynasty do
you belong to?” The question of “who I am” or “who you are” asks about her/his name.
Naming is crucial for one’s identity, what you want to be called is what you identify with. And
Zhaojun refuses to be acknowledged as Yanzhi, the Xiongnu title for the king’s spouses. The
question “where am I from” indicates her identification with the place of her origin, which is her
hometown and her country. When Mao replies that, “I was from Han, but now I serve for
Xiongnu,” Zhaojun reprimands him, “Do you not know that a loyal courtier never serves two
emperors; a chaste woman never marries two husbands?” This is of course Zhaojun’s final word
of her suicide, as well as the most important message in the film. But repetition of questioning
“do you remember” indicates that Mao Yanshou deliberately forgets who he is and where he is
from, and he is therefore a traitor of Han. These questions urgently calls for the audience’s
remembrance of “who they are” and “where they are from”—they are supposed to identify with
their Chinese names, to remember that they are from “China,” and they are “Chinese” no matter
where they are.

59 As mentioned before, the idea of dynasty is very similar to the idea of a nation. So this question also asks him
“Which nation do you belong to?”
For the matriarch Zhaojun, her love to the emperor is connected to the love of the nation. To be more specific, her love for the emperor is love for the nation. The emperor and nation is always her priority. Zhaojun asks Shanyu for three wishes. Besides the last wish to see Mao, the first wish is to have her portrait back. The second wish is Shanyu’s promise to keep permanent peace between Han/China and Xiongnu. When she sees her portrait, she asks General Wang to bring it back to the emperor and encourage the emperor not to be too disheartened because “the kingdom is more beautiful than [she is.]” She hopes the emperor would transcend love to her into love to the nation. Her love to the emperor has also been transcended to love to the nation. Hence she is willing to sacrifice herself to ease the emperor’s mind and to save the nation from the war. The ending of Beyond the Great Wall shows that Zhaojun’s love has been transcended to love to the nation. Before Shanyu celebrates their marriage, Zhaojun asks to have Chinese ceremony of worshiping ancestors and parents. She changes into Chinese style of clothing, and sings,

“First cup of wine, pray to the God,

Wishing that the emperor values foreign defense.
Arranges weapons and supplies, prospers the nation,
Pulls the emperor’s reputation together and appease barbarous territories

Second cup of wine, pray to the God,

Wishing the high spirits from the armies.
Together be inspired and strengthened,
Never allow the enemy to be arrogant.

Third cup of wine, pray to the God,
Wishing for the harvest to fill up barns.
Sufficient to store up people and the army’s barns,
Strengthen the army and feed up horses to protect the frontiers.

My heart is as clear as water in the river,
As clean as snow in a foreign country.
How can I humiliate my parents?
How can I betray the emperor?
I would rather leave with the wavy river,
Riding back to my homeland on the wind.⁶⁰

In this song, Zhaojun prays for three things with three cups of wine, first she prays for the emperor to focus on military defenses, second she prays for the army to have a fighting spirit, and then she prays God for a harvest. Starting from an individual, the emperor, to a group of people, the army, then to an unpredictable factor, the weather for the harvest, what she prays for are neither the emperor’s everlasting love nor the longevity of the emperor, but for one sole purpose—the military reinforcement that will lead a strong nation. Her love to the emperor has been transcended into a greater love of the country. It is a strong nation that is more important than her personal desire. And it is people’s need, as well as the armies’ need, to have enough food and strength to protect the country that is more important than either hers or the emperor’s need.

Since Zhaojun is the matriarch of the nation, her body is metaphorically body of the nation. The female body that symbolizes the nation is sacred and cannot be violated. Her chastity

⁶⁰ Quotation from the film.
is therefore crucial for being matriarch of the nation. Not only does Zhaojun reprimand Mao by saying that “a chaste woman never marries two husbands,” she also claims that her heart is “as clear as water in the river” and “as clean as snow in a foreign country.” When she faces the dilemma of sacrificing her body for the sake of the nation, she would rather commit suicide than being defiled by the nomad King. The integrity of her body is the integrity of the nation. Zhaojun changes back to Chinese style of clothing before she commits suicide. On the one hand, she follows the Chinese saying of “born as a Han; die as a Han.”\(^6\) The Han here not only indicates her national identity, it also indicates her ethnic identity as a Chinese. The Chinese style of clothing shows her identification with Han/Chinese when facing death, and her determination of being a Han/Chinese even at the edge of facing death and becomes a Han/Chinese ghost. The saying “Born as a Han, and die as a Han” can literally be translated as “born as a Han person, and die as a Han ghost” since Chinese believe that people become ghosts or spirits after they die and before their reincarnation. The idea of ghost/spirit adds another layer to this reading—even if she dies, she remains Han/Chinese as a spirit. The way Zhaojun commits suicide is symbolic too. She jumps into a river, that more than often flows to the east in China. Han/China was geographically at the east of Xiongnu kingdom. Her choice of jumping into the river from a cliff shows her determination to “ride back to [her] homeland” as a Han/China spirit.

*The Magnificent Concubine*

*The Magnificent Concubine* (Li Han-Hsian, 1962) is strictly speaking a historical epic instead of a *huangmei* musical film. Yet as a film of feminine genre, the protagonist Yang Guifei\(^6\) in *The Magnificent Concubine* appears to be matriarch of the nation. *The Magnificent Concubine* delineates another of the four beauties in Chinese history, Yang Guifei (719 A.D.-756

\(^{61}\) 生是漢家人，死是漢家鬼。

\(^{62}\) Yang Guifei is also translated as Yang the Prized Consort, she is also known by her name Yang Yuhuan.
A.D.). Yang was born in Tang dynasty (618 A.D.-907 A.D.), the greatest dynasty of Chinese history. She is often regarded as the beauty who causes downfall of great Tang. The movie depicts emperor Xuanzong’s favoritism over Yang. Yang is jealous of concubine Mei, and makes a scene in front of the emperor. Emperor Xuanzong expels Yang out of anger, but he soon misses her to an extent that he can hardly eat nor sleep well. Yang is also upset and misses the emperor very much. The eunuch understands the emperor’s mind and brings Yang back to palace. Emperor Xuanzong is delighted to have Yang back, and they sing the song that promises love and simple life between husband and wife. However, while emperor Xuanzong happily spends most of time with Yang, Yang’s cousin Yang Guozhong became powerful and hides everything from the emperor. Soon there begins An Lushan Rebellion, claiming to expel Yang Guozhong from the emperor. Protecting by a troop of soldiers, the emperor flees away with Yang in chaos. He gets sick in the long journey, and Yang Guifei accompanies and attends him. The situation gets worse when they arrive at Maweipo. The soldiers cannot have enough of food, and get angry seeing Yang Guozhong and his family having feasts even during the evacuation. They kill Yang Guozhong and demand to kill Yang Guifei as well because she is the reason that Yang Guozhong gets his power as the prime minister. Yang Guifei hears noise of the riot, presents herself in front of the soldiers, and announces that her life worth nothing as long as the soldiers can safely protect the emperor through the journey. She then returns to the emperor’s bedside, waits on him to take medicine and have some sleep after two days of insomnia, and slowly walks to a tree and hangs herself.

*The Magnificent Concubine* is a film that brings the audience to the imagined nation China. The imagined China can be perceived in two levels. First, *The Magnificent Concubine* is arguable whether Tang dynasty is the greatest time of Chinese history. But it is no doubt one of the greatest dynasties in Chinese history.
brings what is literal into visual. Many of the scenes are based on Song of Lasting Pain, a well-known Tang poem by Bai Juyi (772 A.D.-846 A.D.). At the beginning of the film, the camera focuses on Yang Guifei taking a bath in the hot spring named Hua-qing, when she is about to get up from the bath, a group of maidservants come to assist her. Yang soon falls into their arms. This sequence is what Bai writes,

“In springtime’s chill he let her bathe
in Hua-qing Palace’s pools
whose warm springs’ glistening waters
washed flecks of dried lotions away.
Those in attendance helped her rise,
in helpless so charming—
this was the moment when first she enjoyed
the flood of royal favor.”

The “flecks of dried lotions” refers to Yang’s flawless skin that is as smooth as white jade. The camera visualizes Bai’s poems into such detail that it gazes at Yang’s smooth skin. [Figure 1.3, 1.4] Then it cuts to Yang acting her “helplessness” by fainting into the arms of maidservants. [Figure 1.5] There are many other scenes that visualize Song of Lasting Pain. An old man in the market comments on Yang Guozhong’s power that, “you can only blame yourself for not having a daughter” parallels

“This caused the hearts of parents
all the world through
to care no longer for having sons,

---

but to care to have a daughter.”

Even the scene when An Lushan Rebellion occurs parallels the poem. In *The Magnificent Concubine*, the revolt occurs during Yang’s dance in the palace. The emperor is playing the drums while Yang sings and dances for the peaceful and luxurious time of Tang dynasty. The revolt breaks the peaceful dance and melody and causes chaos in the palace. This is a visualization of Bai’s poem,

“This then kettledrums from Yu-yang came
making the whole earth tremble
and shook apart those melodies,

‘Coats of Feathers, Rainbow Skirts.’”

The intercutting of the splendid dance with the breaking of the war visualizes the contrast of peaceful time with wartime in the poem. Bai’s *Song of Lasting Pain* is a collective cultural asset that Chinese audience in diaspora grow up with. These detailed episodes in *The Magnificent Concubine* visualize Bai’s *Song of Lasting Pain* and reminds the diasporic audiences of the literature that they are familiar with. Besides these episodes that parallel Bai’s poem, *The Magnificent Concubine* is also composed by different parts and pieces of tales related to Yang Guifei, such as Yang’s jealousy over Consort Mei and her love of lychee. *The Magnificent Concubine* narrates a new “history” of the love story between Emperor Xuanzong and Yang Guifei by interweaving literature and tales into a visual form. Watching this film, like watching many other movies of Shaw Brothers’ feminine genre, is an experience of visualizing Chinese

---

literature and tales in a renovated method. It gives diasporic Chinese audiences a picturesque imagination of a collective China.

On a different level, The Magnificent Concubine projects an imagined China through the extravagant settings and costumes. In the film, camera ceaselessly takes the audience’s attention away from the narrative to browse through the extravagant settings. This is shown from the very beginning of the film. Before the audiences meet the protagonist Yang Guifei, the camera takes the audience with a maidservant who walks into the Hua-qing spring where Yang is taking a bath. The camera does not focus on the maidservant or anyone else. On the contrary, it is constantly disrupted by groups of maidservants carrying lacquer boxes. Some shots may seem to be weird for contemporary audiences, but it makes sense if we consider that the hall, the palace, and the settings are the subjects of this shot. The next shot that Yang comes into the film is also quite intriguing. The camera first focuses on the ceiling, then it pans down to Yang who is bathing in the spring. [Figure 1.6] The golden ceiling in this sense is a spectacle that precedes Yang’s half-naked body. These shots show that the settings in some sense cannot be disregarded in The Magnificent Concubine. And sometimes it is the extravagant settings that are magnificent and therefore spectacles in this film.

This portrait of China in The Magnificent Concubine appears not only to be magnificent and ancient, but more significantly authentic. The “authenticity” of every detail in the film is closely related to the director Li Han-Hsiang, who is literally the father of huangmei musicals and historical dramas. Li works for art designing before he became a director, hence he is known for his talent in designing the “authentic” and realistic background of Chinese landscape and interior of the palace. Li pays attention on “historical authenticity” in two ways—on the one hand, Li constantly delves into Chinese history and Chinese classics to verify the authenticity of
the script, and on the other hand, Li collects or duplicates antiques as the props. Li says in an interview that he “bases the records in the history and adds on to [his] own imaginations” on the historical drama *Empress Wu Tse-Tien*. *Empress Wu Tse-Tien* is not the only historical drama that Li researched before filming. Given that *The Magnificent Concubine* is shoot at the same time with *Empress Wu Tse-Tien*, and both Yang Guifei and Empress Wu are from Tang dynasty, Li’s research on history of Tang therefore verifies the “authenticity” of *The Magnificent Concubine*. Li’s effort on trying to make an “authentic” historical film also echoes his portrayal of a collected China from Chinese literature. In a magazine article “Li Han-Hsiang Success Spurs Him to Greater Efforts,” it says, “Director Li Han-hsaing has scored his greatest triumphs in historical costume productions. This is because he spares no effort in poring through historical documents and reference books to achieve a realistic atmosphere.” (33) The article describes Li’s setting is not simply extravagant but “realistic” due to Li’s effort in digging into the history. It reports that Li builds parts of the settings in *Empress Wu Tse-Tien* based on Two Mausoleums of State of Southern Tang. Li’s effort on picturing an “authentic” China to the extent of doing historical research on the one hand shows Li’s obsession with an “authentic” China and on the other hand symbolizes Li’s intention for reviving ancient China on silver screen. Li’s obsession on an “authentic” China is also one of the reasons that his camera often

---

67 This is an interview “Cong Wu Zetian tan dao Xiaji—yu Daoyan Lun Xi Zhi San” [From Wu Tse-Tien to Consort Xia—Discussing Movies with Director] with Li Han-Hsiang in *The Milky Way Pictorial*, Issue 36, published by Milky Way Pictorial Publishers in February 1961. The interview is published in Chinese, and this is my translation.


69 Empress Wu is the only empress in Chinese history, so she cannot be left out from female genre. She was once the consort of Emperor Gaozong, and then later established Zhou dynasty in 690-705 A.D.. After her death, Tang dynasty is reestablished and continues till 907 A.D.. Her biography is also recorded in *History of Tang*.

70 Pu, Yi. “Ku Xue Fendou de Li Han-Hsiang/Li Han-Hsiang Success Spurs Him to Greater Efforts.” No. 33. *Southern Screen Illustrated*, The Southern Screen Publications. Shaw Building, HK. 32-35. The magazine is published in Mandarin Chinese with English abstracts on some articles.

71 Two Mausoleums of State of Southern Tang are the mausoleums built in 943 and 961 A.D., located in modern day Nanjing.
pans away from the characters and focuses on the settings and props. In the bathing scene of *The Magnificent Concubine*, the camera focuses on a pair of exquisite shoes, which according to the magazine article is an antique that Li found in antique market. [Figure 1.7] The camera’s gazing at the settings and props shows that they are no less protagonists than the actors and actress. It is the essences of the most “original” and “authentic” storylines, settings, and props that make these historical dramas by Li Han-Hsiang an “authentic” China on the screen.

*The Magnificent Concubine* particularly reflects the characteristics of female genre because instead of blaming Yang Guifei as the cause of the decline of the nation like any other historical records and classics, *The Magnificent Concubine* transforms Yang into the matriarch who saves the nation. In Bai Juyi’s “Song of Lasting Pain,” Yang and Emperor Xuanzong are both responsible for the decline of Tang Dynasty, Bai writes, “Han’s sovereign prized the beauty of flesh, he longed for such as ruins domains,”\(^72\) indicating that it is Emperor Xuanzong’s longing for beauty that leads his empire into the ruins domains. The poem also describes the emperor’s indulgence in Yang as

> “And the nights of spring seemed all too short,
> the sun would too soon rise,
> from this point on our lord and king
> avoided daybreak court.”\(^73\)

With spring’s connotations of love and mating, nights of spring refer to the nights the Emperor spends with Yang. Bai depicts these nights as the cause of the emperor avoiding the daybreak court, and of course, any other business related to the court. Though instead of claiming directly

---


that Yang is the transformation of lust who bewitches the emperor into ruining a great dynasty, Bai tries to depict a touching love story between the emperor and Consort Yang. However, it does not make Yang any less a scapegoat for An Lushan Rebellion and the chaos caused by the rebellion. In the movie The Magnificent Concubine, a movie of female genre, neither Consort Yang nor the emperor should take full responsibility for the decline of the great empire. It is the treacherous official Yang Guozhong and disloyal general An Lushan who should be blamed.

Though Li Han-Hsiang generally follows Bai Juyi’s depiction of Yang Guifei, The Magnificent Concubine on the contrary delineates a nation in danger that depends solely on the matriarch for rescue. There are some parts of the movie that allude Yang Guifei’s role in causing the decline of Great Tang. For example, there is an episode of a messenger riding through a market and disturbs people’s life simply because Yang Guifei favors lychees. This episode is based on literary references that Yang Guifei loves lychee and Emperor Xuanzong hence orders messengers to send lychees from southeast China with excessive speed in order to please her. Another episode only remotely refers to Yang Guifei and demonstrates that it is Yang Guozhong who should be blamed in this film. In this episode, a young man tries to assassinate Yang Guifei but fails. Yang Guozhong hurried to interrogate the young man on who is behind the assassination. The young man gives his reason that, “Yang Guozhong, you have bullied people with your power, […] diet on jade and clothed on brocade, and living an extravagant life, while people labor like oxen and horses, and have nothing to eat nothing to wear. You can kill me today, but you cannot kill all the people in the world!” 74 Though Yang Guifei appears to be the target of this young man’s assassination, he ends up venting his anger on Yang Guozhong.

---

74 Quotation from the film. The Magnificent Concubine, Dir. Li Han-Hsiang. Perf. Li Li-Hua and Yen Chun. Shaw Brothers, 1960.
instead of Yang Guifei. His anger, as well as the anger of the audience is diverted to Yang Guozhong—the villain of this film. In this episode where Guozhong kills the young man mercilessly right at the spot, Guozhong vents his anger on a soldier, which plants the seed of his death. Guozhong whips the soldiers and leaves a scar on one of the soldiers’ face. This scared soldier later plays a significant role in Yang Guozhong and Yang Guifei’s death—it is he who provokes the entire troop against Yang Guozhong, kills Yang Guozhong, and demands to execute Yang Guifei in the end.

Yang Guozhong appears to be the nation’s enemy in *The Magnificent Concubine*. Not only is he merciless, he also makes people suffer due to his indulgence in power and extravagance. Guozhong is unkind to his subjects and to the soldiers who protect him and the emperor during evacuation. In the scene at Maweipo, the scared soldier provokes the entire troop to revolt based on Guozhong’s unkindness. In this scene, Guozhong gives an order to economize on soldiers’ food. Each soldier consequently only receives one scoop of rice porridge for dinner. Yet in the meanwhile, Guozhong and his family are enjoying an extravagant feast with roast sucking pig, which is a luxury even in a peaceful time. The film makes a drastic comparison between the feast and innutritious food by editing them together. [Figure 1.8, 1.9] And what is more unbearable for the hungry soldiers is that Yang’s cousin feeds their pet dog with the feast in this shot. The scared soldier therefore makes a speech that they have left their homes and their family behind to protect the Yang family, yet they are not even treated as well as the Yang dog that supposedly belongs to the Yang family. He claims that under the rule of Prime Minister Yang Guozhong, everything valuable has become private assets of the Yang family. And the irony is that while everything valuable belong Yang’s family, only the member of Yang family—even a dog—has the right to enjoy it. Not any other subject is able to enjoy Yang’s
private assets, not even ones who have sacrificed for them and protected them in the long journey. One of the generals tries to calm the soldiers in this scene by saying a proverb, “Only in a poor family appears the filial son; only in a chaotic nation appears the loyal officials.” The soldiers are not appeased by this proverb, but this proverb ironically indicates that Yang Guozhong appears to be the disloyal official in this chaotic nation. He has never been sympathetic to the people or to the soldiers, he keeps his extravagant life during the evacuation while the soldiers are starving, and he values a dog in Yang family more than the soldiers protecting him in the journey.

Yang Guozhong is the villain who brings the nation into danger, and hence he is the one who deserves to be executed. Because of his lust for power, he betrays the emperor’s trust as well as his nation. Yang Guozhong intentionally hides military report from the emperor so that the emperor would have a peaceful mind. He claims,

“It’s common for the generals at the front to rebel. Why do you make a fuss out of it and disturb to emperor? The court treats An Lushan with kindness, and yet he repays our kindness with rebellion. This kind of person does not deserve mandate, and will soon be betrayed by people. He’ll fail without us sending even one single soldier.”

Yet it is Guozhong’s lusts for power that delays the military report from the emperor. With the emperor indulges in an illusion of a peaceful time, Guozhong can exploit power as he pleases. Because the military report is delayed, the emperor receives the news only when the rebellious troops are about to ravage into the capital. Not being able to make decision at the right moment, the emperor is forced to abandon the capital and evacuate to southwest province. The military generals blame Yang Guozhong for deceiving the emperor. The emperor is neither unkind nor a

75 家貧出孝子，國亂顯忠臣。
76 Quotation from the film.
villain, he is simply betrayed by treacherous official Yang Guozhong. He later laments to Yang Guifei that, “Though good medicine is bitter to tongue, it is good for sickness. Though loyal advises are against one’s ear, they are good for heart.” This Chinese proverb means that although advice from loyal officials may not be as pleasant as words from treacherous officials, it is good for the nation just like the bitter medicine are the best medicine for sickness. Emperor Xuanzong regrets for not taking advice from loyal government officials but trusted and been deceived by treacherous Yang Guozhong. Yang Guozhong is regarded as a villain by people and by the emperor.

When Yang Guozhong is depicted as the treacherous official who leads the entire nation into danger, Emperor Tang Xuanzong and Consort Yang Guifei are redeemed from being stigmatized. Chinese intellectuals often blame the decline of the great Tang Empire on Xuanzong’s indulgence in Consort Yang’s beauty. Bai Juyi’s poem “Song of Lasting Pain” is the most typical and well-known masterpiece on Emperor Xuanzong and Yang Guifei that states it is Xuanzong’s indulgence in Consort Yang’s beauty that brings his empire into ruins. But in The Magnificent Concubine where Yang Guozhong is depicted as the villain, both Emperor Xuanzong and Yang Guifei are redeemed. Xuanzong is delineated as a benevolent emperor in the film. When he decides to evacuate from the capital, he leaves time for people to get prepared instead of caring only for his own safety. During evacuation, he tells Guifei that he feels sorry to make everyone suffer with him at his old age. When Xuanzong is disturbed by noises from the soldiers, Yang lies to him and says that his subject nearby knows the emperor has come, and wants to pays a visit to the emperor’s honor. But the soldiers wouldn’t let them in for the sake of the emperor’s safety. The emperor replies, “The subjects are good subjects; the soldiers are all

---

77 Chinese proverb. 良藥苦口利於病，忠言逆耳利於心。My translation. Against the ears means that it is difficult to accept wise advises than treacherous praises.
good soldiers. But the emperor is not a good emperor, who made them to leave their place and has no home to go back to.” The emperor blames himself for not being able to be a sagacious emperor and brings his subjects a better life. It is neither power nor wealth that he cares. What he wishes for is commonwealth for his empire, and a peaceful time. He admits that he is not a good emperor, and confesses to Yang Guifei that what he truly desires is to retire from and to compose songs in peace. What truly matters in his life is not his reign over the empire but to have his beloved Consort Yang by his side. His confession shows that although he is not a successful emperor, he is nonetheless a benevolent ruler who fits into Confucian value. His confession also rationalizes that he never has an ambition to be a powerful ruler, but to spend his life peacefully with the woman he loves. This depiction is partly based on historical evidences, and partly on fabrication from the director and the screenwriter. Emperor Xuanzong is known for his talent in music. But he is also known for the flourishing reign of Kaiyuan, in which the great Tang Empire reaches its second peak. *The Magnificent Concubine* tries to justify why the Great Tang Empire has fallen into decline under Emperor Xuanzong’s regime by picturing the Xuanzong as a benevolent ruler.

For the same reason, though Yang Guifei is regarded as the beauty who enchants the emperor and brings the empire into ruin in Chinese literature, in female genre, she is elevated into the matriarch of the nation. In *The Magnificent Concubine*, Yang Guifei is depicted as the matriarch who sacrifices for the sake of the nation and for the emperor. She is sympathetic to the soldiers. In the scene where the soldiers riot over food, Yang sympathetically says that “[we] must feed them well.” More significantly, unlike what is recorded in the history, Yang

---

78 Quotation from the film.
79 Quotation from the film.
voluntarily sacrifices herself in *The Magnificent Concubine*. In Bai Juyi’s poetry, the emperor is forced to give an order to kill Consort Yang,

“Our lord and ruler covered his face, unable to protect her; he looked around, and blood and tears were flowing there together.”\(^{80}\)

Though there are various legends on whether Yang Guifei died at Maweipo, Bai’s poem is the most well-known version on Yang Guifei’s death based on history. This depiction of her being hanged makes her a voiceless victim whose destiny depends entirely on men—no matter it is the troop that demand her death, or the emperor who is eventually forced to sacrifice her for his own safety and empire, she is left with no chance to articulate or to act for herself. Contrary to this voiceless and passive woman, Yang Guifei in *The Magnificent Concubine* is powerful and active. In the scene where soldiers start a riot and demand to kill Yang Guifei, She fearlessly faces the troop and reasons with them. She lectures,

“There is one thing I don’t understand. Our nation feeds you soldiers a thousand days for a danger like this. Now that the traitor An Lushan has taken over the capital, it is time for you soldiers to be responsible, to fight against the enemy and protect our nation. Why do you spend your ability and energy on a harmless woman like me?”\(^{81}\)

Yang’s authority as a matriarch is evident. She lectures on the soldiers with loyalty to the nation and the emperor. She stands by the side of moral and is therefore superior to the soldiers. The camera angle of this scene is also important in showing her authority. Yang Guifei appears on

---

\(^{81}\) Quotation from the film.
the top of the stairs with a glow. The soldiers try to intrude upward suddenly stops at the bottom of the stairs with awe. [Figure 1.10] Yang is thus morally and physically superior in this scene. The soldiers even back a few steps when Guifei descends to approach them. During the entire speech, the camera looks at her from a low angle, which is supposedly the angle of the soldiers from the previous frame. But it is a closed-up of Yang Guifei, hence it is closer than the position of the soldiers. This shot magnifies and towers Yang Guifei with power and authority, and makes her an unmistakable matriarch of the nation. [Figure 1.11] Her authority as a matriarch is also revealed from the sound in this scene. The rioting soldiers become quite immediately when she appears in the scene. The attention of the soldiers, as well as the attention of the camera draws on Yang the matriarch.

The fact that she sacrifices herself instead of being sacrificed is the most crucial evidence that makes her a matriarch whom the entire nation depends on in this film of female genre. After her lecture on loyalty to the nation, Yang proclaims that, “If you agree to be loyal to the royalty and protect the emperor westwards to Bashu, I will definitely not hold tight onto my life. But I hope you can grant me some time to wait on the Emperor to sleep. Besides, I don’t need your hands.” She then waits on the Emperor for the last time, kowtows to him three times after he falls asleep, and slowly walks to a tree in dignity. She is not being killed passively by “others’ hand.” She takes the initiation on the decision for her own death. She sacrifices herself voluntarily and fearlessly for the sake of the emperor and the nation—as long as she sacrifices herself, the emperor will be safe and the nation will be saved. It is the decision she actively makes. In her death scene, the camera tracks her through the hall slowly. Yang Guifei leads the way through a hall, followed by soldiers holding a piece of white silk. She wears a white

---

82 Bashu is present day Sichuan province, in the southwest of China.
83 Quotation from the film.
costume, and with her solemn face she resembles a statue of goddess. She leaves some final words to the emperor that “never values affections too much and loses insights of a nation. One has to know that China is in danger, and the barbarians must be eliminated. If this can be achieved, I would be satisfied even in death.” This is also a monologue for her death. Everything—love, affection, or life—can be sacrificed for the sake of the nation. Her death is depicted as a noble sacrifice; every soldier around her is touched by her loyalty and her love to the emperor. They kneel down and wait for Yang walking to the tree hanging with white silk step by step. [Figure 1.12] The sacrifice from the matriarch is an ultimate sacrifice—it is assumed that her sacrifice will save the nation from the current danger.

Her noble sacrifice makes a fascinating contrast to treacherous villain Yang Guozhong’s death. Both Yang Guozhong and Yang Guifei die in the riot at Maweipo. In the film, this riot takes place in a temple full of statues of gods and goddesses. The setting of temple reminds people the belief in karma—what one has done would have an effect on one’s future. In other words, one will pay for what he has done. Furthermore, karma does not end in one’s lifetime. In Chinese belief, it will affect one’s spirit after death—karma decides whether one can be reincarnated or has to suffer in hell. The idea of karma is apparent in Yang Guozhong and Yang Guifei’s death. Yang Guozhong pays back his karma in the riot: he is killed—or executed since his crime is claimed before his death—by the scarred soldier who he once whipped. The editing of Yang Guozhong and Yang Guifei’s death also implies their role as a treacherous villain and a redeemable angel. Their death is edited with the statues of the Gods. Yang Guozhong’s death is edited with the heavenly soldiers, who take people’s soul to the final judgment. [Figure 1.13,

---

84 Quotation from the film. She uses literary language that is half classical and half vernacular Chinese. My translation focuses on the meaning instead of her literary references. The barbarians refer to An Lushan and his army who belong to the nomad.
1.14] The intercut of Yang Guozhong, the soldiers, and the statues of heavenly soldiers indicates not only that Guozhong now deserves to be killed, it also indicates that his soul will be punished after his death. Yang Guifei’s death, on the other hand, is edited with a statue of Buddha, implying that she will be redeemed. [Figure 1.15] The shots of the heavenly soldier and the Buddha are also contrasting. The heavenly soldier is shot in low-angle close-ups, which makes the already scaring statues even more intimidating. The shot of the Buddha is a medium shot that shows Buddha’s mercy. Both Yang Guozhong and Yang Guifei’s death are accompanied by thunders. But with skillful editing, thunder plays very different roles in their death. In Yang Guifei’s death, thunder appears to be her emotional turbulence because the camera often closes up and pays attention on her subtle eye movement. In some shots, thunder strikes when she, and the camera, looks at Emperor Xuanzong, indicating how devastating her death would be to him.

On the contrary, because the karma plays an important role in Yang Guozhong’s death, thunder becomes an interesting depiction of Chinese idiom, *tianda leipi*85, strikes of thunder from heaven. Thunder can be interpreted as anger from heaven that strikes on the villains. This implies that Guozhong is finally paying for what he has done.

As matriarch of the nation, Yang Guifei’s love for the emperor is transcended into love to the nation. The emperor becomes an embodiment of nation. It is her love to the emperor that moves the soldiers, and it is her love to the emperor that proves her a loyal subject. She always places the welfare of the emperor/nation as the first priority. The very first thing she proposes to rioting soldiers is not to disturb the emperor because he has suffered with insomnia for two nights. Hearing her claim, soldiers lower their heads in shame. [Figure 1.16] It is shameful to the soldiers that they are confronting this great matriarch—one who cares not of her life, but the

---

85 天打雷劈。This idiom is often used to refer punishment from heaven.
emperor’s health. Her concerns for the emperor elevates her status and wins her respect from soldiers because her love is transcended to loyalty by Xuanzong’s identity as an emperor. Before Guifei faces her death fearlessly, she kowtows to the emperor after she waits him into sleep. This gesture is no longer an expression to a lover, but a ritual to the respectful Emperor. Her sacrifice is noble because whom she sacrifices for is not simply a man she loves but an embodiment of the nation. In addition, her role of actively making this decision makes her a martyr of a nation.

While the identity of emperor is loaded with heaviness of nation, the love between Emperor Xuanzong and Yang Guifei is unloaded and purified. The pure love becomes their redemption from the stigma of causing the decline of a great empire. Their love is depicted with simplicity. There is an episode of “Song of Weaving” in The Magnificent Concubine. When Yang is expelled from palace, she hears a folksong from a couple performers. The folksong is interestingly in huangmei tune. It sings,

“The woman weaves while the man farms,
the man feeds the farming ox while the woman feeds chickens,
[they] don’t know about fame, don’t know about power,
only know to value affect and responsibility,
[and hence] the loving couple never parts in their whole life.”

When Yang Guifei returns to palace, she sings this folksong to Emperor Xuanzong while he accompanies with musical instrument. This fabricated episode is a depiction of their ideal: they wish to relinquished from fame and power, and simply spend an idyllic lives as husband and wife. This simple wish should not be blamed. It is treacherous Yang Guozhong who cares only

---

86 This song is one of the two songs with musical elements in The Magnificent Concubine. And this is the only one in huangmei tune.
87 Quotation from the film.姐兒紡紗郎耕地，郎君放牛姐兒餵雞，不知道名，不知道利，只知道重情義。重情義，恩愛的夫妻一世都不分離。
about his power and wealth that should be blamed. During the last moment between this loving couple, Emperor Xuanzong again alludes to “Song of Weaving.” He claims that he wants to retire after the rebellion is appeased. And he wishes to spend his life composing poetry and music. He stresses to Yang Guifei, “you have to be by my side. You’ve become part of me. I cannot do anything without you.”88 Their love is idealized and purified from wealth and power. And they are therefore redeemed from being the causes of decline of the Great Tang Empire in this film.

*The Magnificent Concubine* is more a historical drama than a *huangmei* musical film because there are only two episodes that can be considered with musical elements, yet interestingly both episodes are about their love. Besides “Song of Weaving,” the other song in *The Magnificent Concubine* is an epitome of the story. This song is accompanied with music and dance. It begins with Emperor Xuanzong beating drum in a palace performance, and then enters a group of twenty soldiers performing military dance. Soon Yang Guifei enters with twenty dancers and they perform a splendid dance. Yang sings while dancing,

“Drumming freely, drumming freely,
Dancing heartily, dancing heartily.
How lucky are we to be born in such a peaceful time, peaceful time.
Don’t waste this beautiful time, beautiful time.
After experiencing taste of yearning, taste of yearning,
do we realize the blessing of togetherness, blessing of togetherness.
The kindness of Emperor is boundless as sea and mountain, boundless as sea and mountain;

88 Quotation from the film.
The love between us is unprecedented, unprecedented.

Our hearts are as strong as metal; our love is as adhesive as glued.

Never shall we be parted; as husband and wife in every reincarnation.”

Emperor Xuanzong stops beating drum once Yang enters. He stares at her with an infatuated smile as if she is all he can see. If we consider beating drum as a way of commanding soldiers like the war drum in previous shot of An Lushan Rebellion, this performance shows that Emperor Xuanzong has been leading military dance up until Yang Guifei comes into the picture. A group of twenty soldiers indicates the strengthened army. Yet when Yang enters with twenty beautiful dancers, Emperor Xuanzong stops and forgets about the army or military dance but simply focuses on her. Both military dance by soldiers and dance by beautiful women can be interpreted as dances of the magnificent Tang dynasty. Dance by a group of twenty people is visually grandiose. With splendid costumes on dance troupe, Yang’s dance appears to be the magnificent China that the audience could ever imagined. [Figure 1.17] Yet we can see that even in this dance of magnificent China, the lyrics are solely about their love—love in a peaceful time. The lyrics and Xuanzong’s stunned smile indicates that even though in this grandiose heyday, the emperor and Consort Yang cares nothing of the wealth or power but their simple and pure love. This love can therefore redeem them into a benevolent emperor and a loyal subject. The dance ends in a way that parallels the end of this magnificent China—it is interrupted by military report of An Lushan rebellion, which metaphorically ends the Great Tang Empire.

---

89 Quotation from the film. 鼓兒任意敲，任意敲。人兒盡情舞，盡情舞。幾生修到太平時，太平時，良辰美景休辜負，休辜負。嘗過相思味，相思味；才識雙棲福，雙棲福。君恩如海又如山，如海又如山，濃情蜜意空今古，空今古。心比金石堅，情似膠漆固，從今永遠不分離，生生世世為夫婦。
Matriarch of Our Nation: the Imagined Nation China

From reading closely on *The Grand Substitution*, *Beyond the Great Wall*, and *The Magnificent Concubine*, we get to see how China is imagined on silver screen in female genre. This imagined China is filled with shared cultural knowledge and visual signs of Chinese culture. These stories are based on legends, literature, theatres, and history. It is often situated in ancient China—sometimes remotely dated or in an untraceable legendary time. The time periods are often overlooked because the shared cultural knowledge is more important in these films. Female genre creates a timeless China for diasporic audience. It is a revival of cultural China that comes into life on screen—a colorless China from words in literature, from previous studies and knowledge, or from their imagination that suddenly becomes a grandiose and colorful image on screen. The dialogues and singings are often quite lyrical and full of literary references, and hence sometimes difficult to understand without any cultural knowledge. The imagined China is on certain level targeting to intellectuals. Yet it is not an imagined China solely for intellectuals, it is meanwhile an imagined China of popular culture. There are elements targeting to the masses. Love story is a common attraction in female genre, there are also folksongs, chants, and rhymes that are easy to follow and remember. One of very special characteristics of *huangmei* musicals is that audiences go to movies over and over again to an extent that they are able to sing along with protagonists. In movie theatres, audience enjoy a timeless China that has long been in their imagination, a China that has never appear in real life, as well as a China that has neither been “modernized” nor “communized.” This is a China that they can never return to—physically or in time. The experience of watching an imagined China on screen becomes an experience of

---

90 Some movies are based on Chinese legends and therefore the time period cannot be traced, for instances, *Madam White Snake* (Yueh Feng, 1962) and *The Mermaid* (Kao Li, 1964).
91 Ang Lee mentions in the interview “Watching Movies With Ang Lee; Crouching Memory, Hidden Heart” that he has mastered in the songs of the *huangmei* film *Love Eterne* and sing along in the movie theatre.
reinforcing the identity of being Chinese, that is, a diasporic Chinese with shared cultural knowledge. This imagined China is a “nation” saturated with cultural symbols, and cultural symbols only. It is a nation that revived on screen and in imagination, and a nation that has only the people—the audience—but neither a government nor any actual territories.

Though the imagined nation China in female genre appears to be magnificent in cultural symbols, as a film genre profoundly influenced by the Cold War, this imagined China is often depicted as being in a great turmoil. The nation in danger is a national allegory that displays political turmoil in the Cold War. It mobilizes the audiences—the subjects of this imagined nation China—to be loyal to this imagined nation. In *The Grand Substitution*, *Beyond the Great Wall*, and *The Magnificent Concubine*, the nation is in great danger. Under the atmosphere of the Cold War, in which the psychological battle is more essential than actual bombing, it is not a coincidence that the villains in the movies are treacherous government officials. In the above movies, it is often traitors like Tu Angu, Mao Yanshou, and Yang Guozong who bring the nation into danger. During the Cold War in which people are under strict surveillance, it is important to educate people to be loyal subjects. Just as stated in *Beyond the Great Wall*, it is more difficult to avoid traitors than fighting against the enemy in the Cold War, especially when sometimes the actual enemy is not visible in the imaginary war of psychology.

Whereas traitors are the villains in female genre, the matriarchs are the saviors of the nation. In female genre, the image of the matriarch embodies the nation in suffering. This embodiment is very different from imagination of homeland in Chinese culture—it is gendered female. If we examine the idea of nation in Chinese culture, it is often gendered male. Historical records and literatures are more than often written by men through male perspective. The depiction of loyalty, *zhong*, usually appears as brotherhood or fatherhood in Chinese literature.
and history\textsuperscript{92}. Take *Romance of The Three Kingdoms* for example; in this famous novel which loyalty is the core value, the majority characters in the novel are male\textsuperscript{93}. The word of homeland/motherland/fatherland, *zuguo*\textsuperscript{94}, is also gendered male. The word *zuguo* is a combination of ancestor (*zu*) and country/nation (*guo*). In patriarchal Chinese culture, women marry into their husbands’ family, take up their husbands’ surname, give birth to children who carry their husbands’ family names, and are buried in their husbands’ family grave. Women often lose their personal names and are remembered as wives-of-certain-family. The word ancestor is loaded with masculine connotations, and therefore fatherland is a better translation of *zuguo* than motherland. Yet in female genre, in which matriarch is the embodiment of the nation, the fatherland *zuguo* transforms into the motherland and reveals on matriarch.

Matriarch is a powerful image that displays the nation in danger. Matriarch is quite a special image in female genre. The matriarch does not rule the country, but she plays a crucial role that the entire nation depends on. Her role is more prominent than the one who actually rule the country, often time the emperor. Her significance lies in her female body that endures sufferings. The widow is a common image of a suffering woman. In *The Grand Substitution*, Princess Zhuangji is a widowed mother who awaits her lost son’s return. A similar story can be found in *The Lotus Lamp* (Yueh Feng, 1964) and *Inside the Forbidden City* (Kao Li, 1965)\textsuperscript{95}. In

\textsuperscript{92} 忠。Though I use the word fatherhood, it is more a sonship since loyalty is an affect or obligation from the subjects to the ruler. Under influence of Confucianism, loyalty is often paralleled with filial piety since the ruler are considered as the father of the nation, the subjects hence should be loyal to the emperor, the father of the nation.  
\textsuperscript{93} *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is one of the four novels in Chinese literature based on an actual history in Three Kingdoms era (220-180 A.D.).  
\textsuperscript{94} 祖國  
\textsuperscript{95} In *The Lotus Lamp* a student has a son with a Goddess. The Goddess is thus punished under a mountain for having a relationship with a human being. The student raises their son who eventually saves his mother. In *Inside the Forbidden City*, one of the consorts gives birth to a prince but the baby prince was exchanged with a dead cat. She is therefore expels from the palace while her son is raised by another consort who is her enemy. The old mother suffers for twenty years before she is acknowledged as the real empress dowager.
these cases, the widowed mother loses her son\textsuperscript{96} and her family. Her existence is a manifestation of suffering, and the entire movie centers on how her suffering will eventually be paid back. Martyr is another image of suffering women. The martyr sacrifices herself in order for the welfare of the nation. Both Zhaojun in \textit{Beyond the Great Wall} and Yang Guifei in \textit{The Magnificent Concubine} are the martyrs. Either a widowed mother or a martyr, these women are the matriarchs of a nation who suffer for the sake of a nation. The suffering body of matriarch symbolizes the suffering nation during the Cold War. Their sufferings mobilize people—as sons and daughters of the nation—to shed tears and be willing to fight for the imagined nation.

Since the body of the matriarch symbolizes the imagined nation, her body is therefore dignified and cannot be violated. The matriarch is portrayed as a chaste woman. In both \textit{Beyond the Great Wall} and \textit{The Magnificent Concubine}, the movies emphasize the matriarch’s chastity and appear to be different from historical records. In \textit{The Magnificent Concubine}, Yang Guifei fearlessly faces her death. She specifically claims that she does not need anyone else’s hands. This expression can be interpreted on two different levels. For one, Yang actively faces her death without any other’s help, which stresses on her courage. And on a literal level, her death \textit{by her own hands} indicates that her body remains untouched by the soldiers, which shows her chastity in sense of Chinese patriarchal culture\textsuperscript{97}. In \textit{Beyond the Great Wall}, Zhaojun commits suicide with a declaration that “a chaste woman never marries two husbands.” Her suicide prevents the audience from recalling that Wang Zhaojun married to the king of Xiongnu and had children with him. In female genre, Zhaojun’s dignity and chastity is preserved and emphasized\textsuperscript{98}. The

\textsuperscript{96} The son is often played by female actress.
\textsuperscript{97} The gender boundary is not as strict as in Tang dynasty. This is also a way of imagining Chinese culture.
\textsuperscript{98} In some Chinese local theatres, the story of Zhaojun also ends with her committing suicide. \textit{Huangmei} musicals and historical dramas is a genre that is greatly influenced by Chinese theatres, hence her suicide may not appear to be surprising to the audiences. What I want to emphasize here is how these female characters appear as matriarchs in these films. As I have mentioned, the director Li Han-Hsiang is known for doing historical research and to represent Chinese history in his films. Yet he purposely shot the films in the way to glorify the matriarch.
chastity of the matriarch is crucial because as the embodiment of a nation, her body cannot be violated. Her image as a matriarch is also glorified by her inviolability. The inviolability makes matriarch a paradoxical image. On the one hand, as an empowering image of women, the image of matriarch glorifies the female. The matriarch is active and compassionate, and she appears to be the savior that the entire nation depends on. Yet on the other hand, the image of matriarch is also loaded with moral standards and disciplines established in patriarchal society. Though matriarch appears to be powerful and active, her value is judged by a patriarchal standard—thus the matriarch must be chaste to her husband and be loyal to the nation in order to be considered sanctified. For the female audiences, though the matriarch appear as an inspiring image for the “new women” of the time, this image in the meantime disciplines women to be chastise to their husbands and be loyal to their country.

