



Commercializing Ideologies

Intellectuals and Cultural Production at the *Mingxing* (Star) Motion Picture Company 1922 - 1938

Inaugural-Dissertation
zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde
an der Philosophischen Fakultät
der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg
Institut für Sinologie

vorgelegt von
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July 2009

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For my parents, sister and 3-year-old niece

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Conventions and Abbreviations

1. Chinese characters are provided for all Chinese names, terms, and titles in the main text when they first appear. Afterwards, characters are given only when I deem necessary for ease of reference or other reasons.

2. Film titles are given in *pinyin*, Chinese characters and English translations, together with dates of production in parentheses, when they first appear. Afterwards, only *pinyin* and dates of production are given. A filmography which contains all the films Mingxing produced is provided in Appendix I.

3. For secondary source materials I cite in this study, only author, title and page numbers are given in notes (if in Chinese, only *pinyin* is given). For primary source materials – mainly journal articles in Chinese, I give full citations (both in *pinyin* and Chinese characters), because sources and dates of publication provide significant information for this historical study. English translations for Chinese sources are only given in "Bibliography" and "Lists of Primary Source Materials" appended.

4. The following abbreviations are used in the notes:

DS	<i>Diansheng</i> 電聲
MB	<i>Mingxing banyuekan</i> 明星半月刊
MT	<i>Mingxing tekan</i> 明星特刊
MY	<i>Mingxing yuebao</i> 明星月報
MXNB	Fan Yanqiao. "Mingxing yingpian gongsi nianbiao 明星影片公司年表"
SB	<i>Shenbao</i> 申報
SMA	Shanghai Municipal Archive (Shanghai dang'an guan 上海檔案館)

XWB	<i>Xinwenbao</i> 新聞報
YHWZ	Rui Heshi, et al., eds. <i>Yuanyang hudie pai wenxue ziliao</i> 鴛鴦蝴蝶派文學資料
YHYZ	Wei Shaochang, ed. <i>Yuanyang hudie pai yanjiu ziliao</i> 鴛鴦蝴蝶派研究資料
ZDFZS	Cheng Jihua, et al., eds. <i>Zhongguo dianying fazhanshi</i> 中國電影發展史
ZHWSJ	Tian Han, et al., eds. <i>Zhongguo huaju yundong wushinian shiliaoji</i> 中國話劇運動五十年史料集
ZWD	Zhongguo dianying ziliaoguan, ed. <i>Zhongguo wusheng dianying</i> 中國無聲電影
ZWDJB	Zheng Peiwei, et al. ed. <i>Zhongguo wusheng dianying juben</i> 中國無聲電影劇本
ZZDY	Chen Bo, et al., eds. <i>Zhongguo zuoyi dianying yundong</i> 中国左翼电影运动

Acknowledgements

Words are inadequate to express my gratitude to many individuals who have contributed to the making of this thesis over the past three years and ten months. My deepest appreciation goes to my advisor Barbara Mittler, an exceptionally committed mentor, for her never failing support and her instruction with unflagging zeal. She read every line of each chapter of my three drafts with admirable patience. I have benefitted tremendously from her insightful comments, inspirational thoughts, as well as numerous helpful suggestions about the skills and technical details of writing an academic thesis. I also owe a great debt to my co-supervisor Anne Kerlan. With her specialist expertise in early Chinese film history, she raised many thought-provoking questions and offered valuable advice, both of which have been crucial to this study. The chair of my examining committee Joachim Kurtz read through my thesis and provided constructive feedback, which I have highly appreciated.

My heartfelt thanks also go to Nanny Kim and Xiao Zhiwei. I have always enjoyed the conversations with Nanny who shared with empathy my joys of unearthing intriguing materials as well as my confusions and anxieties in the course of writing. It is extremely kind of her to have carefully read my drafts and provided invaluable help with language correction and many comments. As a historian of Chinese early cinema, Zhiwei generously gave me special permission to his "private library" built up through his arduous archival research over two decades. Besides, for his warm support and sympathetic understanding, I owe profound gratitude to him.

As this historical study has relied largely upon primary source materials scattered in a wide range of newspapers, periodicals and archival documents at various libraries and archives, I am deeply indebted to the following teachers and friends who drew my attention to particular materials, shared with me their own collections or researches, or helped me locate certain missing pieces: Li Daoxin, Rudolf Wagner, Xu Qinzhen, Chen Jianhua, Sun Liying, Shi Yun and Xu Meimei. In addition, I would like to especially thank the library of the Institute of Chinese Studies at Heidelberg University as well as its

librarian Anne Labitzky-Wagner who is very accommodating and patient. The library is such a home-like place which not only houses a wealth of "treasure," offers free use of many facilities (e.g. the extremely useful microfilm scanner), but also opens 24 hours to bookworms. My thesis owns an intellectual debt to this wonderful place.

My work on this project at the last stage was supported by a Completion Scholarship (*Abschlussstipendium*) awarded by the Graduate Academy of Heidelberg University and a Research Scholarship by the Heidelberg Cluster of Excellence. I am indebted to the two institutions' generous support which allowed me to concentrate on my work at this crucial stage. I am also grateful to the Graduate Academy for a Travel Grant which enabled me to take a research trip to Shanghai and attend a conference in the summer of 2008.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the members (and visiting members) of the Popular Culture Research Group: Jennifer Altehenger, Cheng Chun-chieh, Joscha Chung, Nora Frisch, Sebastian Gehrig, Lena Henningsen, Annika Jöst, Cora Jungbluth, Jennifer May, Sun Liying, Petra Thiel, Wu I-wai, Xiong Jingjing, and others. Stimulating discussions and other forms of interactions with them frequently drew me to useful theories, approaches and materials and made the process of writing this thesis more interesting. Finally, many thanks to my friends Huang Yunfeng, Jin Tao, Wang Jialin, Wang Yan, Xu Ke, Zhang Zhi'an, Zhu Yanhua, as well as my parents, sister and niece, for their company, support, and love in different ways.

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Introduction

The conclusion of Edison's film forced the recognition of the motion picture [...] as the greatest educational agency since the discovery of the printing machine.

Moving Picture World 10, 18 Nov. 1911

Can *shadowplay*(film)-making make money?
(攝製影戲還能賺錢否?)

Hong Shen 洪深, XWB 1 Jan. 1926

In the early spring of 1922, Bao Tianxiao 包天笑 (1876 - 1973) was about to take the editorship of the *Xingqi* 星期 (it own English title: *The Sunday*; literally, *Week*), a popular fiction weekly published in Shanghai by the *Dadong* Publishing House (大東書局).¹ Fiction lovers of the day were able to read his works on quite many occasions. For example, a comic short story by him ran in the February 1922 issue of a fiction journal by the same publisher.² In the summer of the same year, Zheng Boqi 鄭伯奇 (1895 - 1979), who was studying literature in Japan, spent his summer holidays in Shanghai. During the few months, he co-edited two journals by the Creation Society (*Chuangzao she* 創造社), a literary group founded by his friends Guo Moruo 郭沫若, Yu Dafu 郁達夫, and others in 1921 in Tokyo with their stated objective to "create a new Chinese literature."³ In 1922, Liu Na'ou 劉呐鷗 (1905 - 1940), a prominent writer of the Japanese-inspired literary school "new sensationism" (*xin ganjue pai* 新感覺派) in 1930s Shanghai, was a student of the Japanese Christian school Aoyama Gakuin. In the following year, he graduated from

¹ See advertisement in SB 28 Feb. 1922: 17.

² The story was entitled *Xin Xiyouji* 新西遊記 (A New Version of *Journey to the West*) and was published in *Youxi shijie* 遊戲世界 (The World of Games). See advertisement in SB 22 Feb. 1922: 20.

³ Cf. Xu Youchun, ed, *Minguo renwu da cidian*, p. 1481.

The Creation Society was formed in June 1921 in Tokyo by a group of Chinese students. Prominent members were Guo Moruo 郭沫若, Yu Dafu 郁達夫 and Cheng Fangwu 成仿吾. It was one of the two major literary societies of the May Fourth period, which exerted a profound impact on Chinese modern literature. The other leading society was the Literary Association (*Wenxue yanjiuhui* 文學研究會) formed in November 1920 in Beijing and Shanghai by Mao Dun 茅盾, Zhou Zuoren 周作人, Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸, and others. See Hsia, *A history of modern Chinese fiction*, pp. 55-56; p. 93.