The discussion on women’s role and nationalism is a prevalent subject in diasporic studies. In the discourse of Asian American literature, women are often considered to be the one who preserves culture and carries on to next generation. The image of mother is a common symbol. In Nationalism and The Imagination, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak discusses connections between the role of woman and nationalism for people in diaspora. She asserts,

“The role of women, through their placement in the reproductive heteronormativity that supports nationalisms, is of great significance in this narrative. When we are born, we are born into the possibility of timing, temporalization: we are in time. […] Since it is usually our mothers who seem to bring us into temporalization, by giving birth, our temporizing

---

often marks that particular intuition of origin by coding and re-coding the mother, by computing possible futures through investing or manipulating womanspace.” (87)

Spivak argues that nationalism is a public matter that is related to reproductive heteronormativity. Women often appear in the image of mother, and since mother is the one who gives birth to us, this image stands for the past in a timeline. The image of matriarch is similar but at the same time different from the image of a mother. For one, a matriarch dominates the family whereas the role of mother is often not as authoritative as father. In the case of female genre, matriarch is the one who has the ability to lead the nation to a better future. Though her spouse usually serves as the emperor, he is not capable in making a right decision for the nation. Besides, different from a mother, the matriarch is not portrayed as nurturing. The role as a mother for matriarch is overlooked since she appears as childless or is deprived of a child. Though the image of matriarch is inseparable from nationalism and follows heteronormativity, it disregards women’s reproductivity. To look at this image more closely, it does not follow heteronormatitvity entirely. In one sense, this image follows the heteronormative paradigm that the unit of a family is formed by a man/husband and a woman/wife. Yet in another sense, the reproductivity of a family is completely neglected. And gender issue is already complicated in female genre since many of the male roles are played by actresses100. In a way, the role of matriarch is an intriguing image to represent a nation.

The difference between matriarch and mother also places matriarch in a complicated position on a timeline. Spivak’s argument that woman/mother is a prior existence can be a very

---

100 The issue of gender will be further discussed in next chapter. But The Grand Substitution is a perfect example to show that the image of matriarch does not entirely follow the heteronormative paradigm since the son is played by actress Ivy Ling Po.
interesting discussion with Rey Chow’s argument on primitive passions. In *Primitive Passions*, Rey Chow argues that Chinese intellectuals often “primitize” the oppressed—women and children—and in consequence appear to be more modernized. Chow contends,

“In the ‘third world,’ there is a similar movement to primitize: the primitive materials that are seized upon here are the socially oppressed classes—women, in particular—who then become the predominant components of a new literature. It would not be farfetched to say that modern Chinese literature turns ‘modern’ precisely seizing upon the primitive that is the subaltern, the woman, and the child.” (Chow, 21)

Spivak’s argument is temporal: while women/mother is in the position of the past, “we” are in the position of the present. Chow’s argument, on the other hand, is not only temporal but also hierarchical. Chow writes that the “primitization” of the women is an imitation of Orientalization: Chinese intellectuals primitize women as though the West orientalizes the East. Hence women as the “primitive” in Chinese literature/cinema are not only positioned in the past on a timeline, they are also at the bottom of the hierarchical relation with men/the intellectual.

[Figure 1.18]

As the genre that centers on women, it is inevitable to look at female genre with “primitized” aspect. In “Embracing Glocalization and Hong Kong-Mad Musical Film,” Siu Leung Li states that

“The Shaw’s historical epics […] can be more fruitfully read as complex representations addressing issues of the imaginary homeland of reconstructing ‘China-home’ outside China, reconstructing grand historical narratives for contemporary use, the diasporic desire

---

for a place in the global context, and self-feminization in representing the ‘I’ in an uneven world dominated by the Orientalist gaze.” (78)

Li’s claim suggests that female genre is the Chinese diaspora “primitive passion:” it is a way of self-orientalization/self-feminization. While I agree that the image of matriarch is a representation of an imagined China outside the territorial China, I suggest that the image of matriarch is more complicated than “self-orientalization” or “primitive passions.” In a sense, the image of matriarch is imagining oneself in the form of a woman and hence is no doubt self-feminization. Yet due to characteristics of matriarch, the imagination of the matriarch is different from primitive passion. Though the matriarch embodies Chinese culture and can be considered as a “prior” to the present, she is not a “primitive” existence. The matriarch is a magnificent image immersed in cultural values. Different from primitive passion, matriarch is elevated and no longer inferior to men/intellectual. The image of matriarch reverses the hierarchy in primitive passion: women as the embodiment of Chinese culture are superior to men. Consequently, for Chinese intellectuals including directors and audiences, Chinese culture is also hierarchically superior to the West in the female genre. [Figure 1.19] The image of matriarch represents the glorified nation and culture that calls for people’s loyalty and commitment.

In terms of temporality, the genre itself also complicates the position of matriarch on a timeline. As an embodiment of cultural China and presented in the form of historical epics, the matriarch is a “prior” existence to the present. But if we look at matriarch as a representation of “new women” in the 1960s, the image can be considered as a “prior” as well as the “present.” Since the matriarch is one of the imaginations of women in female genre, it can be interpreted as an imagination of modern women. Similar to other imaginations of women in the genre,

---

[102] I will explain how female genre depicts “new women” in next chapter.
matriarch is depicted as fearless, active, and willing to sacrifice herself for the sake of her country and the man she loves. This image is different from an ideal woman in patriarchal Chinese culture that expects women to be passive and domestic.

**Nation That Becomes a Family vs. Family That Becomes a Nation**

The word nation in Chinese, *guojia*, is a combination of country and family\(^{103}\): *guo* refers to country while *jia* refers to family. When we switch the word sequence to family-country, *jiaguo\(^{104}\)*, the phrase interestingly becomes a quite similar yet more complicated concept. *Jiaguo* can either mean from a family to the nation or the family that becomes a nation. This is a Confucian notion of rippling: everything starts from the self, then from oneself to a family, from a family to a nation, and from a nation to the world. Only when one properly behaves oneself can one be able to form a family; from properly manages one’s family can one be able to rule a country; from properly manages a country can one be able to pacify the world. The image of matriarch in female genre plays the crucial role of turning a nation into a family and meanwhile turning a family into a nation. The family of a matriarch is a royal family in which every decision she makes matters to the nation. Thus her role as a member of the royal family shed the lights on her family also on a nation. Her image as matriarch helps blur the boundary between family vs. nation; domestic realm vs. public realm. Through the screen, every audience is the subject of this nation; every audience is a member of this family. The glory and kindness of the matriarch shines on the soldiers/subjects in the movie as well as the audiences seating in theatres. The family-country/*jiaguo* that the matriarch brings together starts from herself: through the image of matriarch, everyone is brought together. On one level, the image of matriarch brings family/nation in the movie together. On the second level, her image brings the audiences in the

---

\(^{103}\) *國家*

\(^{104}\) *Jiaguo, 家國.*
theatre to part of the imagined nation China on the screen. On the third level, her image brings diasporic Chinese in the world together. The ripple of the matriarch starts from herself to the nation/family in the movie, and then from the nation/family in the movie to the imagined nation cultural China, and from the imagined China to diasporic Chinese in the world.

Though the image of matriarch seems to be an empowering image of women, it is nonetheless an image that fulfills patriarchal hegemony. Matriarch is quite a paradoxical image: it is modern and yet traditional; it is a matriarch and yet eventually conforms to patriarchal values. This image of a powerful woman is strengthened by patriarchal virtues, such as female chastity and loyalty. And her endurance of suffering is ultimately for the sake of the man she loves as well as for the sake of the nation that belongs to men. The image of matriarch not only embodies an imagined nation, this image also serves as a moral lesson to the audience. What are the virtues that people praise? What are the loyal subjects supposed to do? Whereas the image of a powerful woman mobilizes the audiences to be loyal subjects to the imagined nation, she inspires the audience—male or female audience—with virtues of patriarchal standard, and calls for their loyalty to patriarchal hegemony.
3.

A Man Who is Actually A Woman—Imagining Gender

As historical epics and huangmei musicals are defined as the “female genre,” gender plays a complicated and intriguing role in this genre. The genre is categorized as “feminine” because women dominate the genre in many senses: women often play the protagonists in these movies, the movies are often narrated through women’s perspectives, and the male protagonists are often played by female actresses. Ivy Ling Po, one of the most famous stars in historical epics and huangmei musicals, is known as Liang Xiong, literally translated as Brother Liang. She is known as the “Brother Liang forever” since this is how the female protagonist calls “him” in The Love Eterne (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963). For audiences, Ivy Ling Po is the male protagonist as well as the imagined ideal “man” of the time. All of the most famous female stars in the female genre cross-dressed as men one way or another. Li Li-hwa plays the male protagonist in Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai (Yen Chun, 1964) and Lady Jade Locket (Yen Chun, 1967), Linda Lin Dai cross-dresses as a young boy who rescues his mother in The Lotus Lamp (Yueh Feng, 1965), Betty Lo Ti cross-dresses as a male student in The Love Eterne in order to be educated as a woman, Li Hsiang-Chun, Li Ching, and Cheng Pei-Pei all cross-dress as men in the female genre. There are two layers of cross-dressing in the female genre. On the first level, women disguise themselves as men in the stories in order to attain mobility in the stories that take place

---

105 Yongyuan de Liangxiong. 永遠的梁兄。
106 Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai has the same title as The Love Eterne. It is not produced by Shaw Brothers, but by Motion Picture and General Investments Limited (MP&GI) which happens to be the competitor of Shaw Brothers Studio and was winning the war of “twin” movies—meaning that Shaw Brothers and MP&GI produced movies on the same story in the same genre, and the company releases first often wins the audiences over. The Love Eterne is the “twin movie” of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai from MP&GI.
107 Linda Lin Dai also plays as the mother in this film.
108 Li Hsiang-Chun disguises as a male student in The Return of the Phoenix (Kao Li and Li Han-Hsiang, 1963), Li Ching disguises as a male student in The Pearl Phoenix (Yang fan, 1966), and Cheng Pei-Pei cross-dresses as a man in The Lotus Lamp.
in pre-modern settings. In this case, the gender of the actresses matches the gender of the character, and audiences acknowledge her as an actress. On the second level, female actresses cross-dress as men to play the male lead in the female genre. In this case, the gender of the actress is different from her character, she is acknowledged as a man on the screen. In both cases, gender is imagined. In this chapter, I will look at two different layers of cross-dressing and see how the female genre is a genre of transgression. I argue that in this genre of gender transgression, culture as well as gender is re-imagined. These imaginations on the one hand appear to be innovative yet on the other hand reaffirms dominant heterosexual normativity.

**Gendered Gaze**

It is often argued that in Hollywood cinema, the power of looking/gazing is gendered. As Laura Mulvey writes in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, in Hollywood cinema, women are the spectacles that bear the look from male-centered perspectives:

“In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.” (19)

While women are exhibited as sexual objects on screen, the look of the camera, the look of the audiences, and the look of the characters are connected together from the male dominated perspective. With the male protagonist actively looking at the female protagonist, the look of the camera, along with the look of the audiences, are consequently aligned and gendered male. While the gendered gaze is pervasive in the Hollywood movies, it is based on heterosexual normativity that men tend to look at women, either in movies as the male protagonist looks at the
female protagonist, or out at theatre as the audiences—now gendered male—look at the female protagonist along with the camera. In this chapter, I will also look at how the gaze of the characters, of the camera, and of the audience function in the genre that is gendered female.

**Genre of Transgression**

The feminine genre is a genre of transgression. Women cross-dress as men is an example of gender transgression. Besides gender-transgression, the transgression of social status is also a popular theme. The transgression of social status is presented by love relationships between a human being and a non-human being, sometimes a deity/fairy and sometimes a(n) ghost/animal. One of the most famous examples is *Madam White Snake* (Yueh Feng, 1962), a love story between a man, Xu Xian, and a spirit of a white snake that turns into a beautiful woman. In this love story, a thousands-year-old spirit of white snake has refined itself to an extent that she has magic. She was once rescued as a snake by Xu Xian and decides to find Xu and help his living. The white snake transforms into a beautiful lady named Bai Suzhen, and she soon falls in love with Xu. Their love story tragically ends because the monk Fa Hai insists on tearing up the love relationship between a human and a non-human being. Similar plots on love relationships between a human and a non-human being can be found in other films such as *The Enchanting Shadow* (Li Han-Hisang, 1960), *A Maid From Heaven* (Yan Chun, 1963), *The Lotus Lamp* (Yueh Feng, 1965), *The Mermaid* (Kao Li, 1965), *Lady Jade Locket*\(^{110}\). All these films depict love stories between a human being with a non-human being, and interestingly the human being is always gendered male while the non-human being is gendered female. This kind of love

---

\(^{109}\) The spirit of an animal that could transform into a human being is a fascinating existence in Chinese culture. People believe that any spirit could become a better spirit with self-refinement. The spirit is neither a ghost nor a fairy. With sufficient refinement, the spirit will be able to transform into human figure, and has some magic.

\(^{110}\) *The Enchanted Shadow* is a love story between a human man, Ning Caichen, and a female ghost, Nie Xiaoqian. *A Maid From Heaven* is a love story between a human man, Dong Yong, and a fairy. *The Lotus Lamp* is based on a love story between a human scholar and a goddess. *The Mermaid* is a love story between a human scholar and a refined carp spirit. And *The Lady Jade Locket* is a love story between a human scholar and a female ghost.
relationship can be interpreted as transgression between the social statuses because if we look at the Chinese cosmology that divides the world into three realms—the underworld, the earth, and the heaven—these three realms are literally positioned in a hierarchy of heaven, earth, and underworld. This hierarchy is unquestionably intransgressible, indicating that the couple is violating strict social rules with their love relationship.

Besides transgression on social status, gender transgression is a common transgression in the female genre. On the first level of gender transgression, women cross-dress as men in order to gain social or gender mobility. The pattern of the story goes like this: a young lady encounters limitation because of her sex—female—and decides to cross-dress as a man. With her new identity as a man, usually a male student, she will be able to accomplish the tasks that she cannot achieve as a woman. A lot of films, especially huangmei musicals, center on this layer of cross-dressing. Examples include two of the most popular films The Love Eterne and Lady General Hua Mu-lan (Yueh Feng, 1964), The Return of the Phoenix (Kao Li, 1963), The Female Prince (Chow Sze-Loke, 1964), The Perfumed Arrow (Kao Li, 1966), Dawn Will Come (Kao Li, 1966), and The Pearl Phoenix (Yang Fan, 1966). In this case, actresses play their own gender, female, but momentarily disguise themselves as men. Their real gender (female) serves as the major secret that will eventually be disclosed in the end. The gender pun is often revealed in the title of these films, such as the lady general, the female prince\textsuperscript{111}, the female scholar, and the female general.

\textsuperscript{111} The Chinese title of The Female Prince is Shuangfeng Qiyuan (雙鳳奇緣) literally translated as romance of two phoenix. In Chinese literary tradition, phoenix is gendered. When phoenix is paired with dragon, it is gendered female. Hence in the Chinese title, it indicates the movie is about a romance of two women. However, phoenix is also called fenghuang (鳳凰) in Chinese. This is a compound word that combines both male phoenix, feng (鳳), and female phoenix, huang (凰). In this case, feng indicates the male phoenix and makes the title more intriguing. In any case, the title Shuangfeng Qiyuan indicates a romance between the same sex.
province governor\textsuperscript{112}. The fact that the gender female is attached to general, prince, and scholar suggests that these roles are traditionally played by male.

**Lady General Hua Mu-Lan**

The story of Hua Mulan is probably the most famous Chinese literary tradition on a woman cross-dresses as a man, and thus an excellent story for the female genre. *Lady General Hua Mu-Lan* is a *huagmei* musical film on Mulan. There are countless representations and adaptations of the story of Mulan\textsuperscript{113}, and each has its own elaboration based on the same storyline. The story of Mulan is based on “The Ballad of Mulan,” a folklore written in Northern dynasty (386-581 A.D.)\textsuperscript{114}. In the original version of “The Ballad of Mulan,” Mulan decides to join the army because her old father is drafted yet she has no elder brother to substitute for him. She purchases equipment and decides to join the army on a long journey with endless battles. After twelve years, Mulan succeeds in numerous battles and goes back to see the emperor. When the emperor asks her what (s)he\textsuperscript{115} desires as rewards, (s)he replies that that (s)he does not want a position in government. Instead, (s)he simply desires a camel that can bring her all the way back to her hometown. Then Mulan goes back to her family, takes off his(her) military uniform and puts on her old female outfit. She surprises her comrades when she goes out of her room because none of them have ever noticed that Mulan is actually a woman. Based on this original version of “The Ballad of Mulan,” the story has been retold and elaborated into various versions. *Lady*

\textsuperscript{112} The female scholar ,Nū Xiucai (女秀才), is the Chinese title of The Perfumed Arrow. And the female province governor, Nū Xun’an (女巡按), is the Chinese title of The Pearl Phoenix.

\textsuperscript{113} Dong, Lan. *Mulan’s Legend and Legacy in China and the United States.*

\textsuperscript{114} The author is anonymous, and the time of the ballad is also untraceable. Scholars believed that the ballad is written in around 5\textsuperscript{th}-6\textsuperscript{th} century, during the Northern Dynasty, possibly Northern Wei (386–534 AD). It is interesting that Northern Wei is established by the nomad tribe Hsien-pei (Xianbei), and the “nomad/barbarian” that invades Northern Wei is the Jou-jan (Rouran) tribe. However, Mulan’s story has been Sinicized and the readers recognize Mulan as a “Chinese” female general fighting against the nomad troops.

\textsuperscript{115} In this chapter, I will use the identity one appears as the name or the pronoun, and the real identity will be followed in the parentheses.
General Hua Mu-Lan is Mulan’s story retold in the female genre. By looking at how Lady General Hua Mu-Lan fills up the gaps in “The Ballad of Mulan,” we will see how the feminine genre is a genre of gender-transgression.

In the female genre, Mu-Lan’s gender transgression is rationalized with a greater reason—the nation. In the ballad, Mulan joins the army out of her filial piety to her father,

“The battle-roll was written in twelve books,
And in each book stood my father’s name.
My father’s sons are not grown men,
And of all my brothers, none is older than me.
Oh let me to the market to buy saddle and horse,
And ride with the soldiers to take my father’s place.”

The reason that she cross-dresses as a man is driven by her filial heart: she has no elder brother to replace her father in the army. It is for the purpose of the family, which is at the personal level.

In Lady General Hua Mu-Lan, Mu-Lan cross-dresses as a man not only for her father, but also for the nation that is in great danger. The movie begins with invasion from the nomad troops.

In a scene, Mu-Lan’s uncle evades from the border with an entire family because of war. Her uncle says/sings,

116 The name Mu-Lan specifically refers to Lady General Hua Mu-Lan. Otherwise, she is referred as Mulan in general.
118 As mentioned in the previous chapter, the idea of the nation “China” is a modern creation after the 1900s. Hence the “nation” here is an imagined nation China with han (Chinese) ethnic as well as the imagined China on silver screen. In Lady General Hua Mu-Lan, the story has been Sinicized to the degree that the audiences cannot discern the time period. Mu-Lan is a “Chinese/Han” fighting against the nomad kingdom, which is identified as Xiongnu and Tujue (Turkic). Xiongnu is the nomad kingdom in Han dynasty (202BC–220AD). And the male protagonist of the film is named Li Guan, which is the same as one of the most famous general who fights against Xiongnu in Han dynasty. The references to Han dynasty shows the Sinicization of Mu-Lan’s story since the word Han also means Chinese as a collective ethnic group.
“How hateful that the barbarians have huge ambition, breaking into the custom, intruding our territories, and disturbing the Chinese. How many people have lost their lives; how many people have their homes ruined? How many people are struggling under the water and fire; how many people groan under knives and spears? [Homes] have been burned; [people] have been killed. [Women] have been raped; [some] have been captured. Poor people living at the boarders, they tremble with tears, And hoping day and night for seeing the Chinese troops.”

The song is edited with shots of nomad troops ravaging China. [Figure 2.1] The nation in danger depicted in the film mobilizes the people, men or women, to rise and fight for their country.

Hence Mu-Lan’s gender transgression is not only driven by her filial piety to her father, but also by her loyalty to the nation. Her love to her family has been uplifted to a higher level—her love to the nation. For this greater purpose, her gender-transgression is rationalized and even glorified instead of being criminalized. Mu-Lan challenges the gender barrier with a greater level—loyalty. Mu-Lan’s father advocates for the belief that every single man should join the army and protect the nation. Before Mu-Lan joins the army, she cross-dresses as a man to be advised of martial art from her father, Hua Gu. Mu-Lan’s cousin, Hua Ming, brings disguised Mu-Lan to Hua Gu, and Hua Gu praises these two young men for volunteering in the army. Her

---

119 Water and fire here indicates difficulties.
120 Quotation from the movie, my translation. If not further indicate, the quotations from the movie will be my translation.
121 As mentioned in the previous chapter, the female genre often depicts nation in danger to mobilize the audience to identify with the imagined nation China, and to be hailed to be the citizen of this imagined nation.
122 This is also related to the relation between family (jia) and nation (guo) in the Chinese word nation (guojia) in the previous chapter. The family and nation are a close combination.
123 In a different film version Mulan (Chucheng Ma, 2009), Mulan is criminalized to deceive her identity, and has to be “pardoned” by the emperor to go back to her home.
father also insists on joining the army even in sickness. Knowing her father’s loyalty to the
nation, Mu-Lan goes further to challenge and to expand her father’s belief. In disguise, she
specifically asks her father this question, “Is it true that every person, no matter a man or a
woman, should fight for his/her nation when it is under invasion?” Her father answers
affirmatively. Besides, Mu-Lan asserts to her father that, “who shouldn’t devote to the nation?
Who shouldn’t join the army?” The expected answer is that everyone, rather than every single
man, should devote oneself to the nation. Mu-Lan’s questions challenge her father, the
audiences, and the patriarchal ideology within and outside the film that why is gender a hidden
factor in one’s ability to protect the nation? She points out the blind spot that when claiming that
everyone should protect the country, it indicates that every man rather than the gender-neutral
word everyone should fight for the nation because the military is never a gender-neutral space.
However, under the greater demand of loyalty to the nation, Mu-Lan’s father and the audiences
acknowledge that everyone should be patriotic to the nation in danger no matter one’s gender.

Not only does Mu-Lan challenge the patriarchal space that is predetermined as male, she
transgresses into military space with patriarchal acknowledgement. In Lady General Hua Mu-
Lan, Mu-Lan joins the army with her father’s consent. Before Mu-Lan’s father agrees her to go
the battlefield, Mu-Lan disguises as a man and asks her father for an advisory contest of martial
art. When she wins over her father and eventually reveals her identity, her father praises,

“Definitely your skills on spear are better than your father!

You are the honorable son of the Hua family.

---

124 My emphasize. Mu-Lan asks this same question again, “Is it true that no matter a man or a woman, every person
has to fight for his/her nation?” Hence it is also emphasized in her way of asking this question.
125 In English, every man could also mean everyone; while in Chinese, everyone is gender neutral. Yet, Mu-Lan
points out that why is the gender-neutral word indicates male only when referring to protecting a nation?
Now I feel relieved to have you replace me and fight to the frontier.”

Her father then passes the familial spear to her, and has her worshiping to Hua ancestral tablet before she departs to the. Her father says,

“This is a famous spear of Hua family,
which has accompanied me all my life.
[It] has killed so many enemies for the nation,
and earned so much honor for the Hua family.
Now that I pass it to you,
so that you can go fight the enemies.
[When there comes] one enemy, kill one;
[when there comes] a couple of enemies, kill a couple.
Defeat all the enemies and then come back home.
Bring the honor of Hua family back to our Hua Village.”

Mu-Lan is acknowledged by her father: she replaces him as “an honorable son” of the Hua family, and she inherits the familial asset the spear so that she can bring back the honor that belongs to Hua family. In patriarchal Chinese society, it is sons’ right to inherit the familial asset, to worship the ancestors, and sons’ responsibility to honor the family. As a woman, Mu-Lan takes up the responsibility, the honor, and the identity as the “son” of the Hua family and goes to the battlefields with her father’s acknowledgement. Her father even takes up the responsibility of Mu-Lan disguising as a man because

“As long as (s)he can kill the enemy, it doesn’t matter whether (s)he is a man or a woman;

---

126 Quotation from the film.
127 Quotation from the film.
As long as (s)he pays back to the country, it doesn’t matter whether (s)he disguises or not. […]

The Hua family has a decent descendent to earn honor for the family and for the nation.”

From these details that fills in the gaps of Mulan’s story, we can see that in this film of the female genre, Mu-Lan entitles herself to be the heir of the family. She not only inherits the fighting skills from her father, she even surpasses her father. To inherit the familial spear is even more significant. It is the spear from Hua ancestors that had brought honor to her family. To be able to inherit it shows that Mu-Lan is regarded as a descendent of Hua family. It indicates that as long as a daughter/woman has the ability, she can take up the responsibilities and defend the honor of the family. Although one can argue that she is being acknowledged as “an honorable son” rather than “an honorable daughter,” Mu-Lan still crosses the limit for women in a patriarchal society.

Gender is a major theme in the female genre. In *Lady General Hua Mu-Lan*, Mu-Lan constantly defends and advocates for gender equality. In an episode, Mu-Lan vigorously defends for women against a group of soldiers. The soldiers criticize that women are lazy because “it is husbands who suffer and fight in wars, [and yet it is] wives who enjoy lives at home.” This criticism is gender-biased because military and battlefield is a predetermined male-centered space. Mu-Lan stands up and lectures on them,

“This when husbands go out and join the army,

women stay home and substitute for the chores.

[They] farm and pay military grains;

---

128 Quotation from the film.
They weave and make military uniforms.

Military is mostly supported by women,

How are women lazy in any ways possible?"\(^{129}\)

Mu-Lan’s defense brings the war into a greater picture that involves every single person in the nation. Although it seems that the battlefield belongs solely to men, it has to be supported by women. Like Mu-Lan who transgresses her place by entering into a male-centered battlefield, Mu-Lan brings women into this predetermined male-centered space, and contends that everyone, male or female, can be considered as a loyal subject. Despite one’s gender, in the time of war, everyone should be mobilized as a loyal subject.

In “The Ballad of Mulan,” Mulan’s skills in fighting and her life in military are ignored. In the female genre, the film spends a lot of footage on how Mu-Lan constructs his(her) masculinity in military. Mu-Lans’ masculinity is accumulated in several examples. First of all, Mu-Lan wins the martial art contest when he(she) joins the army. It is depicted as a one-on-one contest that the soldiers could learn from each other. In this contest, Mu-Lan triumphs all the opponents despite how strong and powerful they might be. The martial art contest shows that Mu-Lan’s fighting skills surpasses every man in the troops. Second, his(her) masculinity comes from her bravery. In the two scenes of battlefields, Mu-Lan appears to be the one leading the entire army. She always runs in front of the entire troop, prior to every other man. [Figure 2.2] Third, Mu-Lan shows her intelligence during the war. The movie delineates Mu-Lan’s success in a major fight against the nomads. In this fight, the Chinese/Han army has been confronting the nomad troops for quite a while. Yet the nomad appears to settle down and shows no signs of moving forward or retreating back. The Chinese army is confused and worries of wasting food

\(^{129}\) Quotation from the film.
that they have brought all the way from the south. One night when Mu-Lan is watching at the river bank, he/she discovers that there are crows flying above the nomad camps. She predicts that the disturbed crows is the sign of nomad troops’ preparation for a midnight invasion. His/her prediction prevents Chinese army from surprised invasion. Not only does Mu-Lan predict the invasion, he/she also foretells that the nomad King will flee to the bank in chaos. Mu-Lan hastens to the bank and captures the nomad King even with her shoulder injured. This episode shows that she is not only brave and intelligent; she prioritizes the nation over her personal safety. Her heroic image also constructs his/her masculinity.

Mu-Lan is so successful in playing her role as a “man” that she is even better than a real man. His/her comrades keeps praising him/her of being brave and capturing the nomad king. They agree that Mu-Lan should be “the first one on the victory records.” Mu-Lan is so successful in being a man that the Chief Commander wishes to marry his own daughter to him/her. The Chief Commander praises Mu-Lan,

“You have good personality, and good fighting skills,

It is more difficult to be brave and have strategies.

You had my heart when I first saw you,

My old eyes have never made any mistakes on discerning people.

You and I have been fighting in countless battlefields,

And in ten years we are like a family.

Now that I am sad to part with you,

It is even more sorrowful that I am at the old age without a son.[…]

If you don’t dislike my daughter,
Let’s be a family through marriage.”

As the Chief Commander states, he “has never made any mistakes on discerning people,” confirming that Mu-Lan is a man with a good heart, courage, and intelligence—despite the mistake he makes on her gender. He compares parting with Mu-Lan as parting with his own son, and wishes Mu-Lan could be his son-in-law—a son through marriage system. Among all the men in the troops, the Chief Commander selects the one (wo)man to be his son-in-law. This shows that besides being “an honorable son” of the Hua family, Mu-Lan is also a desirable son/son-in-law for others. Not only is Mu-Lan no less than a man, (s)he is even better than any other man. As one of her comrades states after eventually knowing her identity as a woman that, “none of us stinky men could be compared to you.” These words come from the soldier who has previously criticized on women for being lazy in the war. Mu-Lan has taught him a lesson that women could be better than men on battlefields.

Besides transgressing into the male-centered military space, another transgression Mu-Lan makes is that she decides the person she marries. In the patriarchal China, marriage is a decision made by the patriarch—such as the marriage the Chief Commander arranges for his daughter and Mu-Lan. However, Mu-Lan sets her heart on General Li Guang, whom (s)he has been fighting with for more than ten years. When General Li knows that the Chief Commander would like to have Mu-Lan as son-in-law, Li goes to congratulate Mu-Lan. They have an interesting conversation in which Mu-Lan reveals her love to Li. They sing to each other,

“Congratulations, Brother Hua, that the Chief Commander is marrying his daughter to you!” says Li.

“I am not familiar with her, how can I have feelings for her?” says Mu-Lan.

130 Quotation from the film.
“Worship the Heaven, worship the Earth, you’ll naturally have feelings after being husband and wife,” answers Li.

“This kind of feelings is nonsense. It’s better if the couple knows each other well. The feelings grow day after day, and the affections deepen day after day. After months and years the couple will be hard to part, just like you and me,” says Mu-Lan.

“We two are brothers, how can you compare us to husband and wife?” asks Li.

“Good brothers, good husband and wife, they all have same feelings. For example, if you become a woman, you can be my wife,” replies Mu-Lan.

“How could I be a woman, your words are strange,” says Li.

“If you can’t become a woman, it’s okay if I become a woman. If you were a woman, you shall marry to me; if I become a woman, I shall marry you. This is how a true couple have real feelings,” says Mu-Lan.

“You are being childish saying this and that. If this is the only way to be husband and wife, one can find no wife even though he searches till his iron shoes worn out,” says Li.

In this conversation saturated with gender puns, Mu-Lan challenges marriage practice in patriarchal society. She advocates for a marriage in which the couple “knows each other well” prior to the marriage, and the marriage that based on “feelings” and “affections” that will “grow day by day”—in other words, the marriage that is based on love. In patriarchal China, the arranged marriage by the patriarch is a common practice. This kind of marriage is often in favor of the patriarchal value, such as bringing assets or status to the family. In the arranged marriage,

---

131 In a traditional Chinese wedding ceremony, the couple has to bow to the heaven, earth, and the husband’s parents to be announced as husband and wife.
132 Quotation from the film.
the interest of an individual, especially interest of the bride/woman, is often ignored or sacrificed. The marriage that based on love could be intolerable in a patriarchal society since love can neither guarantee family wealth nor status. And when one advocates for a marriage based on simply mutual love, he/she ignores the favor of the family and hence challenges the patriarchal authority. This kind of marriage also prioritizes individualism since it only takes personal affection into consideration. On the other hand, this is a way of imagining a modern world. What Mu-Lan proposes, the marriage of mutual love, is a marriage that represents the “modern” world where neither man nor woman would be sacrificed under the patriarchal benefits. It is a modern world where individual opinions are praised and valued. In a sense, Mu-Lan can also be regarded as how a modern woman should be: a woman with courage, with intelligence, and with the will to decide for her life companion. Mu-Lan is a woman who can be regarded as the “honorable son” of a family, and a woman who is better than any of the men.

Their conversation not only shows Mu-Lan’s challenge to patriarchal society, it is on a different level a transgression of heterosexual paradigm. When Mu-Lan states that “Good brothers, good husband and wife, they all have same feelings,” (s)he compares affections between brothers to love between husband and wife, and hence implies the possibility of love between two men. Furthermore, Mu-Lan proposes the possibilities that either General Li or Mu-Lan himself(herself) to “become a woman” and marry each other. This interestingly suggests possibilities of forming a relationship between the transgendered.

133 It is difficult to tell how many percentages of marriages were under arranged in this time period especially in different film markets in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and diasporic communities in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and North America. However, we can see from the example from Ivy Ling Po, the female star who plays the role of Hua Mu-Lan. She comes from a poor family in southeast China, and is sent to an adopted family. Her adopted mother forced her to marry to a rich man who is thirty-two years older than she is. Ling Po later finds out that he was already married in Philippines. Ling’s life has been made into a film Orphan Ling Po (Gunü Xiaojuan) (Jin Chaobai, 1964).
When Mu-Lan cross-dresses as a man, she has power, authority, and moreover, she possesses the ability of looking/gazing. Not only is Mu-Lan given the responsibility of watching the enemy twice in the movie, (s)he also achieves her military position by watching the camps of the enemy—seeing the disturbed crows. Moreover, Mu-Lan’s autonomy is revealed by the action of “looking/gazing.” When cross-dresses as a man, Mu-Lan has the power to look for her suitable spouse, General Li Guang. Mu-Lan’s affection to General Li is established under several shots of gazing. When Mu-Lan firstly meets Li, he helps him(her) with a heavy sack of grains. Mu-Lan looks at him with praising eyes. [Figure 2.3] The camera, showing Mu-Lan’s perspective, shots at Li’s back while he soon ignores this incident and directs other soldiers. [Figure 2.4] And then the camera follows Mu-Lan, showing that she turns her head and looks at Li several times even till she enters the tent. [Figure 2.5, Figure 2.6] In another scene, General Li stands up to give a welcome speech to Mu-Lan and other new soldiers; Mu-Lan looks at Li with intent eyes. [Figure 2.7] Each shot of Mu-Lan’s intent eyes is followed by General Li standing straight at the center yet looking at all the soldiers. [Figure 2.8] Mu-Lan’s gaze centers on Li only. And with a smile on her face, she glows with love. General Li, on the other hand, does not gaze back at Mu-Lan, his attention is on the entire event rather than any single person. Mu-Lan’s active gazes make General Li her object of desire.

The power of Mu-Lan’s gaze ceases when Mu-Lan returns home and changes into women’s clothes. Once Mu-Lan becomes a woman, she turns into the object of desire and has to bear the look/gaze of a man. A very first few things that Mu-Lan does when returning to a woman is to tidy her hair in front of the mirror. In this close up shot, Mu-Lan and the audience look and praise her beauty. Yet the camera does not follow her perspective to show her image in
the mirror. Rather, the camera and the audience only see her looking into the mirror\textsuperscript{134}. [Figure 2.9] Her perspective is no longer prominent to the camera. It is herself that becomes the center of attention. Appearing as a woman, Mu-Lan grabs everyone’s attention. In a specific cut when Mu-Lan passes through in front of three soldiers, the soldiers’ looks traces Mu-Lan from left to right. [Figure 2.10, Figure 2.11] Looking and being-looked-at-ness is also a significant gender performance for Mu-Lan. Once (re)turning to a woman, Mu-Lan has to avoid looking intently at men and avoid being-looked-at by men. One of Mu-Lan’s female behaviors is raising up her arms and lowering her gaze. [Figure 2.12] This is feminine behavior because on the one hand, Mu-Lan loses her power of actively looking/gazing and can only peek at men between her arms. On the other hand, with her raised arms, Mu-Lan shows that she is aware of being men’s object of desire and has to avoid the gaze to show her embarrassment. Looking/gazing is consequently a behavior with power dynamics that Mu-Lan could exercise only when she cross-dresses as a man.

**The Female Scholar With A Perfumed Arrow**

*The Perfumed Arrow* is an interesting film that also shows the first layer of gender transgression—a woman cross-dresses as a man. The film begins with three good friends attending school together, Wen Junqing, Wei Zhuanzhi, and Du Zizhong. Among the three, Junqing is actually a woman named Wen Fei’e. (S)he disguises as a man in order to get education, and (s)he has passed the first level of Civil Service Exam and earned the *xiucai*\textsuperscript{135}

---

\textsuperscript{134} Mu-Lan looking into the mirror is a portrayal of “She stood at the window and bound her cloudy hair; She went to the mirror and fastened her yellow combs” in “The Ballad of Mulan.” 當窗理雲鬢，對鏡貼花黃。Translation from The Shorter Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature.

\textsuperscript{135} There are three levels in Chinese Civil Entrance Exam. When one passes the first local level, he earns the title *xiucai*; the second provincial level, he earns the title *juren*, and the final exam is the national level, which is often under the supervision of the emperor. To become the top three in the final level of the Civil Entrance Exam is considered as the ultimate success as a scholar, and they have their titles as *zhuangyuan, bangyan*, and *tanhua*, respectively. *Zhuangyuan*, the first place is the highest honor one can achieve and hence often appear in the movies.
title. Junqing/Fei’e hopes to participate in three levels of the Civil Service Exams and attains the highest position. Yet her parents expect her to get married. Junqing/Fei’e shoots an arrow anticipating that she will marry the one who picks up the arrow. Du Zizhong is the one who firstly picks up the arrow, but since Du has to return home with an emergency, he hands the arrow to Wei Zhuanzhi. Zhuanzhi shows Junqing(Fei’e) the arrow, Junqing(Fei’e) tells him that the arrow belongs to his younger sister, Wen Fei’e, and (s)he is willing to arrange a marriage between Fei’e and Zhuanzhi. Junqing(Fei’e) cannot join the Civil Service Examination with Zizhong and Zhuanzhi because her father is imprisoned with false accusations and her mother is seriously ill. When Fei’e(Junqing) gets a message that both Zizhong and Zhuanzhi passed the final level of the examination, she decides to go to the capital in cross-dressing and look for a way to save her father with her friends. When Junqing(Fei’e) finally meets her friend Zizhong and celebrate on his success, Zizhong eventually discovers his(her) true gender—a woman! Zizhong hopes to marry Fei’e(Junqing) yet she tells him that she is engaged with Zhuangzhi because he discovered the perfumed arrow. Zizhong claims that he is the one who firstly discovered the arrow, and Fei’e happily acknowledge him as husband since she has already set her heart on him. When they return home, Fei’e arranges a marriage between Zhuangzhi and Lady Jing, who (s)he saved on the way to capital. And two couples live happily ever after.

*The Perfumed Arrow* is based on a short story from *Jingu Qiguan*136, which can literally be translated as *The Spectacles in Ancient and Modern Times*. The story of a woman who cross-dresses as a man for education is considered a spectacle (*qiguan*) in pre-modern China, yet becomes a typical story in the female genre since it presents women’s autonomy. Fei’e’s cross-dressing transgresses gender barriers in two levels. Spatially, cross-dressing enables Fei’e to

---

136 *Jingu Qiguan (The Spectacles in Ancient and Modern Times)* is an anthology of short stories edited by Baowong Laoren, published in Qing Dynasty (1368-1644).
transgress into the spaces that are gendered male: the public realm including school, public inn, and capital. Symbolically, cross-dressing enables her to transgress into the success that granted only for men: to study, to take Civil Service Exam, and to actively make decisions for herself or for her family. In *The Perfumed Arrow*, space is specifically gendered: the private space is gendered female while the public space is gendered male. Fei’e dresses to follow the gendered space. She cross-dresses as a man in school and changes into women’s clothing once returning home. The private space is more strictly limited to her bedroom. This is a space that she always appears as a woman, and a space that may reveal her true identity. Zizhong once unintentionally intrudes to Junqing(Fei’e)’s private space. He finds out needlework and women’s shoes and assumes that Junqing(Fei’e) is married. Zizhong’s assumption falls into the heterosexual imagination that Junqing(Fei’e)’s is unquestionably male and the feminine possessions can only belong to a woman. The strictly gendered space limits Fei’e’s mobility as a woman. And by cross-dressing Fei’e breaks the gender boundaries and transgresses into the male spaces physically and symbolically.

As a genre of transgression, *The Perfumed Arrow* rationalizes Fei’e/Junqing’s gender transgression. Her cross-dressing merely gives her a ticket to the male spaces, Junqing(Fei’e) has to prove herself from these chances granted only for men. As Junqing, Fei’e proves herself by passing the first level of Civil Service Exam and becomes a scholar/ *xiucai*, which naturally gendered male in pre-modern China. Besides being a female scholar, Junqing(Fei’e) also proves herself in martial art. Being a son(daughter) of a martial family, Junqing(Fei’e) also specializes in fighting. Without cross-dressing, these achievements can never be accomplished nor be revealed. However, Fei’e cross-dresses not merely for her self-achievement. Her gender transgression is rationalized with a greater reason—her filial piety. Fei’e firstly cross-dresses as a
man to please her parents and to bring her family more governmental access. Her parents have no son and she hopes to be the substitute son that her father could never have. Her cross-dressing benefits the family because her father is a military official, and he desires for a son who can pass the Civil Service Exam and makes their family an intellectual family. Later Fei’e/Junqing’s transgression is further rationalized when Fei’e/Junqing’s father is imprisoned after being falsely accused. Fei’e has to transgress into the public spaces in order to save her father. It is out of her filial piety that she is pardoned to transgress the gender barrier that confines women into the private realm. Fei’e also rationalizes her gender transgression by making an analogy between gender and social statuses. Fei’e tells/sings to her parents,

“Father I know what you think,
[I] hate that there are so many unfair standards in the world.
The generals protect the nation and the territories,
Why do people value intellectuals more than generals?
Women have the same intelligence as men,
Mulan and Guanniang have established military contributions.
I am full of ambition to reach the sky,
Yet [it] becomes a dream being a daughter.”

Fei’e makes a comparison between gender and social status. In pre-modern China, the government values studying more than martial arts, and values the intellectuals more than the generals. Fei’e compares the social inequality with gender inequality. She points out that the generals endeavor to protect the country and defend the enemies. Yet the Chinese society has never valued the generals as much as they have valued government officials. Her father, as a

\textsuperscript{137} Quotation from the film.
military official, have known and experienced the social inequality. Fei’e’s cross-dressing hence tries to break the social boundary that treats her father unfairly. The analogy brings light to gender inequality. She points out that women are undervalued for no reason. Even though, as she has proved, women have the same intelligence as men, women are devalued and deprived of chances simply because of the sex they are born with. From this perspective, Fei’e’s cross-dressing transgresses both gender and social boundaries.

Fei’e’s transgression successfully proves that she is not merely playing a substitute son of the family but better than any of the men in the movie. Gender is always centered in The Perfumed Arrow. The movie begins with a debate on gender, and this debate establishes Junqing(Fei’e)’s masculinity. In this scene, three of the friends go to Junqing(Fei’e)’s house to witness Junqing(Fei’e)’s masculinity. Junqing(Fei’e) has to prove his/her masculinity by demonstrating his/her skills in martial arts because Zhuanzhi teases Junqing for seeming “pretty, weak, and just like a woman.” Junqing(Fei’e) shows his/her ability of weightlifting and skills in spears and archery. The film makes a hilarious comparison between Zhuanzhi and Junqing(Fei’e) to emphasize on Junqing(Fei’e)’s masculinity. Junqing(Fei’e) invites Zhuanzhi to try and lift the barbell that seems “tiny” in Zhuanzhi’s view. Zhuanzhi can hardly lift it with all his power. Yet Junqing(Fei’e) lifts the same barbell with only one arm. [Figure 2.13, 2.14] The martial contest ends up with the conclusion that one cannot judge a book by its cover. Junqing(Fei’e) comments that “a scholar is not necessarily worse than a masculine man” as long as he “has a courageous heart.” Junqing(Fei’e) concludes that one should never judge a person’s ability by appearance. But what Junqing(Fei’e) truly implies is that one should never judge a person’s ability by the gender that he/she is born with. By demonstrating martial art, Junqing(Fei’e) proves that she is even more “masculine” than Zhuanzhi and wins respect from
her friends. Junqing(Fei’e)’s masculinity is further assured in another scene when (s)he wins the heart of a young lady, Jing Fuchun. In this scene, Junqing(Fei’e) singlehandedly defeats a group of villains and rescues Lady Jing from being raped. Lady Jing decides to marry Junqing(Fei’e) in return of the gratitude even though Junqing(Fei’e) vigorously declined. Lady Jing’s admiration proves that Junqing(Fei’e) is the ideal man for a single lady from a good family. The most crucial virtue that Lady Jing sees in Junqing(Fei’e) is his(her) courageous heart that constructs his(her) masculinity.

Rebellious Modern Women

Like Mu-Lan, the image of Junqing(Fei’e) as a courageous (wo)man with intelligence and autonomy can be interpreted as a portrayal and imagination of a modern woman. In the feminine genre, women are depicted as intelligent, courageous, and active. They make decisions for themselves, and very often for people around them, including their family or even for their nation. In the case of The Perfumed Arrow, Junqing(Fei’e) makes decisions of her own marriage, for her family on rescuing her father, and for the marriage between her friend Zhuanzhi and Lady Jing. Many scholars have discussed the feminist readings of the huangmei musical films, especially on the most famous film The Love Eterne. In “The Female Consciousness, the World of Signification and Safe Extramarital Affairs: A 40th Year Tribute to The Love Eterne,” Peggy Hsiung-ping Chiao has looked at The Love Eterne closely and argues that the female protagonist Zhu Yingtai shows her “independent female consciousness.” Zhu takes actions, and she “challenge[s] traditional (orthodox) notion of heterosexual love.”

(80) Siu Leung Li also claims in Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera that among various versions

138 This refers to the matriarch that I mentioned in the previous chapter.
of the Liang-Zhu story, Li Han-Hsiang’s *The Love Eterne* is the one that has inspired feminist readings. In “Huangmei Opera Films, Shaw Brothers and Ling Bo—Chaste Love Stories, Genderless Cross-dressers and Sexless Gender-plays?” See-Kam Tan goes further and looks at the *huangmei* musical films starring Ivy Ling Bo under the Chinese literary tradition of *caizi* and *jiaren*, the scholar and beauty. Tan argues that in this literary tradition, there is often a figure as the patriarch: “[t]he father-figure is the most ardent defender of legalized Confucianism, and he is often portrayed as the most major obstacle to the *caizi* and *jiaren*’s quest for love and marriage based on free will. In this sense, he is a symbol of patriarchal oppression.” (3) Tan asserts that while there are different variations of the scholar and beauty stories, the *jiaren*/beauty is often under the eyes of the patriarchal figure. She is often depicted more positively, and more rebelliously than the *caizi*/scholar. I agree with Chiao, Li, and Tan’s assertion, and I argue that the beauty/*jiaren*/woman is depicted more positively and rebelliously than the scholar/*caizi*/man because in the female genre, the female autonomy is proposed in order to inspire an imagination of modern women. In a sense, this is re-imagining gender roles, and at the same time re-imagining a modern world. With women cross-dress as men, the genre imagines gender-transgression, imagines women’s autonomy, and imagines what women can achieve if not limited by their sex. Meanwhile, the genre also inspires the audiences to imagine what women could achieve outside the movie theatre, in the modern world where gender barriers are eliminated, where women can travel freely, study in public, and have chances to marry to people they love.

---


141 There is an overlapping of *huangmei* films that Tan looks at and the female genre. While Tan looks at the *huangmei* films that very often re-present the *caizi-jiaren* (Scholar and Beauty) paradigm, my dissertation looks at the female genre that includes historical epics, which does not follow the storyline of scholar and beauty.
The Love Eterne is the most famous huangmei film that plays a lot of gender puns and is complex on many levels. The story of The Love Eterne begins with a rebellious woman, Zhu Yingtai, cross-dresses as a man to pursue education. She studies for three years with her classmate, Liang Shanbo, and falls in love with him. Yingtai hopes to marry Shanbo, and drops numerous hints on her true gender before she returns home. Assuming Yingtai is inherently male, Shanbo fails to recognize her hints. Shanbo gets sick missing of Yingtai, and when Shanbo eventually knows that Yingtai is a woman from their teacher’s wife, he is delighted that Yingtai has promised to marry his(her) “twin-sister” to him. However, before Shanbo reaches Zhu family, Yingtai’s father has betrothed her to Ma Wencai, a well-known playboy with power and wealth. Shanbo falls seriously ill and dies knowing this devastating news. Yingtai is bereaved by Liang’s death and insists on paying a visit to Liang’s grave on the day of her wedding. The grave splits open, and Yingtai jumps into the grave to fulfill their love oath that if they cannot be together alive, they cannot be parted in death. When people realize what just happened, all they can see are two butterflies flying together.

The Love Eterne is complex because it involves two different levels of cross-dressing and creates multiple readings of the text. On the first level, Yingtai cross-dresses as a man in order to get education. On the second level, the male protagonist, Liang Shanbo, is casted by a female star, Ivy Ling Po. At the first level, the female protagonist Zhu Yingtai is depicted as a woman with autonomy. Her cross-dressing is not rationalized under any greater reason such as filial piety or loyalty—she does not cross-dress for anyone else’s sake, but for her own desire to be better educated and to break the gender limitations that confine her possibilities. Yingtai fights for her chances to be educated against the will of her father—the symbolically “patriarchal
oppression,” as Tan phrases it. Like Fei’e in *The Perfumed Arrow*, Yingtai’s cross-dressing challenges the physical and symbolical limitations that confines women. Women are limited physically to the private spaces, and limited symbolically to chances of social mobility, such as attending schools or taking Civil Service Exam. Yingtai’s cross-dressing is therefore a transgression of gender barriers.

From *The Lady General Hua Mu-Lan, The Perfumed Arrow, and The Love Eterne*, we can see that the female protagonists Hua Mu-Lan, Wen Fei’e, and Zhu Yingtai transgress gender barrier by cross-dressing. From the first level of cross-dressing, women who cross-dress as men break gender limitations and challenge the patriarchal power. They advocate for gender equality, and demonstrate women’s autonomy by showing what women could achieve if not being confined by gender limitations. These cross-dressed women help to construct an imagination of the “modern” in the movies of the past. The “modern women” are courageous and smart, and once they cross the gender barrier, they are often equal or better than men. The imagination of the “modern” at the same time constructs an imagination of the past. The smart and autonomous “modern women” who fight for their country, who study and join Civil Service Exam, and who decide on their spouses also create an imagination of the past that confines women to their private spaces and limits women from possibilities of self-achievements. In this imagined past, women are oppressed, and sometimes considered as properties that will bring wealth and status to the family through arranged marriages. Yingtai’s arranged marriage with Ma Wencai, the son of the provincial governor, is an example that will bring the status to Zhu family. Other examples can be found in *The Female Prince, The Pearl Phoenix and The Mirror And The Lichee* (Kao Li, 1966). These examples show that the past is imagined as a conservative space full of different

---

Tan’s article is majorly based on *The Love Eterne* and films starring Ivy Ling Po. Therefore, Zhu’s father is the typical figure of “patriarchal oppression.”
forms of patriarchal oppression and strict social rules. The imagined past is also the imagined collective Chinese culture that the audiences receive in the movie theatre. And this imagined past inspires female audiences in front of the screen to be autonomous and rebellious against the patriarchal oppression in the modern time, more excitingly without cross-dressing because the strict gender barriers has been eliminated.

**Eternal Brother Liang**

Besides the rebellious modern woman Zhu Yingtai, *The Love Eterne* presents another fascinating character: Liang Shanbo, who is also called Brother Liang. Liang is fascinating because “he” is the male protagonist played by actress Ivy Ling Po in cross-dressing. The male protagonist cross-dressed by an actress is a common practice in the female genre. Besides the most famous *The Love Eterne, The Dream of The Red Chamber* (Yuan Qiufeng, 1961), *A Maid From Heaven* (Ho Meng-hua and Chan Yau-san, 1963), *The Crimson Palm* (Chan Yau-san, 1963), *The Mermaid, The Lotus Lamp, The West Chamber* (Yueh Feng, 1965), *The Pearl Phoenix, The Mirror And The Lichee, Lady Jade Locket, Forever And Ever* (Lo Wei, 1967), *The Three Smiles* (Yueh Feng, 1969), and *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1977) all cast an actress as the male protagonist. Among the thirteen movies above, Ivy Ling Po stars in seven of them. It is so prevalent to cast actresses as male protagonists in the female genre that Chang Cheh, a famous martial art director, claims in his memoir that he insisted on casting actors in male roles and actresses in female roles in his only *huangmei* film *The Butterfly Chalice* (Chang Cheh, 1965) as a protest to the common practice of cross-dressing, and hence miserably.

---

143 The male protagonist of *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (Yuan Qiufeng, 1961) is Jen Chieh, who became the female supporting in *The Love Eterne*. The male protagonist of *The Lotus Lamp* is Cheng Pei-Pei, the female protagonist Linda Lin Dai also plays an important male role as her son with the male lead. The male protagonist of *The Pearl Phoenix* is Hsiao Hsiang. The male protagonist of *Lady Jade Locket* is Li Lihua. The 1977 version of *The Dream of the Red Chamber* is directed by Li Han-Hsiang, and the male protagonist is Brigitte Ching-Hia Lin while the female protagonist is Sylvia Ai-Chia Chang.
failed in the film market\textsuperscript{144}. \textit{The Butterfly Chalice} failed probably not because Chang casts actor as the male protagonist, but rather because the film reinforces the patriarchal standard and therefore is not as exciting as other films in the female genre. But it is noteworthy that the cross-dressed male protagonist is such a common practice that a director considers it as an “abnormal” practice that needs to be amended.

Male impersonator and female impersonator are common practices in traditional Chinese theatre. As Siu Leung Li writes in \textit{Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera}, male cross-dresses as female can be dated as early as Western Han Dynasty (202 BCE–8AD) while female cross-dresses as male can be dated in Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368AD) when theatre, \textit{zaju}\textsuperscript{145}, firstly became a mature genre under the regime of Mongolians. Gender in the theatre in Yuan dynasty was mixed of male and female performers, and female performers are more significant in \textit{zaju} genre. However, in Ming (1368-1644AD) and Qing (1644-1911AD) dynasty when Neo-Confucianism became prominent and gender segregation was reinforced in Chinese society, gender-segregated troupes became a common practice. And in the male troupes or female troupes, cross-dressing became necessary\textsuperscript{146}. Li further states that it is the \textit{yueju} (Shaoxing) opera version on the story on Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai\textsuperscript{147} that became popular in films, and hence the film continues \textit{yueju} tradition on male impersonator as an all-female troupe. In “Huangmei Opera Films, Shaw Brothers and Ling Bo—Chaste Love Stories, Genderless Cross-Dressers And Sexless Gender-Plays?,” See-Kam Tan also writes that the well-known versions of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai are Yueju (Shaoxing), Yueju (Cantonese), and \textit{huangmei} opera

\textsuperscript{144} Chang, Cheh. \textit{Huigu Xianggang Dianying Sanshi Nian (Reviewing Thirty Years of Hong Kong Cinema)}. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (H.K.) Co., Ltd, 1989.
\textsuperscript{146} Also known as Liang-Zhu and \textit{Butterfly Lovers}.
that have traditions of women cross-dress as male characters.\textsuperscript{148} Shaoxing opera derives from the area where Liang-Zhu’s story came from, so it’s understandable that Liang is cross-dressed by a female performer. It is notable that Cantonese opera is the local theatre in Hong Kong, where Shaw Brothers’ movie was made. Hence there is no surprise that the cross-dressed male protagonists are well-received in Shaw Brothers’ huangmei films. The popularity of The Love Eterne was phenomenal, and Ivy Ling Po was well loved as the male protagonist Brother Liang that Ling continued to cast as the male protagonists in many other movies. Ling’s success made cross-dressed male protagonists a common practice.

Ivy Ling Po’s success on cross-dressed male characters is legendary, and she is the most successful male impersonator in the female genre. Famous director Li Han-Hsiang reminisces about how Ivy Ling Po became a super star in his memoir:\textsuperscript{149} Ivy Ling Po was the singing voice of the male lead in The Dream of the Red Chamber (Yuan Qiufeng, 1961). Director Li thinks that she sings and appears better than the actual male lead Jen Chieh. He then cast Ling as the male lead in his film The Love Eterne, whereas Jen Chieh was given the supporting female role. Ivy Ling Po became a superstar with The Love Eterne, and is the “eternal Brother Liang” of Chinese film history. The fact that Liang Shanbo is performed by a cross-dressed actress creates different layers of readings for The Love Eterne. The most basic reading, as Ang Lee and Peggy Hsiung-ping Chiao recalls,\textsuperscript{150}, and probably how most audiences at the time would read it, is to regard Ivy Ling Po as a male protagonist with no sexual desire—that is, the audiences have no


\textsuperscript{149} Li, Han-Hsiang. Yinghai Shengya. [Life In Silver Sea.] Also Known as Sanshi Nian Xishou Congtou. [Speaking From The Beginning of The Thirty Years] Jiangsu: Nongcun Readings Publisher. 1987.

attached sexual desire to the male protagonist, nor does the male protagonist have sexual desire
to the female protagonist. There is, as Siu Lieung Li, See-Kam Tan and Annette Aw suggest,
discover Zhu’s sex as a woman after spending three years together? One explanation is that he
must be gay and chooses not to acknowledge the truth. The third reading, considering the fact
that the couple is played by two actresses, is that the film is about a love story of two women—a
possible lesbian story. There are different reasons of having male impersonators in the female
genre, and there are different reasons why Ivy Ling Po became so popular as the male
impersonator. Nevertheless, I argue that Ivy Ling Po and male impersonators demonstrate an
imagination of the ideal man. The re-imagining of an ideal man at the same time redefines
definitions of masculine versus feminine.

In the feminine genre, especially huangmei musical films, the male protagonists are often
cross-dressed by actress. The characters that are cross-dressed by women are usually scholars
and children(sons). Old men and villains are always played by actors. In The Perfumed Arrow,
some of Wen Junqing(Fei’e), Du Zizhong, and Wei Zhuangzhi’s classmates are played by
actresses. [Figure 2.15] Unlike Wen Junqing(Fei’e) who is cross-dressed by a woman, they are
supposed to be male students. In other words, while Junqing(Fei’e) demonstrates the first layer
of cross-dressing, her classmates are the examples of the second layer of cross-dressing. Another
example can be found in The Love Eterne. In a scene of a classroom full of students, some are
played by actresses and some are played by actors. These cross-dressed students help the male
protagonist, cross-dressed by Ivy Ling Po, to be more convincing. Yet to look at what kind of
characters is cross-dressed makes the gender issue more interesting. In The Perfumed Arrow, it is
the characters who have lines and assumedly more important roles, are cross-dressed by actresses. In *The Love Eterne*, however, it is the students who are played by actors who are more important and appear in the camera. But these characters play buffoons and the “bad” students.

In a classroom full of students, supposedly all male students except Zhu Yingtai, there are mixed of cross-dressed students and actor-played students, and the cross-dressed students are the majority. The camera tracks through cross-dressed students and actor-played students, [Figure 2.16] and the students played by actors are the students who are not paying attention in the class. [Figure 2.17] In the scene when Teacher tests on students to recite classics, it is the actor-played student who dozes off in the class and cannot complete the task. The Teacher’s test question is an irony, the Teacher says, “These people who fill their bellies all day long […].” While the student is supposed to continue the sentence and recite “without ever using their minds, I cannot abide!” What the student fails to recognize is that the Teacher criticizes him on filling his belly all day long without using his mind. Even when the Teacher angrily scolds him as the “Rotten wood cannot be carved […],” the student happily completes the sentence in singing, “dung walls cannot be troweled.” This is exactly the sentence that Confucius uses to scold his disciple when sleeping at day. This actor-played student fails to acknowledge the irony and becomes the laughing stock in class. In another scene, a group of actor-played students make fun of Yingtai’s (lack-of) masculinity. [Figure 2.18] The actor-played students appear in the film to be the buffoon and the school bully; unlike the crossed-dressed students who appear to be the merit students. This kind of “gender performances” is in a sense restructuring what underlies masculinity—chauvinist and insincere—and femininity—serious and smart.

---

The cross-dressed male protagonist is peculiarly an “ideal man,” it is different from what people imagine as a “masculine” man. As See-Kam Tan writes in “Huangmei Opera Films, Shaw Brothers and Ling Bo,” in the caizi-jiaren (Scholar and Beauty) paradigm, women often “become increasingly more yang (masculinized) so as to offset or provide a counter-balanced to her generally yang-deficient romantic hero.” (3, Tan 2007) In other words, the male characters cross-dressed by Ling Po appears to be more “feminine” than the female protagonist. In Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera, Siu Leung Li goes further on the issue of femininity of the cross-dressed Brother Liang in The Love Eterne. He asserts that,

“the reason Liang is best played by a woman, is that he is a ‘woman.’[…] Liang falls short of the ideal scholar for he has shown no concern or ambition to strive for maximum masculine power through distinguishing himself at the imperial civil examinations, not to mention gaining top graduate status [zhuangyuan].” (125-126)

This brilliant argument brings us to look at what “masculinity” and “femininity” signify in the feminine genre. Li and Tan’s arguments are both under the hierarchy which holds that masculine (yang) is better than femininity (yin). And the characteristics such as brave, active, success are associated with masculinity (yang) while weak, passive, failure are associated with femininity (yin). However, as gender is restructured in the female genre, femininity is associated with more positive characteristics such as brave, intelligent, and autonomous. The cross-dressed “ideal man” also redefines how a male protagonist is valued. As the “ideal man,” a cross-dressed male protagonist often lacks sexual desire to the female protagonist. This is on the one hand a depiction of pre-modern China where gender segregations are reinforced under Neo-Confucianism, and a gentleman is supposed to be “stirred from the affection yet stops at the
etiquette\textsuperscript{154}, “meaning that a gentleman’s actions of affection are strictly disciplined by etiquette. On the other hand, possibly a reason why the gentleman is better cross-dressed by an actress, assuming that (s)he has no sexual desire to the female protagonist. Yet the affections of the “ideal man” are often very strong that (s)he is devoted to the female protagonist despite all kinds of hardships. Nevertheless, what makes the cross-dressed male protagonist “ideal” is neither his love, nor his intelligence and potential in passing Civil Service Exams. What he is truly valued, is his moral standards and his advocacy on free love, and sometimes even on women’s rights.

Brother Liang in \textit{The Love Eterne} is a typical cross-dressed “ideal man.” Liang is attentive, he stays up all night and takes care of Yingtai when (s)he is sick. Assumably, his attentiveness has no sexual desire involved. More importantly, as the “ideal man,” Liang advocates for women’s right. When Yingtai firstly meets Liang and states her ambition in the name of her little sister, Liang immediately replies that, “Well-said! Men and women are equal in nature, it is the human affairs that are unreasonable.” Liang’s words quickly win Yingtai’s heart because she “thought that all men are the same, it is rare that he speaks for women.”\textsuperscript{155} When Yingtai criticizes Liang on not reading Chinese classics critically and believes too easily that women are “troubles,” Liang immediately agrees with Zhu and says that he is “enlightened” by his(her) opinions. Liang admits that he is “silly” and promises that he will study harder to fully understand the classics in the future. This shows that Liang is the “ideal man” who supports on women’s education, who values women’s opinion, and who promises to be more open-minded on gender issue. These are the reasons that Yingtai falls in love with Liang. Similarly, in \textit{The Perfumed Arrow}, although the male characters Du Zizhong and Wei Zhuanzhi are both played by actors, Wen Fei’e falls in love with Du rather than Wei because Du is the one who

\textsuperscript{154}發乎情止乎禮。My translation.  
\textsuperscript{155}Quotation from the film.
does not look down upon women. It is Wei who often challenges Junqing(Fei’e)’s (lack-of) masculinity and teases him(her) for behaving like a woman. Yet Du is the one who praises Junqing(Fei’e) for being the “son of a general”\(^{156}\) and claims that one should not judge a book by its cover. In summary, it is often the one who advocates for gender equality that is considered to be a better choice for the female protagonist.

*The Mirror And The Lichee*

In *The Mirror And The Lichee*, Ivy Ling Po again cross-dresses to play an “ideal man.” The movie depicts a love story between Chen Boqing and Huang Wuniang. They meet during the lantern festival when Wuniang is harassed by Lin Daxiong, the son of a wealthy family. Chen pretends to be her fiancé in order to save her. It turns out that Boqing and Wuniang are in fact betrothed to each other in childhood, and their families have exchanged a mirror and a coral tree as engagement gifts. In order to get closer to Wuniang, Chen sells himself to the Huang family as a study companion to Wuniag’s younger brothers. Soon he becomes the teacher due to his intelligence. Lin Daxiong did not give up on the idea of having Wuniang as his concubine, and sends out a thousand tael of gold to Huang family as betrothed gift. Wuniag’s father happily agrees. Although Wuniang protests, she cannot disobey her father. Chen falls ill and tells Wuniang the truth that they were engaged. They decide to have Chen go back to his hometown and get the coral tree to win Wuniang back. When Chen finally comes with the carol tree, it is the day of Wuniang’s wedding. Lin Daxiong claims that Chen is a thief who stole the coral tree from Lin family and sends Chen into prison. Fearing of the power of Lin family, Wuniang gives in and agrees to marry Lin in order to save Chen Boqing. After Chen comes out of prison, Wuniang claims that she does not love Chen and wants him to leave. Chen falls seriously ill out

\(^{156}\)将门虎子。Quotation from the film.
of despair. Eventually, Wuniang sneaks out of the house before her wedding day with her mother’s help. She finds Chen and they live happily ever after.

Chen Boqing, like Liang Shanbo in *The Love Eterne*, is the cross-dressed “ideal man.” He may not be wealthy, and neither has he fully completed his Civil Service Exam. He is “ideal” because he is moral, he is smart, and more importantly, he advocates for free love. As the cross-dressed “ideal man,” Chen looks at the female protagonist with no sexual desire attached. In the beginning of the film, the background music narrates the liveliness of the Lantern Festival, and while most people are enjoying various lanterns, “[t]here are some people who do not look at the lanterns but look for pretty women. And there is only one student from afar, […] who does not care about women but enjoys the guessing games.”

The guessing game is a tradition in the Lantern Festival. This depiction shows that first, Chen is intelligent that he enjoys and often wins in the guessing game. And second, he is a gentleman who does not take advantage of women. When Lin Daxiong harasses Wuniang, Chen stands up and to stop Lin, showing that Chen fears not of power. After saving Wuniang by pretending to be her fiancé, Chen even apologies for taking advantage of her in words—even pretending to be her fiancé is considered as taking advantage of a lady. Like Liang, Chen is also depicted as a gentleman whose affections stop at etiquette. (S)he does not take advantage of women even in words because his affections has no sexual desire attached. Moreover, Chen is “ideal” because he and Wuniang fall in love with their free will. Chen is the opposite of the patriarchal oppression that Lin and Wuniang’s father represent. Although it may seem improper that Chen sells himself to the Huang family for the purpose of getting closer to a lady, his behaviors are rationalized under the prerequisite that they

157 Quotation from the film.
are engaged to each other. And Chen is special because he firstly wins Wuniang’s heart, and then is legitimate as her fiancé, which could be a very “modern” way of marriage in the 1960s.

Chen’s “ideal” is further assured under his contrast, Lin Daxiong. As a villain, Lin is played by an actor. In contrast to Chen, Lin is rich and powerful, he is also macho since he has passed the Military Exam\textsuperscript{158}. Yet Lin is lascivious and he abuses his wealth and power. Unlike Chen whose affection to Wuniang has no sexual desire attached, Lin looks at Wuniang with almost merely sexual desire. Lin harasses her for her pretty appearance, and he proposes to marry Wuniang even though he already has a wife. Lin brags about his wealth that, “my family has been governor official for generations. My father is now the governor of Shanxi. A bird cannot even fly through [our family] farms. My family is the most wealthy one in Chaochou.”\textsuperscript{159} His companion also claims that due to his family wealth, it is just ordinary that Lin should have multiple wives and concubines. Lin then sends one thousand tael of gold to Wuniang’s father as if she is the property that belongs to the patriarchal power and can be purchased with gold as the down payment. Contrary to Lin, Chen tries to win Wuniang’s heart even though he is her betrothed fiancé. The contrast between Chen and Lin is therefore obvious: while one respects women and is the one who represents love of free will, the other regards women as men’s property and should yield to patriarchal power. Lin even abuses his power and wealth by falsely accusing Chen as a thief and makes Wuniang to yield to be his concubine. The contrast between the actor-played villain Lin and cross-dressed Chen redefines what is associated with masculinity—the patriarchal suppression—and redefines how an “ideal man” should be—respecting women’s rights.

\textsuperscript{158} 武舉
\textsuperscript{159} Quotation from the film.
The cross-dressed male protagonists in *The Love Eterne* and *The Perfumed Arrow* show that gender is re-imagined in the female genre. The actor-played characters often perform negative characteristics of masculinity, while the cross-dressed male protagonists perform the “ideal men” with positive traits. Both Liang Shanbo and Chen Boqing, as well as other cross-dressed male protagonists in the female genre, consequently represent the “ideal man” for the rebellious modern women. Masculinity and one’s ability to be successful is no longer important, it is one’s conscience that is praised. More importantly, it is how one respects the female protagonist’s opinion and her will that is regarded as ideal for women with autonomy.

**Redefining Gender vs. Reconfirming Gender**

Although the genre inspires a renovated way of defining femininity and masculinity, and propagandizes female protagonists to transgress into the male realms, I argue that the female genre in a way also reconfirms gender performances and heterosexual normativity. Even when the female protagonists enjoy the mobility that is granted for male with first-layer of cross-dressing, they eventually have to return to their gender role and be confined under gender segregation. The female protagonists, including Mu-Lan, Fei’e, and Yingtai, all have to return home and change into women’s attire in the end. And as a woman, the female protagonists have to consider marriage as their ultimate achievement rather than any other ways of success. No matter how much they have achieved when disguising as a man, such as being a general in Mu-Lan’s case, they will eventually relinquish these successes because these are the honors granted only for men. And in many of the cases, their transgressions and successes are under the surveillance of patriarchal power.

In *The Lady General Hua Mu-Lan*, Mu-Lan is constantly under supervision of her cousin Hua Ming. Hua Ming is an invented character that does not exist in the “Ballad of Mulan.” Hua
Ming is the big brother who watches over Mu-Lan. Ming advises Mu-Lan on whom to be friends with, he tries to stop Mu-Lan when she ventures to defend for women [Figure 2.19], and he stops Mu-Lan when she is forced to drink with other soldiers. In these situations, Ming not only watches out for Mu-Lan, he also watches and supervises Mu-Lan [Figure 2.20]. He proclaims to Mu-Lan that “I am your big brother, you have to listen to me.”\textsuperscript{160} Although comparing to the fathers, Hua Ming is not an authoritative patriarchal power; and being a “rebellious modern woman” Mu-Lan oftentimes does not follow Hua Ming’s instruction, Mu-Lan is constantly under surveillance of the patriarchal power represented by her big brother Hua Ming. Moreover, it is her “masculine” behaviors, such as winning martial art contest and fighting in battlefields that are approved by her comrades. Her non-masculine behaviors, on the contrary, are regarded as either “feminine” or “childish.” In the scene when Mu-Lan declines to drink, one of the soldiers teases her to be in “women’s army”\textsuperscript{161} if a soldier cannot drink. In another scene when Mu-Lan refuses to take off her clothes for treatment on a wound by poisoned arrow, her comrades think that it is “childish” for a man who fears of taking off clothes. Feminine and childish are used to describe the behaviors that lack masculinity, and thus less appreciated in a man. In a sense, even with gender transgressions, the scale that weights femininity and masculinity still exists; and even with redefinitions, the scale more or less follows the one that people are familiar with.

In \textit{The Perfumed Arrow}, Fei’e(Junqing)’s father symbolizes the patriarchal surveillance that Fei’e cannot escape. Her father, as the authoritative patriarchal oppression, constantly reprimands her for cross-dressing. Her mother, on the other hand, encourages her to cross the gender boundaries and to transgress into the male spaces, such as getting education, taking Civil

\textsuperscript{160} Quotation from the film.
\textsuperscript{161} 娘子軍, my translation.
Service Exams, and traveling to the capital. Several times in the movie, Fei’e(Junqing)’s mother nods supportively while her father frowns upon her cross-dressing. [Figure 2.21] Her father once reprimands her, “It’s all because your mother pampers you, that [you become] a woman cross-dresses as man and behaves unruly. Your xiucal/scholar is already fake, now you are talking nonsense to be a zhuanyuan.”

He blames Fei’e’s mother for “pampering” her and thus she behaves “unruly.” This indicates that first, Fei’e’s mother is the one who supports and allows Fei’e to behave as her will in cross-dressing as a man. Second, Fei’e’s father considers her gender transgression “unruly,” and expects her to follow the gender rules that have been assigned to her as female. Dressing like a man, as well as thinking of attaining the “zhuangyuan” title, the first place in Civil Service Exam, is “nonsense” for a woman. Her father even brings up the symbolic order, the law, to discourage Fei’e from transgressing her gender roles. He states that she will get into trouble because participating in the Civil Service Exam with a false identity is against the law. Besides, since the final exam is specifically given by the emperor, a false identity would be a crime of deceiving the emperor. Fei’e(Junqing) then is dissuaded from perusing her(his) honor and is encouraged to consider the achievements that suits her gender as a woman—marriage with either Zhuanzhi or Zizhong. Fei’e’s gender-transgression is prohibited by her father, the law, and the emperor, who symbolizes the patriarchal oppression and the ultimate symbolic order.

The Perfumed Arrow on the other hand reconfirms gender roles and gender segregation. Even though Fei’e cross-dresses as Junqing, she is in fact a woman and has to follow gender segregation. For example, though she can travel freely in public spaces, to spend a night with her

---

162 Quotation from the film. Zhuangyuan, the first place of the final level of Civil Service Exam, also considered as the highest honor one can achieve in the exams.

163 Interestingly, just as The Perfumed Arrow, Zhu Yingtai’s father also blames Yingtai’s mother for “pampering” Yingtai and causes Yingtai’s ambition of studying in cross-dressing.
friend Zizhong is prohibited and is the reason that discloses her gender—Zizhong finds out her long hair that looks “like a woman.” Besides Fei’e(Junqing), Lady Jing is another woman who is confined under her gender role. Though it seems that Lady Jing falls in love with Junqing(Fei’e) because (s)he demonstrates his(her) masculinity by saving her, Jing forces Junqing(Fei’e) into a marriage agreement with one reason: she has spent a night with this “man.” Lady Jing also insists on gender segregation and requests Junqing(Fei’e) to avoid looking at her putting on the clothes that has been ripped by the rapist. [Figure 2.22] While in previous shots, Jing was shown naked on the screen in front of the rapist, the camera, and the audiences. [Figure 2.23, 2.24] Yet being looked by Junqing(Fei’e), who is in fact a woman, is prohibited. This intriguingly shows that on the one hand, Junqing(Fei’e) is demonstrating the redefined “ideal man” who lacks sexual desire for the lady and follows the etiquette, and does not take advantage of a woman even when it is merely a glimpse. On the other hand, while it can be argued that Lady Jing uses gender segregation as an excuse for her own love to Junqing(Fei’e) and in a way shows her autonomy, she nevertheless is bound by gender boundaries and demands to fulfill the rules that bound her. Furthermore, gender boundaries are made apparent by gender transgressions. When Fei’e, Mu-Lan, and Yingtai transgress gender boundaries, it in fact shows the audiences where the boundaries are. While the audiences enjoy the transgressions of the female protagonists on the screen, they also see that these female protagonists will have to return to their gender roles in the end. While the audiences may feel lucky to live in a world where

---

164 Junqing(Fei’e) turning his(her) back on the left of the shot, avoiding looking at Lady Jing.
165 Although Fei’e/Junqing is a woman who disguises as a man in The Perfumed Arrow, which is the first layer of cross-dressing, Fei’e/Junqing is played by the actress Ivy Ling Po, who is known for her second layer of cross-dressing as the male protagonists in the female genre. Ivy Ling Po also plays the male protagonist in The Love Eterne and The Mirror And The Lychee.
gender boundaries are supposedly eliminated, they are in the meanwhile reminded for gender boundaries and limitations for their achievements.

While films on cross-dressing provide certain pleasure on transgressing heterosexual normativity, the stories eventually reconfirm the normativity. Scholars as Li, Tan and Aw claim that there is a homoerotic reading on The Love Eterne\textsuperscript{166}, and one assumes other movies on cross-dressing in the female genre as well. However, the female genre is nonetheless a genre that confirms heterosexual normativity. The possibility of same-sex relationship is obscure and often lost in the movies. Take The Love Eterne as an example, though there are numerous gender puns on same-sex relationship, Liang Shanbo constantly fails to grasp the puns that Yingtai proposes\textsuperscript{167}. Even when Yingtai tells Liang that (s)he can arrange a marriage between his/her “twin sister” and Liang, Liang still gets sick out of missing Yingtai\textsuperscript{168}. Liang’s illness is miraculously cured upon knowing that Yingtai, the person he misses and loves, is in fact a woman. Only when he realizes that Yingtai is a woman does Liang see a possibility of his love reunion with her. If there is indeed a homoerotic reading of The Love Eterne, then Liang Shanbo could be regarded as being homophobic.

Homophobia can also be found in other films on the first layer of cross-dressing. In Lady General Hua Mu-Lan, when Mu-Lan proposes to General Li that, “If you were a woman, you shall marry to me; if I become a woman, I shall marry you,”\textsuperscript{169} General Li ignores her proposal and regards her as being “childish” because either same-sex love or same-sex marriage is

\textsuperscript{167} Yingtai proposes all kinds of gender puns to imply that she is in fact a woman. For instance, she points to the water and claims that there are a woman and a man’s reflections. Liang reacts that “I am definitely a man, you shouldn’t compare me to a woman.” His reaction indicates not only that he fails to grasp the idea that Yingtai is a woman, he also feels that his masculinity, rather than Yingtai’s, is challenged.
\textsuperscript{168} This could of course be argued the other way around under Tan and Annette and Li’s argument that it is the male Yingtai that Liang truly loves, and hence a homosexual love story.
\textsuperscript{169} Quotation from the film. Same as note 28.
unimaginable. Mu-Lan’s love and desire to General Li is also established under the prerequisite that they are of different sexes. Hence while Mu-Lan is in disguise, only she is allowed to look at General Li with desire. On the contrary, since General Li assumes that Mu-Lan is male, he can never look back at Mu-Lan with a scrap of desire. Precisely for this reason, Mu-Lan possesses power of looking/gazing only when she disguises as a man. One’s object of desire can only be of different sex. Consequently, once Mu-Lan returns to being a woman, General Li suddenly realizes Mu-Lan’s gender puns and says, “[you] actually became a woman, no wonder there were such strange words; now that everything is clear, [you] turn out to be Zhu Yingtai.”170 Upon seeing Mu-Lan turn into his opposite sex, General Li finally arouses interest in her and possesses the power of looking. When Mu-Lan enters a room as a woman for the first time, the gaze of every man focuses on her. [Figure 2.25] The camera then zooms in and focuses on General Li, focusing on his stunned expression. [Figure 2.26] In the following shots, Li’s gaze glues on Mu-Lan. He looks at Mu-Lan from head to toe several times. [Figure 2.27, 2.28, 2.29, 2.30] Now that Li realizes Mu-Lan is a woman, he becomes the one who actively looks at Mu-Lan as his object of desire. The power of looking and being-looked-at is switched when Mu-Lan becomes a woman not only because men, including the disguised one, possess the power of looking, but also because only when the couple follows the heterosexual paradigm can the man possess the power of looking.

In The Perfumed Arrow, homophobia is also prominent. Like Yingtai in The Love Eterne, Junqing(Fei’e) has to create an imagined sister in order to arrange marriage between herself and

170 Quotation from the film. Due to the success of The Love Eterne, there are a lot of references to Liang and Zhu in The Lady General Hua Mu-Lan. Zhu Yingtai here indicates a woman who disguises as a man.
Wei Zhuanzhi. The “imagined (twin) sister” implies a person who is exactly the same or extremely similar to “him,” with the only difference being gender. Zhuanzhi even happily says that base on Junqing’s good looking, his(her) sister must be a beauty, and soon becomes obsessed with “Fei’e” whom he has never met. Zhuanzhi’s obsession indicates that Junqing is the prototype that he falls in love with, and Junqing could be his spouse if he were a she. Du Zizhong, on the other hand, though respecting Junqing(Fei’e) to be a man with feminine appearance, also persists in heterosexual normativity. When discovering Fei’e(Junqing)’s shoes and needlework in his(her) room, Zizhong assumes that Junqing(Fei’e) is married, which strengthens Junqing(Fei’e)’s masculinity under heterosexual paradigm. Moreover, Zizhong behaves precisely according to gender segregation that men and women belong to distinct spaces. It is also the reason that Zizhong intrudes to Fei’e(Junqing)’s private space twice—he assumes that he and Junqing(Fei’e) are of the same sex. The first time Zizhong enters Junqing(Fei’e)’s bedroom and discovers her(his) feminine belongings. The second time, the time Zizhong discovers Junqing(Fei’e)’s true gender, Zizhong insists on sharing a room with Junqing(Fei’e) as “brothers.” When Juqing refuses, Zizhong complains, “do you regard me as an outsider?” To regard him as an outsider, jianwei in Chinese, meaning that Junqing(Fei’e) does not take Zizhong as one of his kind. While Zizhong refers to Junqing(Fei’e) not regarding him as a close friend, what Junqing(Fei’e) knows by heart is that Zizhong is indeed not one of her kind. Zizhong’s reaction to Junqing(Fei’e)’s true gender follows the heterosexual paradigm. Not only does Zizhong have a convincing explanation for Junqing(Fei’e)’s feminine behaviors, he also

---

171 Zhu Yingtai claims to have a twin sister while Junqing says that he has a little sister of the same mother. In the pre-modern China where polygamy is practiced, a sister from the same parents indicates their similarity at least in appearances.
172 Wei only knows that Junqing has a younger sister named Fei’e. He does not know that Junqing is Fei’e.
173 Quotation from the film. 見外。
174 Zizhong sings,
immediately thinks that he and Junqing(Fei’e) should have been segregated because they are indeed not one of the same kind. Du Zizhong falls in love with Fei’e(Junqing) and proposes to her once he realizes that (s)he is a woman. His proposal also follows heterosexual normativity. Zizhong tells Junqing(Fei’e) that the purpose of having a wife is to “be a lover when [one is] young and be a companion when [one is] old. To have children and descendants.” Zizhong emphasizes the purpose of reproductivity in marriage, which requires Junqing(Fei’e) to be his opposite sex to fulfill this purpose. His proposal consequently reaffirms heterosexual normativity.

Gaze in The Female Genre

The power dynamic in the female genre is intriguing and quite different from Hollywood cinema. Despite the fact that women are always the center of not only the camera but also the

“The way Junqing falls asleep is so charming, [that] seems like a woman rather than a man. Her black hair is so fluffy and soft, and her fingers are so fine and slim. No wonder she sleeps so sound and charming, Junqing is definitely a woman. No wonder she behaves so strange and obscure, [and there are] sewing in her room as if it is a woman’s bedroom. Wait a minute, and don’t be impetuous. She is a woman and I am a man. We shared a room and shared a bed, it would be difficult to explain to others. I should cover up her secret, and see how she pretends.”

He refers her feminine looking, her sewing, and even her sleeping “sound and charming” as feminine characteristics that comes from her gender as a woman. In other words, a man with masculinity is not supposed to have these characteristics.

This is different from the story of Jingu Qiguan (The Spectacles in Ancient and Modern Times). In Jingu Qiguan, Du Zizhong claims to Junqing(Fei’e) that “It’s a pity that we are both men. If I were a woman, I would definitely marry to you; if you were a woman, I would definitely marry you.”

There is homoerotic element in the original version of the story, yet hetero-normalized in The Perfumed Arrow.

Quotation from the film. Zizhong jokingly asks Junqing(Fei’e) why is the Mountain God single? Junqing replies, “it is free to be single.” “Who is going to make the bed?” says Zizhong. “[You] keep saying [he] needs a wife. What is a wife for?” asks Junqing. “To be a lover when [one is] young and to be a companion when [one is] old. To have children and descendants,” answers Zizhong. “To have children and descendants, there are all kinds of women in the world,” replies Junqing. “No one is as pretty and charming as you,” says Zizhong. Then Zizhong proposes, “Now that you appear as a woman, I would like to propose to you.” Zizhong apparently regards domestic chores such as making a bed to be things that a woman, rather than a man, does.
storyline in this genre, it is important to note that women are the one who is active in the movies. To begin with, Mulvey’s pleasure of looking in Hollywood is based on psychoanalysis, which is saturated with (hetero-)sexual desire. The female genre, on the other hand, is a genre that apparently lacks sexual desire. Nakedness or erotic shots that focus on women’s body are rare in the genre. When some of these shots occur, the gaze of the camera does not belong to the male protagonist and hence the audiences would not identify with it. For instance, in The Perfumed Arrow, there is a shot on Lady Jing’s frontal nudity [Figure 2.23]. Yet the shot only lasts for two seconds. The camera courteous shifts to lustful expression of the rapist, and then looks at the naked female body from the back of Lady Jing. [Figure 2.24] With the short span of time, the shot of Jing’s frontal nudity is hardly a gaze that suspends the time of the movie, and even hardly a shot for audiences to remember due to the dim light. Besides, this shot of her frontal nudity is supposedly a shot from the rapist’s perspective. Whereas the audiences go to movie theatres to enjoy the imagination of an ideal ego, it is hard for the audiences to identify with the gaze of the rapist and gain pleasure to identify with this gaze with sexual desire. Another example of rarely occurred shots on naked female body can be found in The Magnificent Concubine (Li Han-Hsiang, 1960) when Yang Guifei baths in the Hua-qing hot spring. [Figure 1.3, 1.4, 1.5] These shots faithfully depict how Yang is being objectified in the Chinese classic Song of Lasting Pain. Though the camera brings audiences to gaze at Yang’s smooth skin, these shots are from the perspective of Chinese intellectuals rather than the male protagonist, the emperor. The male protagonist is absent in this scene, and absent so far in the movie. The absence of the male protagonist makes the audiences not to identify with him, nor to objectify Yang from the perspective of the male protagonist.

---

177 As I argue in the previous chapter, these are the depiction of Chinese classics Song of Lasting Pain written by Bai Juyi. Li Han-Hsiang faithfully depicts the imagined China based on Bai’s masterpiece on Yang Guifei.
Whom should the audiences identify with in the female genre? Whereas the male gaze in Hollywood serves as the connection between audiences to the male protagonist as their ideal ego, in the female genre, the female protagonist is the ideal ego whom the audiences are supposed to identify with. Unlike male protagonists who often lack of power, the female protagonists are the one who are intelligent and active. This is one of the possible reasons that the female genre is popular among female audiences. Peggy Chiao writes in “The Female Consciousness, the World of Signification and Safe Extramarital Affairs” that, “It is a female subject who guides the vision, the gaze, and perspective of the female consciousness developed in The Love Eterne.”