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the high school and began to take undergraduate courses in English literature at the Aoyama College.⁴

In the years to come, Bao Tianxiao, Zheng Boqi and Liu Na'ou – labelled in the official history of Chinese cinema *Zhongguo dianying fazhan shi* 中國電影發展史 (A History of the Development of Chinese Cinema) as the popular fiction author from the "*Yuanyang hudie pai* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派" (Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School), the "*Zuoyi wenyi gongzuo zhe* 左翼文藝工作者" (left-wing cultural worker) and the "*Guomindang yuyong wenren* 國民黨御用文人" (hack writer of the GMD), respectively⁵ – would cross paths by joining a commercial film company in Shanghai, the *Mingxing* (Star) Motion Picture Company (明星影片股份有限公司, hereafter Mingxing), which was founded in the spring of 1922. This study presents a historical investigation of cultural production within this film company's studios, focusing on the dynamic relationship between commercial imperatives, intellectual forces – embodied by Bao, Zheng, Liu and their colleagues, as well as the end result of this production, films.

One of my purposes is to make clear that what has been conceived as rigid divides between the so-called *Yuanyang hudie pai*, *Zuoyi* and GMD groups are often blurred in the actual history. The received paradigms through which the history of China's early film has been viewed are not conducive to a more nuanced understanding of film culture in Republican China. Once shifting the received frame, I will argue, the commercial film company Mingxing acted as an intermediary which popularized and disseminated a variety of intellectual ideas to a wide public through the combination of commercial drives and joint efforts of these allegedly radically different groups of filmmakers. By looking at (1) how the film company was operated economically (Chapter 1); (2) why certain writers and dramatists joined the company at different times (Chapters 2, 3, 4); and (3) what the company's film products say about (Chapters 5, 6, 7), this study is intended to present the dynamic process of commercializing ideologies via the popular medium cinema. This new form of mass media, in this regard, functioned comparably to its predecessors, the printing press in particular. In the following I set out to discuss how mass media, commerce and enlightenment interacted in both Western and Chinese historical contexts, and then provide an overview over scholarship on Chinese film studies. Finally I will introduce the structure of this book, as well as the methodology and source materials I employ.

⁴ Xu Qinzhen, "Liu Na'ou nianbiao." in Xu Qinzhen, *Modeng, Shanghai, Xin ganjue*, pp. 159-60.

⁵ Cf. ZDFZS, pp. 56, 201, 396.

Mass media, Commerce, and Enlightenment

The printing press has acquired a great deal of attention in the scholarship on Europe's modern transition. By virtue of its capacity to reproduce and disseminate human knowledge on an unprecedented scale, this earliest form of a mass medium is predominantly believed to have acted as a significant agent of change in institutional, political as well as cultural spheres.⁶ Existing scholarship has explored print's social functions, for example, in forging the "public sphere" – a domain of our social life, as Jürgen Habermas has defined it, in which public opinion can be formed;⁷ or, in creating what Benedict Anderson has termed "imagined communities" which facilitate the growth of nationalism.⁸ Historians have outlined the far-reaching effects of printing through empirical studies, for example, of the business of selling the Encyclopaedia,⁹ though at the same time serious doubts have also arisen.¹⁰

Seen in the historical context, the power of the print medium was intertwined with or propelled by the agent of commerce in complex ways. The early press products in Europe which emerged during the second half of the fifteenth century were, for the most part, commercial enterprises organized along capitalist lines. Their development, as John Thompson has suggested, was "part and parcel of the growth of a capitalist economy in late medieval and early modern Europe."¹¹ But the effects of the emerging new medium went well beyond the concerns of the industry. It became an effective tool to make new values and new knowledge available to a broader reading public and thus played a significant part in the social changes of Europe from the Medieval Age to its modern era.¹² During the eighteenth-century Enlightenment Movement, the power of print gained further momentum as an increasing number of intellectual leaders sought to employ the medium to enlighten the masses. It was often joined by other cultural and commercial institutions, such as theatres and museums. For example, Michael Lynn examines one type of club called *musée* emerging in late-eighteenth-century Paris and demonstrates how this

⁶ Cf. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*.

⁷ Habermas, "The Public Sphere," p. 398.

⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

⁹ Darnton, *The business of enlightenment*.

¹⁰ For example, Schudson's *The Power of News* has two chapters discussing "myths of media power" (chapters 5, 6); Mittler concludes her book on the Chinese newspaper *Shenbao* with the sentence: "Foreign-style Chinese-language newspapers were powerful not by nature but by default." (Mittler, *A newspaper for China?* p. 421)

¹¹ Thompson, *The media and modernity*, p. 53.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 57-59.