(84) Similar to watching The Love Eterne, when female audiences look at the female protagonists of the female genre on the screen, they identify with the female protagonists and perceive an imagination of being a rebellious modern woman. These rebellious modern women therefore cannot be objectified by male protagonists who lack of power and sexual desire. To have actresses to cross-dress as male protagonist ensures that the male protagonists do not have sexual desire toward the female protagonists whom the audiences identified with.

Yet does this indicate that in contrast to male gaze, the female genre generates “the female gaze?” The gaze in the female genre is dominated by the hetero-normativity and therefore frequently switches. Cross-dressing makes a lot differences on the gendered looking. Due to hetero-normativity, only the opposite sex could have desire for one another. Consequently, with first-layer of cross-dressing, when the female protagonist disguises as a man, the male protagonist cannot imagine a love relationship for the male female protagonist. He can never look at her(him) with power of gaze, nor to objectify her(him) with sexual desire. Oppositely, because the female protagonist knows that she is a (heterosexual) female, she therefore possesses

---

the power of looking/gazing at the male protagonist with desire. Noteworthily, the desire that the female protagonist has is hardly sexual, and the gaze never focuses on the male body. Rather, it is often the virtues that the female protagonist looks at. The female protagonist’s power of looking as well as her power of agency only occurs when she cross-dresses as a man. Once she returns to her gender role as a woman, she loses her power of looking because this active action is not a feminine behavior. When returning to be a woman, she is confined into her private space and has to behave accordingly to her gender roles, which means to avoid looking actively at men and avoid being looked at by men. Similar to the female protagonist who returns to being a woman, the female protagonist who does not cross-dress as a man has no power to transgress gender spaces or to look actively. Interestingly, in the second layer of cross-dressing, the male protagonist who is cross-dressed by actress, since he is supposedly the “ideal man” whose sexual desire is eliminated, he seldom looks at the female protagonist with gaze of desire.

It is not to say that “male gaze” does not exist in the female genre. As the example of *The Magnificent Concubine* shows, male gaze does occur under the framework of patriarchal pre-modern China where the stories happen. And the directors are certainly male directors. But when women are exhibited in this genre, they are not objectified by sexual desire. They are portrayed with glorified and sometimes even sanctified perspectives. Women are the ideal images that the audiences identify with. In the female genre, neither female protagonist nor male protagonist gazes at one another with sexual desire. What does the camera focus on then? The camera usually focuses on the progress of the storyline and the gender performances of the female protagonist. When the female protagonist cross-dresses as a man, the camera centers on how she successfully hides her gender and how she performs masculinity sometimes with theatrical
movements. The gaze at the gendered performances from the camera in a sense also reconfirms gender and hetero-normativity.

**Genre of Imagination**

The female genre is a genre of transgression *and* a genre of imagination. Gender is often being transgressed. In the first layer of gender transgression, the female protagonist cross-dresses as man in order to transgress to male spaces. From this layer of gender transgression, the audiences see an imagination of a modern woman with power and agency, and the possibilities of being successful in the male sphere. Hua Mu-Lan, Zhu Yingtai, and Wen Fei’e, are the imaginations of rebellious modern women. The imagination of the modern at the same time shows an imagination of the past where limitations and confinements are prominent. From the second layer of gender transgression, the audiences imagine an ideal man from a cross-dressed actress. This imagined ideal man could be, as Peggy Chiao states, the female audiences’ imagination of a “safe extra-marital affair” in a conservative time. The fundamental value of masculinity and femininity is also re-imagined on the cross-dressed actresses. Through both layers of cross-dressing, audiences enjoy various pleasures. When there is transgression, there is pleasure of breaking the confinements. With both layers of cross-dressing, there are pleasures of transgressing heterosexual normativity. From the first layer of cross-dressing, the audiences could enjoy the reading of two *male* protagonists falling in love on the screen. And from the second layer of cross-dressing, the audiences acknowledge that it is in fact two actresses purportedly falling in love with each other. While the pleasures of transgression certainly do exist in the female genre, these pleasures are however imagined. The transgression will in the end be confined, and regulations will after all be restored.
4.

Redeemed Femme Fatales—Imagining Modern Women

Stories in the female genre are often based on Chinese history and Chinese classical literature. When delineating a historical “China,” the female genre creates an imagined collective past for the diasporic audiences. This imagined past depicts a China under patriarchal (Neo-)Confucian tradition, in which women are expected to be a good daughter, a good wife, and a good mother. These are the three roles of a woman’s life that centers on man—the daughter of a father, a wife to a husband, and a mother of a son. Father, husband, and son are the three lords for woman in (Neo-)Confucian value: woman is supposed to obey her father before she gets married\textsuperscript{179}, obey her husband after she gets married, and then obey her son if her husband dies\textsuperscript{180}. A woman is not only supposed to be filial to her father, loyal to the nation, she also has to be faithful to her husband. Although women in pre-modern China experienced different degrees of (lack of) authority in different time periods\textsuperscript{181}, and (Neo-)Confucian suppression was not reinforced to women especially considering various social statuses\textsuperscript{182}, the “historical China” depicted in the female genre is an “imagined past” that strictly divides gender sphere into male/public versus female/domestic. In contrast to the virtuous woman, woman who is not filial, loyal, and faithful, are considered to be unvirtuous. In Chinese patriarchal tradition an evil woman appears to be one who lures men into destruction with her beauty or sexual power, and often time one who causes the decline of a dynasty. Concubine Yang Guifei in The Song of
Lasting Pain is one of the most famous examples of a dangerous woman. In The Love Eterne (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963), the female protagonist Zhu Yingtai specifically argues against Chinese misogynist literary tradition with the male protagonist Liang Shanbo. Liang states that in Chinese tradition, women are “troubles” because they are often the one who enchant men and cause decline of a nation. Liang gives examples such as Moxi, Daji, and Baosi who are the “femmes fatales” of Chinese literary tradition. Zhu argues against Liang’s perspective, and claims that it is these male kings are at fault in losing their nation yet they blame women as scapegoats. Zhu is not simply arguing against Liang, she is actually arguing against the entire Chinese patriarchal narrative. There are many notorious “femmes fatales” in Chinese literature and history, including Xi Shi, Diao Chan, Empress Wu, Chen Yuanyuan and Empress Wu Zetian. 

---

184 禍水。
185 Moxi (妹喜) is the concubine of the last king of Xia dynasty (ca. 2000BCE–1600BCE), the very first dynasty in Chinese history yet has only mythological records. Legend has it that Moxi is a beauty who loves to listen to the sound of tearing up brocades, and King Jie of Xia spends a lot of money on brocades, as well as numerous extravagance on Moxi and eventually caused the decline of his kingdom.
186 Daji (妲己) is the concubine of the last king of Shang dynasty (ca. 1500BCE-1027 BCE). It is the first dynasty of Chinese history with written records. It is said that Daji is a beauty whom the King Zhou of Shang loves and spends a lot of time and treasures on. He even kills a loyal courtier Bigan since Daji says that she heard that there are seven holes on the heart of a loyal courtier. A historical epic The Last Woman of Shang (Yueh Feng, 1964) is based on the story of Daji.
187 Baosi (褒姒) is the consort of King You of Zhou, the last king of Western Zhou dynasty (ca. 1027-771 BCE). It is said that Baosi is a beauty who rarely smiles, and yet she is astounding when smiles. In order to make she smile, King You of Zhou lights the beacon fire, which is used to notify surrounding fiefs to come and support Zhou kingdom with armies. When the armies come with hurry, Baosi smiles. However, the armies are angry because there was no actual threat to Zhou kingdom. Hence when the nomad troops actually invade Zhou kingdom and the beacon fire is lightened, no troops come to rescue and the Western Zhou dynasty is overturned.
188 Xi Shi (西施) is one of the four beauties in Chinese history/literature, who is sent to Fuchai (r. 495-473 BCE), the King of Wu, from Goujian (r. 496-465 BCE), King of Yue. Fuchai is enchanted by Xi Shi Guojian eventually revenges for his kingdom. Diao Chan (貂蟬) is also one of the four beauties. In Romance of the Three Kingdoms, Diao Chan helps the official Wang Yun to seduce Lü Bu in killing Dong Zhuo (141-192 AD), who is a warlord in the end of Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 AD). The story Diao Chan is made into the first huangmei film Diau Charn (Li Han-Hsiang, 1958). And the story of Xi Xhi is made into a historical epic Hsi Shih: Beauty of Beauties (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963), produced by Grand Motion Pictures. Xi Shi and Diao Chan can be said to be the female spies who fulfill their missions with sexual power.
189 Empress Wu/Wu Zetian (武則天, 624-705 AD) is the only empress who established her own dynasty in Chinese history. She reigned in the (Wu) Zhou dynasty (690-705 AD). Her story is made into a historical epic Empress Wu Tse-Tien (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963).
Dowager Cixi\textsuperscript{190}, and etc. In the female genre, the stories of the “femme fatales” are retold in the modern medium of cinema with women’s perspectives. For instance, the story of Yang Guifei transforms Yang into a matriarch who sacrifices for the sake of a nation in \textit{The Magnificent Concubine} (Li Han-Hsiang, 1962). Stories of many other “femme fatales” are also retold in a way that rationalize how these women are misunderstood under patriarchal perspectives. In this chapter, I will look at \textit{The Last Woman of Shang} (Yueh Feng, 1964), \textit{Three Sinners} (Yen Chun, 1962), and \textit{The Amorous Lotus Pan} (Chow Sze Loke, 1964) and see how the “femme fatales” are reinvented in the female genre. For the Chinese “femme fatales,” it is no longer how they are recorded in the history or what they represent that matters, it is how their stories are retold that is more important in the female genre. I argue that the new versions of the “femme fatales” serve as a way of educating the audiences.

\textbf{The Femme Fatales}

If matriarch is the woman who sacrifices for (Neo-)Confucian values of filial piety, chastity, and ultimately for loyalty, the “femme fatale” can be regarded as the bad woman who cannot be controlled under (Neo-)Confucian values. The term “femme fatale,” as Patrick Bade and Virginia M. Allen observe, became popular in art and literature since the 19\textsuperscript{th} century\textsuperscript{191}. But the prototype of the “femme fatale” exists in literature and mythologies for centuries. As Allen defines, “the femme fatale is a woman who lures men into danger, destruction, even death by means of her overwhelmingly seductive charms.” (vii, Allen) Images like Pandora, Medusa,

\textsuperscript{190} Chen Yuanyuan (陳圓圓, 1624-1681 AD) is a famous prostitute in the end of Ming dynasty (1368-1644 AD) who is said to be the reason that General Wu Sangui opens up Shanhai fortress of the great wall and allows the Qing armies to intrude/enter the Ming China. Empress Dowager Cixi (慈禧, 1835-1908 AD) is the last Empress Dowager in Qing dynasty (1644-1912 AD) who rules in the end of Qing dynasty under the name of young Emperor Guangxu. She is said to be responsible for losing wars versus the western armies in the end of Qing dynasty.

Salome, Cleopatra are all considered to be the prototype of “femme fatale.” Images of the “femme fatale,” as Allen writes, derives from “fear and desire experienced by men confronted with women who demand the right to control their own desires, their bodies, their reproductive tracts—women, who, in other words, deny the right of men to control female sexuality.” (x, Allen) When mentioning of the “femme fatale” in film study, it is inevitable to look at feminist theories in film noir. However, the “femme fatales” in the female genre and film noir are drastically different. Not only does the genre itself contrast—whereas film noir is dark visually and in topics, the feminine genre is colorful and splendid—the femme fatales are portrayed very differently in film noir and in the female genre. The “femme fatales” in film noir are often seductive and dangerous due to their overflowing sexuality. Yet since the female genre is a genre that lacks sexuality, the “femme fatales” in the female genre are portrayed to be very different image from the “femme fatales.” To be more specific, these women were defined as “femme fatales” because of their uncontrollable sexuality—they were the projection of male fear in Chinese classics. Yet when their sexuality is diminished in the female genre, these “femme fatales” appear as projection of uncontrollable women in (Neo-)Confucianism: the unfilial, unfaithful, and unloyal women. Furthermore, since the female genre tends to depict great women in classics, as I argue that, stories of these “femme fatales” are retold in a way that helps to rationalize women’s role in the official history and classical narrative, yet on the other hand also make dangerous women play a supportive role to the state.


The transformation of the “femme fatale” makes them less dangerous women and hence should be considered with the quotation mark. But I will use this definition in the entire chapter, so I will omit the quotation mark so that it does not appear to be redundant.
The Femme Fatale Or the Matriarch

Daji is a notorious femme fatale in Chinese history and literature. People recognize her as the one with sexual power who causes the tyrant King Zhou to be the last King of the Shang dynasty. Daji is notorious not for being an actual historical figure, but for being the synonym as a femme fatale. *Investiture of Gods* is a mythological novel that vividly depicts Daji as the femme fatale. In the novel, Daji is a thousands-year-old fox spirit sent by Goddess Nüwa specifically to destruct King Zhou and to end the Shang dynasty. She is described as a beauty who “breaths pleasant fragrance from her tongue when opening her cherry-like lips, delivers thousands of amorous and coquettish feelings when moving her phoenix-like eyes.” (36, Xu) King Zhou immediately falls in love with her, listens to every single suggestion she proposes, and ignores all affairs related to his dynasty. Daji gives all kinds of suggestions to make King Zhou a tyrant of all times. For examples, she creates a way of torture which ties people on a hot-burned hollow bronze pillar. By exhibiting this torture in public, loyal officials dare not to criticize King Zhou. She falsely accuses the queen of revolt, and tortures her to death. She even prods King Zhou to kill his own sons because they are sons of the queen and could someday revenge for their mother. These are just a few examples, among which King Zhou agrees with all of her suggestions. Although the actual historical figures Daji and King Zhou lived in the end of Shang dynasty (ca. 1500BCE-1027 BCE) when neither Confucianism nor Daoism existed, *Investiture of Gods* is a novel that is saturated with (Neo-)Confucian and Daoist ideas because

---

194 *Investiture of Gods* (Fengshen Yanyi, 封神演義), written or edited by Xu Zhonglin in Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD). The novel is published in 16th century, and there are debates on who is the author of the novel.
195 King Zhou offends Goddess Nüwa in her temple by writing an offensive poem that wishes to make the goddess his concubine.
196 妲己啟朱唇似一點櫻桃，舌尖上吐的是美孜孜一團和氣，轉秋波如雙彎鳳目，眼角裏送的是嬌滴滴萬種風情。My translation.
197 Both Confucianism and Daoism are philosophies that came into being in Spring and Autumn Period (770-475 BCE) of Eastern Zhou dynasty (771-256 BCE). Confucianism does not become the state ideology until Han dynasty (ca. 104 BCE).
the novel was written in the sixteenth century when Neo-Confucianism was still the dominant state ideology. Who the Daji and King Zhou actually are in history is no longer as important as what they represent. In *Investiture of Gods*, Daji signifies the femme fatale. Daji bewitches King Zhou for the sole purpose of destroying the Shang dynasty. She is replaced by the fox spirit that is often depicted as one who transforms into a beauty and lures man with her sex appeal. The monster replaces Daji on two levels. On one hand, the fox spirit kills Daji and literally replaces her in the novel. On the other hand, the non-human being that transgresses the (Neo-Confucian) rules replaces the actual person Daji in the history. Daji hence becomes the synonym of the femme fatale in Chinese literary tradition.

The film, *The Last Woman of Shang* retells the story of the femme fatale Daji into a story of almost-a-matriarch. In the film, King Zhou of Shang is a headstrong and belligerent tyrant who never cares about his people. Daji’s father, a feudal lord, is betrayed by a treacherous official and killed by King Zhou. Daji therefore decides to revenge and vows to end the Shang dynasty. She makes King Zhou fall in love with her. With his love, Daji requests King Zhou to build the Star-reaching Palace, a skyscraper of the time that demanded tremendous amount of money and labor. Before Daji meets King Zhou, she has feelings to Ji Fa, a young man who overturns Shang dynasty and becomes the first King of the succeeding Zhou Dynasty. Ji Fa comes to palace rescue his father and to assassinate Daji under his father’s command. Knowing that King Zhou is about to execute Ji Fa and his father, Daji secretly saves and releases them. Ji Fa calls the feudal lords to rebel against Shang Dynasty and leads the armies to the capital. At

---

198妖怪。

199 Shang dynasty (ca. 1500BCE-1027 BCE) is the first dynasty with written records. Zhou dynasty (ca. 1046-256 BCE) is the succeeding dynasty. The last king of Shang is King Zhou, which is a different character to the Zhou dynasty pronounced with different tones. Ji Fa is the name of King Wu of Zhou dynasty, the first and legitimate King of Zhou dynasty. Ji Chang is his father who dies before Zhou dynasty was established. Yet King Wu acknowledges him as King Wen of Zhou.
the end of his death, King Zhou laughs that he possessed everything in the world, and he is satisfied that now he dies with the woman he loves. Daji then claims that she has planned all the way for the end of Shang dynasty. When Ji Fa arrives, it is too late to rescue Daji.

The Last woman of Shang is a historical epic that depicts a grand China, and interestingly, it is a grand China under East Asian collaborations. The male protagonist King Zhou is played by Korean actor Shin Yung-Kyun, the male supporting actor Ji Fa is played by Korean actor Nam Koong Won, and the cinematographer is Nishimoto Tadashi, a Japanese cinematographer under Chinese name He Lanshan\(^{200}\). Many of outdoor scenes are shot in Korea. Several of the films, especially historical epics that costs a lot on productions are partly filmed in Japan or Korea. Part of the reasons is that it is hard to find beautiful and empty outdoor scene in Hong Kong. On the one hand, historical epics shot in Korea or Japan\(^{201}\) shows that as one of the largest film studios the Shaw Brothers had ambition and ability to dominate East Asian film market. On the other hand, it also shows that the actual China—the mainland China or the motherland China—was lost to diasporic audiences\(^{202}\) and had to be reconstructed and reimagined in the Shaw Brothers’ movies. The reconstructed and reimagined China not only serves as a collective China for the audiences, but also serves to educate the audiences in history, culture, and values. To re-create the femme fatale is therefore in a sense to re-educate the audiences on not only history/literature but also on re-constructing an image of woman. And the re-created femme fatale is also a reconstructing of a modern woman.

---

\(^{200}\) Shaw Brothers was one of the largest film studios in Chinese film market. There were a lot of collaborations between Shaw Brothers and Japanese or Korean film studios. He Lanshan is the cinematographer for many of Shaw Brothers’ films, including The Magnificent Concubine (Li Han-Hsiang, 1962) and The Love Eterne (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963). Qiu, Shuting. Gangri Yingren Koushu Lishi: Huadi Weiyou. [Oral History From Hong Kong and Japanese Filmmakers: Making Friends From Enemies.] Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 2012. Print.

\(^{201}\) Besides The Last Woman of Shang, part of The Goddess of Mercy (Shin Sang-Ok and Lim Wan-Sik, 1967) is also shot in Korea. It is a movie on the story of Sinicized Bodhisattva Kuan-yin hence more complicated than an imagined China. The Magnificent Concubine, on the other hand, is partly shot in Japan.

\(^{202}\) This refers to what I mentioned in the chapter on matriarch.
How is the femme fatale transformed? Daji is very different in the historical epic *The Last Woman of Shang* and *Investitures of Gods*. Although (Neo-)Confucian value saturates both texts, Daji appear to be very different characters. In *Investitures of Gods*, Daji is the femme fatale who leads a man to destruction, she is to be blamed for the responsibility of ending the Shang dynasty. However, in *The Last Woman of Shang*, Daji is de-stigmatized. She is granted an ultimate mission that uplifts her deeds into a greater level: to avenge her father’s death. She has two enemies, the two people who cause the death of her father: the treacherous official You Hun and ruthless King Zhou. Her father, Su Hu is depicted as a lord with Confucian value—a benevolent heart. His fief has experienced severe floods and cannot afford to pay more tribute to the Shang dynasty. You Hun, who is responsible for collecting tributes from Su’s fief, intends to make Daji a reward for himself. Su Hu claims that his fief is the “country of ritual and righteousness,” indicating a country that follows Confucian values, and expels You. Being humiliated, You accuses Su of being rebellious to Shang dynasty and successfully instigates King Zhou to intrude Su’s fief and kills Su Hu. The enemy which kills one’s father, as in Chinese idiom and as Daji states, is “the enemy that one cannot stand under the same sky,” meaning that only one of the two can exist. Under her vow to revenge for her father, Daji’s deeds are not only justified but also glorified. Furthermore, to avenge one’s father is traditionally a son’s responsibility, like Ji Fa revenges for his father and overthrows King Zhou. But the movie titles and makes Daji the last woman who revenges for her father and ends the Shang dynasty. Besides revenging for her father, Daji’s mission can also be explained at an even higher level: she is also revenging for her father’s fief and the people of the fief. Her revenge is beyond the

---

203 仁。
204 礼义之邦。
205 父仇不共戴天。 My translation.
familial grudge to the level of the national enemy. In a sense, Daji in the female genre sacrifices herself to revenge for her father and her country\textsuperscript{206}, almost like a matriarch. With the mission to revenge for her father and for her country, Daji in \textit{The Last Woman of Shang} hence is de-stigmatized. In other words, instead of being depicted as the femme fatale who destroys patriarchy in \textit{Investitures of Gods}, Daji transforms into almost a matriarch who sacrifices herself and defends for patriarchy—the patriarchy of her father.

Daji is portrayed as almost but not quite a matriarch because although she sacrifices for patriarchy, it is her sex appeal that she uses as a weapon. Despite causing the war that destroys her father’s fief, her sex appeal also works as a way to eliminate her enemies. Her first enemy, treacherous You Hun dies under her sex appeal. Zhiyan, Daji’s maid, tricks You into thinking that Daji agrees to have sex with him. When he sneaks into Daji’s tent and attempts to rape her, Zhiyan goes to inform King Zhou to come to the rescue. King Zhou saves Daji and kills You Hun immediately. In a sense, You Hun suffers the consequences of his action: since it is out of his lust that he makes Daji and her father to suffer, it is also his lust that causes his own death. Besides You Hun, Daji further lures King Zhou and makes him succumb to her sex appeal. Daji’s sex appeal is further emphasized in a scene of her taking a bath. In this sequence, the camera gazes at Daji taking a hot bath [Figure 3.1] King Zhou firstly looks at her through a curtain, then he slowly walks toward Daji, opens up the curtain and peeps/gazes at her naked body. [Figure 3.2] Although Daji bathes at the same bathtub as Yang Guifei of the Magnificent Concubine [Figure 1.3], a very crucial difference is that while Yang is gazed at by the camera and the audience, Daji is gazed by King Zhou, the male protagonist of the movie. The shot of

\textsuperscript{206} Her father’s fief, according to the feudal system, belongs to King Zhou. In the film, however, Daji’s maid Zhiyan persuades her by saying that “King Zhou destroys the Ji state, and harms our people.” Hence, though not emphasized, Daji is also revenging for the fief of her father. And I refer the fief here as the country/nation.
Yang lacks a male subject who projects her as the object of desire. On the contrary, Daji’s naked body is under King Zhou’s gaze and she is portrayed as his object of desire. In the next sequence, after King Zhou drives out loyal officials who ask him not to squander on a woman, Daji walks out from the bathtub slowly and opens up her robe facing King Zhou. [Figure 3.3] The camera does not gaze at Daji’s naked body but in the next shot looks at her from the back. [Figure 3.4] Daji’s naked body is revealed only to King Zhou, whereas the audiences can only presume the King’s view through merely Daji’s body shape projecting on the robe. King Zhou laughs in satisfaction and jokingly kneels down in front of Daji, salutes that “the lesser subject kowtows to Queen Su.” [Figure 3.5] His behavior symbolizes that he succumbs to Daji’s sex appeal. From this moment on, their roles are reversed: in front the allure of Daji’s naked body, King Zhou becomes the “lesser subject” of Her Majesty Daji. It is Daji’s naked body—her sex appeal—that captivates King Zhou and revenges to her enemies. Due to the power she gains from her sex appeal, Daji can only be a redeemed femme fatale rather than a matriarch of a nation.

The Last Woman of Shang rewrites the story of Daji and redeems her from the stereotyped femme fatale. Besides giving her a greater mission loaded with filial piety, the movie to redeems Daji with several different approaches. All of Daji’s evil deeds are altered to redeem her. For instance, King Zhou’s wife Queen Jiang’s death is completely rewritten in the movie that makes Daji an innocent woman who never thinks of power. In Investitures of Gods, Daji proposes all kinds of ruthless suggestions to King Zhou with the purpose of destroying his patriarchy. Queen Jiang, King Zhou’s primary wife, is depicted as a virtuous wife who accords with (Neo-)Confucian values. As the Queen, she advises King Zhou not to indulge in Daji. Daji hence plans to eliminate her with treacherous court official Fei Zhong. They hire an assassin and

---

207 Quotation from the film. My translation. If not further indicates, all the quotations from the film are my translation.
accuse Queen Jiang of assassinating King Zhou. Daji then suggests King Zhou to torture the Queen for confession. Queen Jiang is scooped out one eye and her arms burned with the bronze pillar. Yet with her faithfulness and loyalty, Jiang never gives any false confession and eventually dies under torture. Daji then persuades King Zhou to give an order of killing his own sons. In (Neo-)Confucian standard, these are intolerable suggestions not only because the princes are King Zhou’s own sons, but also because they are the heirs and the foundation of a nation. Their deaths would mean a termination of the Shang dynasty. For the same reason, Daji’s purpose of ending the Shang dynasty is apparent in the novel. However, The Last Woman of Shang retells this story and makes Daji completely innocent. In the movie, Queen Jiang actually hires an assassin to kill Daji. Yet Zhiyan discovers the Queen’s plan and finds King Zhou to rescue Daji. King Zhou kills the assassin, and Queen Jiang commits suicide hitting her head on a pillar. In this retold version, Queen Jiang’s reason for hiring an assassin is not revealed, and she is no longer a virtuous wife as depicted in the novel. On the other hand, Daji has no idea of the assassin, nor does she have any attempt of killing or replacing the Queen. Daji is made completely innocent and a victim rather than a killer.

The Last Woman of Shang also redeems Daji from a ruthless woman. Besides torturing Queen Jiang and attempting to eliminate the heirs of Shang, in Investitures of Gods, Daji also plots in killing many loyal officials. One of the most famous examples is Bigan, a loyal official who also happen to be King Zhou’s uncle. In the novel, Daji cooperates with her friend, a pheasant spirit. The pheasant spirit transforms into a woman to seduce King Zhou, and she claims that only Bigan’s heart can cure Daji’s fake heart disease. King Zhou requests Bigan to

---

208 In this mythological novel, two princes are saved eventually by wind in the persecution.
submit a piece of his heart to cure his beloved Daji. Bigan dies digging out his heart alive\textsuperscript{209}. In The Last Woman of Shang, the story is rewritten to redeem Daji. In the movie, Bigan’s death occurs when he criticizes King Zhou for spending time on Daji and wasting money on constructing palaces. He suggests the King to expel Daji and pay more attention on his kingdom. When Bigan criticizes, Daji lowers her head, which shows that she is ashamed of Bigan’s criticism. [Figure 3.6] King Zhou, on the other hand, is furious at Bigan’s criticism and commands Bigan to dig out his heart because “he heard that there are seven holes on a saint’s heart.”\textsuperscript{210} At this moment, Daji even comes forward to stop the King. When Bigan stabs into his own chest, Daji is terrified and cries over Bigan’s death. Although Daji is soon dragged away by King Zhou to the towered Star-reaching Palace, Zhiyan kneels down and leads everyone to mourn over Bigan. Noteworthily, this shot is an extreme long shot from a high angle, which could be regarded as Daji’s perspective looking from the top of the Star-reaching Palace. [Figure 3.7] Besides making King Zhou responsible for Bigan’s death, the movie goes further and depicts Daji as being ashamed of bringing harm to the people and to sympathize with the loyal Bigan. Daji is depicted as humane rather than demonized in the movie. From her detailed emotions, such as sympathetic, fear, and sadness, Daji appears to be a humanistic woman on the screen rather than a demonized femme fatale.

The most crucial revision of Daji’s story is her love with Ji Fa. Ji Fa is a significant character because the actual historical figure Ji Fa is the first King of the succeeding Zhou dynasty, King Wu of Zhou. His father, Ji Chang, also plays an important part in establishing the

\textsuperscript{209} In this mythological novel, Bigan does not die immediately because he was protected by a spell. He soon dies when the spell is broken. Xu, Zhonglin. Ed. Fengshen Yanyi. [Investitures of Gods.] Beijing: Renmin Weexue Publishing. 1979. Print.

\textsuperscript{210} Another version of this story that people are familiar with is that Daji claims there are seven holes on a saint’s heart, and would like to know if Bigan’s heart is born with seven holes.
Zhou dynasty. Yet the character Ji Fa in *The Last Woman of Shang* is a fabrication based on Ji Fa and his elder brother, Bo Yikao. In the novel, Daji is portrayed not only ruthless but also lascivious. Besides luring King Zhou, she falls in love and seduces Bo Yikao due to his appearance. Yikao is known with his specialty on koto, so Daji approaches him with an excuse of learning koto from him. Since filial Yikao refuses her, Daji angrily accuses him of taking advantage of her sexually. She demands King Zhou to slice Yikao up, makes him into meatballs, and then feed it to his father, Ji Chang. Ji Chang is forced to take his son’s flesh to prove that he makes no harm to King Zhou. From the brutal description, Daji is undoubtedly a demonized femme fatale in the novel. The movie, however, makes a lot of revisions on this cruel story. First and foremost, Bo Yikao is substituted by Ji Fa, King Wu of the Zhou dynasty. Their love begins even before Daji loses her father and incarnates with vengeance. Their love is pure, mutual, and it follows Confucian values. They meet in the mountain when Ji Fa is playing koto on a song that praises “King Tang of the Shang dynasty who overturns tyrant King Jie of the Xia dynasty and saves people from hardships.” Daji praises his skills on koto and asks him to teach her. Ji Fa acknowledges Daji as his *zhiyin*, which signifies intimate or close friends who know each other by heart. Literally, *zhiyin* means to understand one’s music well. On a different level, the music signifies Ji Fa’s mind and his intention of “saving people from hardships” of tyrant King

---

211 The novel describes that Bo has “a face like full moon, graceful temperament, uncommon appearances, and attractive demeanors.” 面如滿月，風姿俊雅，一表非俗，其風情裊裊動人。Xu, 1979.
212 Daji seduces Yikao and asks to be taught in his embrace, yet Yikao politely refuses her. Xu, 1979.
213 Daji tells King Zhou that a saint would not eat his son’s flesh. If Ji Chang is a saint, he would not take the meatballs. But this also means that Ji Chang might someday overturns the Shang dynasty and has to be eliminated. Hence although Ji Chang knows by heart that it is his son’s flesh in the bowl, he has to take it so that he does not appear as a threat to King Zhou. Xu, 1979.
214 Quotation from the film. This refers to Moxi (妹喜) in footnote 7. In Confucian value, a king/emperor acquires the mandate of heaven only when he is a benevolent king/emperor. A tyrant who treats his subjects without Confucian values loses his mandate of heaven and will eventually be replaced by a benevolent king who has the mandate of heaven.
215 知音。
Zhou of the Shang dynasty. As Ji Fa’s zhiyin, Daji is supposed to understand his ideal. Ji Fa and Daji’s love begins with a koto duet. This kind of love reflects the Confucian virtue of feelings that is “stirred from the affection yet stops at the etiquette.” Besides showing their virtues, the duet also refers to a Chinese idiom “the harmony of kotos,” indicating love relationship between husband and wife that resembles harmonious music. The koto duet is a revision of Bo Yikao’s story yet makes Daji a virtuous woman with Confucian value.

The fact that Yikao is substitutes by Ji Fa is crucial in revising history not only because their pure and mutual love redeems Daji from being a dangerous woman, but also because Ji Fa is the first and legitimate King of the Zhou dynasty. The movie proposes a way to look at Daji from a different perspective: as the last woman of Shang, she is assisting the succeeding dynasty. More importantly, Ji Chang and Ji Fa are two kings who have been constantly praising by Confucius for ruling with virtues and overturning the tyrant King Zhou with mandate of heaven. The revisions are significant in redeeming Daji. To begin with, Ji Fa states Daji’s image as a femme fatale and tries to assassinate her in a scene:

“The people in the world are in hardships caused by you! They would like to skin you alive and devour your flesh. You built up tall palaces, imprisoned feudal lords, and killed loyal officials. And only for your enjoyments,” Ji Fa claims.

---

216 发乎情止乎禮。My translation.
217 琴瑟和鳴。The harmony of qin and se. Qin and se are two types of ancient instruments, both are similar to koto. This idiom specifically refers to relationship between husband and wife.
218 Confucius is born in Spring and Autumn Period, which is the later Zhou Dynasty. He praised the former Zhou, especially King Wen, King Wu, and Duke of Zhou who is King Wen’s brother. Confucius praises King Wen (Ji Chang) for being virtuous and benevolent, praises King Wu for overturning the tyrant King Zhou, and praises Duke of Zhou for establishing the rituals. Here are some of the examples of Confucius praising King Wen in The Analects.

“Although the House of Zhou had domination over two-thirds of the world, it still remained a vassal of Shang. One may truly say that the moral power of Zhou was supreme.” (38) “The Master was trapped in Kuang. He said: ‘King Wen is dead; is civilization not resting now on me?’ If Heaven intends civilization to be destroyed, why was it vested in me? If Heaven does not intend civilization to be destroyed, what should I fear from the people of Kuang?” (39)
“I…,” stumbles Daji.

“Under my father’s order, I am here to kill you today,” claims Ji Fa.

“He…, he does not understand me,” cries Daji.

“Say no more! You are harmful to our nation and people. You are selfish. I am going to remove you today,” says Ji Fa.

“Mr. Ji, kill me, just kill me,” cries Daji.219

Ji Fa’s statement shows how people understand Daji—a femme fatale who causes people to suffer, who is harmful to the King and nation, and thus who has to be eliminated. Daji’s reaction in this scene symbolizes how the film looks at the historical figure Daji. She firstly stumbles, symbolizing Daji’s inarticulation for herself in Chinese literature for thousands of years. When she states that “he does not understand me,” the “he” here could be interpreted in different ways. “He” could be Ji Chang, and in this sense Daji means that Ji Chang send Ji Fa to kill her because he does not understand her. “He” could also be Ji Fa, in this sense Daji sighs that the person she loves does not understand her as she understands him. “He” could also be a symbolic pronoun for Chinese intellectuals who were articulate and had the power of writing. What “he” does not understand, as how Daji understood Ji Fa, is her will to overturn the Shang dynasty, for both her sake, Ji Fa’s sake, and for the sake of Zhou dynasty. Looking Daji from the perspective, all the male writers in Chinese literature do not “understand” Daji. The movie suggests to look at Daji from the perspective that makes her almost a matriarch of the Zhou dynasty.

Moreover, the movie convincingly delineates how Daji endeavors to rescue Ji Fa and Ji Chang as a modern medium that goes into details on Daji’s psychological struggles. For instance, in order to stop King Zhou from killing Ji Fa due to the assassination, Daji wittingly states that “I

219 Quotation from the film.
want to torture him and make him die slowly.” Although Daji states a cruel command, her minute facial expressions on the screen shows her worry. [Figure 3.8, 3.9] Hence when Daji states the order that suits her stereotype as a femme fatale, the audiences are reminded of the hidden reasons that cannot be revealed without watching her on the screen. While Daji is justified in the movie, the treacherous court official Fei Zhong is blamed for torturing Ji Fa and his father. Fei suspects on Ji Fa and Daji’s relationship, and suggests King Zhou to make Ji Fa into meatballs and bring it to Daji. Fei claims that if Daji hates rather than love Ji Fa, she would take his flesh without hesitation. Though Ji Fa and his father were successfully rescued with Zhiyan’s plan, Daji cleverly asserts that as the King’s beloved, “how can [she] be tainted by flesh of traitors” and refuses to take the flesh that belongs to a substitute. This revision on Bo Yikao’s story not only de-demonized Daji, it interestingly makes Daji the one being testified rather than virtuous Ji Chang. The analogy between Daji and Ji Chang in a sense sanctifies Daji. Daji is tested for her faithfulness and loyalty—her faithfulness to Ji Fa and loyalty to the succeeding Zhou dynasty. She proves her faithfulness to Ji Fa, also the one who establish the Zhou dynasty, and hence her loyalty to the Zhou dynasty is also confirmed. Consequently, even though Daji is a femme fatale in the history of the Shang dynasty, she should be regarded as almost a matriarch from the perspective of the Zhou history—that is, under the prerequisite of Daji’s mission of revenge. To look at Daji from this perspective on the one hand sanctifies Daji, yet on the other hand *The Last Woman of Shang* calls Daji’s feminine into control of patriarchies—the patriarchy of her father’s as well as the patriarchy of the Zhou dynasty.

Daji’s death scene in the movie is significant in showing her mission accomplished for the sake of patriarchies. This sequence is juxtaposed with two scenarios: Ji Fa mobilizing the

---

220 Quotation from the film.
221 Quotation from the film.
people to rise in rebellion versus King Zhou enjoying an extravagant life with Daji in the palace. The movie believably depicts Ji Fa’s mandate of heaven with shots on people responding to his call. [Figure 3.10] The juxtaposition shows that in the meanwhile Daji slowly leads King Zhou into destruction. In the end Daji finally reveals her mission of vengeance to King Zhou on the Star-reaching Palace. While King Zhou summarizes his life to Daji that, “I have no regret dying with you by my side. [...] In my life I have won numerous battles in North, South, and the whole world. I have never met any compatible enemy. How can I die in the hands of an enemy.” While King Zhou announces his content of having Daji, and prepares to die with his own hands, Daji strikes him with her true color. She claims,

“Don’t come near me. You are still dreaming in the end of your life. My true love is Ji Fa, the enemy that you cannot stand under the same sky. [...] Not dying in the hands of an enemy. I am your enemy. You die in my hands. I can tell you that I am the one who released Ji Fa. I am the one who ends the Shang dynasty.”

Ji Fa even comes to rescue her, though a moment too late. When he arrives to kill King Zhou, Daji is already dead. Ji Fa cries over her, and then walks into ruins holding her in his arms. [Figure 3.11] This last shot echoes the establishing shots of the movie, in which the camera looks at battlefields in long shots. [Figure 3.12] The establishing shots begins with the fighting scenes, and followed by corpses lying on the ground, yet with no exceptions all soldiers and bodies are gendered male. The ending shot, however, shows Ji Fa holding Daji in his arms. This shot on the one hand symbolizes that Daji is considered as one of the soldiers, and the only female, who fight in overturning the tyrannical Shang. On the other hand, this shot also symbolizes that

---

222 Although not clearly stated in the film, from the soldiers’ outfit, this shot resembles the call from the nomad tribe to Ji Fa and Zhou dynasty.
223 Quotation from the film.
224 Quotation from the film.
whereas the last woman of Shang dies and the Shang becomes ruins, here begins a new
patriarchy—King Wu of/and the Zhou dynasty.

With revisions in *The Last Woman of Shang*, the historical figure Daji becomes vivid and
more complicated than the femme fatale in the words. This image of the redeemed femme fatale
is not exceptional. Besides Daji, Diao Chan and Xi Shi’s stories are also retold in the films of the
female genre. Diao Chan’s story is made into the first *huangmei* film *Diao Charn* (Li Han-
Hsiang, 1958). The film depicts Diao Chan as a heroine who sacrifices herself to pay back her to
her benefactor. Xi Shi’s story is made into a great historical epic *Hsi Shih: Beauty of Beauties* (Li
Han-Hsiang, 1965) after director Li Han-Hsiang leaves the Shaw Brothers and establishes Grand
Motion Pictures in Taiwan. Other films, such as *The Magnificent Concubine* and *Empress Wu
Tse-Tien* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963) revise stories of female historical figures Yang Guifei and Wu
Zetian respectively. While Ain-Ling Wong may attribute these great female characters to
director Li Han-Hsiang’s sympathy to women in his film-making career since Li continued to
make films on prominent women after he left the Shaw Brothers, I would rather say that the
rewriting of prominent women is a trend in female genre in this time-period since many directors
also made similar films. *The Last Woman of Shang* is unique because while Diao Chan and Xi
Shi are often depicted as tributary beauties for the purpose to enchant powerful men, Daji is
always considered as a femme fatale. The movie intriguingly redeems Daji. Besides the
historical figures, some other the notorious femme fatales in Chinese literatures are also revised
in the female genre. For instance, story of Yan Xijiao and Pan Jinlian.

---

225 Wong, 2007. And interestingly, *Diao Charn, The Magnificent Concubine, Empress Wu Tse-Tien* and *Hsi Shih: Beauty of Beauties* are all directed by Li Han-Hsiang.

226 The film *Diao Charn* and *Hsi Shih* also revise the stories of Diao Chan and Xi Shi. But the story of Daji is almost completely different from the one people know of.
A Less-Dangerous Femme Fatale

The story of Yan Xijiao comes from a vernacular novel *Water Margin*\(^\text{227}\). The novel delineates one hundred and eight outlaws who evades to Mountain Liang and forms a small utopia to fight against government in the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127). Xijiao is a minor character who turns Song Jiang, the leader of Mountain Liang, into an outlaw. In *Water Margin*, Yan Xijiao is a young and beautiful woman who excels in singing. Her old mother arranges her for the secondary marriage with Song because Song helps them to bury Xijiao’s father, and she counts Song as a dependable source of living expenses. Song provides Xijiao and her mother a sufficient life. Yet since Song does not have much desire on woman, soon Xijiao falls in love with Zhang Wenyuan, a young and handsome colleague of Song. Song hears of gossip and avoids visiting Xijiao. However, Yan’s mother considering Song as the bread winner, finds Song and brings him back to Xijiao one night. Xijiao has her heart on Zhang and ignores Song the entire night. Song also hopes to leave but is forced to stay by Yan’s mother. Song leaves in the early morning but leaves an important letter of Mountain Liang at Yan’s place. Since the letter is from the outlaws, it could cause trouble to both Song and outlaws in Mountain Liang. When Song hurries back to fetch the letter, Xijiao hides the letter and threatens Song. Song agrees on all her conditions, and asks for the letter immediately then to get enough of money later. Xijiao refuses. Out of anger, Song accidentally kills Xijiao. Song is then forced to leave his post and later joins the outlaws in Mountain Liang.

\(^{227}\) The novel *Water Margin* (水滸傳), although depicting outlaws in the Song Dynasty, is written in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 AD). There are debates of the author(s), it is believed that the novel is written by Shi Nai’an and/or Luo Guanzhong. The outlaws in the novels are mostly forced to transgress the laws and cannot be justified with the laws or government of the time. Yan Xijiao goes with the name Yan Poxi in *Water Margin*, *po* could also mean woman. But I will use Yan Xijiao as her name to indicate that they are the same character.
The movie *Three Sinners*, on the other hand, tells quite a different version of Yan Xijiao’s story. Xijiao is a poor woman who sells herself in order to get money to bury her father. Out of sympathy, Song Jiang gives her money to help her. Xijiao insists on paying back Song by being his wife, Song reluctantly gives in and lives with Xijiao and her old mother as a family. As an official in local government, Song suddenly has to travel without a return date. Song asks his follower Zhang Wenyuan to bring some money to Xijiao. Zhang falls in love with her but has no chance to get close to her. Since Song is away, Xijiao’s old mother asks Zhang to accompany Xijiao to her father’s grave one day. With this chance, Zhang rapes Xijiao and asks her to leave Song and be with him. When Song returns, Xijiao struggles to tell him the truth but fails. One day, Zhang sneaks into Xijiao’s place and threatens her to keep secret on their relationship. Song happens to come back, overhears part of their conversation, and leaves the place angrily with misunderstandings. Song stops visiting Xijiao for a couple of months, and Xijiao becomes ill thinking of Song. Xijiao’s mother drags Song home for Xijiao’s sake. Song questions her on Zhang, and she admits. Song is furious and refuses to listen to her confession, he decides to leave her with Zhang and commands her to leave the next day. Zhang has sneaked into Xijiao’s place again and overhears their conversation. After Song leaves, Zhang finds a letter Song leaves behind. Zhang wants to report Song on the rebellious letter from Mountain Liang. Xijiao wisely helps to get the letter back and burns it immediately. When Song returns for the letter, he sees Zhang’s back sneaking away from the place. Song asks Yan for the letter, and does not believe that she has burned it. He assumes that Xijiao must work with Zhang in taking the letter to the court. Song kills Xijiao out of anger, yet soon finds the ashes of the letter.
*Water Margin* portrays Yan Xijiao as a young, beautiful, and lustful femme fatale. She is described as eighteen or nineteen years old, in “the best years”

228 of her life. She has a beautiful look and sexy body: black and overflowing hair, slim and arched eyebrows, tiny feet and white hands, shiny eyes and snowy breasts, just “as if a fairy comes to the world.”

229 Her beauty is an asset: she appeals to many wealthy men and her mother keeps her for the best offer. She is a femme fatale who dominates her own sexuality. She despises Song because he cannot satisfy her sexually. She then falls in love with Zhang because of his appearance and his ability to please women sexually and in words. Xijiao takes the initiative to flirt with Zhang, and they fall in love “as hot as fire.”

230 (200) When Xijiao finds the letter, she threatens Song to write an agreement for her and Zhang to get married, to give up his right on the belongings that she receives, and then to give her 100 tael of gold that he receives from Mountain Liang.

231 Her decisions are made under the concern of her love with Zhang. She intends to take the money and spend her life with Zhang. Since Song not only helps to bury her father, but also provides sufficient life for her and her old mother, he is considered to be the benefactor and husband to Xijiao. Hence Xijiao is unfaithful and ungrateful to betray Song Jiang. Even though killing Xijiao makes Song an outlaw, *Water Margin* indicates that Song should be justified due to his righteousness and Xijiao’s moral defects. Xijiao appears to be a femme fatale whose overflowing sexuality threatens the law of patriarchy. Though not stated in either *Water Margin* or *Three Sinners*, Yan Xijiao can...
be read with sympathy. She can be considered as a victim under patriarchy: a young woman who is sold for burying her father and exchanged as a merchandise for economic values by her mother. She cannot make decisions for her own life. When she finally finds her love and fights for it, she is blamed for being unfaithful and lascivious. As a female character in the novel, Xijiao has no voice of herself. She is soon eliminated and becomes simply a reason for the emergence of great hero Song Jiang. Interestingly, the revision of Yan Xijiao’s story in *Three Sinners* does look at her simply in this sympathetic perspective. On the other hand, Xijiao is revised to be a faithful and active woman.

In *Three Sinners*, Xijiao transforms from a minor character to the female protagonist, and more importantly, a dignified female protagonist. Even her birth is revised: Xijiao is no longer a “prostitute of wine and lust” (200), but born in an impoverished intellectual family. Xijiao is thus supposed to be a well-educated woman who follows (Neo-)Confucian moral standards. To begin with (Neo-)Confucian values, Xijiao is depicted as a filial daughter. She voluntarily sacrifices herself for patriarchy. In the first scene of Xijiao’s appearance in the movie, she walks slowly to a crowd with a solemn face. [Figure 3.13] She then kneels down and begins to sing/narrate her life: her family suffers from hunger and travels to Yuncheng County in the hope to stay with relatives. Yet they not only cannot find their relative, her father also dies. As a poor but filial daughter she is willing to “sell herself to bury her father, so that her mother’s mind will be eased.” Different from the novel, her sacrifice is an active sacrifice. Her solemn face indicates that she is making a dignified sacrifice. In the evening when she prepares to offer her

---

232 酒色娼妓。In *Water Margin*, Xijiao has a low birth. She learns singing from her father and earns living by singing in brothels. Working in the brothels was considered as the lowest of low occupations. But the “prostitute of wine and lust” also clearly refers to her uncontrollable sexuality.

233 Quotation from the film.
Though Mother Yan does not specify, but Xijiao is being filial and obedient to her father and under patriarchal values. Xijiao tearfully answers, “this is what I am supposed to do as a daughter.” As a filial daughter, Xijiao willingly and actively sacrifices her body to a man who she barely knows. Her marriage with Song thus begins with her filial piety. Moreover, even when Song declines, Xijiao insists on paying back to him or she would rather die “with her father.” In other words, Xijiao recognizes value of her body and actively makes a decision to sacrifice for patriarchal value.

Besides being a filial daughter, Xijiao transforms from a lascivious femme fatale to a faithful wife. In *Water Margin*, Xijiao is arranged to marry Song as the secondary wife while in the movie Xijiao becomes Song Jiang’s first and legitimate wife. The movie also emphasizes their love to each other: Song spends a lot of time with her and almost ignores his business in government. Their love is depicted with symbols of inseparable love in Chinese literary tradition, such as branches twin together and mandarin ducks. Not only is their love legitimized, Xijiao also makes effort to be Song’s faithful wife. Following (Neo-)Confucian value that a woman belongs to private sphere and should shun away from men except her husband, Xijiao refuses to see Zhang without Song’s presence. When Zhang comes to visit her alone first time, she tells her mother that, “his master is not here, it is inconvenient for me as a

---

234 孝順
235 Quotation from the film.
236 Quotation from the film.
237 Song Jiang does not care if Xijiao is having an affair because “she is not the wife chosen by [his] parents.” (201) Xijiao is Song’s concubine though the novel does not specify if he already has a wife.
238 Song Jiang calls her “wife of master (shiniang)” in front of his follower Zhang Wenyuan. “Wife of master” is a title that Zhang uses to call Xijiao in the film. I also translate it as Madame according to the situations.
239 This is in contrast to *Water Margin* in which writes, “Song is a hero whose interest is in martial arts instead of women.” (200)
240 This refers to the previous chapter in which I talked about how pre-modern China is imagined in the female genre. Interestingly, this is a practice of wealthy or intellectual family. Hence this implies that Xijiao’s birth is uplifted in the movie.

138
woman to meet him.” More importantly, it is Zhang who makes initiation on approaching and flirting with her. Xijiao on the contrary remains her dignity as a faithful wife. In the scene when Zhang finally has the chance to meet her alone for the first time, Xijiao politely asks him to have some tea while Zhang starts flirting with her:

“Madame, it smells so good,” Zhang says touching Xijiao’s hand as if by accident.

“What…what did you say?” Xijiao says in astonishment.

“I mean the tea. Madame, is this young tea or old tea?” replies Zhang.

“Either young or old, please leave after drinking it,” says Xijiao angrily.

“Yes, either young or old, it must be perfectly mixed with rain and dew. Then it comes with such good smell of green, right, Madame?” flirts Zhang.

“It also depends on the root of tree. If the root is bad, the fruit will not be good. Just like a person’s morality. If one does not have morality, he is not a good person,” replies Xijiao sarcastically.

While it seems that they are discussing about tea, Zhang is in fact flirting with Xijiao. The “mix of rain and dew” indicates sexual intercourse. Zhang overhears that Xijiao is lonely since Song has been traveling for a couple months, he states his desire to have sexual intercourse with her. He even expresses his intentions by physically approaching her. Xijiao, on the other hand, reprimands Zhang to be a scoundrel with no morals. She soon slaps him on the face and leaves.

In the movie, Xijiao appears to be a faithful wife with impeccable moral standards and endeavors to keep her honor. She stands by the side of moral and reprimands despicable Zhang.

Different from *Water Margin* in which Xijiao is the one who flirts and seduces Zhang, Xijiao in *Three Sinners* is raped. Xijiao becomes a victim of Zhang’s lust. The reason that Xijiao

---

241 Quotation from the film.
is raped by Zhang is in a way justified with her filial piety: it is because she has to visit her late father’s grave that Zhang has a chance for to get close to her. Their interactions in front of the grave shows their different attempts. While Xijiao cries heartbrokenly over her father’s grave, Zhang stares at her body and laughs lustfully. [Figure 3.14] He even burns his hand because of looking too intently on her body. The rape scene occurs at a deserted temple. This scene is interestingly portrayed with various symbols.

“All your clothes got wet, why don’t you take them off to dry. There’s no other people here. You’ll get cold wearing wet clothes. Do you want me to help taking them off?” says Zhang.

“Please be more respectful,” says Xijiao. Strikes the thunder.

“The rain comes at a right time. This is what people calls heaven follows a man’s mind,” Zhang says reaching to Xijiao. Xijiao resists.

Zhang continues, “Do you not know my mind? Why don’t you make my wish come true?”

“Let go! You are such an animal!” Xijiao begins to sing, “Do not make reckless moves with no respect. Bear in mind that there are gods above your head.”

“Madame, don’t scare me with gods or spirts. These are just statues made with clay and wood, how can they cause misfortune to people,” replies Zhang.

“Zhang Wneyuan, it’s useless that you’ve read poetry and books, do you not know courtesy?” Sings Xijiao.

“Pretty Madame, you are as beautiful as peach blossoms and you must have feelings,” Zhang starts to chase Xijiao around.

“If you come closer, I will call for help!” Xijiao warns.
“There will be no one even if you worn out of your throat,” Zhang catches her even though Xijiao struggles.242

This conversation shows that their sexual intercourse happens out of Xijiao’s control. Xijiao protests to Zhang with two different standards of values: (Neo-)Confucianism and Buddhism/Daoism. By (Neo-)Confucian standards, Xijiao strictly reprimands Zhang that his actions are against “poetry and books,” which refers to Confucian classics Book of Odes and Book of History, or Confucian values in general. “Courtesy,” which can also be translated as “etiquette” or “rituals” is a core Confucian value stating the affections should stop at etiquette. Xijiao again stands at the side of morals and scolds Zhang for not following Confucian values. By Buddhist/Daoist243 standard, Xijiao claims that “[b]ear in mind that there are gods above your head.” She warns Zhang that he is watched by gods and will be punished someday because of karma. Xijiao stands by the side of moral values whereas Zhang ignores and transgresses moral boundaries. Xijiao hence transforms from a femme fatale to a victim in Three Sinners. Their conversation is followed by the rape scene, which is juxtaposed by shots of thunder, Xijiao, Wenyuan, and statues of gods. These images are skillfully edited. [Figure 3.15.1–3.15.8] The camera firstly shows a close up of Zhang laughing lecherously, supposedly from Xijiao’s point of view. [Figure 3.15.1] Then it cuts to a close up of Xijiao’s frightened face from above, supposedly from Zhang’s point of view. [Figure 3.15.2] Then it shifts back to a close up of Zhang approaching Xijiao. [Figure 3.15.3] In the back of Zhang’s face gradually appears a medium shot of a statue of god, indicating that god is watching from the back above Zhang’s head. [Figure 3.15.4, 3.26.5] Then it cuts to a special effect of thunder. [Figure 3.15.6] Followed

242 Quotation from the film.
243 The idea of karma is from Buddhism, but adapted into Daoist religion in China. The gods and spirits in the temple are the religion of Daoism, which is different from Daoism as a philosophy.
by thunder are five shots of statues of god/spirit from a low angle. [Figure 3.15.7, Figure 3.15.8] Then it cuts to a shot of flowers in heavy rain. [Figure 3.15.9] Each of the shots has different implications. The shot of Zhang and Xijiao shows their positions and feelings: while Zhang is at the top forcing Xijiao with power, Xijiao appears to be a victim of his violence. While Zhang is satisfied that his dark wishes are coming true, Xijiao is frightened and struggles in vain.

Intriguingly, this is a Dongyue Temple, in which the major god [Figure 3.15.5] is one who governs the underworld in Daoist religion while the rest of minor gods/spirits [Figure 3.15.7, 3.15.8] are the one who take people’s souls to the final judgment after death. The statues of the gods/spirits are shot from a low angle which make them quite intimidating. The shot of thunder here on the one hand indicates the anger of god, and on the other hand indicates that Xijiao is under unacceptable violence. The shot of flower in heavy rain [Figure 3.15.9] is a metaphor of Xijiao being raped by Zhang: Xijiao is the fragile flower ravaged by the thunderstorm. This sequence of shots depicting Xijiao’s tragedy also shows that in the female genre, sex and body are ambiguously depicted. After being raped, Xijiao as a victim devastatingly states that she hopes to kill Zhang or die immediately. Zhang Wenyuan on the contrary states his love to her “even if she becomes a ghost,” and kneels down in front of god swearing that “if [he] ever stops loving [her], [he] will die tragically.”

In Three Sinners, Xijiao not only makes effort to be a filial daughter and a faithful wife, she also questions the patriarchal standard of faithfulness. Besides Zhang who rapes Xijiao and ruins her hope to be a faithful wife, Song, representing patriarchal standard, also plays a part in

---

244 This refers to my previous chapter in which I mention that the female body and sex are not shown in the female genre.
245 At this point, Zhang mentions that Xijiao and Song are not legal husband and wife. Hence there is some ambiguity of Xijiao and Song’s relationship.
246 Quotation from the film.
destroying her reputation. This is interestingly presented in the film. Although Xijiao is ashamed of being raped, she decides to confess to Song rather than be found out someday. When she hesitantly walks to Song, he happens to be reading *Biographies of Exemplary Women*, a record of faithful women in Chinese history. She tests Song and asks if there are any raped women on *Biographies of Exemplary Women*.

“I have never seen such things in the book. If a woman is no longer chaste, she would not be listed in this book,” Song answers.

“Things in the world turn out to be so not clear, a woman’s chastity is proved by her body rather than her heart,” sings Xijiao.

“Big Sister	extsuperscript{247}, there must be a reason you speak of such things, is there anyone who loses her chastity?” asks Song.

“If you are a court official, would you punish this woman?” asks Xijiao.

“Lust is the worst among all evils. If this woman is not punished, it is teaching other people to be lustful,” answers Song.

“Dear, what if this happens to me?” asks Xijiao	extsuperscript{248}.

Song laughs, “Big Sister, unless moon comes out from west and sun sinks to the east. I spent not even a year with you, but you do not know how to say anything immoral, nor do you smile easily. How could you attract men intentionally and lose chastity?” replies Song.

*Biographies of Exemplary Women* is a list of biographies promoting women’s three roles according to (Neo-)Confucian value: filial daughters, faithful wives, and loving mothers. In the

---

	extsuperscript{247} Both Song and Zhang calls Xijiao Big Sister sometimes. It might indicate that Song and Xijiao are not legal husband and wife. Yet it clearly shows that Xijiao is not a young woman as in *Water Margin*.

	extsuperscript{248} Quotation from the film.
conversation, Xijiao expresses her hope to be considered as an exemplary woman. Song also acknowledges her as an exemplary woman who never speaks of “anything immoral” or flirts with men. Song’s rationale demonstrates a misogynist perspective which blames women for arousing men’s sexual desire. The misogynist logic indicates that if a woman does not appear to be a femme fatale with overflowing sexuality, men would not be ignited with sexual desire, and hence it is important for women to be disciplined and play only the three roles without a hint of sexuality. A raped woman, under this misogynist logic, can no longer be considered as an exemplary woman. Xijiao hence questions the misogynist (Neo-)Confucian value: is a woman’s chastity proved by her body or by her heart? Should a woman be blamed to “seduce” men—even in a rape? *Three Sinners* implies that Xijiao should be redeemed as a faithful wife.

There is a shot in which the camera zooms in and focuses on lotus flowers before it cuts to Xijiao, who has been ill because of missing Song. [Figure 3.16] This shot implies that Xijiao is like the lotus flower which grows out of a mud pond yet blossoms above the water to be pure.

Xijiao is redeemed also with filial piety: it is because she needs to accompany her old mother that she cannot commit suicide after the humiliating rape.

The English title of the film is *Three Sinners*. If it is Xijiao’s story in *Water Margin*, the three sinners are Xijiao, Zhang Wenyuan, and Mother Yan. Xijiao is guilty for her overflowing sexuality, Zhang for his lascivious, and Mother Yan for her greediness. Song Jiang, who eventually becomes the leader of Mountain Liang, is depicted as a hero full of brotherhood, justice, and righteousness in the novel. In *Three Sinners*, the revision of Xijiao’s story, there are two interpretations of three sinners. The first interpretation is that the three sinners are the three

---

249 In Neo-Confucian standard, a faithful woman is supposed to commit suicide before she is raped because “a faithful woman does not serve two husbands,” the value that Xijiao’s mother teaches her.

250 This is a common literary symbol in Chinese literature. 出淤泥而不染。

251 The Chinese title is *Yan Xijiao*, which shows that Xijiao is made the female protagonist and the title of this film.
most important characters: Song Jiang, Yan Xijiao, and Zhang Wenyuan. The film redeems Xijiao from a femme fatale to a filial and faithful woman, hence questions: is Xijiao guilty when the story is told in this version? Song Jiang, on the contrary, becomes a sinner in the revision. He not only physically but also symbolically kills Xijiao. Physically, Song kills her with a knife. Symbolically, Xijiao is driven to devastation because of his unsympathetic and misogynist comments. As one of the sinners, Song Jiang takes the responsibility for Xijiao’s death in the movie. He turns himself in to the government, and takes the punishment. He apologizes to her old mother and is forgiven by her. He even states to her that, “If I Song Jiang ever comes back, I will take the responsibility to take care of you till the end of your life.” If Song acknowledges his fault and takes up the responsibility of taking care of Yan’s old mother, the sinner Song Jiang could also be forgiven by Xijiao and the audiences from this perspective. Zhang Wenyuan, nevertheless, is the biggest sinner in the entire film. He is not simply lustful; in the film version he is also ungrateful enough to betray his master Song Jiang. He takes advantage of Xijiao’s filial piety and causes her death. He is the unforgivable sinner. A different interpretation of the three sinners is to regard Yan’s mother as one of the sinners rather than Xijiao. Yan’s old mother could be guilty of not knowing good from bad and trusting Zhang too easily. In this case, Xijiao is completely redeemed and becomes a pure victim.

**The Amorous Femme Fatale**

Pan Jinlian, Lotus Pan, is one of the most notorious femme fatales in Chinese literature. Pan is also a minor character in *Water Margin*. She was a maid of a wealthy family. She is astoundingly beautiful, yet she refuses to have sexual intercourse with her master and report to

---

252 In *Water Margin*, Song Jiang successfully escapes with many people’s help. He then joins the outlaws in Mountain Liang, and is justified to be a hero. In the movie, on the contrary, Song is sentenced to serve in the army. 253 Quotation from the film.
her mistress. Her master therefore marries her to the worst man available to humiliate her—Wu Da, a really short and poor man who earns living by selling Chinese style pancakes. Pan is not satisfied with Wu Da, and has affairs with different men. Wu Da’s younger brother, Wu Song, is a tall and strong man who once beats a tiger to death only with only his hands. Pan is attracted by Wu Song and seduces him. However, Wu Song is a righteous man. He refuses Pan and leaves the house. Pan later has an affair with a wealthy man, Ximen Qing. They poison Wu Da after he finds out about the affair. When Wu Song returns home after an official trip, he investigates the crime. The court refuses to take the case because the chief officer is bribed by Ximen. Hence Wu Song slaughters Pan and Ximen, then turns himself in to the court. Wu Song later joins the outlaws in Mountain Liang. The story of Pan Jinlian is expanded into an erotic novel *Jin Ping Mei*.\(^\text{254}\) In *Jin Ping Mei*, Pan marries to Ximen after poisoning Wu Da, and lives a debauched life that leads to Ximen’s death in overindulgence in sex. Because of this novel, the name of Pan Jinlian becomes a synonym for a lascivious woman. Pan Jinlian is a femme fatale who not only seduces many men in both novels, she also commits incest\(^\text{255}\), poisons her own husband, and even causes Ximen’s life with her overflowing sexuality in *Jin Ping Mei*.

Hence it is intriguing how *The Amorous Lotus Pan* redeems this notorious femme fatal. The movie basically follows the storyline of *Water Margin*. Wu Song goes back to Wu Da’s home as a tiger-beating hero. Pan Jinlian falls in love with Wu Song and takes care of him. One day, Pan confesses her love to Wu Song. Wu Song refuses, leaves home, and suggests Wu Da not to give Pan chances to go out freely. Ximen Qing one day sees Pan and falls in love with her. Ximen asks her neighbor Wang Ganniang with plans to court Pan and successfully sleeps with

\(^{254}\) *Jin Ping Mei* is a vernacular novel written in the late Ming Dynasty. Jin, Ping, and Mei are the names of three different women, and Jin comes from Pan Jinlian.

\(^{255}\) In both *Water Margin* and *Jin Ping Mei* Pan unsuccessfully seduces her brother-in-law Wu Song. In *Jin Ping Mei*, Pan has sexual intercourse with her step son-in-law Chen Jingji.
her. Their affair becomes a huge scandal all over the town. When Wu Da knows the scandal, he tries to catch them yet is hurt by Ximen. Pan Jinlian takes care of Wu Da. She claims that she was betrayed by Wang and Ximen, and asks for forgiveness. Wu Da decides to forgive her if she cures his heart disease. Pan asks Wang for the cure of heart disease. Wang plots with Ximen and gives Pan poison instead, and Wu Da is therefore killed. When Wu Song returns, he discovers Wu Da’s death and becomes suspicious seeing a red skirt under Pan’s mourning clothing. He finds the person who cremated Wu Da’s body, and discloses the crime. He fights with Ximen, and Ximen falls down from the second floor and dies. Wu Song cuts off Ximen’s head, and carries it to Pan. Pan claims that she has no feelings for Wu Da, it is Wu Song she truly loves, and then throws herself under Wu Song’s knife and dies.

Unlike Daji or Xijiao, as the most notoriously lustful woman, Pan Jinlian cannot be redeemed either with filial piety or faithfulness. Nonetheless, Pan is justified with her affections, or her true love to be more specific. *The Amorous Lotus Pan* revises the story of a lustful woman and rationalizes Pan’s behaviors under the name of love—love for righteous Wu Song. In the scene when Pan faces Wu Song at the end of life, she has a chance to states/sings her side of story in front of her neighbors and the audiences: a story as a victim under patriarchal oppression. Pan was sold to a wealthy family as a maid. She has no feelings for Wu Da yet is sacrificed under patriarchy. Her life and her marriage is not in her control. When Wu Song lectures her with (Neo-)Confucian discipline that, “[i]t is said to act as chicken when marries to chicken. There are rules for husband and wife from ancient time.” His statement shows that even though a woman cannot be married according to her will, she has to be disciplined under

---

256 Although not stated clearly in the film, his heart disease is caused by Ximen Qing kicks him at the heart.
257 In Chinese tradition, the mourning clothes are in white.
258 Her life is not fabricated in the film. It is the same as both *Water Margin* and *Jin Ping Mei*. But neither of the novels focuses on her life. It is rather her lustfulness that is being focused in the novels.
(Neo-)Confucian rules to be a good wife. Pan replies, “a human being is neither grass nor wood. Even a dried old well may emerge with water someday. My lonely heart was like burned ashes until you came to stir it.” From Pan’s narrative, her story becomes a story of a poor woman. She challenges patriarchal power that treats women as properties or lifeless beings—the “grass or wood.” Pan makes her statement in front of a group of people who Wu Song finds to witness Pan is guilty [Figure 3.17]. Yet what they witness, as well as what the audiences witness in the theater, is Pan’s testimony as a victim under patriarchy.

*The Amorous Lotus Pan* tries to justify Pan’s behaviors with her true love to Wu Song. The film delves into Pan’s psychology to rationalize her actions. In the scene before she has sexual relationship with Ximen Qing, there is an episode occurring in her mind. Pan not only does not seduce Ximen Qing, on the contrary, she reprimands Ximen to “respect” her since “she is a wife of a man.” The camera then cuts to Pan’s mentality [Figure 3.18], with her voice-over singing, “I can only blame Wu Song for not having any feelings. He stirs my heart in turbulence. All I want is his care, but he leaves with an iron heart.” With her voice-over, the camera shows flashbacks of Pan preparing food and making bed for Wu Song with affection [Figure 3.19], and Wu Song leaves in a snowy day. Then the camera shifts to the room where Pan and Ximen are. Pan sings, “now look at this heartbreaking new clothing, I want to release my heart and enrage [Wu Song].” The scene of her inner struggle demonstrates that she does not have sexual relationship with Ximen because of her sexual desire, but because she wants to exact on revenge

---

259 Quotation from the film.
260 Quotation from the film.
261 Quotation from the film. The new clothing is made from the fabric given by Wu Song as a thank you gift. Wu Song also gives Pan fabric in the novels. But it is interesting that Pan wears the clothing made by this specific fabric in the movie.
behalf of Wu Song, her true love who has been banished from society. With both Pan’s narrative and the sequence of her psychology, the movie revises Pan’s story into a love story.

Besides being a victim of patriarchy, Pan is also depicted as a victim of Wang and Ximen. Pan claims that she falls into Wang and Ximen’s trap and is forced to continue her relationship with Ximen. In this film about the most notorious femme fatale, it is inevitable to have certain degree of nudity even in the female genre. But in a shot of their sexual intercourse, also the only shot of nudity in the entire film, it is Ximen who takes off Pan’s clothes while she sits with her back turned to him. [Figure 3.20] Thus it is apparent that Ximen is active while Pan is passive in their relationship. More importantly, in *The Amorous Lotus Pan*, Pan Jinlian is innocent of her husband Wu Da’s death. Unlike *Water Margin* and *Jin Ping Mei*, Pan ignores her husband’s illness, continues to sleep with Ximen Qing, and eventually poisons her husband, in *The Amorous Lotus Pan* she takes care of Wu Da and begs for his forgiveness. Pan repents of her affair that, “I was wrong. It does not matter if you beat me or scold me. Why do you torture yourself now. […] We have been husband and wife for so long, can you not forgive me?”[263] [Figure 3.21] Their positions in this shot demonstrates their power relation: Wu Da holds the power whereas Pan begs him on floor. She also rejects Wang and Ximen’s scheme of killing Wu Da and innocently believes that the medicine she gives to Wu Da are in fact for heart disease. It is Ximen who exchanges the medicine with poison and hurriedly comes to kills Wu Da. Wang Ganniang is the evil one who also tells Wu Song a false version of Wu Da’s death: it is Ximen and Pan’s affair that results in Ximen’s plan to poison Wu Da. In the revision, Pan Jinlian

---

[262] Wang threatens Pan to continue her relationship with Ximen in her teahouse, otherwise she will tell Wu Da about their affair. In *Water Margin*, Wang makes the same statement, but the novel shows that Pan is indulges in sexuality and keeps going to Wang’s place even though Wu Da is ill.

[263] Quotation from the film.
becomes a victim who once went wrong under the repression of patriarchal power, and can never return to the right path because of other people’s evil plans.

Is the femme fatale Pan Jinlian justified? On certain level, *The Amorous Lotus Pan* justifies Pan Jinlian from a sympathetic perspective. Pan’s death in the film is revised to demonstrate this sympathetic view. In *Water Margin*, Pan is slaughtered by Wu Song. In the novel, Wu Song forces her to confess her crime, and then split her chest open, takes out her organs as sacrifice to Wu Da’s spirit. He then cuts off Pan’s head to Ximen. In the movie, Wu Song firstly fights with Ximen Qing, cuts off his head and brings it to Pan Jinlian. This arrangement gives Pan the chance to state her testimony with. The depiction of Pan’s death is also altered. When Wu Song appears in blood looking for the “bitch,” Pan stands out and fearlessly claims, “Here I am. […] What do you want?” Pan then states her life and her feelings to Wu Song in front of witnesses and audiences. She even questions him, “[i]f we were not brother and sister-in-law, would you have feelings for me?” After the testimony, she claims that “my life went wrong when I was forced to match with a wrong man. All my affections [to Wu Song] leaves only regrets. I have no chance to be with the one I love in this life, I would rather die in his hand.” She then throws herself to the knife in Wu Song’s hand. In this version, Pan Jinlian is not being passively punished by justice. On the contrary, her death could be interpreted as either a love suicide or a suicide under regret and remorse. Not only the witnesses feel sympathetic with Pan, the movie also ends with an interesting shot that sympathizes to her. Wu Song visits Pan’s tomb in shackles [Figure 3.22] where Pan is buried in a

---

264 The fighting scene with Ximen Qing is very interestingly depicted as the martial fighting scene. This kind of scene is rare in the female genre.
265 Bitch is a word that often refers to Pan Jinlian both in novels and in the movie.
266 Quotation from the film. Wu Song does not answer her question.
267 Quotation from the film.
tomb written “tomb of Wife Pan of the Wu family.” The shot on the one hand shows that it is Wu Song now being punished for his crime, a crime he may have come to regret. And there might be some possibilities that he has feelings to Pan yet cannot cross the line because she is his sister-in-law. The words on her tomb, on the other hand, suggests that Pan is buried with the title “wife of the Wu family”—it might be interpreted as her wish of being Wu Song’s wife rather than Wu Da’s.

From these movies on lives of the femme fatales, their stories are redeemed or justified in the female genre. Besides alterations of the story, movie as a modern medium plays an important role in justifying these femme fatales. Although these movies may not retell stories from the femme fatales’ perspectives, such as shooting from their point of views, the female genre is a genre that they narrate their stories through singing. Xijiao sings her struggles after being raped, while Pan sings her affection to Wu Song through huangmei tune. The female genre is special in a way to provide style and space for narrative through the femme fatale’s perspectives. Moreover, movie as a modern medium shows details of characters’ facial expressions. Therefore, the audience can see Daji’s inner struggle when she states her wish to torture Ji Fa yet in fact tries to protect him; see Xijiao’s inner struggle when stating to report Song Jiang to the court yet in fact tries to get the letter back; and see Pan’s shocking expression when Wu Da is poisoned. When these details are shown on the screen, the audiences would feel like witnessing these historical figures. And consequently the revisions also challenge the history and literature that the audiences have read before: are the written words believable?

**Psychological Depth of the Femme Fatales**

---

268 In *Three Sinners*, Xijiao lies to Zhang Wenyuan that she wants to revenge to Song Jiang who abandoned her in order to get the letter from his hands and burns it down.
More interestingly, the movies on the femme fatales provide chances for audiences to delve into the femme fatales’ psychology and to understand them with more complicated perspectives. In *The Amorous Lotus Pan*, Pan Jinlian’s mentality is visually portrayed. Besides Pan’s flashbacks of her life spent with Wu Song [Figure 3.18], there is another episode depicting her first encounter with Wu Song. This sequence brings the audiences into Pan’s psychology for the first time. While the narrative voice-over sings of her thoughts that, “Once seeing Wu Song her heart blossoms,” the screen shows a special effect indicating that the audiences now shift into a different realm: the realm of Pan’s mind. [Figure 3.23.1] The voice-over continues, “As if the cloud has been cleared and the sun finally shines. [Figure 3.23.2] Look at this person in the front is so handsome, just as powerful as a god in the heaven. [Figure 3.23.3] At this moment, the shabby room becomes a heaven. [Figure 3.23.5]” With narration, the camera shows comparable shots: sunshine between the clouds, Wu Song standing straight above the cloud in armors, and then cuts to a garden in the clouds as if in the heaven. Then it cuts back to the same special effect followed by the shabby room where Wu Song is in his uniform rather than armor. This sequence interestingly shows Pan’s psychology of how Wu Song has brightened her life and the room. Although Pan is not the only character that the audiences could see through her mind—there is one sequence on Wu Song’s psychology of how Wu Da raised him up after their parents passed away—the sequences of Pan’s psychology help the audiences to understand Pan’s character significantly\(^\text{269}\). And both sequences of Pan’s psychology portray her affections for Wu Song.

*The Last Woman of Shang* complicates Daji’s character with an invented character—her maid Zhiyan. Zhiyan serves a very important role as Daji’s alter ego who redeems Daji and

\(^{269}\text{It is also interesting that Pan Jinlian and Wu Song are the two characters the audiences see of their psychology. This may also suggests that they are the protagonists of the film, and Wu Song probably has feelings to Pan yet cannot cross the line because of his gratitude to Wu Da.}\)
makes aligns her with the figure of a “modern woman.” Daji and Zhiyan have to be interpreted jointly as two sides of the same coin. In a crucial scene when Zhiyan persuades Daji to postpone her suicide and makes her death more significant, the conversation shows their collectivity,

“There is death as light as a feather, and there is death as heavy as Mountain Tai. If you die [by suicide,] it is a worthless death. Now that you make up your mind to die, why not die after revenge? King Zhou is our enemy that we cannot stand under the same sky,” says Zhiyan.

“As a weak woman, what do I have to revenge?” Daji replies weeping on floor.

“You have to know, six hundred years ago, the kingdom of the tyrant Jie of Xia ends in the hands of a woman,” Zhiyan answers firmly. The camera then shifts and focuses on Daji. [Figure 3.24]

“[He] ruins our Ji state,” says Zhiyan. Yet the camera focuses on Daji rising slowly from floor.

“[He] kills my father,” Daji replies with resolution on her face.

“[He] also harms our people,” Zhiyan’s voice continues outside the frame.

“He is our first and foremost enemy,” Daji firmly concludes. [Figure 3.25]

Their conversation can be interpreted in two ways. Verbally, not only does Zhiyan persuade Daji to carry out the mission of vengeance, she also ensures Daji that even a “weak woman” can be strengthened with sex appeal and eventually overturns a dynasty. Zhiyan is the one who encourages and inspires Daji to revenge. Moreover, if we read Zhiyan and Daji’s conversation respectively, Zhiyan keeps using plural forms of first person pronoun, we and our, implying

---

270 Zhiyan is referring to Moxi (妹喜) in footnote 185.
271 Translated from the film. The italic words are my emphasis.
272 We and our in Chinese are the same characters, women (我們) with a structural particle de (的) added.
collectivity. Whereas Daji firstly uses singular form, I and my\textsuperscript{273}, yet in the end of the conversation changes into plural form our. At first Daji considers only about herself—her life/death, her weakness, and her father. With Zhiyan’s reasoning, Daji incorporates not only Zhiyan’s words, but also the state, the people, and women as a collective group into her mind. Hence Daji’s revenge is a collective revenge: as one of the women she is strengthened by her sex appeal, and as one of the people and part of the Ji state she revenges for her country. Visually, in the second half of the conversation, the camera focuses solely on Daji rising from crushed into resolution in one cut. [Figure 3.24, 3.25] Although Zhiyan’s voice continues in the dialogue, she is not shown on the screen. It is presented as if Zhiyan’s voice is part of Daji’s self-narration because without looking closely at Daji’s mouth, it is hard to discern which statement is from Daji and which is from Zhiyan. Zhiyan and Daji therefore becomes one. Zhiyan is not only inseparable from Daji in this scene, she is Daji’s alter ego who completes Daji in the movie.

Zhiyan plays a very important role in The Last Woman of Shang. She is Daji’s alter ego that symbolizes intelligence. Zhiyan’s name in Chinese characters is a combination of intelligence, zhi, and wonderful, yan\textsuperscript{274}. Interestingly, the combination of intelligence with different Chinese characters of yan creates multiple meanings on her name. One of the homophones yan\textsuperscript{275}, means words. Zhiyan in this sense means words of intelligence or words of wisdom. With another different homophone of yan\textsuperscript{276}, meaning research, Zhiyan in this sense means to research and investigate in wisdom. Zhiyan plays the role that fulfills different interpretations of her name. Zhiyan symbolizes intelligence and wisdom: not only does she

\textsuperscript{273} I and my in Chinese are the same character, wo (我) with a structural particle de (的) added.

\textsuperscript{274} Zhi (智) means intelligence or wisdom, yan (妍) means pretty or wonderful. Interestingly, this is also a common name in Korean.

\textsuperscript{275} 言。Zhiyan, 智言, is words of intelligence or words of wisdom.

\textsuperscript{276} 研。Zhiyan, 智研, means research or investigate on wisdom.
always provide suggestions to Daji on how to revenge, she also plays the role of investigating other people’s schemes and protect Daji from being harmed. Zhiyan comes up with the plan to eliminate their first enemy treacherous official You Hun while Daji appears to be completely innocent. Zhiyan discovers Queen Jiang’s scheme for assassinating Daji and informs King Zhou to come to the rescue. Zhiyan hints at Daji to request stars from King Zhou, and hence leads him to construct the towered Star-Reaching Palace\(^{277}\). The construction of the palace costs a lot of money and labor and speeds up the destruction the Shang dynasty. Zhiyan also successfully plans to save and release Ji Fa and Ji Chang. On the one hand, having an invented character Zhiyan makes Daji innocent because Zhiyan is the one who comes up with the plans to destroy the Shang dynasty. On the other hand, symbolizing intelligence, Zhiyan is Daji’s alter ego that Daji cannot be separated from in order to be considered as a modern woman.

Besides advises, Zhiyan is inseparable from Daji because on the one hand she provides emotional support to Daji, and on the other hand she completes Daji’s mission. Zhiyan is Daji’s alter ego who support Daji emotionally. They often appear together with contrast. When Daji weeps, Zhiyan supports and strengthens her. [Figure 3.26.1]\(^{278}\) When Daji is weak, Zhiyan comes with advises and helps her to solve the problems. [Figure 3.26.2]\(^{279}\) When Daji is scared, it is Zhiyan who protects her. [Figure 3.26.3]\(^{280}\) Daji and Zhiyan are inseparable even when facing death. In the end of the movie when Daji is forced to be separated with Zhiyan by the crowd running away from the war, the camera show that they are inseparable. After they are

---

\(^{277}\) In the novel, Daji advises King Zhou to build a palace made with amber. She recommends an official Jiang Ziya to be the supervisor so that she will have an excuse to kill Jiang if he fails. The palace is titled Lutai. The Star-Reaching Palace is built by King Zhou and it is rewritten in the movie.

\(^{278}\) This is a shot of Zhiyan persuades Daji to revenge.

\(^{279}\) This is a shot of Zhiyan comes with a plan to killed You Hun. Daji cries in Zhiyan’s arms seeing You killed by King Zhou.

\(^{280}\) This is a shot of Daji being scared to see Bigan stabs himself. When Daji mourns for loyal Bigan, it is Zhiyan who leads people to kneel down and pay respect to Bigan.
separated [Figure 3.27.1], Daji appears on the right of the frame constantly looking at the
direction of Zhiyan [Figure 3.27.2]. Zhiyan also appears on the left of the frame calling Daji’s
name. [Figure 3.27.3] Rather than calling Ji Fa, Daji calls for Zhiyan’s till the end of her life.
Daji and Zhiyan complete each other. In addition to her intelligence, Zhiyan plays an
indispensable role that destroys the Shang dynasty—the alcohol. Daji vows to overturn the
Shang with “wine and lust.”281 While Daji plays the role of arousing King Zhou’s lust, Zhiyan
plays the role of indulging King Zhou in alcohol. Several times in the movie the camera focuses
on Zhiyan pouring wine into King Zhou’s drinking vessel, and then zooms in to Zhiyan’s hands
and the vessel, emphasizing Zhiyan’s role. [Figure 3.28.1, 3.28.2] In one specific shot, Zhiyan
hands wine to King Zhou while Daji lures him into building the Star-reaching Palace. [Figure
3.28.3] Zhiyan and Daji are “wine and lust” respectively which leads the kingdom into ruin.

**Femme Fatales with Educational Purposes**

In the female genre, stories of the femme fatales in Chinese classics are revised
from a more sympathetic perspective to women. These revisions serve one purpose that is similar to all
other films in the female genre: to educate the audiences. While Daji was a femme fatale who
overturns a dynasty with her sexuality in Chinese classics, in *The Last Woman of Shang*, Daji’s
sexuality is utilized by different patriarchies: the patriarchy of her father’s and the patriarchy of
the succeeding dynasty that is established by her lover Ji Fa. Daji is therefore redeemed as
almost a “matriarch” who sacrifices her body to the nation. In *Three Sinners*, Yan Xijiao is
revised into a faithful woman who defends Song Jiang even though it eventually causes her
death.282 From stories of both Daji and Xijiao, the message in the movies is that these women are
justified and redeemed because of their resolutions to stand by the side of the *correct* patriarchy.

---

281 酒色。
282 See note 89. Xijiao lies to Wenyuan and burns the letter. Yet Song Jiang kills her under misunderstanding.
The revised story of notorious femme fatale Pan Jinlian also deliver similar yet counter message: she will be punished if she does not make the *correct* decision. Hence Pan Jinlian eventually has to pay for what she once wronged though she is justified in *The Amorous Lotus Pan* under a sympathetic perspective.

In most of films in the female genre, karma is a common moral lesson. These films teach the lesson that the villain will eventually be punished while the righteous will be rewarded. For instance, films like *Inside the Forbidden City* (Kao Li, 1965) and *The Crimson Palm* (Chan Yau-san, 1963) features stories of Bao Gong, a righteous government officer who is known for his skills in bringing justice to injustice crimes. And films like *The Mermaid* (Kao Li, 1964) and *Lady Jade Locket* (Yen Chun, 1967) on the other hand depict stories on how virtuous man/woman would be rewarded even by refined animal spirit or ghost. Karma as a moral lesson is pervasive in *Three Sinners*. While Xijiao is redeemed from the femme fatale and Song Jiang sentenced to army, Zhang Wenyuan as the sinner is severely punished. The movie ends with four scenes of Zhang’s punishment. The first is Xijiao’s funeral, in which Chinese believe that the spirit of the dead person would come back to visit as a spirit. The second scene happens in an inn where a minor character, Niuge, pretends to be a ghost to scare Zhang. The third scene

---

283 In Chinese saying: 善有善報，惡有惡報。
284 包公。Bao Gong (999-1062 A.D.) is a righteous government officer in Northern Song dynasty. He is also known as Bao Zheng or Bao Qingtian.
285 *The Mermaid* describes a love story between a virtuous poor scholar and a carp spirit. The carp spirit falls in love with the scholar because of his virtue. And *The Lady Jade Locket* is a love story of a virtuous female ghost Lian Suo and a poor human scholar. Because of their virtues, both couples are rewarded to be together in the end even though their relationships are forbidden since they belong to different species.
286 In this specific scene on Xijiao’s funeral, Zhang sees the monks chanting sutra, hears the comments on karma from people in the communities, and more interestingly, while he stands at the corner, a drop of blood falls on his face. Though Zhang does not know where the blood comes from, the audiences see that it is from a hole on the ceiling where a cat is enjoying its feast on a dead animal. The cat, as believed in Chinese culture, often comes back to revenge. In the last shot of the funeral scene, Zhang sees the ghost of Xijiao coming back. Besides, two shots in this scene are shoot from high angle. It could be interpreted as the angle of the god, or the angle of Xijiao’s spirit. In four scenes of Zhang’s punishment, there are often scary sound effect indicating the ghost has appeared.
happens in Zhang’s cottage at midnight, the ghost/spirit of Xijiao comes back to visit Zhang. The fourth scene happens after Zhang escapes from the cottage, Xijiao’s ghost chases him to Dongyue Temple where Zhang once raped Xijiao and swore to the god of underworld. In these four scenes, karma plays an important role: Zhang is finally tasting the bitterness fruit he once planted. Zhang is punished by judgments from the communities, from Xijiao, from his conscience and from gods/spirits. The community plays the role of surveillance and their comments such as “the karma will pay off soon”\(^{287}\) has an effect on Zhang guilt. Niuge also plays a role as judgment from the communities. He states that, “if you have done something guilty, be aware that a ghost will knock your door at night.”\(^{288}\) These comments from the community wakes Zhang’s conscience and threatens him with karma. Xijiao also comes back to punish Zhang Wenyuan in the form of a ghost/spirit. [Figure 3.29] This scene is interestingly depicted in the form of traditional Chinese opera: there is opera music of drum and gong, accompanied with theatrical movements. [Figure 3.30] As a ghost, Xijiao sings/narrates the entire story from her point of view: how Zhang raped her, and how she lost the trust of Song because of Zhang. She claims, “although I die in Song’s hand, it is you who caused my life,”\(^{289}\) and wants to take Zhang to Yama for the final judgment. Symbolically speaking, Xijiao’s ghost can also be regarded as an epitome of Three Sinners: Xijiao comes back to narrated the entire story from her perspective and to justify her stigma as a femme fatale. The fourth scene as the ending of film conveys the most important message of karma. In this scene, Zhang is brought back to his crime scene to be punished by gods who he once says, “are just statues made with

\(^{287}\) Quotation from the film. Another neighbor in the inn also states to Zhang that, “your master is looking for you” before Niuge appears as a ghost. The movie shows that Zhang is scared by these comments.

\(^{288}\) Quotation from the film. Niuge’s comment is in the form of Shulaibao, a style of Chinese performance in rhymed chants.

\(^{289}\) Quotation from the film.
clay and wood” and cannot “cause misfortune to people.” The statues of five gods/spirits that was cut into his crime scene [Figure 3.15.7, Figure 3.15.8] come into lives [Figure 3.31] and chase Zhang around with Xijia’s ghost. [Figure 3.32] Then with Zhang’s scream, the camera shifts to a shot of the statue of the god of underworld [Figure 3.33], who watched Zhang’s crime and oath “above [his] head.” [Figure 3.15.5] The narrative sings as the voice-over that, “there is neither ghost nor god in the world, it is all because one has done something guilty that he cannot rest well. Do not be like Zhang Wenyuan, do things right and you will live long.” The narrative states the crucial message of karma to the audiences: the villain will eventually be punished. The message educates the audiences to be virtuous and do the right thing.

In addition to moral lessons, revisions on history also function as lessons on history to diasporic audiences. The female genre targeting to diasporic audience endeavors to re-present the authentic China. The Last Woman of Shang, as a historical epic especially makes effort on reviving historical scenes. Besides presenting a grand China through magnificent mise-en-scenes, The Last Woman of Shang re-presents depiction such as “pond of wine and trees of meat,” a four-letter idiom that describes King Zhou’s extravagance life with a pond filled with expensive wine [Figure 3.34.1] and the trees hanging with cooked meat. [Figure 3.34.2] In the back of the hanging meat are large groups of dancers displaying a grandiose China. [Figure 3.34.3] The movie tries to depict the authentic Shang in details such as music instruments and drinking vessels. [Figure 3.28.2] The movie pays so much attention on reviving the details that Ji Fa even sends a letter to Daji with oracle bones. [Figure 3.35] Though oracle bones are now

---

290 Quotation from the film. Same as note 242.
291 Quotation from the film. Same as note 242.
292 Quotation from the film.
293 This refers to the previous chapter on matriarch.
294 酒池肉林。
known for divination rather than sending messages by Shang people, it is apparent that the movie endeavors to visually re-present Chinese culture and history as authentic as possible. The huangmei musical films, on the other hand, try to revive stories from Chinese literature in visual form. For example, Three Sinners begins with stills of Chinese paintings as if the audiences are reading a picture book. [Figure 3.36] Then the camera pans from left to right revealing the painting like a scroll. While the narrative voice-over sings the background of famine, the camera then zooms in to a still of painting [Figure 3.37.1] that turns into a shot of actual buildings. [Figure 3.37.2] As the establishing shot of Three Sinners, it indicates that the movie takes audiences to the world of a colorful picture book on Chinese literature. Films on the femme fatales hence serve as history and cultural lessons for Chinese diasporic audiences in constructing collective memories. Furthermore, films on the femme fatales are not simply history lessons that depict authentic Chinese culture, they are lessons that re-construct new collective memories for Chinese diasporic Chinese. For instance, unlike notorious Pan Jinlian or Daji, Yan Xijiao is a femme fatale who the audiences are not familiar with. Three Sinners therefore brings Xijiao into light in front of the audiences and with a new facet. In this sense, movies on the femme fatales further change and re-construct collective memories to disporic audiences. Where now the authenticity is re-created in the form of cinema, the actual authenticity in the movies is no longer important. Like oracle bones in The Last Woman of Shang, the history is repackaged with new meanings to audiences and may or may not be true. In these new versions, the authenticity serves to make the audiences believe the revised versions. What actually

---

295 Besides Three Sinners, several huangmei musicals also begin with the establishing shot of paintings. For instance, The Love Eterne (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963), The Mirror And The Lichee (Kao Li, 1966), and Forever and Ever (Lo Wei, 1967) all begin with paintings.

296 Besides the reason that Yan Xijiao is not a notorious femme fatale, as mentioned in note 227, Yan Xijiao is named Yan Poxi in The Water Margin.
happened in the history or literature is no longer important, it is how history or literature is represented that matters.

The revised femme fatales in a sense reflect “modern” women in the 50s and 60s. Since the end of Chinese Civil War in 1949, a large number of immigrants flooded to Hong Kong. Many factories also relocated in Hong Kong from Southern China such in the end of the 1940s. The immigrants and baby booms of the immigrants provided sufficient amount of laborers to manufacturing with low-price\(^{297}\). The number of female laborers gradually increased at the time. Women with education and economic sources in a way challenged the patriarchy\(^ {298}\). The “modern” women in parenthesis indicates that they are are modern in contrast Chinese tradition according to the imagined past. To begin with, the revised femme fatales resemble certain features of modern women. For instance, Daji is accompanied with Zhiyan as her alter ego that represents a woman with wisdom and intelligence. Both Xijiao and Pan Jinlian has their own positions and are no longer voiceless women. The femme fatales represent “modern” women who challenged patriarchy in the 1960s. These “modern” women became the uncontrollable feminine power that the patriarchal society fears. The revisions on the one hand open up a space for the “femme fatales” in the patriarchal narrative: the femme fatales are no longer judged under misogynist perspectives but are looked with a sympathetic perspective. But the revisions do not simply provide a space to the femme fatales. To look at these revisions closely, this is a space


\(^{298}\) Salaff, Janet W.. *Working Daughters of Hong Kong: Filial Piety or Power in the Family?* NY: Columbia UP. 1995. Print. The book majorly talks about the female factory workers in the 1970s. But the trend of women working in the factory begins after the Civil War according to Wang in *Hong Kong History: New Perspectives*. And it is important to note that as Salaff mentions, the female labor is a social phenomenon not only in Hong Kong, but also in Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea.
that disciplines women into the prototypes that are acceptable in patriarchal society. (Neo-)Confucian values such as filial piety and faithfulness are again emphasized. The revised femme fatales have to stand persistently with (Neo-)Confucian values in order to be redeemed. The one who follows her heart rather than patriarchal values, like Pan Jinlian, though being sympathized, will be eventually punished.

In the female genre, history is retold and revived in the modern media cinema to serve educational purposes for audiences in the 1960s. In fact, all movies in the female genre are revisions of Chinese history and literature. The revisions on femme fatales are the best examples to demonstrate the retelling of patriarchal history and literature. In the revised stories, the femme fatales are rationalized or even redeemed. The revisions appear to be more sympathetic to women, especially to “modern” women who challenge patriarchy. These are movies of the past with modern twists, in modern form cinema, and made to serve modern audiences. The revised history are moral and history lessons for diasporic audiences to construct their imagined culture, imagined nation, and imagined collective memories. Nevertheless, though history retold no doubt gives femme fatales chances to narrate their stories in front of audiences, the revised stories in fact try to re-discipline the “dangerous” women under (Neo-)Confucian values. The revised movies make the femme fatales to act from values of filial piety, faithfulness, or loyalty, and consequently incorporate the unruly women into collaboration with patriarchy.
5.
Shaw’s Empire of Imagination—Imagining Modern and Stardom

The Shaw Brothers established a movie empire in Hong Kong, targeting into Chinese
diasporic film market including Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and North
America. By joining various movie festivals, the Shaw Brothers’ ambition of establishing a
movie empire was extended to other parts of Asia, Europe, North America, Australia and even
Middle East. The Shaw Brothers’ movie empire was established in 1958299. Although there were
several other studios and film companies300 at the time, the only competitive and comparable
studio was Motion Picture and General Investments Limited (MP&GI). The Shaw Brothers and
MP&GI were competitors, and the female genre was their major battlefield301. The Shaw
Brothers were fighting a great battle in the battlefield of the female genre. As a monopolized
studio, Shaw Brothers had its own crew, actors and actresses, acting and dancing classes that
produced actors and actresses, and publishing house which promoted movies and movie stars. As
the major genre in this time period, the female genre played a significant role in constructing
Shaw’s movie empire. In the previous chapters, I examined how movies on Chinese history serve
to be imaginative wonder for diasporic audiences in various ways: an imagination of a collective
nation, an imagination of gender roles, and an imagination of the femme fatale redeemed. While

299 The Shaw Brothers is established in 1958 by Run Run Shaw and Runme Shaw. Prior to the Shaw Brothers
Limited, Tianyi film company was established in Shanghai in 1925 by Runje Shaw, the elder brother of Shaw Run
Run. In 1937, the second eldest brother Runde Shaw took over Tianyi film company and changes its name to
Nanyang film company. Nanyang film company focused its business in Singapore and Malaysia during the World
War II. After World War II, Rende Shaw went back to Hong Kong and establishes Shaw & Sons Co. Ltd. In 1950.
Run Run Shaw and Runme Shaw have been developing film market in Singapore and Malaysia before they go back
to Hong Kong in 1957. In 1958, Run Run Shaw and Runme Shaw took over Shaw & Sons Co. Ltd and established
Shaw Brothers (Chung, 2004).
300 There are left studios including Great Wall Pictures Corporation and Feng Huang (Phoenix) Motion Picture
Company, and studios producing Cantonese films such as Union Film Enterprise, Sun Luen Film Company, Oversea
301 MP&GI and the Shaw Brothers made many “twin” movies in the female genre to compete with each other
stories of these films take place in the past, the movies themselves are meanwhile the most modern entertainment of the time. Though movies of the past may seem to be contrasting to an empire of modern, the Shaw Brothers in fact endeavored to construct a movie empire that is modern and exciting with different techniques. Shaw’s publication in magazines is a fascinating way to reveal the “modern” aspect of their film productions. In this chapter, I will look at *Southern Screen Illustrated*\(^{302}\), the magazine published by the Shaw Brothers, and see how these magazines help to package movies of the past and bring audiences to modern world. By looking at media other than films, I also hope to provide a more complete and complicated picture of Shaw Brothers’ movie empire.

*Southern Screen Illustrated*

*Southern Screen Illustrated* was published by the Southern Screen Publications, a firm owned by the Shaw Brothers. It was a monthly magazine that firstly released in December 1957. Prior to the publication of *Southern Screen Illustrated*, there was a bimonthly magazine *The Screen Voice*\(^{303}\) owned by the Shaw and Son Limited, the forerunner of the Shaw Brothers ran by Runde Shaw. There are also other magazines in the same time period, including *The Great Wall Pictorial*\(^{304}\) that publicizes leftist movies and movie stars, *International Screen*\(^{305}\) which belongs to MP&GI, and *Screenland*\(^{306}\) and *The Milky Way Pictorial*\(^{307}\) that are independent from studios\(^{308}\). The Shaw Brothers publishes another monthly magazine *Hong Kong Movie News Illustrated*\(^{309}\), which targets to more serious readers with articles such as “Three Essential Steps

---

302 *Nanguo Dianying*, 南國電影．
303 *Dianying Quan*, 電影圈．It is published every two months.
304 *Changcheng Huabao*, 長城畫報．This magazine is published by Great Wall Pictures Corporation.
305 *Guoji Dianying*, 國際電影．
306 *Dianying Shijie*, 電影世界．
307 *Yinhe Huabao*, 銀河畫報．
308 These are examples of magazines that are overlap with *Southern Screen Illustrated* in the 1950s to the 1960s.
309 *Xianggang Yinghua*, 香港影畫．
to Stardom\textsuperscript{310}\textsuperscript{v} or articles on monthly seminars on Hong Kong cinema. \textit{Hong Kong Movie News Illustrated} was firstly published in January 1966. Since it is published in the end of the trend of the feminine genre\textsuperscript{311}, my research will focus on \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated}. More specifically, my research on \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated} focuses between 1957 to 1967, the ten years of rise and fall of the female genre.

Different from fans magazines that dig out scandals of the celebrities, \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated} targets to fans and audiences of the Shaw Brothers movies. \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated} attracts its readers/audiences with colorful pictures and posters of the movie stars, many of them superstars of the time. Readers/audiences collect their posters and pictures from magazines\textsuperscript{312}. In addition, \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated} also attracts readers/audiences by interactions between readers and movie stars. For instances, in the end of each issue, there are games such as guessing movie stars from their shadows, postures, hairstyles, and etc. \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated} will announce answers in the next issue, and send presents to “lucky readers” who are drawn from postcards sent by readers. There is also event such as having Qiao Zhuang, a male movie star, draw lots from pictures sent by readers and then draw a sketch of the lucky readers. Sometimes \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated} holds ceremonies for lucky readers who are chosen with lot drawing to receive prizes from movie stars of the Shaw Brothers. In issue seventy-three, the magazine covers an article on such an event in Taipei, and describes this “[t]hrill of [a] [l]ifetime” experience of lucky readers to meet their idols, have a Q&A session.

\textsuperscript{310} \textit{Hong Kong Movie News Illustrated}. Jan. 1966: 55.
\textsuperscript{311} \textit{Hong Kong Movie News} demonstrates the downfall of the female genre. For instance, in issue seven, the topic of monthly seminar on Hong Kong cinema is “We Need a Male Idol in Hong Kong Cinema.” Jul, 1966: 64-67. The topic on the one hand shows that Hong Kong cinema has been dominated by the female genre and female idols, and on the other hand shows that the audiences are getting tired of the female genre and it was time to change.
\textsuperscript{312} From copies of \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated} I researched in Taiwan Film Institute, it is obvious that readers who donated magazines valued the pictures. The pictures and colorful posters are often cut out or missing from magazines. Besides \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated}, pictures of movie stars are often cut out from other magazines.
and take pictures with their idols. Similar events are also hold in Hong Kong and the events are how *Southern Screen Illustrated* is more attractive to the readers/audiences.

*Southern Screen Illustrated* costs 0.8 Hong Kong dollars (HKD) per copy, 9.6 HKD to subscribe per year, and 2.4 HKD per year for shipping to readers overseas. According to the listed distributors on the magazine, *Southern Screen Illustrated* can be bought in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand\(^ {313}\). The average daily wage for each person in Hong Kong was about 4.9 HKD in the year 1959, 9.27 HKD in 1965, and above 10 HKD after 1966\(^ {314}\). A typical *Southern Screen Illustrated* magazine has a colorful front page with a movie star. [Figure 4.1] The front page always features a female star while the female genre dominated the film market. From the first issue published in December 1957\(^ {315}\) to issue 118 published in December 1967, there is only one male star—Peter Chen Ho—who gets to the front cover of *Southern Screen Illustrated* in issue 36 within ten years\(^ {316}\). Peter Chen Ho is known for being the male lead in love comedy and has never played a role in the female genre.

There are around 70 to 100 pages in each issue, except the annual special issue in January which ranges from 140 to 200 pages\(^ {317}\). In each issue, there are five to ten colored pages/posters of popular movie stars or movies, and sometimes the poster across two pages. [Figure 4.2, Figure 4.3] In around thirty items listed on table of content in each issue, it always begins with articles on the Shaw Brothers, on newly released movies, or on superstars. And then followed by two to three articles on Hollywood movies or movie stars. With most of the articles, there is a short

\(^{313}\) Besides, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand, there is also distribution to “other places” that is not specified. Singapore and Malaysia are under the same distributor located in Singapore.


\(^{315}\) The first huangmei musical *Diau Charn* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1958) is released in 1958.

\(^{316}\) The next male star gets to the front cover is Jimmy Wang Yu in issue 120 published in February 1968.

\(^{317}\) The special issue costs more. For instance, issue 107 costs 1.5 HKD with 188 pages.
summary in English. In the end of each issue, there is a guessing game, the answers of the guessing game from last issue, the list of lucky readers who win prizes on the guessing games, and one or two pages for readers looking for pen pals. Sometimes there are short novels, serial novels or serial comic strips. For instance, Old Master Q\(^{318}\), a popular comic character serialized on \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated} between 1966 to 1970. From time to time, there are also numbered musical notations on movie theme songs [Figure 4.4] to promote movie and popular music. Most of the articles are from unknown editors or reporters. Even if the name of the author is provided, it is often a pen name that the readers cannot identify. Besides colored posters, the rest of content is in black and white.

As the Shaw Brothers’ official medium for publicity, \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated} focuses on promoting movies, the Shaw studio, and movie stars. The magazine also served a pedagogical purposes to fans and audiences in several ways. In terms of promoting films, it serves as \textit{benshi}\(^{319}\), the programme that audiences receive prior to viewing the movie with brief summary of the movie and advertisements of the coming movies. In terms of promoting the Shaw Brothers, the magazine propagandizes “modernity” of the Shaw studio from different angles. Besides promoting the Shaw Brothers studio, the magazine also covers various movie festivals and publicizes internationalization of movies, the studio, and the movie stars. In terms of promoting movie stars, \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated} helps to publicize movie stars in “modern” lifestyles. The publicity of movie stars is an important way of promoting movies in film industry at the time. From these different aspects, I will delve into \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated} and look at

\begin{footnotes}
\item[318] \textit{Old Master Q}. 老夫子。 This popular comic is made into a movie \textit{Mr. Funny Bone} (Kuei Chih-hung, 1976) by the Shaw Brothers.
\item[319] 本事。 It is similar to the program in theatre or music performances.
\end{footnotes}
how the Shaw Brothers publicize its movie empire and create an imagination of modern to the
audiences.

**Publicizing on Movies**

Though movies in the female genre are based on stories that diasporic audiences may
have heard of, the audiences may not fully comprehend these movies because they are produced
in Mandarin Chinese, which is not the mother tongue for probably most of the audiences.
Despite that there are a large number of immigrants coming to Hong Kong in the end of 1940s,
most of Chinese immigrants do not speak the same language\(^{320}\). Moreover, language in the
movies is quite often lyrical and sometimes integrated with classical lyrics that the audiences
cannot fully comprehend simply by watching movies in theatres. Subtitles at the bottom is one
way to understand the language. Besides Chinese subtitle, there is also catalogue, *benshi,*
provided in movie theatres for audiences to get a picture on the movie they are about to watch. In
*The Chinese Silver Screen: Hong Kong and Taiwanese Motion Pictures in the 1960’s*, Wolfram
Eberhard describes these catalogues as what “moviegoer receives when he enters one of the
larger first-run theaters. These handouts contain a fairly detailed description of the action of the
film, unless it is a detective story. Similar handouts are supplied to operagoers.”\(^{321}\) (3) In other
words, audiences are supposed to know the entire storyline before they are seated in movie
theatres. *Southern Screen Illustrated* serves as an expanded movie catalogue. Take movie *Lady

---

\(^{320}\) Immigrants from different provinces speak different dialects: people from Shanghai speak Shanghainese, people from Kuangtong speak Kantonese or Shantou, people from Fujian speak Amoy or Southern Min, and etc.. The
diasporic audiences also speak in various languages or dialects. Though the official language in Taiwan (Republic of
China) is Mandarin Chinese, it is a language that brought by the Chiang Kai-Shek regime from 1949. Most people in
Taiwan spoke either Japanese or Southern Min prior to Mandarin Chinese is made the official language. Chinese
immigrants in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, or other places including Indonesia, Vietnam, Australia, or the USA
spoke various dialect according to the region they emigrant from.

\(^{321}\) Wolfram Eberhard’s study provides a large number of abstracts on movies showed in Taipei in the 1960s, many
of the films are made in Hong Kong. Since he could not possibly watch all the movies in Taipei, he provides some
of abstracts based on movie catalogues, *benshi.* Wolfram attaches three catalogues in the appendix, and each full of
details on content of the movie.
General Hua Mu-Lan (Yueh Feng, 1964) as an example, the movie is released in October 1963. The promotion of Lady General Hua Mu-Lan begins in issue 62, April 1963. There are articles introducing and promoting the movie in issues prior to the time when it is actually released. In issue 62, there is an article titled “Hua Mu-Lan,” which is the name of Mulan as well as the Chinese title of the film. The article gives details on the cast with pictures, and introduces Mulan’s background as an actual historical figure. In the following issues, there are articles with titles such as “Look at Ivy Ling Po at the Martial Contest,” “Ivy Ling Po’s Life as a Soldier in Military,” “Hua Mu-Lan Wipes Out Enemies at Beach,” “Hua Mu-Lan Exchanges Love Gifts,” “Ivy Ling Po Splits Out Secret After Drunk,” “Ivy Ling Po Bravely Establishes Merits,” and “Ivy Ling Po’s Love as a Daughter.” From these titles, it is obvious that the movie star Ivy Ling Po plays a significant role in publicizing the movie: though these articles are about the movie Lady General Hua Mu-Lan, Southern Screen Illustrated has Ivy Ling Po’s name in titles to attract readers.

These articles introduce Lady General Hua Mu-Lan in details. Besides casting, Southern Screen Illustrated introduces historical background of Mulan and provides details on scenes that are considered to be spectacles. For instance, in “Hua Mu-Lan Wipes Out Enemies at Beach,”

---

According to Hong Kong Movie Database, the movie is released in June 1964. However, there might be some mistakes on the releasing date. From my research on United Daily News in Taiwan, the showing schedule of Lady General Hua Mu-Lan can be dated on October 26th, 1963, And the movie is usually showed a couple days or weeks earlier in Hong Kong.

看凌波校場比武。May. 1963: 32-34. Issue 63. This is the title I translated from Chinese. The English title of the article is “Ivy, Joan of Arc.” Some of the articles are accompanied with English title and a summary, but it is not exactly the same as Chinese text. Hence I focus on Chinese text.


[Figure 4.5.1, Figure 4.5.2] the article publicizes the battle scene as “the great battle scene rarely seen in Chinese movies” in the subtitle. In the article, there are details of how Mu-Lan discovers crows flying above nomad camps and predicts the invasion at midnight, and consequently helps to end the twelve-year war against the nomad. With pictures, the article demonstrates how the scene is a spectacle: there are more than three thousand people in this scene. In another article “Hua Mu-Lan Exchanges Love Gifts,” the reporter provides details on the conversation between Mu-Lan and General Li and accompanies with pictures of the scene. All of these articles publicize Lady General Hua Mu-Lan and actress Ivy Ling Po at the same time. A different way of presenting the story of the movie is similar to a picture book. This kind of article features the basic story of the movie, accompanied by drawings on the movie. The story matches the flow of the movie. [Figure 4.6.1] These articles serve as expanded movie catalogues. On the one hand Southern Screen Illustrated provides details on story of the movie to potential audiences, and on the other hand it promotes movies and movie stars. The articles on Lady General Hua Mu-Lan demonstrates how the magazine publicizes movies. The publicizing of this movie is quite comprehensive because Lady General Hua Mu-Lan is one of the most popular movie in the female genre—one that features Ivy Ling Po after her great success of The Love Eterne (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963)\(^3\). Not all of the films are publicized with the same level—for instance, the story with drawings are quite selective—but the magazine articles always focus on story and cast of the film, and emphasizes certain spectacular scenes. And it is transparent that the movie stars are the selling point of the films.

Due to the purpose of publicizing the films, Southern Screen Illustrated records spectacles in each film. For instance, the spectacle of Magnificent Concubine (Li Han-Hisang,
1960) is the dance of Yang Guifei—dance of rainbow colored dress and feather. [Figure 1.17] *Southern Screen Illustrated* covers the dance in issue 43. The English summary titles “The Dance of Yang Kwei-Fei”:

“The West had Salome and her dance of the Seven Veils, but China had Yang Kwei-fei and her dance of the rainbow-coloured dress and feathers. But while Salome dropped her veils for the head of John the Baptist, Yang Kwei-fei danced to win Emperor Ming Huang’s heart. Salome’s dance was but a forerunner of present-day strip tease, and she was more thorough in it. But Yang Kwei-fei’s dance was one of slow graceful motions. And stripping? That offends Chinese modesty!” (19)

It is worth mentioning that English summary focuses on the analogy of Salome and Yang Guifei. It shows that Yang was regarded as a femme fatale in Chinese culture, yet turns into the matriarch in the female genre. Besides, the English summary shows Shaw Brothers’ ambition of constructing a movie empire of the East, or a movie empire of “China.” The article in Chinese, on the other hand, focuses on research of “Dance of Rainbow-Colored Dress and Feathers.” In three-fourth of the article there are at least ten sources on descriptions of the dance in classical Chinese literature. Whereas one-fourth of the article displays director Li Han-Hsiang’s effort in reviving the dance: asking his friend to send the music that is affirmed by a scholar to be relic of the song from Japan, Li then tries to revive the music and dance based on descriptions in classical Chinese.

*The Last Woman of Shang* (Yueh Feng, 1964) on the other hand, features the outdoor scenes of battlefield. [Figure 3.10, Figure 3.11, Figure 3.12] In issue 73, the article “Ancient

---

332 Yang Guifei in pinyin.
Battlefield in *The Last Woman of Shang* features the battlefield as the spectacle, the English summary writes,

“A Shaw-Korean joint production destined to be a box office hit is being produced under the top direction of Griffin Yueh of Shaw’s Studio. The film is called ‘Last Woman of Shang’, a Chinese historical color extravaganza. To ensure success, Shaw put up 4-time Best Actress Award Winner Miss Lin Dai, while the Korean counterpart also brought its best foot forward with its Movie King Shin Yunkyoon. Griffin has spent two months in Korea on location, shooting the great battlefield scene which required 200 actors and some 5,000 extras.” (5)

The English summary more or less follows the Chinese text, except that the reporter claims in Chinese that there are more than 10,000 extras. And the reporter publicizes more details in Chinese. For example, the outdoor scenes are shot in Korea while the indoor scenes of extravagant palace are shot in “modernized” Shaw studio. The budget on this film, as the reporter claims, is more than 3,000,000 HKD. The film will be dubbed with three languages including Chinese, Korean, and English and it will be shown in Korea, Southeast Asia, and around the world. Such article publicizes spectacles in *The Last Woman of Shang*: it is an “extravaganza” features the most popular movie stars, expensive budgets, impressive scene on battlefield shot in Korea, and the film is going to be a big hit around the world. Pictures in the article also demonstrate the scene of battlefield as a spectacle, and leave the readers to imagine how impressive the scene would be in the colorful Shaw Scope. [Figure 4.7]

---

From *Southern Screen Illustrated*, it is apparent that *authenticity* is crucial in publicizing the female genre, especially on historical epics. For instance, the article “Hua Mu-Lan”\(^{335}\) presents research on Chinese classics of what time period did Mulan live, where is she actually from, and what is her actual name. The reporter claims in English summary that “Shaws spent months in doing the research on Hua Mu-lan. The final story represents the efforts by the researchers and script writers who are seeing to it that everything in the film is authentic.” (3)

And the next page of the article is accompanied with the text of “Ballad of Mulan.” The article shows how Shaw Brothers endeavors to revive history from historical texts in making *Lady General Hua Mu-Lan*. Another article “The Dance of Yang Kwei-Fei” reports that director Li Han-Hsiang endeavors to revive “Dance of Rainbow-Colored Dress and Feathers” in *The Magnificent Concubine*. The reporter claims that the revived dance cannot be entitled “Dance of Rainbow-Colored Dress and Feathers” due to “serious and faithful working attitude of the film makers,”\(^{336}\) (33) the revived cannot be exactly the same as the original in Tang dynasty. There is also articles like “Historical Evidences of Yang Guifei and Empress Wu”\(^{337}\) to present how Shaw Brothers endeavors to revive Chinese history in their movies. Besides publicizing specific movies with authenticity, *Southern Screen Illustrated* also promote Shaw Studio with its effort in reviving the *authenticity* of Chinese history and culture. In the article “Classic Chinese Beauties on Silver Screen,”\(^{338}\) the reporter claims that the clothing style in ancient China differs from different dynasties, from seasons, and from social classes. And “Recently Shaw Brothers made many costume dramas of ancient time. They take it very seriously on clothing, […] and faithfully revives ancient lifestyle on silver screen.” (25) Attached to the article are still photos of the

---

\(^{335}\) See note 323.  
\(^{336}\) See note 333.  
movies: Linda Lin Dai in *Beyond the Great Wall* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1964) as an example of a concubine in Han dynasty, Li Li-Hua in *Magnificent Concubine* and *Empress Wu Tse-Tien* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963) as an example of a concubine and an Empress in Tang dynasty, and etc.. This article on the one hand demonstrates how Shaw Brothers values *authenticity* on reviving Chinese history in details such as costumes. On the other hand, the article also promotes movies and movie stars. Besides, to stress on *authenticity* also differentiate the Shaw Brothers from low budget films in Cantonese. The English summary of this article is also quite interesting. It begins,

“This fashion in milady’s wardrobe is ever-changing, whether it is in the Western world or in the Orient. But unlike Western fashions which had progressed from the severe styles of the Victorian age to the daring bikinis of our modern times. Chinese fashions, while do revealing progressively more, had always accentuated the femininity of the weaker sex.”

Similar to the article ““The Dance of Yang Kwei-Fei” which makes contrast between Salome in the West with Yang Guifei in the East, the reporter of “Classic Chinese Beauties on Silver Screen” also makes comparisons between the West and the Orient. Both articles publicize how “the Orient/East” is different from the West. The English text differs from Chinese text; the comparison is not emphasized in Chinese text and not even mentioned in article on Yang Guifei. The comparison in English summary reveals Shaw Brothers’ ambition in constructing a movie empire of the Orient/East. The “Orient” in this report is intriguing as well. Based on the Chinese text, the reporter actually means that while Chinese fashion also reveals progress of modern

---

339 The English text is different from Chinese text, and I keep the exact words in English text. The readers of English text are untraceable. I assume that it might be oversea readers/audiences who do not know Chinese well.

340 See note 333.
fashion, it hews to the tradition of emphasizing femininity of women. Hence the binary opposition of West and East is that while the west is daring in clothing, the east is more conservative yet more graceful in displaying femininity. “The weaker sex”\footnote{There is also possibility that this might be a bad translation from tender.} is in contrast to masculinity rather than to the West, hence if the femininity of the West is symbolized by the femme fatale Salome, the femininity of the Orient is less daring and more beautiful symbolizing by Yang Guifei the matriarch.

Besides publicizing films, *Southern Screen Illustrated* sometimes also teaches the readers/audiences how to interpret the films. This is evident in publicizing films on the femme fatales. In an article “Read ‘Denunciation of Wu Zhao’ First Before Watching *Empress Wu Tse-Tien*”\footnote{看武則天影片之前請先讀「討武曌檄」。Oct. 1961:22-25. Issue 44. The English title is “Empress Wu Tse-Tien,” written by Bu Yi, which is very likely a pen name. “Denunciation of Wu Zhao” is an essay written by Luo Binwang (640-684 A.D.) Wu Zhao is also Empress Wu’s name.} the reporter states that though “Denunciation of Wu Zhao” is the classic that people understands about Empress Wu, the essay is unfair to Wu for four reasons: first, the author Luo Binwang stands by the side of Tang dynasty, which is the opposite position of Wu\footnote{Empress Wu established her own dynasty Zhou (690-705 A.D.) in between Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.), in this sense she is considered as the enemy of Tang dynasty.} and therefore cannot be read as the official history. Second, women had more rights in Tang dynasty because of influences from nomad culture, and there are other women who had power in this period of time. Third, the gender boundary is not as strict in Tang dynasty, and there are examples from literature. Fourth, Empress Wu has great establishment in her regime, and people should not ignore her establishments and focus only on her “faults.” The second half of the article is the classic “Denunciation of Wu Zhao” and translation in vernacular Chinese. The English summary states that, “This description of her may not be very fair, as the historians of that period might have been prejudiced against her, for she was a woman who rose to the greatest
heights in a man’s world, and the historians were men.” (25) Besides teaching the readers/audiences that the classics is not “fair” to Empress Wu, this article also points out a major purpose of the female genre—to rewrite history and classics that was dominated by men and to look at these female figures with a more sympathetic perspective. Interestingly, as the article states and shows with stills of the movie, “Denunciation of Wu Zhao” is read aloud in front of Empress Wu in the film and Wu bursts out laughing when hearing the essay. The movie shows Wu’s reaction in historical records, which is left out from the classics that people understands her from. To read this portrayal symbolically, the female genre also depicts how a prominent woman would probably react to the patriarchal texts.

Articles on The Last Woman of Shang (Yueh Feng, 1964) also educate readers how the film interprets the femme fatale Daji. In “Unprecedented Great Production Daji”344 the reporter writes, “People often say that King Zhou is overthrown because of Daji. Actually, King Zhou is overthrown by King Wu of Zhou because of his own actions […]. Even if there was no concubine like Daji, he will be overturned due to his tyrannical control that makes people suffer.” (3) The English Summary once more compares Daji with another femme fatale:

“Like Cleopatra, she had the power to overthrow cities and states. Like Cleopatra, who became Emperor Julius Caesar’s mistress, [Daji] also was the favorite concubine of the infamous Emperor [King Zhou]. Historians often blame [Daji] for the downfall of the Shang Dynasty—which is not quite true.” (5)

The article states clearly that it is not “true” to blame Daji for the downfall of the Shang Dynasty. The “truth” suggested by this article and presented in the movie is that Daji is a filial daughter

344空前偉大的製作—妲己。Jun. 1964: 2-5. Issue 76. The English title is “Last Woman of Shang,” which is the title of the film, and the same as the title in issue 73.
who revenges for her father’s death. Another article “Linda Lin Dai Out from Bath”\(^\text{345}\) features Linda Lin Dai’s bath scene as a spectacle. [Figure 3.1, Figure 3.2] However, rather than presenting Lin’s body, the reporter states that “the focus of this scene is vivid depiction of King Zhou’s lustfulness.” (18) The English summary makes the content clear in its title, “Lin Dai Cools Emperor’s Ardour.” The summary interprets this scene as “[n]aturally [King Zhou] approaches [Daji] for a closer look at the charms of this ravishing beauty. But the concubine, in no mood for love, dampens his passion with a bucket of scented water!” (18) The reporter states that Daji is “in no mood for love.” No matter this interpretation comes from the reporter/editor, the filmmaker, or Shaw Brother’s publication, the readers are taught to interpret Daji and King Zhou by *Southern Screen Illustrated*. Prior to watching *The Last Woman of Shang*, the readers should have known that Daji is redeemed in the film: it is King Zhou’s tyrannical control rather than Daji’s beauty that causes the decline of Shang dynasty.

The publicizing on *The Amorous Lotus Pan* on the other hand reflects ambiguity of the controversial femme fatale Pan Jinlian. In “Why Wu Song Kills Pan Jinlian,”\(^\text{346}\) the article sheds light on Pan’s death scene in details with Wu and Pan’s dialogue. However, while in the movie Pan “suicides” by throwing herself to the knife in Wu Song’s hand, in this article the reporter describes that “Wu Song raises his hand, and with a knife his hand falls into Pan’s chest” (49)—indicating that Wu Song actively kills Pan rather than Pan actively decides to die. The reporter asserts that the purpose of this film is “to warn the audiences” as a moral lesson. Hence this movie depicts “how Wu Song preserves morality, refuses love from his sister-in-law, revenges for his brother, and kills the lustful woman like a hero.” However, an article on the same film in


the next issue, “The Lonely Heart of Chang Chung-wen,”\(^{347}\) tells a different story—the version that more is more similar to the film. The English summary of this article states that “For centuries, the traditionalist have condemned Lotus Pan, once described as China’s most promiscuous woman. But do they understand the loneliness, the frustration and the forced into marrying the town’s No.1 midget?” (82) In Chinese text of this article, the reporter presents Pan’s background before marrying to Wu Da, and then writes, “if Pan had lived in modern time, she would not have been so severely condemned.” (83) The content of this article better reflects the movie of *The Amorous Lotus Pan*, in which her life and her love is presented with a more sympathetic perspective. Besides these two articles, “Wu Song Fights in Lion Inn”\(^{348}\) and “Chang Chung-wen Brings Pan Jinlian to the Screen Lively”\(^{349}\) also have contradictory perspective on this movie. The publicizing of *The Amorous Lotus Pan* in *Southern Screen Illustrated* shows how Pan Jinlian is a controversial femme fatale in Chinese literature, and hence cannot be easily redeemed even in the female genre.

Publicizing movies is a major purpose of *Southern Screen Illustrated*. The magazine publicizes various movies from Shaw Brothers studios. Besides the female genre, movies in other genres are also publicized. In the end of 1950s and early 1960s, Shaw Brothers also produced melodrama and romantic comedy. In the mid 1960s, martial art genre became more and more popular, and replaced the female genre as the most popular genre in the end of 1960s produced by the Shaw Brothers. Actresses and actors also play roles in different genres from time to time. But different from present East Asia, in which movie stars also play parts in

---

347 張仲文寂寞芳心。Oct. 1963: 82-83. Issue 68. The English title is “She Is Innocent?” Chang Chung-wen is the actress who plays Pan Jinlian.
349 張仲文演活潘金蓮。Dec. 1963:40-42. Issue 70. The English title is “Is Lotus Pan a Bad Woman?” This article is more sympathetic to Pan Jinlian.
television shows and/or become popular singers, the 1960s was a time when television was at an preliminary stage and the audiences could only see movie stars in movie theatres or from fans magazines. Under Shaw Brothers’ monopolized studio system, it is often not the movie stars who decided their roles or their images on the screen. They are assigned certain roles on the screen, and the studio helped to publicize their images in magazines. In the next part, I will discuss how movie stars of the female genre, Li Li-Hua, Linda Lin Dai, Betty Lo Ti, and Ivy Ling Po are publicized in Southern Screen Illustrated.

**Publicizing on Movie Stars**

In the 1960s, the film industry was led by monopolized Studios such as the Shaw Brothers and MP&GI. Along with star system, the studios publicized stars in order to promote movies. In Xianggang Yingshiye Bainian, a history of movie and television industry of Hong Kong, Po Yin Chung writes that the star system in Hong Kong was produced in the end of 1950s by studios, and in the 1960s the studios began to publicize movie stars in order to promote movies. Chung writes that the star system is a distinguished feature in the 1960s. Studios provide training classes for people who are interested in being actors and actresses, and then select actors/actresses from trained students. In the 1960s, the studio began to promote movie stars with fans clubs and publications. Whereas Chung focuses on movie stars in Cantonese cinema, she also mentions that International Screen by MP&GI and Southern Screen Illustrated by Shaw Brothers were two of the most famous publications in publicizing movie stars. As Chung says, “these publications are often losing money in business, the major purpose is

---

publicizing.” (173) The Shaw Brothers specializes in producing and promoting movie stars. The Shaw Brothers has its own training classes: Southern Drama Group. Southern Screen Illustrated introduces the group in a magazine article “Beautiful Fruit of Southern Drama Group.” Students enter the group through examination and the training is free of charge. The training takes six days a week and lasts six months. The trainees take various classes on performance, cinema, dance, singing, and etc.. From time to time, the trainees play minor roles or extras in Shaw Brothers’ films. After the training, some trainees started starring in Shaw Brothers’ movies and became movie stars. For instance, Li Ching, Fang Yin, Cheng Pei-Pei, and Pan Yin-Tze all came from Southern Drama Group. Cheng Pei-Pei plays the male lead and Li Ching plays the female supporting actress in The Lotus Lamp (Yueh Feng, 1965). Li Ching and Fang Yin later became popular stars in the female genre. Pan Yin-Tze, who later became popular with television series, also began her career starring in the female genre. Pan is an extra in Three Sinners (Yen Chun, 1962) and plays a minor role in A Maid from Heaven (Ho Meng-hua and Chan Yau-san, 1963). The most popular movie stars in the female genre, however, did not come from Southern Drama Group because when the Shaw Brothers began making movies in the female genre, the group was not yet fully developed. But the Shaw Brothers specializes in publicizing movie stars with its publication Southern Screen Illustrated. Besides training group, Shaw Brothers establishes fans club. The fans club holds events among fans, sometimes among fans and movie stars. There are also publications within fans club, and surprisingly, there is also scholarship for fans club.

Movie stars in the female genre are often superstars of the 1960s. The most famous evidence of their popularity is Ivy Ling Po’s visit to Taipei in 1963. Ivy Ling Po visited Taipei in

---

354 Nanguo Shiyan Jutuan. 南國實驗劇團。

180
October 30th 1963. The success of *The Love Eterne* earlier the same year made her visit phenomenal. The *United Daily News* in Taiwan reports that “thousands of people rushed to see her that the allies are empty.” [Figure 4.8] Ling Po also reminisces in an interview that she planned to take a convertible from airport to Taipei so that she could be seen by her fans. However, there were too many people surrounded the car that it could not move at all. Ling Po eventually had to take a police car in order to be protected from excited people, in the police car was three lucky thieves who were about to be taken to police station. The *United Daily News* on the next day reports that there were 18 miles of people surrounded the streets waiting to see Ling Po driving through on a car in Taipei. An editorial on the same day titles, “Comment on Social Order from Ling Po’s Visit,” in which the editor asserts that people should learn to follow the order and cooperate with police to see a superstar. Taipei became “A City of Frenzy” with Ling Po’s visit. In the interview, Ling Po mentions how people are excited to see her even for a glance, how her fans sent her all kinds of gifts—comforter, rings, jewelry, even gold. “I received all kinds of presents, probably everything except a house,” she jokes. Ivy Ling Po’s visit shows popularity of a superstar who became famous because of the female genre. The mighty power of movie stars is constructed through movies and publications. How does *Southern Screen Illustrated* help to construct movie stars for the Shaw Brothers?

*Southern Screen Illustrated* helps to construct an image of modern to the readers/audiences. Movie stars play various roles in movies. Actresses in the female genre also

---


casts in films of modern time, usually melodramas or modern musicals. However, since the female genre was the most prominent genre in the Shaw Brothers in the early 1960s, the most popular movie stars are the actresses from the female genre. Shaw Brothers also endeavors to produce and promote films in the female genre because these are big budgets blockbusters. While actresses appear in movies of the past, *Southern Screen Illustrated* publicizes the “modern” aspects of movie stars. Though movie stars in the female genre often appear in movies on historical China, their modern lifestyles are publicized in magazines. *Southern Screen Illustrated* launched a series on “Secrets of Beauty from Movie Stars,” interviewing Li Li-hua, Margret Tu Chuan, Linda Lin Dai, Li Hsiang-Chun, Betty Loh Ti, Pat Ting Hung, Gu Mei, and Fan Li in separate issues. In these interviews, movie stars share their secrets of their living styles. In the interview with Li Li-hua, Li shares her eight living principles with the interviewer: washes her face with soap every night, does not go on a diet in order to get balanced nutrition from everything, drinks honey water every day, takes ginseng every day in winter, keeps a pleasant mood all the time, be optimistic, does chores as exercise to keep fit, and sleeps more than eight hours every day. Linda Lin Dai’s secret of beauty, on the other hand, focuses on how to protect eyes and skin. Lin Dai tells the interviewer that she uses eye drops every day, washes her face with soap, sleeps more than eight hours, and tries to control her temper to keep young, and so forth. These interviews display movie stars’ modern living styles: how to keep fit, how to maintain their beauty, what to eat, what to do and not to do, in other words, how to live.

---


like a movie star? These articles have one thing in common—they serve pedagogical purposes for readers/audiences to follow. The movie stars are role models for readers/audiences on keeping modern living styles.

In addition to teach readers/audiences movie stars’ modern living styles, *Southern Screen Illustrated* also reports on movie stars traveling around the globe. From articles titled “Li Li-hua in The United States of America,”363 “Linda Lin Dai Sends A Letter From New York,”364 “Linda Lin Dai Ready to Come back,” “Linda Lin Dai at Hollywood,”365 “I Have Been to Australia—Pat Ting Hung,”366 “I Come Back From San Francisco,”367 “Miscellaneous Notes of Li Li-hua and Yen Chun’s Trip to America,”368 “Linda Lin Dai Goes to America and Comes Back,”369 “Linda Lin Dai Goes on Vacation in Europe,”370 “Ling Po Vacation in Japan,”371 “Ivy Ling Po Coming Back From Japan,”372 “Chang Chun-wen Coming Back From United States,”373 and etc. demonstrate that movie stars traveling abroad in their leisure time. There are also articles on movie stars traveling to countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, and “Motherland China”374, which is Taiwan (R.O.C.). But they often travel to these places with missions such as shooting a film or promoting movies. In articles on their vacation, there are sometimes interviews with the movie stars’ interesting encounters abroad, sometimes letters sent

373 張仲文黃金國歸來。Feb, 1965: 73-75. The English title is “Diana’s Memories of America.”
374 Zuguo (祖國) can be translated as fatherland, motherland, or homeland. Here I use motherland because in the female genre, the homeland is represented by women.
by movie stars from abroad saying hi to the readers, and sometimes pictures of their vacations in the articles. [Figure 4.9] This type of articles informs readers that the movie stars travel abroad on vacation. Spending leisure time in places like New York, Hollywood, or Tokyo is “modern” and bourgeois in the 1960s. And the idea of having a vacation is also a leisure that belongs to bourgeoisie.

Besides traveling abroad, *Southern Screen Illustrated* also publicizes movie stars’ different aspects of modern living styles, including interior of their apartment, fashionable hairstyle, seasonal clothing, or entertainment. For example, articles such as “Ivy Ling Po Tries New Spring Outfit,”375 “Ivy Ling Po’s New Hairstyle,”376 “Movie Stars’ Morning: Ivy Ling Po Doing Warm Up Exercises”377 not only reveal Ivy Ling Po’s style of fashion and modern living style, but also promote Ling Po as a modern icon. Her fans and readers adores her sense of fashion and her way of living. An article “Movie Stars At the Beach”378 publicizes spending time at the beach as an entertainment. And in articles “Life Team Visits Shaws”379 and “Cheng Pei-pei Rests in Taiwan,”380 there are pictures of movie stars going to beach in bathing suits. This kind of reports display stylish bathing suits and demonstrate fashionable living style of the time.

In issue 68, an article titled “Stars And Cars”381 introduces cars owned by movie stars. [Figure 4.10] The reporter writes that, “some people assume that movie stars own cars to show off, but this is incorrect. In the advanced and civilized society where material enjoyment is getting more and more available, it is no big deal to own cars. […] Just like clothing, food, or houses, people

380 鄭佩佩寶島休養。Dec. 1966: 40-42. Issue 106. The English title is “Taiwan Style For Pei-Pei.”
381 明星與汽車。Oct, 1963: 16-20. This is the English title.
have their preference on cars.” (16) The article then introduces different style of cars belonged to movie stars: Linda Lin Dai has a Jaguar Mark X, Betty Loh Ti and Peter Chen Ho has the same car as Lin Dai, Li Li-hua and Yen Chun has a Mercedes Benz and a Renault, and Ivy Ling Po has a Vauxhall Victor. The reporter claims that cars are simply one of the necessities. In this article, movie stars take pictures with their own cars. These articles in *Southern Screen Illustrated* demonstrate fashionable lifestyle of movie stars: to have a stylish hairstyle, stylish outfit every season, to go to beach at weekend, and to own a car. This bourgeois living style reveals the modern aspects of the movie stars.

*Southern Screen Illustrated* also publicizes movie stars respectively. Every movie star is encoded with different characteristic and personality, and very often their characteristic is related to the roles they play: their characteristics may be the reason that they are casted in certain roles repeatedly, and the roles they play may also reinforce their characteristics. Or, the roles they play may be the reason that they are publicized with certain characteristic. In other words, their characteristics are the images created by how they are publicized due to the roles they play. For instance, Chang Chung-wen is publicized as “the most beautiful creature” in *Southern Screen Illustrated*, and she plays the femme fatale Pan Jinlian in *Amorous Lotus Pan*. It is possible that Chang is sexy, so she is casted in the role Pan Jinlian. Or Chang is publicized as sexy because she is casted as Pan Jinlian. It is difficult to say who the movie star really is because the audiences do not know her in person. People can only know her from the screen and publications. More possibly, the image of movie stars on the screen and in publication reinforces one another, and the characteristics of movie stars are created/imagined by media. Hence I will focus on how movie stars are publicized in *Southern Screen Illustrated* to see their images, and

---

how are these images related to their roles in the movie or related to the society of the time. I focus on four of the most famous movie stars in the female genre because on the one hand they are publicized most frequently due to their popularity, and on the other hand from these publicizing I hope to portray a picture of how *Southern Screen Illustrated* publicize these movie stars as modern women.

**Li Li-Hua**

Li Li-Hua was born in Shanghai in 1924, and began her career as a movie actress in Shanghai in the 1940s, when Shanghai was an “isolated island” from Japanese occupation. Li was already a movie star before she joins the Shaw Brothers, and hence she has more power over the roles she plays or the studio she prefers to work with. For instance, Li cross-dresses as Liang Shanbo in *Liang Shanbo and Zhu YingTai* (Yen Chun, 1964), which is the “twin” movie of *The Love Eterne* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963) made by MP&GI. Although MP&GI began their production earlier than the Shaw Brothers, *The Love Eterne* is accomplished faster under director Li Han-Hsiang’s supervision and became a blockbuster. Though casting two of the most famous movie stars—Li Li-hua and You Min—*Liang Shanbo and Zhu YingTai* never became as popular as *The Love Eterne*. Li Li-hua marries to actor/director Yen Chun. Yen owns a movie company which cooperates with Shaw Brothers in producing movies, and Li Li-hua is often the female lead in these films.

In the female genre, Li Li-hua often plays the role of matriarch, the empress, the woman with power, or the woman who saves people. She plays Princess Zhuangji in *The Grand Cai, Guorong. “Changqing Shu: Li Li-hua. [Evergreen: Li Li-hua.]” Meng Yuan Xing Xi: Zhongguo Mingxing Shi. [Far Away Dreams Stars Sparse: History of Chinese Film Stars.] Taipei: China Film Critics Association. 1984. Print.

384 Besides Li Li-hua, another famous movie star You Min plays Zhu YingTai in *Liang Shanbo and Zhu YingTai*. *Liang Shanbo and Zhu YingTai* is not a huangmei film, according to Ivy Ling Po’s interview, *Liang Shanbo and Zhu YingTai* is in yue opera.
Substitution (Yen Chun, 1965), Yang Guifei in The Magnificent Concubine, Empress Wu in Empress Wu Tse-Tien, and Kuanyin in The Goddess of Mercy (Shin Sang-Ok and Lim Wan-Sik, 1967)\(^{385}\). In Southern Screen Illustrated, she is often depicted as one with power. In an interview “Dialogue with Li Li-hua,”\(^{386}\) the interviewer writes that Li resembles the “queen.” She writes, “I cannot think of anyone else who can play the role Empress Wu except [Li]. No matter it is her reputation, acting skills, beauty, or intelligence.” (39) The interviewer asks Li on the roles Yang Guifei and Empress Wu. Li replies that she likes Yang Guifei because Yang knows “how to use her feminine charm to win the heart of a man. Her feminine weakness was her strength, as she used it to bend the ‘strong’ masculine will to her own desires.”\(^{387}\) On the other hand, when thinks of Wu, Li says that she admires Wu because “[Wu] was ambitious, scheming, a great politician who beat the men at their own game.”\(^{388}\) Li further states that Empress Wu should be regarded as “the founder of feminist” because Wu fights for the equal right between men and woman—having children mourn their mother as long as their father. This interview tells the readers how to read the movie Magnificent Concubine and Empress Wu Tse-tien: Yang is a woman who uses her feminine charm to fulfill her own will whereas Wu is a powerful woman who fights for gender equality. Besides, the interview publicizes Li Li-hua as the only movie star who is significant enough to play the roles Yang Guifei and Empress Wu. The interviewer states that Li is perfect for these roles also because her personality resembles the queen. It can also be the other way around that since Li is casted Yang Guifei and Empress Wu that the reporter

\(^{385}\) The Goddess of Mercy is a film that can be categorized as historical drama. It is cooperated by the Shaw Brothers and Shin’s studio from Korea. The male lead is played by Korean actor Kim Seung-Ho, and the outdoor scenes are shot in South Korea. The Goddess of Mercy, Kuanyin, was born in Tianzhu, present day India. But the film is Sinicized in terms of clothing and background.

\(^{386}\) 和李麗華一席談。Sep. 1961: 36-39. Issue 43. The English title is “A Woman’s View on Women?”

\(^{387}\) This is a quotation from English summary.

\(^{388}\) From English summary.
publicizes her as a queen. Thus it is evident that the article meanwhile promotes the Shaw Brothers’ movies *Magnificent Concubine* and *Empress Wu Tse-tien*. On the other hand, Li also gives Yang Guifei and Empress Wu a “modern” interpretation in the interview since she compares Yang as a woman who manipulate men with her femininity, and Wu as the first “feminist” in history.

Li Li-hua is often publicized as a woman with feminine charm, to be more specific, a woman with Oriental/Chinese feminine charm. In the article “Li Li-hua Is Like A Rare Diamond,” the reporter praises Li to be different from Hollywood actresses: while actresses in Hollywood exposes their bodies, Li dresses in cheongsam and reveals her body in a modest way. The reporter claims that Li is smart in showing her beauty with make-up skills that makes her to be “more and more beautiful day by day, year by year.” (36) The English summery even states that it is a “national trait” (35) of Chinese women to appear youthful, and Li is the one who displays this “national trait.” Different from Li Li-hua, other actresses at similar age as Li usually play roles as mothers or middle aged women. Li, on the contrary, always play major female roles despite the age of these roles. Li is hence often referred as “evergreen” of Chinese cinema. Li Li-hua, or any other movie stars in Shaw Brothers, may play different roles in different time of their acting careers and hence be publicized differently. Nevertheless, certain images or characteristics would be maintained. Li Li-hua’s image as the matriarch and her importance in cinema makes her Kuanyin in *Goddess of Mercy* even though she is a catholic.

When trying to promote *Goddess of Mercy*, *Southern Screen Illustrated* no longer publicize her Oriental/Chinese feminine charm. Rather, it is her significance in cinema that is being focused.

389 李麗華像一顆稀世巨鑽。Jan. 1962: 34-37. Issue 47. The English title is “Ever Youthful Li Li-hua.”
390 For example, Ouyang Shafei and Kao Baoshu. Li is born in 1924. Ouyang Shafei is born in 1923, and Kao Baoshu is born in 1932. Ouyang Shafei and Kao Baoshu often have to put up old make-up for their roles.
391 影壇長青樹。
In “Li Li-hua as Goddess of Mercy,” the reporter writes about Li’s status as “superstar of Chinese cinema.” In “Golden Horse Award Winner: Li Li-hua,” the reporter focuses on Li Li-hua’s status as the most significant Chinese actress in cinema and her acting skills in playing various roles. Another article “Li Li-hua’s Ambition in Cinema” publicizes Li Li-hua’s ambition of making a representable movie for her career and to be a “giant” of Chinese cinema. This article indicates that Li is paying attention on qualities of her films and hence the coming Goddess of Mercy and Lady Jade Locket (Yen Chun, 1967) will certainly be artistic. None of these articles looks at Li’s femininity or sexuality because she is playing a goddess who should be sanctified. It is her significance or her acting skills that are promoted. The audiences can also see continuity of Li’s screen image since her significance has been established by playing the roles of matriarch.

**Linda Lin Dai**

Linda Lin Dai is a unique movie star in the Shaw Brothers. Lin Dai became popular with her first movie Singing Under the Moon (Yen Chun, 1953), in which she plays a role as a country girl. She became famous before joining the Shaw Brothers. Hence MP&GI competes with Shaw Brothers in having Lin star in their movies. Different from movie stars who work only for the Shaw Brothers and receive a monthly stipend, Lin is paid with remuneration. She stars in movies of both MP&GI and the Shaw Brothers, depending on scripts or remuneration. According to Cai Guorong, the author of Far Away Dreams Stars Sparse: History of Chinese Film Stars, Shaw Brothers increased her remuneration from 10,000 to 40,000 HKD. MP&GI

---

392 李麗華的觀音造像。Jan. 1965: 30-33. Issue 83. This is the English title.
393 金馬影后李麗華。Nov. 1965: 8. Issue 93. This is the English title.
thus agrees to pay 45,000 HKD for each of the movie she makes\(^{395}\). Lin Dai is unique also because she stars and successes in all kinds of movie genres, including the female genre, melodrama, and musicals. In other words, Lin Dai appears on screen in movies of modern time and historical drama. Lin is often publicized as “Asian movie queen” because she is a four-time best actress in Asian Film Festival. The four movies that wins Lin Dai the best actress awards are *Golden Lotus* (Yueh Feng, 1957), *Diau Charn* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1958), *Les Belles* (Doe Ching, 1961), and *Love Without End* (Doe Ching, 1961). Among the four, *Golden Lotus* is a black and white musical produced by MP&GI, *Diau Charn* is a colored historical and *huangmei* musical, *Les Belles* is a colored musical, and *Love Without End* is a black and white melodrama. These four movies on the one hand demonstrate that Lin Dai is casted in various genres, and on the other hand shows that she collaborates with both MP&GI and Shaw Brothers. Linda Lin Dai dies at a very early age: thirty years old. She commits suicide at the height of her fame. She is very much a victim of media. As a famous movie star, all her behaviors are magnified by journalists. Her biography *Movie Queen of The Time: Lin Dai*\(^{396}\) describes her life full of headlines. For instances, Linda Lin Dai and Li Li-hua’s relationship as opponent. They are opponent not only on work but also in private life since Lin became famous staring in Yen Chun’s films, and is meanwhile his partner. Yen Chun later marries to Li Li-hua. Besides, Lin’s success surely brings her a lot of enemies and gossips. Lin marries to Long Shengxun, a controversial man whose father is the Governor of Yunnan under the regime of People’s Republic of China. Their marriage is a hot subject of media. For example, an article “Issue on Lin Dai’s Bedroom”\(^{397}\) in


issue 33 of The Milky Way Pictorial clarifies gossips on Lin Dai’s widespread news on May 10th. Journalist Zu Ting writes that “it is no big deal,” (20) “they are young couples who fight sometimes,” and sometimes “pepper works better than honey” (21) in increasing their love. Many other medias are not as friendly to Lin, and there are often gossips on Lin or her husband’s “affairs.” Different from medias that focus on gossips, Southern Screen Illustrated always publicized Linda Lin Dai with positive images.

Lin Dai is herself an attraction to audiences. Though Lin plays various roles in movies, her image on the screen more or less follows the image of a naïve girl. In one of her famous movie in the female genre, The Kingdom and the Beauty (Li Han-Hsiang, 1959), Lin plays a country girl Li Feng who encounters the emperor in disguise as a commoner. She plays the game of “playing the emperor” with the actual emperor and sings famous hunamgei song “Playing the Emperor.” This is an irony on the one hand and shows her naivety on the other. Her role Daji in The Last Woman of Shang (Yueh Feng, 1964) in a sense also follows her image. Although Daji is a femme fatale in Chinese history, the Daji Lin plays is an innocent woman who decides to revenge for her father. And with the imagined character—her maid Zhiyan—as her aid, Lin’s Daji appears to be a naïve and playful girl. Because of Lin Dai’s screen image and popularity, she does not have to be publicized to be “modern.” Southern Screen Illustrated publicizes Lin as a movie queen and a super star. Lin Dai’s traveling abroad is often reported in Southern Screen Illustrated. Article such as “Lin Dai’s European Tour”398 takes readers around the globe along with Lin Dai through pictures. In this article, the reporter also discloses the news that Lin Dai is pregnant, and will take some time off for a while. Nevertheless, Lin does not disappear from media in her pregnancy. During her time off, her movies like Beyond the Great Wall (Li
Han-Hsiang, 1964) and *Love Parade* (Doe Ching, 1962) are released and hence publicized on *Southern Screen Illustrated*—surely with the fame of superstar Lin Dai. The article “*Love Parade: Linda Lin Dai*”\(^{399}\) publicizes these films as things that the readers/audiences could see if they miss Lin Dai\(^{400}\). Another article “At Home With Lin Dai”\(^{401}\) interviews Lin Dai during her time off so that the readers can get a peek at her. The article not only reveals her life in pregnancy but also introduces Lin Dai’s modern living style and modern house.

*Southern Screen Illustrated* often praises Linda Lin Dai as a hard-working actress who is eager to improve herself in acquiring different skills. In an article “Lin Dai’s Busy Hours,”\(^{402}\) the interviewer writes that she/he hears Lin practice *huangmei* music before entering her apartment. The interviewer implies Lin’s effort in practicing singing *huangmei*—even though in fact *huangmei* musical are dubbed and most of actors/actresses in *huangmei* films do not sing except Ivy Ling Po. The interviewer also informs readers how Lin Dai prepares for her characters in *The Last Woman of Shang* and *The Black and the Blue* (Doe Ching, 1966). Lin reads *Investiture of Gods* and original novel of *The Black and the Blue* besides the script. In these details, the interviewer not only shows Lin’s effort as an actress, but also displays how Shaw Brothers is serious in maintaining the originality of the novel and history. Another article “Lin Dai at Ballet”\(^{403}\) presents Lin’s new exercise ballet. Lin tells the reporter that she starts learning ballet not for any of the movies, but to have a new skill and to keep fit at the same time. *Southern Screen Illustrated* publicizes Lin Dai as a hardworking movie stars who looks for ways to improve herself. And these different skills—singing *huangmei*, reading history or novel, or

\(^{400}\) The article publicizes these movies, but *Beyond The Great Wall* was not released until 1964.
\(^{401}\) 渣甸山上訪林黛。Jan. 1963: 26-29. Issue 60. This is the English title.
\(^{403}\) 看林黛練芭蕾舞。Jan. 1964: 20-23. Issue 71. This is the English title.
learning ballet—help to publicize Lin Dai as roles in *huangmei* musicals, historical epics, and modern musicals.

Linda Lin Dai’s funeral is reported in *Southern Screen Illustrated*. Rather than focusing on reasons of Lin’s suicide, *Southern Screen Illustrated* pays attention on Lin’s funeral. In reports on Lin’s funeral, including “Movie Queen’s Tragic Death” and “Tributes to Lin Dai,” *Southern Screen Illustrated* lists Lin’s contributions to Chinese cinema and describes details in the funeral, including movie stars who attended Lin’s funeral and their messages to Lin. In the next issue, an article “Lin Dai Memorial Photo Exhibition” reports a memorial photo exhibition in honor to Linda Lin Dai. The reporter states that there were thousands of people in the exhibition each day, and the two-days exhibition has to be re-opened in the next month for seven more days. After a year of Lin’s death, *Southern Screen Illustrated* continues to honor Lin Dai. In articles “New Lin Dai: Du Die” and “Which is Which?” the reporter claims that the Shaw Brothers has found Lin Dai’s childhood classmates who resembles Lin to finish the movies Lin left behind: *The Black and the Blue* and *The Lotus Lamp* (Yueh Feng, 1965). The article shows Lin Dai and Du Die’s pictures in films and asks readers to guess which one is which. In issue 91, an article on “Linda Lin Dai’s One-Year Memorial” reports anniversary memorial service at Lin’s cemetery that is full of movie stars and fans. In issue 100, Linda Lin Dai appears on inside of the front cover, and in this issue an article “Linda Lin Dai Gets Special Memorial Award” reports the success of *The Black and the Blue* in 13th Asian
Film Festival, and a reward in memory of Lin Dai. In issue 101, second anniversary of her death, director Doe Ching publishes a letter “A Letter to Be Burned—In Memory of Great Lin Dai” dedicated to Linda Lin Dai. These special articles dedicated to Lin Dai on the one hand shows her status as movie queen. On the other hand, publicity of Lin Dai after her death is a way to promote her unfinished movies. Shaw Brothers’ *The Lotus Lamp* wins over its twin movie *The Magic Lamp* (Wong Tin-Lam, Tang Huang, Wu Chia-Hsiang, Evan Yang and Lo Wei, 1964) by MP&GI in the box because it is one of Lin Dai’s last pieces, even though it is released a year later.

Betty Loh Ti

Betty Loh Ti is known for her image as “classic beauty,” meaning that she is a typical beauty of Chinese tradition. Loh Ti did not spend too much time working for the Shaw Brothers. She works for Great Wall Film Production Limited before joining the Shaw Brothers, joins the Shaw Brothers in 1958, and then leaves Shaw Brothers to MP&GI in 1964. Loh Ti marries to Shaw Brothers’ movie star Peter Chen Ho, who is famous for starring in modern comedy and musicals. They have a daughter, and divorce after 5 years of marriage due to Chen’s affair. Loh Ti commits suicide in 1968 at the age of thirty-one, one year after their divorce. Chen soon dies the next year because of cancer. Loh Ti becomes popular after joining the Shaw Brothers, her most popular movies are *The Enchanting Shadow* (Li Han-Hisang, 1960) and *The Love*.

---

412 Chung, 2004 (202).
413 In some of the media, her name appears as Betty Loh Tih.
414 古典美人。
415 In her biography *Classic Beauty Loh Ti*, her brother Lei Zhen, a famous movie star in MP&GI, claims that Betty Loh Ti did not commit suicide but died because of heart failure from taking too many sleeping pills. He claims that Loh Ti had heart disease and had a habit of taking sleeping pills. But most of media reports that she committed suicide. It is possible that her brother makes the claim because Loh Ti is a catholic, and it is prohibited to commit suicide in catholic. Yet she is buried in catholic cemetery, and this could be a proof that she did not commit suicide. In any case, the truth is hidden because we can only know her from the media.
Eterne. Though she also plays roles in melodrama such as The Deformed (Yueh Feng, 1960) or comedy such as Darling Stay at Home (Wong Tin-Lam, 1968), she is remembered as classic beauty. In her six years in the Shaw Brothers, Betty Loh Ti became from simply an actress to a super movie star, especially after success of The Love Eterne. Yet she soon leaves Shaw Brothers. Other media and her biography records that Loh Ti leaves Shaw Brothers because she did not get the attention she deserves while Ivy Ling Po became the center of attention, and her brother Lei Zhen who works for MP&GI is certainly a factor. However, these gossips never appear on Southern Screen Illustrated. Loh Ti is never center of any articles after she starts working for MP&GI, even though her husband Peter Chen Ho continues to work for the Shaw Brother. Not even her death is reported in the magazine.

While Betty Loh Ti is known as a classic beauty, Southern Screen Illustrated publicizes her as a woman beyond classic beauty. In an article “Betty Loh Ti’s Eight Capabilities,” the reporter publicizes her capabilities as “Capable of being a man and capable of being a woman, capable of playing in martial art woman and capable of acting as a student, capable of playing tragedy and capable of playing comedy, and capable of playing in historical dramas and capable of playing in modern roles.” (65) The reporter lists movies of her roles in these eight categories—The Love Eterne as the one she disguises as a man. Besides, Loh Ti she is often publicized as domestic. Before she marries to Peter Chen Ho, Southern Screen Illustrated depicts her domestic life in articles such as “Betty Loh Ti Decorates Her Ideal Home” or “Betty Loh Tih at Home.” The articles display pictures of Loh Ti knitting, cooking, or serving food. After she marries to Peter Chen Ho, Loh Ti and Chen are often publicized as a couple. Articles such as

---

418 樂蒂在家做些什麼？Jan. 1962: 58-61. Issue 47. This is the English title.
“Betty and Peter Performing Popular Dance”\footnote{樂蒂陳厚表演流行舞。May. 1963: 20-22. Issue 63.} and “Betty and Peter’s Love at First Dance”\footnote{樂蒂陳厚一舞鍾情。Nov. 1963:6-7. Issue 69.} publicize movies starring Betty Loh Ti and Peter Chen Ho. This is a common technique of publicizing movies with movie stars’ names rather than characters’ names in *Southern Screen Illustrated*. Besides promotion of movies, Loh Ti’s domestic life is often publicized in articles like “At Home With Peter and Betty”\footnote{樂蒂、陳厚的家居生活。Oct. 1962: 60-63. Issue 56. This is the English title.} or “Betty and Peter.”\footnote{樂蒂陳厚在聽濤村。Sep. 1963: 26-29. Issue 67. This is the English title.} In these articles, Betty and Peter are depicted as “the happiest couple in movieland.” \footnote{李麗華，嚴俊在美獲千金。Dec. 1959: 42-43. Issue 42.} And pictures of their life, such as reading together, taking a stroll, playing piano or guitar, or playing with their daughter are displayed in the articles. \footnote{嚴俊，李麗華的快樂家庭。Feb. 1961. Issue 36.} [Figure 4.11] The domestic image of woman as a good wife and a good mother is the image that Shaw Brothers promotes in *Southern Screen Illustrated*. Betty Loh Ti is often publicized with domesticity. Besides Loh Ti, family lives of other female movie stars are also a way to publicize movie stars in *Southern Screen Illustrated*.

display movie stars’ family life to readers. Among the four movie stars introduced here, Li Li-hua and Betty Loh Ti’s family lives are often publicized. The distinction on publicity may be resulted in whether the publicity could enhance her screen images. Linda Lin Dai marries not to an actor, and hence publicizing her family life neither supports her screen image as a naïve girl nor helps to promote movies. Ivy Ling Po, on the other hand, though married to Shaw Brothers’ actor Chin Han, her marriage does not help her screen image as a cross-dressed male lead. Sometimes *Southern Screen Illustrated* utilizes Ling Po and Chin Han’s relationship to promote the movie they both star in: the article “Ivy Ling Po and Chin Han Sing Together” is in fact an article publicizing their movie *Song of Tomorrow*. Their actual married life is seldom reported in *Southern Screen Illustrated*. In contrast, the married life of Betty Loh Ti and Li Li-hua are frequently publicized. Besides life partners, they are also working partners of their husbands. Li Li-Hua marries to Yen Chun, who is a director and actor, and Li is often the female protagonist in the movies Yen directed. Betty Loh Ti marries to Peter Chen Ho, they sometimes play female lead and male lead in the same movies. Hence to publicize their married life not only publicize them as movie stars but also promote movies at the same time.

The female movie stars’ married life in *Southern Screen Illustrated* demonstrates life of an ideal modern woman: although a modern woman is active in her career, her role as a wife and a mother cannot be ignored. In “Li Li-Hua and Yen Chun’s Deep Feelings,” the reporter publicize them as “the model couple” who are “both extremely successful in careers, and both

---

431 凌波金漢唱隨之樂。May. 1967: 30-33. Issue 111. There is a Chinese idiom describing married couples’ love as “when the husband sings, the wife follows along.”
432 There is also a possibility that the Shaw Brothers does not support their marriage. Ivy Ling Po is the most famous movie star of the time, and Chin Han is a new actor who has not yet become famous. Ling Po’s image on screen would obviously be affected by her marriage. The details of Shaw Brothers and Ivy Ling Po’s conflict can be found in other fans’ magazines such as *The Milky Way Pictorial* or *Screenland*. Ling Po’s biography “Brother Liang: Ivy Ling Po” also mentions her conflict with Shaw Brothers because of her marriage.
433 See note 427.
achieve prestigious status in cinema. They have cooperated on work for a long time, know each 
other very well, and therefore fell in love and got married.” (42) The reporter states an ideal love 
relationship that begins with love and free will—the marriage that is depicted in the female 
genre. Besides, the reporter describes Li as an ideal modern woman who is a “capable 
housewife” in spite of her career life. She never ignores house chores no matter how busy she is, 
and often cooks in accordance with Yen Chun’s appetite. Yen praises her as “my good helper 
inside, and outside the house.”\textsuperscript{434} From descriptions in the article, an ideal modern woman can be 
successful in career, a woman is no longer expected to be completely domestic or confined inside 
the household. Nevertheless, a woman’s responsibility in domestic sphere cannot be ignored for 
her career. She has to fulfill her role as a wife and as a mother to takes care of her husband and 
children. This ideal modern woman is similar to woman portrayed in the female genre—like Hua 
Mu-Lan in \textit{Lady General Hua Mu-Lan}, Wen Fei’e in \textit{The Perfumed Arrow} (Kao Li, 1966), or 
Zhu Yingtai in \textit{The Love Eterne}. Despite the fact that these women cross-dress as a general or a 
student and become extremely successful in their fields of work, they eventually have to return 
home and get married. In other words, though modern women can be active and successful in 
different realms, in the female genre, they eventually have to fulfill their domestic roles and to 
serve the patriarchal society. 

\textbf{Ivy Ling Po}

Ivy Ling Po is arguably the most popular movie star in the female genre. Ling Po 
becomes popular only after joining the Shaw Brothers. She has a miserable childhood: she was 
an orphan from Amoy Fujian\textsuperscript{435}, and was sold to Mr. Jun at the age of three. After 1949, she 
came to Hong Kong with her foster mother, and she began her acting career as a child star in

\textsuperscript{434} 賢內助，賢外助。Xian Neizhu, a good helper inside the house is a term literally means a good wife. 
\textsuperscript{435} Xiamen, Fujian.
Amoy films with the name Xiaojuan because of financial difficulty. At the age of thirteen, she was forced by her foster mother to be a secondary wife to Mr. Shi, a rich Chinese businessman in the Philippines. Mr. Shi invested in Huaxia film company making Amoy films starring Xiaojuan (Ling Po). From Ling Po’s interview⁴³⁶, she recollects that all the money went to her foster mother and she has never seen any, and she was often beaten by her foster mother if she did not do well in filming. Ling Po has a son with Mr. Shi. Her first son is raised by her foster mother and it later became a scandal that her foster mother keeps him away in order to make Ling Po pay more money. Her miserable childhood is made into a Taiwanese film *Orphan Ling Po* (Jin Chaobai, 1964). Zhang Zhen also argues in “Orphanhood and Post-War Sinophone Film History” that Ivy Ling Po’s background of being an orphan enriches her career as a superstar in Taiwan. After Ling Po becomes popular because of *The Love Eterne*, a lot of women/female fans in Taiwan send her letters expressing their hope to adopt her as a daughter. Many of them claim to be Ling Po’s birth mother. This on the one hand shows her popularity, and on the other hand shows that giving or selling away daughters is not uncommon at this time. Ivy Ling Po’s poor childhood is well-known to audiences. Her lawsuit on guardianship of her son with her foster mother also became headlines in newspapers and many of the fans magazines. *Southern Screen Illustrated*, on the contrary, never uses her background to attract readers/audiences.

After Ivy Ling Po’s success in *The Love Eterne*, she becomes the most popular movie star in the female genre. She was often cast as cross-dressed male protagonist in *huangmei* films. Since Ling Po becomes popular only after she joins the Shaw Brothers, her contract with the Shaw Brothers is paid by monthly stipend: she was paid 800 HKD at first and then soon raised to

⁴³⁶ See note 356.
1200 HKD, which all went to her foster mother\textsuperscript{437}. Besides, her roles are arranged by the Shaw Brothers, and hence she usually plays the cross-dressed male lead or female lead who disguises as a man. When Ivy Ling Po talks about her first movie in the Shaw Brothers in the interview, she discloses that in her first mandarin movie at Shaw Brothers, she plays the female supporting actress Cui Yingying in \textit{Hongniang}, a movie based on Chinese classics \textit{The Story of the Western Wing}. Ling Po claims that this film was burned and never released because Runrun Shaw thinks that Ivy Ling Po’s success as Liang Shanbo in \textit{The Love Eterne} would make audiences not to accept her role as a woman\textsuperscript{438}. Ling Po later plays the male lead Student Zhang in \textit{West Chamber} (Yueh Feng, 1965), a new version of \textit{The Story of the Western Wing}. In three years of Ivy Ling Po’s success on \textit{The Love Eterne}, Ling Po is mostly casted as cross-dressed male lead or a woman who disguises as a man. She sometimes appear as a woman, but these are often guest performer to boost box office—since her films would be at least 100,000 in box office in Taiwan alone\textsuperscript{439}.

Shaw Brothers establishes Ivy Ling Po’s screen image as a handsome scholar. Shaw Brothers reinforces Ling Po’s screen image by re-producing films in the same genre once they became popular. \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated} also publicizes Ivy Ling Po’s image accordingly. Yet interestingly, though Ling Po appears on screen in historical costumes, \textit{Southern Screen Illustrated} publicizes her as a movie star in modern style. A reasons is that Shaw Brothers publicizes its studio to be the most modern and advanced movie empire. Articles that focuses on

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{437} Compared to Linda Lin Dai’s remuneration, Ling Po’s stipend is modest. This is her stipend for the first few years in the Shaw Brothers. And in order to avoid her foster mother, she lives in Shaw Brothers’ dormitory before she gets married.
\textsuperscript{438} See note 356. It is more convincing that this film was burned because Runrun Shaw is not satisfied with it. As Shaw Brothers claims on every film advertisement, “As long as [the film is] produced by Shaw Brothers, [it is] guaranteed to be good.”
\textsuperscript{439} See note 356.
\end{flushleft}
her vacation abroad are examples of the modern life. Sometimes *Southern Screen Illustrated* publicizes the modern aspect of films in history. For example, “Outdoor Scene in Japan—*The Love Eterne*” reports that the crew travels to Tokyo to shot a snow scene. Ling Po’s modern life is also publicized in the magazine. In “Ivy Ling Po’s Half Day of Leisure,” the reporter records a half day she goes shopping with Ling Po: they visited a record store, a department store, a clothing store, a jewelry store, and then had afternoon tea together. The reporter details the items she buys, how she shops, and her encounter with fans. [Figure 4.12] By displaying Ivy Ling Po’s modern life and taste with pictures, the reporter brings her from a character in historical drama into a movie star with the most modern style of living. Besides bringing Ling Po from historical movies to modern world, *Southern Screen Illustrated* also brings her from male to female. In addition to displaying Ling Po in dresses, *Southern Screen Illustrated* also have her pose for modern hairstyles and clothing. In an article “No Easy Road To Success Ivy Ling Po,” the reporter describes Ling Po’s characteristics with both femininity and masculinity:

“she is a dream lover for numerous audiences: men consider her as a girl, women consider her as a boy, the elder hope to have a son/daughter like her, and the youth hopes to have a sibling like her. On the screen, she is a girl in man’s clothing, yet beyond the screen, she wins love from thousands of audience despite their gender or age.” (26)

And the reporter also writes that it is Shaw Brothers that brings Liang Shanbo with Jun Haitang and makes Ivy Ling Po a superstar, it is Shaw Brothers’ advanced techniques in filming that brings Ling Po to success. In other words, though Ivy Ling Po brings masculinity

---

440 See note 371 and 372.
443 See note 375 and 376.
444 凌波是怎样成功的？Apr. 1964: 26-29. Issue 74. This is the English title.
445 Jun Haitang is Ling Po’s original name.
and femininity together on her screen image, it is the Shaw Brothers that brings Ivy Ling Po to success. This article demonstrates that *Southern Screen Illustrated* publicizes Ivy Ling Po with fluid gender identity: she can be considered as a man or a woman, and she is popular because of her fluid gender identity. Hence even though Ling Po appears as male lead on the screen, there is no contradiction showing her femininity in *Southern Screen Illustrated*—she is loved by readers/audiences no matter she appears to be modern or historical, male or female.

Ivy Ling Po’s image changes over time. Before she becomes Forever Brother Liang in *The Love Eterne*, she is publicized as a lady in *Southern Screen Illustrated*. An article in issue 58 titled “Pretty Newcomer Ling Po,”\(^{446}\) Ling Po is publicized for her first mandarin movie *Hongniang* which has never been released. Besides publicizing the cast in *Hongniang*, this short article introduces Ling Po as a new face in Shaw Brothers’ mandarin movies: “twenty-two-year-old lady Ling Po was born in Amoy with her original name as Jun Haitang. She has a beautiful face and wellborn temperament. Since she lives a good life and does not like to exercise, she keeps a slim body of an oriental lady with somewhat classic beauty.” (58) The reporter makes a contrast between the body of an oriental lady to a western/Caucasian lady: whereas an oriental woman should be slim and domestic, although not stated clearly, a western woman is assumed to be strong and athletic. From the description, Ling Po is depicted as a classic Chinese lady of a wealthy family. This image of an oriental lady soon changes after Ivy Ling Po’s success as Liang Shanbo in *The Love Eterne*. In the article “Ivy Ling Po’s Half Day of Leisure”\(^{447}\) she is depicted to be straightforward and candid just “like a boy.” (28) Another article “Ling Po on a Bicycle”\(^{448}\) reports Ivy Ling Po’s new bicycle in Shaw’s movie town. Ling Po tells the reporter that this is

\(^{446}\) 凌波艷影。Dec. 1962: 58. Issue 58. This is the English title.

\(^{447}\) See note 442.

her new method of exercising to keep fit. The reporter writes, “as it turns out, Ling Po likes to exercise since she was a child, and riding bicycle is one of her favorite exercises.” (7) This article depicts Ivy Ling Po as an active girl, pretty much boyish to be exact. This may seem to be the opposite to her first image as a wellborn lady. One could explain this change as Shaw Brothers’ gradual understanding of Ling Po’s personality, however, I would like to argue that it is not the actual personality of Ling Po that matters here, it is how Ling Po’s screen image appears in Southern Screen Illustrated, or how the magazine publicizes Ling Po based on her characters in movies. Because Ivy Ling Po is known for playing the male lead in the female genre, the reporters publicize her as a “straightforward” or “boyish” girl. In a television show with Ling Po’s interview, Ivy Ling Po discusses how she performs a man in huangmei films. She describes her performance as boyish. The publicity of Ivy Ling Po’s image as boyish reflects the reason that Ling Po is able to be the male lead in the female genre: she performs a type of masculinity that is less-threatening than macho. In a way, this confirms that in the female genre, the scale of weighting femininity and masculinity still exists, yet though “boyish” is a lesser form of masculinity, the feminized masculinity is being praised. Ling Po’s image changes again later after she gets married with Chin Han, the male lead in Lady General Hua Mu-Lan. She gradually appears to be a modern woman. In an article “Ivy Picks Spring Wardrobe,” the reporter states that Ling Po looks more beautiful in modern clothing than in historical costumes. This article presents Ling Po’s modern style of clothing in order to promote her film Song of Tomorrow (Doe Ching, 1967) and Too Late For Love (Lo Chen, 1967), which are her first two films in modern

---


450 凌波試春裝。Mar. 1966: 28-29. Issue 97. This is the English title.
setting. The screen images of the movie stars that are publicized in *Southern Screen Illustrated* clearly serves one goal—to promote Shaw Brothers’ films.

Besides Li Li-hua, Linda Lin Dai, Betty Loh Ti, and Ivy Ling Po, *Southern Screen Illustrated* also publicized many other movie stars. Li Hsiang-Chun, Pat Ting Hung, Margret Tu Chun, and Chang Cun-wen are movie stars that Shaw Brothers often publicizes. *Southern Screen Illustrated* is also a channel to publicize brand new movie stars produced by the Shaw Brothers: Li Ching, Cheng Pei-pei, Fang Yin, Chin Ping and many others are trained in Southern Drama Group and then become movie stars in the Shaw Brothers. In an article, “Meet Shaw’s New Faces”*451* *Southern Screen Illustrated* reports an event hold by Shaw’s Fan Club in introducing twelve new movie stars to the readers/audiences. In this event, three guest movie stars including Ivy Ling Po awards presents to lucky readers. Twelve new movie stars, including Cheng Pei-pei, Li Ching, and Fang Yin, present their talents in this event. Moreover, in special issues in January, *Southern Screen Illustrated* publicizes the Shaw Brothers’ movie stars. In articles such as “The Shaw Galaxy”*452* [Figure 4.13], “Shaw Brothers’ Movie Stars Like Starry Sky,”*453* “100 Shaw’s Movie Stars,”*454* “Profile of Shaw’s 109 Movie Stars,”*455* “Shaw Brothers’ 133 Movie Stars,”*456* “Shaw Brothers’ Movie Stars Reaches 150”*457* and “Shaw Brothers’ 156 Movie Stars,”*458* there are pictures and basic information of movie stars. This kind of list on the one had introduces movie stars to the readers, including famous or brand new movie stars. On the other hand, the readers/audiences will be able to recognize who are movie stars from minor characters.

---

*451* 十二星辰遊藝大會。Dec. 1963: 74-77. Issue 70. This is the English title.
*452* 聲勢浩大的邵氏星群。Jan. 1964: 134-141. Issue 71. This is the English title.
on the screen. As a monopolized movie studio, Shaw Brothers produces and imprints screen images for movie stars. Many movie stars play certain types of roles over and over in movies. Ivy Ling Po is the best example of a movie star who plays roles as cross-dressed male scholar. Other movie stars have their distinctive screen images, such as Gao Baoshu often plays evil middle age woman, Chen Yanyan often plays old mother, Jiang Guangchao often plays evil man or playboy, and etc.. The screen images are reinforced by the roles they play frequently or by publication in *Southern Screen Illustrated*.

**Shaw’s Empire of Modern Entertainment**

As Shaw Brothers’ official publication, the major goal of *Southern Screen Illustrated* is to publicize Shaw Brothers and Shaw’s movies. Different from other fans magazines, *Southern Screen Illustrated* publicizes movie stars in order to promote movies. Hence, *Southern Screen Illustrated* seldom reports negative images or gossips of movie stars. The eye-catching titles such as “Linda Lin Dai Spends A Night With Peter Chen Ho” or “Betty Loh Ti’s Lonely Heart” are articles publicizing films with names of movie stars rather than their characters. The real dirt, such as Li Li-hua and Linda Lin Dai’s antagonism, Linda Lin Dai or Betty Loh Ti’s marriage scandals, or Betty Loh Ti and Ivy Ling Po’s problems with their contracts are never published in *Southern Screen Illustrated*. Besides publicizing movies and movies Stars, another major purpose of *Southern Screen Illustrated* is to publicize Shaw Brothers studio. Shaw Brothers is publicized as the most modern and international Chinese studio. Although Shaw Brothers produced a lot of movies in the female genre, and hence movies on historical China, *Southern Screen Illustrated* publicizes the modern aspects of the studios. Thus it is important to

---

461 The Chinese here can be interpreted as the studio that produces mandarin Chinese film, or in a larger sense a culturally Chinese film production.
look at *Southern Screen Illustrated* in understanding why the Shaw Brothers is a modern movie empire and why the female genre is at the same time modern.

*Southern Screen Illustrated* promotes the Shaw Brothers as a modern movie empire. Articles such as “Launch of Shaw’s Brand New Studios,”462 “The Largest Entertainment Supplies in Far East: The Shaw Brothers,”463 “Runme Shaw Speaks on Shaw Brothers,”464 “The Largest Studio in Far East,”465 “Visit Shaw’s Movie Town with Ling Po,”466 and “New Facade of Shaw’s Movie Town”467 publicize Shaw Brothers’ modern studio. The grand Shaw’s movie empire is depict highly modernized and monopolized: there are headquarters, six huge studios which later increases to twelve, modern and ancient outdoor streets scenes, sound stage, film laboratory, dormitory for the movie stars and the crew in the movie town. Beyond the movie town, Shaw Brothers owns one hundred and twenty-seven movie theatres with modernized sound equipment and seating in East Asia, and a film studio in Kuala Lumpur. Shaw Brothers is a great movie empire that not only produces films, produces movie stars to star in the films, publicizes their films in their own publishing company, show the films in their own movie theatres, they also cooperate with foreign studios in making films at Hong Kong, and they help to release films from Hollywood, Japan, Korea, and etc. in their movie theatres. Moreover, Shaw Brothers publicizes modern technology of movie making in *Southern Screen Illustrated*. In article “Mandarin Films Enter Color Age,”468 the reporter states Shaw Brothers’ effort in making wide screen colored pictures—Eastmancolor Shawscope films. The colored film is the most

---

466 凌波帶你參觀邵氏影城。Jan. 1963: 30-35. Issue 59. This is the English title.
468 迎接彩色電影的新時代。Jan. 1963:36. Issue 59. This is the English title.
advanced film technology of the time. It began more and more popular in the end of 1950s. While black and white films continue to be made, film studios began making colored films. The colored films are big-budget attractions since it costs three times more than a black and while film. And films in the female genres are all big-budget colored films. The English summary of this article states that, “Shaw Brothers have shown the way to the colored age for Mandarin films with a number of highly successful production in Eastman.” (36) Among the first few Eastmancolor films—Diau Charn, The Kingdom and Beauty, The Enchanting Shadow, Les Belles, The Bride Napping (Yen Chun, 1962), The Magnificent Concubine, The Dream of the Red Chamber (Yuan Qiufeng, 1961), Madam White Snake (Yueh Feng, 1962), and Beyond the Great Wall, Empress Wu Tse-tien, and Love Parade—nine of them belong to the female genre while two are modern musical. Eastmancolor Shawscope is a significant feature of promoting films and always shown in movie advertisements. [Figure 4.14.1, Figure 4.14.2] Hence, although films in the female genre are about the history, they are meanwhile modern entertainment due to its advanced techniques in Shaw Brothers studio.

Besides publicizing Shaw Brothers as modern studios, Southern Screen Illustrated also publicizes Shaw Brothers’ international collaborations. Shaw Brothers is one of the largest Chinese studios at the time. Most of films are shot in Shaw Brothers’ movie town. Some outdoor scenes of big-budget movies are shot abroad in Japan, Korea, or Taiwan. Southern Screen Illustrated publicizes these special scenes. For instance, “Shaw’s Location Crew in Japan” reports that director Li Han-hsiang leads Shaw Brothers’ crew to Kyoto in order to shot the outdoor scenes of The Magnificent Concubine, Empress Wu Tse-tien, and Beyond the Great Wall.
Wall. And *The Love Eterne* is shot mostly in Shaw Brothers’ studio and partly in Japan. An article “Snow in Subtropics” reports that Shaw Brothers creates an indoor snow scene in studio with talcum powder. Another article “Outdoor Scene in Japan—*The Love Eterne*” reports that Ivy Ling Po and Betty Loh Ti go to Japan for a snow scene in *The Love Eterne*. Besides movies shot abroad, *Southern Screen Illustrated* also publicizes Shaw Brothers’ co-production with foreign studios. The historical epics *The Last Woman of Shang* and *The Goddess of Mercy* are co-produced by the Shaw Brothers and Shin’s studio from Korea. In articles such as “Hong Kong and Korea Collaborate on *The Last Woman of Shang*” and “A HK$4,000,000 Joint Venture” *Southern Screen Illustrated* publicizes *The Last Woman of Shang* as an epic with foreign collaboration. *The Goddess of Mercy*, on the other hand, is a special co-production. The report “Two Goddesses of Mercy” displays two actresses, Li Li-hua and Choi Eun Hi, as *Goddess of Mercy*. The report shows that there are two versions of *Goddess of Mercy*: Chinese and Korean versions. While the outdoor scenes are shot in Korea, the indoor scenes are shot in Hong Kong. There are two female leads and two directors: Li Li-hwa is the female lead and Yen Ch'un is the director in Chinese version, whereas Choi Eun Hi is the female lead and Shin Sang-Ok is the director in Korean version. Besides Korea, Shaw Brothers also cooperates with Japanese film company. For instance, “Pan Yin-tze in Japan” reports Shaw Brothers movie star Pan Yin-tze casts as the female lead in Japanese film *Ahendaichi Jigokubutai*.

---

472 路德的雪景。Apr. 1963: 26. Issue 62. This is the English title.
473 See note 441.
475 亞洲影后影帝破天荒攜手主演妲己。May. 1964: 2-3. Issue 75. This is the English title.
476 Articles “*The Goddess of Mercy*,” “Li Li-hua Cooperates with Two Best Actors on *The Goddess of Mercy*,” “Two Goddesses of Mercy,” and “The Greatest *Goddess of Mercy*” publicize Goddess of Mercy as a movie collaborated with foreign production.
477 潘迎紫大受歡迎。Dec. 1966: 81-83. Issue 106. This is the English title.
The film studio Shaw Brothers is a great film studio that makes films with big-budget, and therefore these films are worth viewing. Besides, the reports also display the Shaw Brothers as the largest studio that represents Chinese cinema to the world. The films produced by the Shaw Brothers, can consequently be regarded as the Chinese film under a global rather than local context.

**Southern Screen Illustrated** also records how their movies are released and received oversea. These articles record history of the Shaw Brothers’ development in global film market. There are articles such as “The Enchanting Shadow Participates in San Francisco Film Festival,” “Indian Success of Kingdom and Beauty,” “Saigon Goes Wild,” “SB Pictures for Europe and Middle East,” “Western Premiers of Chinese Pictures,” “Love Eterne Takes San Francisco by Storm,” ‘Lady General’ Invades San Francisco,” “Americans Like Mandarin Movies,” [Figure 4.15] “Ivy Scores With U.S. Critics, Moviegoers,” and “Shaws Makes Bid for U.S. Market” showing traces of Shaw Brothers movies in global market. Shaw Brothers’ global market includes Japan, Vietnam, India, France, Australia, the United Kingdom the United States, and even Middle East. In the United States, Shaw Brothers’ films are shown in major cities including San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia, Boston,

---

479 「倩女幽魂」參加三藩市國際影展。Jan. 1961: 42.
481 白蛇傳轟動越南。May. 1963: 89. Issue 63. This is the English title.
483 國片在美國和澳洲大受歡迎。Oct. 1963: 2-3. Issue 68. This is the English title.
484 邵氏梁祝轟動舊金山。Feb. 1964: 26-27. Issue 72. This is the English title.
486 國片在美大受歡迎。Dec. 1964: 2-3. Issue 82. This is the English title.
487 美國人眼中的凌波。Apr. 1965: 6-7. Issue 86. This is the English title.
488 邵氏影片在美國開闢新市場。Oct. 1965: 2-3. Issue 92. This is the English title.
Washington D.C., Chicago, Atlanta, Las Vegas, Dallas, and Honolulu. In India, for another instance, the *huangmei* film *Kingdom and Beauty* is shown in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay. Most movies released abroad belong to the female genre, including *The Kingdom and the Beauty, Madam White Snake, The Love Eterne, Lady General Hua Mu-Lan, The Enchanting Shadow, Empress Wu Tse-tien, and The Last Woman of Shang*. *Southern Screen Illustrated* affirms that these wide screen colored mandarin films are no less than or equal to the Hollywood movies, and hence attract oversea audiences. The audiences are not secluded to diasporic Chinese, a report claims that there are fifty percent of Chinese and fifty percent of American audiences in the United States. Films of the female genre are especially popular in global film market not only because of their quality, but also because these films demonstrate Chinese culture and Chinese history to diasporic and global audiences.

Furthermore, *Southern Screen Illustrated* publicizes Shaw Brothers’ success in international film festivals. Shaw Brothers participates in various film festivals including Golden Horse Awards, Asian Film Festivals, San Francisco International Film Festivals, Berlin Film Festival, Cannes Film Festivals, and etc.. The success in film festivals is a method of promoting movies in *Southern Screen Illustrated*. Since movies of the female genre are big-budget blockbusters and they are *Chinese* films in language, content, and settings, they often represent the Shaw Brothers in film festivals. During the domination of female genre in film market, female movie stars are the appearances of Shaw Brothers in film festivals. Female movie stars

---

489 These are the movies reported in *Southern Screen Illustrated*. Two melodramas—*The Coin* (Li Han-hsiang, 1964) and *Love Without End*—are also included in this the report. However, these are Shaw Brothers’ films shown prior to 1965 when “Shaws Makes Bid for U.S. Market” was published. Besides, there are other Chinese films shown in the United States that are produced by other film studios. Wolfram Eberhard records many films shown in San Francisco and Boston in the 1960s that are not produced by the Shaw Brothers in *The Chinese Silver Screen*. 490 See notes 187 and 189. 491 For examples, “Shaw Film For Cannes Film Festival—*[The Magnificent Concubine]*” and “Entry to Berlin Film Festival—*Empress Wu*.”
attend film festivals in groups and sometimes dress in historical costumes. [Figure 4.15, Figure 4.16] The groups of female movie stars on the one hand reflects that the domination of female genre and female movie stars. On the other hand, it also shows that the female movie stars represent the appearance of the Shaw Brothers. Besides promoting Shaw Brothers’ movies, the reports on the movie festivals also publicize Shaw Brothers as an international studio that represents Chinese cinema to the world.

Shaw Brothers’ grand movie empire can be shrunk into an epitome of Shaw’s Movie Pavilion at 23rd Exhibition of Hong Kong Products. Southern Screen Illustrated records the movie pavilion in “Shaw’s Pavilion Major Fair Attraction.”492 [Figure 4.17] In the exhibition, Shaw Brothers built a two-story Chinese palace of 60 feet high with 3,000 square feet wide. The Chinese palace is extravagant: it has four gates, two stone lions in the middle, and the colorful neon light makes it shine in the evening. Inside the palace, there are exhibition of Shaw Brothers movies, including posters and pictures of movies and movie stars, a small theatre that shows movie trailers, and Shaw’s movie stars frequently visit the pavilion to take pictures with the fans or autograph to the visitors. This pavilion symbolizes Shaw Brothers. From outside, it appears to be a Chinese place: it is grand and extravagant, and more importantly appear to be in Chinese style. Yet besides appearing to be Chinese, the modern lighting shines and catches people’s eyes. The merchandises Shaw Brothers presents in the pavilion are also modern: movies and movie stars are the most appealing attractions. This is Shaw Brothers’ modern empire of entertainment: although it appears to be in the form of historical structure, it is definitely the most modern empire of entertainment.

6.

Coda: Aftermath of The Female Genre

The female genre dominated Chinese film market from 1957 to the end of the 1960s. As a genre full of imagination, the female genre portrays an imagined collective nation to Chinese diasporic audiences, portrays imagined modern women for the female audience, re-presents prominent women in Chinese patriarchal tradition, and creates a modern world through movies of the past. The success of the female genre is phenomenal, and can be revealed from popularity of movie star Ivy Ling Po, from Shaw Brothers’ success in international film festivals and global film market, and from film market of Chinese cinema. Prior to production of historical epics and huangmei musicals, Chinese films were regarded as second-rated movies. The first-rated movies are the Hollywood movies. Shaw Brothers’ historical epics and huangmei musicals brought mandarin Chinese films to a different level: Chinese films became the first-rated movies and thus priority choices for audiences. An article “Chinese Movies Supersede Western Movies in Taiwan’s Box Office” in Southern Screen Illustrated records Shaw Brothers’ success in box office in Taiwan. The article states that The Love Eterne (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963) is a turning point for the audiences to realize that (mandarin) Chinese films can compete with western/Hollywood movies in quality. And the first-rated movie theatres which normally shows only western/Hollywood films hope to sign contract with the Shaw Brothers in showing Shaw Brothers’ mandarin movies. From this perspective, Shaw Brothers did achieve their mission in reviving Chinese cinema through the female genre.

494 Xipian, 西片, is literally translated as western films. But it refers not to the genre rather than where the film is produced. Although not specified in the article, most of the western films are from Hollywood.
From Female to Male Genre

The female genre dominated Chinese film market for a decade, succeeding the female genre is the decade of the martial art genre—the “masculine” genre in director Chang Cheh’s terms. As Chang claims in his memoir *Reviewing Thirty Years of Hong Kong Cinema*, the masculine genre is his resistance to the previous decade of female domination in movies. As one of major martial art film directors, Chang claims that his resistance breaks the “myth” that audiences prefer only female protagonists. The rise and fall of the female genre is also the rise and fall of Shaw Brothers’ monopolized studio system. As a monopolized studio, Shaw Brothers works just like a production line: besides contracted directors, photographers, music composers, background singers, movie stars, there are also props, costumes, outdoor and indoor settings that Shaw Brothers can utilize in producing movies of similar genres. This is a reason that Shaw Brothers could compete with Motion Pictures and General Investment (MP&GI) in the battle of twin movies. The monopolized production line enables Shaw Brothers to make films in full speed and release the twin film earlier than MP&GI without sacrificing its quality. However, because Shaw Brothers’ monopolized production line makes films on the similar genre with repetition, the audiences would get tired of it sooner or later. After the success of *The Love Eterne*, Shaw Brothers produced a large number of *huangmei* musicals in the mid 1960s, and women consequently dominated film screen when the female genre was mass-produced. As a director, Chang’s reaction to women’s domination is to make films in the masculine genre. The audiences also gradually got exhausted with the female genre. In a seminar on cinema with college students held by *Hong Kong Movie News Illustrated* in 1966, the students, as

---

intellectuals of the time, criticized that there should be a male idol in Chinese cinema. This criticism shows that the audiences were aware of women’s domination on the screen, and they were waiting for changes from this phenomenon. The emerging male genre in the end of the 1960s is the change that the audiences awaited.

The masculine genre gradually dominated Chinese film market in the end of the 1960s and the entire 1970s. With the male genre, the male movie stars including Jimmy Wang Yu, Ti Lung, David Chiang Da-Wei, Alexander Fu Sheng, Chen Kuan-Tai, and etc. dominated the screen. Similar to the popularity of the female genre, the Shaw Brothers mass-produced a large number of martial art films in the 1970s. A magazine article “The Problems Caused by Wuxia Films” in Screenland foresees problems of domination of the martial art films. The journalist claims that more and more martial art movies are shot in low qualities that the genre is doomed to lose it box office, and with more and more violence in films the government in Taiwan (Republic of China) decides to strengthen the censorship. The domination of the female genre and the following male genre demonstrates strategy of mass-production in Shaw Brothers’ monopolized movie empire. And the audiences gradually get exhausted with mass-produced films in the same genre. In the mid 1970s, the monopolized Shaw Brothers studio finally meets its competitor—Golden Harvest Cinema established by Raymond Chow, the former head of publicity and production chief of the Shaw Brothers. Unlike monopolized studio, Golden Harvest Cinema works with independent filmmakers rather than contracted filmmakers. The system in Golden Harvest on the one hand attracts more talented directors and super stars including Bruce

Lee. On the other hand, it is not limited to movies on similar content and is able to produce films in accordance with the audiences’ changing appetite.

The transition from the feminine genre to the masculine genre is not drastic. Very interestingly, martial art movies with female protagonists emerged in this transition. In issue 92 of *Southern Screen Illustrated*, an article “New Style of Martial Art in Colored Films” states Shaw Brothers new movie style of colored martial art films. The magazine publicizes that they are different from traditional martial art movies not only because they are colored films but also because these are “action” movies with actual actions—there are actual fighting scenes rather than acrobatics. Yet what is more fascinating in these martial art movies is that female protagonists play significant roles. In the same issue, the magazine publicized martial art movies *Temple of the Red Lotus* (Hsu Tseng-Hung, 1965), *The Knight of Knights* (Sit Kwan, 1966), *The Twin Swords* (Hsu Tseng-Hung, 1965), and *Come Drink With Me* (King Hu Chin-Chuan, 1966), all casting a female protagonist and a male protagonist, and female protagonists play equal if not more prominent roles to the male protagonists. And Ivy Ling Po plays guest roles in both *Temple of the Red Lotus* and *The Twin Swords*. The movie *The Perfumed Arrow* (Kao Li, 1966) also reveals the transition between the female genre and the male genre. Wen Fei’e, the female protagonist played by Ivy Ling Po disguises as a man and fights with the villains to save Lady Jing [Figure 2.22]. Ling Po in a sense can be regarded as a swordswoman in the fighting scene. Shaw Brothers’ female movie stars such as Ching Pin, Li Ching, and Cheng Pei-Pei all began their career from the female genre, and then became popular as swordswomen in the transition between the female genre and the male genre.

The female genre on a greater level symbolizes the imagined collective China, and on a smaller level symbolizes Shaw Brothers’ grand movie empire. The decline of the female genre interestingly coincides with shrinking of Shaw Brothers’ ambition and mission on Chinese cinema. Because of localism among Southeast Asian countries, oversea mandarin film markets shank down in the 1970s. Besides Hong Kong, film market in Taiwan, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand are under localization. In Taiwan, the largest mandarin film market of the time, the government supported studio Central Pictures Corporation made films under preferred ideology and strict censorship. Many of Southeast Asian countries passed regulations protecting local cinema. The regulations limited numbers of imported movies, increased taxation on foreign movies, and sets up strict censorships. Malaysia, for instance, prohibits any movies promoting Grand China ideology. Thus market of mandarin Chinese films decreased and the Shaw Brothers gradually loses its glorious movie empire in the 1970s. Shaw Brothers’ movie empire in this sense declined with films in the female genre. Yet the emerging of local cinema in the 1970s leads to a lively decade of Hong Kong and Taiwan New Cinema that centers on the issues of local identity in the 1980s. Another significant social transition in the 1970s also had great influence on Shaw Brothers’ movie empire—the rising popularity of television. Television became a more and more popular way of entertainment in the 1970s with shows in Cantonese, and the Shaw Brothers also began investing in television station Television

---

500 Chung, 2004. Grand China ideology is the ideology that consider all Chinese belong to one nation, meaning that even diasporic Chinese are Chinese in nationality. Hence the female genre is a very typical example of Grand China ideology.

501 This is not to say that Shaw Brothers’ films lost its influence in Southeast Asia. In certain countries, such as Vietnam, this is the case. But in other countries, such as Malaysia, Shaw Brothers produced films for local market in in local studio.

Broadcasts Limited (TVB). Shaw Brothers’ movies lost influence in the 1970s after the trend of the masculine genre.

The decline of the female genre more prominently signifies decline of the era of Mandarin Chinese films produced in Hong Kong. The female genre is a genre that is produced entirely in mandarin Chinese. Shaw Brothers uses dubbing technique on films. The huangmei musicals and songs in historical epics are sung by background singers. When the movie stars are filming in studio, they listen to the background music and perform their roles accordingly. After shooting, movie stars will record dialogues at sound stage. The martial art films are also dubbed. Some young movie stars born and raised in Hong Kong cannot speak mandarin Chinese as well as immigrated filmmakers. Hence when filming in the studio, they often speak in Cantonese. Then the films will be dubbed in mandarin Chinese in post-production. Nevertheless, there are more and more young audiences born and raised in Hong Kong and hence Cantonese is preferred in the movies. In the 1970s, Shaw Brothers produced films in various versions—Cantonese version for Hong Kong market, mandarin Chinese version for Taiwan (ROC) and oversea Chinese market, and Bahasa Malaysian version for Malaysian market. The demand of mandarin Chinese films gradually decreased with the female genre in oversea Chinese film market.

Ripples of the Female Genre

Though Shaw Brothers’ movie empire gradually stops making films in the female genre and loses its glory, the female genre did not disappear suddenly. Shaw Brothers is not the only studio producing films in the female genre. Besides MP&GI which compete with the Shaw Brothers before 1964, the founding father of the female genre, Li Han-Hsiang continues to director films in the female genre after he establishes Grand Motion Pictures in Taiwan (ROC). He continues to make films on historical epics and huangmei musicals, including Seven Fairies
(Li Han-Hsiang, 1963), *Hsi Shih: Beauty of Beauties* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1965), and *The Story of Ti Ying* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1970). *Hsi Shih: Beauty of Beauties*, for instance, is a typical movie of the female genre that focuses on prominent female protagonist Xishi. As one of the four beauties of Chinese history, Xishi in this film is depicted as a female spy who sacrifices herself for the sake of a nation. The movie *Hsi Shih* is a historical epic with extravagance. In *Li Han-Hsiang, the Forerunner of Taiwan Film Industry*, Chiao Hsiung-Ping mentions that *Hsi Shih* costs 26,000,000 New Taiwan Dollars (NTD) in production while monthly stipend of a governor worker at the time was a couple hundred dollars. The budget of *Hsi Shih* is stunning, and even though *Hsi Shih* was a huge success on box office and on film festival, Li Han-Hsiang soon went into debt partly because Mr. Loke Wan Tho’s death in the 1964 makes Li to lose one of his strong economic sources suddenly. Li Han-Hsiang eventually leaves Taiwan and rejoins the Shaw Brothers in the 1970s. The example of *Hsi Shih* shows that first, films in the female genre are often big-budget extravaganzas that appeal audiences with extravagant and authentic scenes. Second, because films in the female genre are often big-budget extravaganzas, they are supported by monopolized studios such as Shaw Brothers and MP&GI. Or only monopolized studios are able to produce these extravaganzas. And third, these big-budget extravaganzas are related to global film market in the 1960s since only the success in multiple box offices can an extravagant film be produced.

The production and significance of historical epics and *huangmei* musicals did not cease though the 1970s is the era of martial art movies. After Li Han-Hsiang rejoined Shaw Brothers, he directed a *huangmei* film *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1977). This last

---

huangmei film in the Shaw Brothers again waged a war of “twin” movies with Today (Jinri) Film Company, a company established by Ivy Ling Po’s husband Chin Han. Chin Han directed The Dream of the Red Chamber (Chin Han, 1977) casting Ivy Ling Po as the cross-dresses male protagonist. In Li Han-Hsiang’s version, Chinese classics is revived with extravagant settings and costumes. Chin’s version, on the other hand, appeals audiences with super stars including Ivy Ling Po, Li Li-Hua, Li Chin, and Chao Lei. Both films can be regarded as a dedication to the 1960s, the grand era dominated by the feminine genre. Neither of the film is more successful in box office than the other. Besides the fight between “twins” on The Dream of the Red Chamber, there are multiple versions of Dream of the Red Chamber and became a heated battle of “triplets,” “quadruplets,” or “quintuplets”504. This heated battle not only reflects how filmmakers and audiences keeps the grand era of the feminine genre in their memories, but also demonstrates problems of this genre. The problems are that while everyone can claim that their version was the best production—in authenticity, or in casting—no one can predict which version will be more successful in the film market. The success of Shaw Brothers’ historical epics and huangmei musicals may be resulted by certain characteristics in its historical juncture, yet the success cannot be duplicated in different time period with different social-historical background. Though huangmei musicals are no longer produced in Chinese cinema, the adaptations of The Love Eterne continues to show its influence in Chinese diasporic communities. And mediums such as television and internet make huangmei musicals available for remembering the grand era of the 1960s.

The historical epics, on the other hand, continues to be produced. Li Han-Hsiang for instance, is a director with passion on historical epics. Women also continue to be prominent in many of his films, including films such as *The Empress Dowager* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1975), *The Last Tempest* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1976), *Burning of Yuan Ming Yuan* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1983) and *Reign Behind a Curtain* (Li Han-Hsiang, 1983). However, Li’s historical epics on Qing dynasty is different from the female genre in styles and stories. Although Li portrays female characters with sympathetic perspective in his films, history is no longer revised to stress on women’s sacrifice for the nation. In these historical epics, Li endeavors to re-present history and stories authentically that sometimes is similar to documentary with voice-over. In these films, women are no longer the protagonists, it is (re-presented) history that is itself the protagonist.

In recent years, there is a trend of turning history/literature into films in Chinese cinema. Some of the films share the same stories with movies of the female genre. For instance, *Mulan* (Ma Chucheng, 2009) and *Lady General Hua Mu-Lan* (Yueh Feng, 1963) are both about Mulan’s stories; *Sacrifice* (Chen Kaige, 2010) shares similar story line with *The Grand Substitution* (Yen Chun, 1964); *Lady of the Dynasty* (Shi Qing, 2015) and *The Magnificent Concubine* (Li Han-Hsian, 1962) are both stories of Concubine Yang Guifei. However, these newly made movies are drastically different from movies of the female genre. In the female genre, stories center on prominent women. But in these newly made films women are less prominent and often sacrificed under patriotism. *Sacrifice* and *The Grand Substitution* is the best example. In *The Grand Substitution*, Princess Zhuangji is depicted as a matriarch whose sacrifice enables the royal bloodline to be continued. On the contrary, in *Sacrifice*, Princess Zhuangji commits suicide after giving birth to her son, the orphaned Zhao. It is the loyal subject, Chen

---

505 Qing dynasty (1644-1912) is the last imperial dynasty of China.
Ying’s sacrifice of his own son, his wife, and his own life that eventually helps the orphan of Zhao to revenge. As a film of the female genre *The Grand Substitution* is a movie about a mother’s sacrifice for her nation and her son—cross-dressed by actress Ivy Ling Po, whereas *Sacrifice* is simply a loyal subject’s sacrifice for his nation. These newly made historical epics, nevertheless, shares one thing in common with Shaw Brothers’ female genre: they are both big-budget blockbusters. They are both films that claims Chinese legitimacy by claiming Chinese classics. Yet I would like to argue that although both genres endeavor to present authentic Chinese history and Chinese culture, the authenticity merely serves as packing for what is underneath—both genres retell/revise/re-present Chinese history and culture to tell stories of their own. And in the female genre, the story underneath is diasporic Chinese audiences’ nostalgic to the imagined nation on images of prominent women.

**Afterthoughts**

In the female genre, Shaw Brothers created a collective imagined nation through cinema. What intrigued me is that this collective nation appears in images of women. By looking at historical epics and *huangmei* musicals, I hope that my dissertation brings light to the female genre and shows its significance of its time. Nevertheless, much as I tried, my dissertation cannot reveal all aspects of this glorious and significant genre. There are issues left out in my dissertation due to limitation of my field of study. For example, there are limited access to audiences of the female genre without anthropological approach. It is hence difficult to know composition of the audiences, including their ages, occupations, levels of education, or genders. From my research, the ages, occupations, levels of education, or genders of the audiences are quite diverse. For instance, a report “Thousands of People Rushed To See One Star, Thousands
of Love on One Person” in United Daily News states that fans welcoming Ivy Ling Po in Taipei were mostly women. Many records claim that most of Ivy Ling Po’s fans are women, some claim that they are middle aged women. Yet in an article in United Daily News “Ivy Ling Po Swept Over Taiwan,” the journalist interviews audiences as housewife, young lady, college professor and his wife. Director Ang Lee, for another instance, is also a fan of The Love Eterne. Lee was about ten years old when The Love Eterne released. These records show that the audiences spread from all ages, from all kinds of occupations, including male and female due to the popularity of the female genre in the 1960s.

For the same reason, it is difficult to conduct a research on the audiences’ reaction to the movies. From research on newspapers, it is evident that audiences watch huangmei films repetitively and sing with melodies in the theatre. Yet none of the journalists ever interviewed the audiences on how they think of the movies or movie stars. Hence I can only make claims from materials I have access to. It could be significant to conduct anthropological research on how audiences regard cross-dressed actresses. Do audiences consider them as male? Do they consider them as female? What are the reactions when Ivy Ling Po perform in female roles? I can only get bits and pieces from records such as Southern Screen Illustrated, from Chiao Hsiung-ping’s essay “The Female Consciousness, the World of Signification and Safe Extramarital Affairs: A 40th Year Tribute to The Love Eterne,” or from Ivy Ling Po’s

---

interview and from archival research on United Daily News. While Southern Screen Illustrated and Chiao both claim that male audiences regard Ivy Ling Po as female, female audiences regard Ivy Ling Po as male, in the interview and in United Daily News, Ivy Ling Po and journalist mention that Ivy Ling Po’s fans calls her with all kinds of names: Ling Po, Brother Liang, Stupid Goose, Stupid Cow, and etc.. From these details, I assume that the audiences cannot easily be understood as one collective singular. Each audience understands Ivy Ling Po from his/her perspective. Some regard her as a man, some regard as a woman, and most of the time people understand her as a woman who only appears as a man on the screen. That said, the audiences lose their individuality in my dissertation.

Another limitation on my research is that Shaw Brothers’ movies were released in different countries, yet it is difficult to understand how audiences from different places regard these films. I look at audiences under their shared identity as diasporic subjects. Yet audiences from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam or North America may have different approaches to movies of the female genre. Moreover, since these films were released in different places, there are sometimes different versions under censorships from different places. However, since these different versions are not well-preserved, and most of films I have access to are the version released by Shaw Brothers after 2004, there might be minor differences between the newly released version and the original versions or between versions from different regions. For instance, in I Love Huangmei Diao: A Preliminary Look at Huangmei Diao Films from Hong Kong and Taiwan, Edwin W. Chen presents differences between the original version and the digital version of The Love Eterne. These differences may also affect audiences in

---

511 See note 507.
512 Dai Tou E and Da Benniu. Both are the jokes that Zhu Yingtao makes in The Love Eterne to joke that Liang Shanbo is silly not to tell (s)he is actually a woman.
different places, yet they are not revealed in my research. However, I would like to say that like similar to watching the feminine genre, the audiences could only understand the film and history from what they have seen on the screen then, the films that are presented in my dissertation can only be understood as it is now.

Last but not least, my research demonstrates influence of a global film market of the female genre. Most of my research is accomplished in Taiwan Film Institute and Hong Kong Film Archive. And in most of the time, archives in Taiwan Film Institute is more accessible than Hong Kong Film Archive. This may of course due to different policies at Taiwan Film Institute and Hong Kong Film Archive. Yet in Taiwan Film Institute, I found most of *Southern Screen Illustrated* magazines in original copies. Although pages are often cut out by fans who donated the magazines, these are colorful remains that reveal a glorious era under cooperation between film markets in Taiwan (ROC) and Hong Kong. In Hong Kong Film Archive, on the other hand, I only found photocopies of *Southern Screen Illustrated* that are often blurry. For me, this symbolizes that Shaw Brothers have lost its magnificent color in Hong Kong film industry. And the female genre as a product that depicts a grand China are preserved in Chinese diasporic Taiwan.
Figures

Figure 1.1

Figure 1.2

Figure 1.3
Figure 1.18

Hierarchy in primitive passion

Figure 1.19

Hierarchy in feminine genre
Figure 2.1

Figure 2.2

Figure 2.3
Figure 3.13

Figure 3.14

Figure 3.15.1

Figure 3.15.2

Figure 3.15.3

Figure 3.15.4
Figure 3.36

Figure 3.37.1

Figure 3.37.2
Figure 4.3
Poster of *Magnificent Concubine* (Issue 44)

Figure 4.4
Musical Notation of *Black Forest* (Yuan Qiu-Feng, 1964)

Figure 4.5
Figure 4.5.2

Figure 4.6.1

Figure 4.7
Figure 4.14.1
Advertisement of *Empress Wu Tse-tien* in *Southern Screen Illustrated*

Figure 4.14.2
Advertisement of *The Love Eterne* in *The United Daily*

Figure 4.15
Bibliography


“Ling Bo Jin Han Changsui zhi Le. [Ivy Ling Po and Chin Han Sing Together.]” *Southern Screen Illustrated*. May. 1967: 30-33. Hong Kong: Southern Screen Publications. Print.


“Wo Qule Aozhou Yici. [I Have Been to Australia—Pat Ting Hung.]” Southern Screen Illustrated. Sep. 1959: 60-61. Hong Kong: Southern Screen Publications. Print.


# Appendix A: List of Names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Chinese Characters or Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Fu Sheng</td>
<td>Fu, Sheng</td>
<td>傅聲</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela Yu Chien</td>
<td>Yu, Qian</td>
<td>于倩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty Loh Ti/Betty Loh Tih</td>
<td>Le, Di</td>
<td>樂蒂</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigitte Ching-Hia Lin</td>
<td>Lin, Qingxia</td>
<td>林青霞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chan Yau-San</td>
<td>Chen, Youxin</td>
<td>陳又新</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chang Cheh</td>
<td>Zhang, Che</td>
<td>張徹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chang Chung-Wen</td>
<td>Zhang, Zhongwen</td>
<td>張仲文</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chao Lei</td>
<td>Zhao, Lei</td>
<td>趙雷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen Chen</td>
<td>Zhen, Zhen</td>
<td>甄珍</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen Kuan-Tai</td>
<td>Chen, Guantai</td>
<td>陳觀泰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheng Pei-Pei</td>
<td>Zheng, Peipei</td>
<td>鄭佩佩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiang Ching</td>
<td>Chiang, Qing</td>
<td>江青</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chin Han</td>
<td>Jin, Han</td>
<td>金漢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chin Ping</td>
<td>Qin, Ping</td>
<td>秦萍</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choi Eun Hi</td>
<td>Cui, Yinji</td>
<td>崔銀姬</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chow Sze-Loke</td>
<td>Zhou, Shilu</td>
<td>周詩祿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Chiang Da-Wei</td>
<td>Jiang, Dawei</td>
<td>姜大衛</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doe Ching</td>
<td>Tao, Qing</td>
<td>陶秦</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan Yang</td>
<td>Yi, Wen</td>
<td>易文</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fang Yin</td>
<td>Fang, Ying</td>
<td>方盈</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Meng-Hua</td>
<td>He, Menghua</td>
<td>何夢華</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hsiao Hsiang</td>
<td>Xiao, Xiang</td>
<td>瀟湘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hsu Tseng-Hung</td>
<td>Xu, Zenghong</td>
<td>徐增宏</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivy Ling Po/Ivy Ling Bo</td>
<td>Ling, Bo</td>
<td>凌波</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen Chieh</td>
<td>Ren, Jie</td>
<td>任潔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Yeh Feng</td>
<td>Ye, Feng</td>
<td>葉楓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kao Li</td>
<td>Gao, Li</td>
<td>高立</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim Seung-Ho</td>
<td>Jin, Shenghao</td>
<td>金勝鎬(김승호)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Feng</td>
<td>Jin, Feng</td>
<td>金鋒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Hu Chin-Chuan/King Hu</td>
<td>Hu, Jinquan</td>
<td>胡金銓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiu Chong</td>
<td>Qiao, Zhuang</td>
<td>喬莊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuei Chih-Hung</td>
<td>Gui, Zhihong</td>
<td>桂治洪</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Ching</td>
<td>Li, Jing</td>
<td>李菁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Han-Hsiang</td>
<td>Li, Hanxiang</td>
<td>李翰祥</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Hsiang-Chun</td>
<td>Li, Xiangjun</td>
<td>李香君</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>English Name</td>
<td>Chinese Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lim Wan-Sik</td>
<td>Lin, Yuanzhi</td>
<td>林元植</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Lin Dai</td>
<td>Lin, Dai</td>
<td>林黛</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ling Yu</td>
<td>Lin, Yu</td>
<td>林玉</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lo Chen</td>
<td>Lou, Zhen</td>
<td>羅臻</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lo Wei</td>
<td>Luo, Wei</td>
<td>羅維</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loke Wan Tho</td>
<td>Lu, Yuntao</td>
<td>陸運濤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margret Tu Chuan</td>
<td>Du, Juan</td>
<td>杜娟</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nam Koong Won</td>
<td>Nangong, Yuan</td>
<td>南宮遠(南宮遠)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan Yin-Tze</td>
<td>Pan, Yingzi</td>
<td>潘迎紫</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat Ting Hung</td>
<td>Ding, Hong</td>
<td>丁紅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Tse Yin</td>
<td>Xie, Xian</td>
<td>謝賢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy Chiao Hsiung-Ping</td>
<td>Jiao, Xiongping</td>
<td>焦雄屏</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Chen Ho</td>
<td>Chen, Hou</td>
<td>陳厚</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond Chow</td>
<td>Zou, Wenhui</td>
<td>鄒文懷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run Run Shaw/Yifu Shaw</td>
<td>Shao, Yifu</td>
<td>邵逸夫</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runde Shaw</td>
<td>Shao, Rendi</td>
<td>邵仁棣/邵仁棣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runjie Shaw</td>
<td>Shao, Zuiwong</td>
<td>邵醉翁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runme Shaw</td>
<td>Shao, Renmei</td>
<td>邵仁枚</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shin Sang-Ok</td>
<td>Shen, Xiangyu</td>
<td>申相玉(申相玉)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shin Yungkyoon</td>
<td>Shen, Rongjun</td>
<td>申榮鈞(申榮鈞)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit Kwan</td>
<td>Xue, Qun</td>
<td>薛群</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvia Ai-Chia Chang</td>
<td>Zhang, Aijia</td>
<td>張艾嘉</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ti Lung</td>
<td>Di, Long</td>
<td>狄龍</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Leung Ka-Fat</td>
<td>Liang, Jiahui</td>
<td>梁家輝</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wong Tin-Lam</td>
<td>Wang, Tianlin</td>
<td>王天林</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu Chia-Hsien</td>
<td>Wu, Jiaxiang</td>
<td>吳家騏</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yen Chun</td>
<td>Yan, Jun</td>
<td>嚴俊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yueh Feng</td>
<td>Yue, Feng</td>
<td>岳楓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yueh Hua</td>
<td>Yue, Hua</td>
<td>岳華</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix B: List of Film Titles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Title</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Chinese characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>A Maid from Heaven</em> (Ho Meng-hua and Chan Yau-san, 1963)</td>
<td>Qi Xiannü</td>
<td>七仙女</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ahendaichi Jigokubutai Totugeseyo</em> (Tai Kato, 1966)</td>
<td>A Pian Tai Di</td>
<td>阿片台地</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Beyond The Great Wall</em> (Li Han-Hsiang, 1964)</td>
<td>Wang Zhaojun</td>
<td>王昭君</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Burning of Imperial Palace</em> (Li Han-Hsiang, 1983)</td>
<td>Huoshao Yuanmingyuan</td>
<td>火燒圓明園</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Come Drink With Me</em> (King Hu Chin-Chuan, 1966)</td>
<td>Da Zui Xia</td>
<td>大醉俠</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dawn Will Come</em> (Kao Li, 1966)</td>
<td>Huanduan Neihe Tian</td>
<td>魂斷奈何天</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Diau Charn</em> (Li Han-Hsiang, 1958)</td>
<td>Diao Chan</td>
<td>貂蟬</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Empress Wu Tse-Tien</em> (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963)</td>
<td>Wu Zetian</td>
<td>武則天</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Enchanting Shadow</em> (Li Han-Hsiang, 1960)</td>
<td>Qian Nü You Hun</td>
<td>倩女幽魂</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Forever and Ever</em> (Lo Wei, 1967)</td>
<td>Jinshi Qing</td>
<td>金石情</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Golden Lotus</em> (Yueh Feng, 1957)</td>
<td>Jin Lianhua</td>
<td>金蓮花</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hsi Shih: Beauty of Beauties</em> (Li Han-Hsiang, 1965)</td>
<td>Xi Shi</td>
<td>西施</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Inside the Forbidden City</em> (Kao Li, 1965)</td>
<td>Song Gong Mi Shi</td>
<td>宋宮秘史</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lady General Hua Mu-Lan</em> (Yueh Feng, 1963)</td>
<td>Hua Mulan</td>
<td>花木蘭</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lady Jade Locket</em> (Yen Chun, 1967)</td>
<td>Lian Suo</td>
<td>連瑣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lady of the Dynasty</em> (Shi Qing, 2015)</td>
<td>Wangchao de Nüren—Yang Guifei</td>
<td>王朝的女人—楊貴妃</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Les Belles</em> (Doe Ching, 1961)</td>
<td>Qian Jiao Bai Mei</td>
<td>千嬌百媚</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai</em> (Yen Chun, 1964)</td>
<td>Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai</td>
<td>梁山伯與祝英台</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Love Parade</em> (Doe Ching, 1962)</td>
<td>Hua Tuan Jin Cu</td>
<td>花團錦簇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Title</td>
<td>Chinese Title</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Love Without End</em> (Doe Ching, 1961)</td>
<td>Buliao Qing</td>
<td>不了情</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Madam White Snake</em> (Yueh Feng, 1962)</td>
<td>Baishe Zhuan</td>
<td>白蛇傳</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Marriage of The Fairy Princess</em> (Shi Hui, 1955)</td>
<td>Tianxian Pei</td>
<td>天仙配</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mr. Funny Bone.</em> (Kuei Chih-Hung, 1976)</td>
<td>Lao Fuzi</td>
<td>老夫子</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mulan</em> (Ma Chucheng, 2009)</td>
<td>Hua Mulan</td>
<td>花木蘭</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Orphan Ling Po</em> (Jin Chaobai, 1964)</td>
<td>Gunü Ling Bo</td>
<td>孤女凌波</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Reign Behind a Curtain</em> (Li Han-Hsiang, 1983)</td>
<td>Chuilian Tingzhen</td>
<td>垂簾聽政</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sacrifice</em> (Chen Kaige, 2010)</td>
<td>Zhaoshi Guer</td>
<td>趙氏孤兒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Seven Fairies</em> (Li Han-Hsiang, 1963)</td>
<td>Qi Xiannü</td>
<td>七仙女</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Singing Under the Moon</em> (Yen Chun, 1953)</td>
<td>Cuicui</td>
<td>翠翠</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Song of Tomorrow</em> (Doe Ching, 1967)</td>
<td>Mingri zhi Ge</td>
<td>明日之歌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Temple of the Red Lotus</em> (Hsu Tseng-Hung, 1965)</td>
<td>Jianghu Qixia</td>
<td>江湖奇俠</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Amorous Lotus Pan</em> (Chow Sze-Loke, 1964)</td>
<td>Pan Jinlian</td>
<td>潘金蓮</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Black and the Blue</em> (Doe Ching, 1966)</td>
<td>Lan yu Hei</td>
<td>藍與黑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Bride Napping</em> (Yen Chun, 1962)</td>
<td>Huatian Cuo</td>
<td>花田錯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Butterfly Chalice</em> (Chang Cheh, 1965)</td>
<td>Hudie Bei</td>
<td>蝴蝶盃</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Coin</em> (Li Han-hsiang, 1964)</td>
<td>Yimao Qian</td>
<td>一毛錢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Crimson Palm</em> (Chan Yau-san, 1963)</td>
<td>Xie Shouyin</td>
<td>血手印</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Dream of the Red Chamber</em> (Chin Han, 1977)</td>
<td>Xin Honglou Meng</td>
<td>新紅樓夢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Dream of the Red Chamber</em> (Li Han-Hsiang, 1977)</td>
<td>Jinyu Liangyuan Honglou Meng</td>
<td>金玉良緣紅樓夢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Dream of the Red Chamber</em> (Yuan Qiufeng, 1961)</td>
<td>Honglou Meng</td>
<td>紅樓夢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie Title</td>
<td>Director(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Empress Dowager</em></td>
<td>Li Han-Hsiang</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Female Prince</em></td>
<td>Chow Sze-Loke</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Goddess of Mercy</em></td>
<td>Shin Sang-Ok and Lim Wan-Sik</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Grand Substitution</em></td>
<td>Yen Chun</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Kingdom and the Beauty</em></td>
<td>Li Han-Hsiang</td>
<td>1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Knight of Knights</em></td>
<td>Sit Kwan</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Last Woman of Shang</em></td>
<td>Yueh Feng</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Last Tempest</em></td>
<td>Li Han-Hsiang</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Lotus Lamp</em></td>
<td>Yueh Feng</td>
<td>1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Love Eterne</em></td>
<td>Li Han-Hsiang</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Magic Lamp</em></td>
<td>Wong Tin-Lam, Tang Huang, Wu Chia-Hsiang, Evan Yang and Lo Wei</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Magnificent Concubine</em></td>
<td>Li Han-Hsiang</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Mermaid</em></td>
<td>Kao Li</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Mirror And The Lichee</em></td>
<td>Kao Li</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Pearl Phoenix</em></td>
<td>Yang Fan</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Perfumed Arrow</em></td>
<td>Kao Li</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Return of the Phoenix</em></td>
<td>Kao Li and Li Han-Hsiang</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Story of Ti Ying</em></td>
<td>Li Han-Hsiang</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Three Smiles</em></td>
<td>Yueh Feng</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The translations are provided in the same language as the original titles where possible.
| **The Twin Swords** (Hsu Tseng-Hung, 1965) | Yuanyang Jianxia | 鴛鴦劍俠 |
| **Three Sinners** (Yen Chun, 1962) | Yan Xijiao | 閻惜姣 |
| **Too Late For Love** (Lo Chen, 1967) | Fenghuo Wanli Qing | 烽火萬里情 |
| **West Chamber** (Yueh Feng, 1965) | Xixiang Ji | 西廂記 |
Appendix C: Filmography


*Sacrifice.* Dir. Chen Kaige. Perf. Ge You and Wang Xueqi. 21 Century Shengkai Film and Shanghai Film Group, 2010.