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commercial institution sought to attract members by facilitating access to the Enlightenment and acting as centres for the dissemination of useful knowledge.¹³

The interconnection between commerce, cultural institutions, and enlightenment (in a broader sense) also played a role in the process of what some scholars have called "Chinese Enlightenment Movement" (*Zhongguo qimeng yundong* 中國啓蒙運動), broadly throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁴ Stimulated by the impact mainly from the West, Chinese intellectual and political leaders initiated wide-ranging social reforms in search of modernity of their own. Underlying various reform agendas, "to enlighten the masses" (*kai minzhi* 開民智) was one of the leitmotifs.¹⁵ In spite of this sophisticated agenda, the mechanisms of commerce were always involved in this process. There seems to be no contradiction between commerce and enlightenment.

Recently, scholars have discussed a number of cases of "the business of enlightenment" in China, such as the lucrative venture of textbook publishing in the name of introducing "new knowledge" (*xinzhi* 新知),¹⁶ the burgeoning business of publishing Chinese encyclopaedia in order to provide "useful new knowledge for everyone to digest,"¹⁷ and, in a sense, the "Chinese print capitalism" as a whole.¹⁸ "Enlightenment" in this sense is, as Wen-hsin Yeh sees it, "commodified and promoted for a profit." Commercial imperatives, meanwhile, "became the engine propelling the rise of a new culture."¹⁹ More examples can be found to support this argument. According to Perry Link's study, fiction in entertainment sheets during the last years of the nineteenth century showed "an admixture of light interest and serious purpose," which implies that enlightenment (as "serious purpose") and commercial interests (guaranteed by "light interest") were integrated.²⁰ Li

¹³ See Lynn, "Enlightenment in the Public Sphere," or see chapter 4 in Lynn, *Popular science and public opinion in eighteenth-century France*.

¹⁴ For an early book that addresses the issue, see He Ganzhi, *Zhongguo qimeng yundong shi* (1947); For recent scholarly studies, see Schwarcz, *The Chinese enlightenment*; Li Hsiao-t'I, *Qingmo xiaceg shehui qingmeng yundong*; Xiong Yuezhi, *Xixue dongjian yu wanqing shehui*; Wang Zheng, *Women in the Chinese enlightenment*.

¹⁵ Liang Qichao was among the first Chinese intellectuals who called for the development of popular knowledge as an indispensable means to promote national strengthening. This call was a recurring theme in his essays from the late 1890s. Cf. Judge, *Print and politics*, p. 22; and many other studies.

¹⁶ See Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, chapter 2.3 "The Business of Enlightenment: Textbooks." The quotation is on page 47.

¹⁷ Chen Pingyuan, et al. eds, *Jindai zhongguo de baike cishu*. The citation is from the preface to *The Encyclopaedic Dictionary of New Knowledge* (新文化辭書, first published in 1923), see Mittler, "Wei renren suo bixu de youyong xinzhi," p. 194.

¹⁸ Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai*.

¹⁹ Yeh, *Becoming Chinese*, p. 6.

²⁰ Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, chapter 4 "From nation-building to time-killing to profit." For the citation see p. 144.

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Hsiao-t'i studied commercial theatre in 1910s Shanghai and analyzed how it experimented with a form of drama that ingeniously combined entertainment and enlightenment.²¹

The realm of mass media was joined by a new member at the turn of the twentieth century, that is, film. Within decades it evolved from a sideshow gimmick into a full-fledged economic art, owing largely to the rise of Hollywood which exported its products to countries all around the globe and turned the new invention into a dominant form of popular entertainment.²² Organized by an image-based universal language and armed with the capability of what Walter Benjamin has called "mechanical reproduction,"²³ film commands a unique power of reaching a large public, less dependent upon the restrictions of literacy and education. In turn, this popular medium must rest upon large numbers of consumers in order to function economically.²⁴ Seen in this light, as Thomas Saunders has suggested, film can take its place alongside the press as a means of public indoctrination.²⁵ The first aphorism quoted in the opening of this chapter has showcased this opinion at the dawn of the film age.

Research on the ways in which film engages with broader cultural and social issues has been prolific. Siegfried Kracauer, for instance, used the film record to examine the relationship between Weimar cinema and the rise of Hitler and argued that the former is a reflection of the national psyche of the period.²⁶ Historian Kay Sloan has shown that American silent cinema before the First World War abounded with expressions of social problems, including suffrage, labour, birth control, poverty, corruption and exploitive behaviour by the powerful.²⁷ A recent volume studies how American identity shapes and is shaped by motion pictures and demonstrates that movies and mass culture mutually determine one another.²⁸ Vanessa Schwartz has called attention to an ontological similarity between Film and History and proposed what she has termed *cinemahistory*, a way to perceive cinema as history itself.²⁹

However, film, under the rubric of "Culture Industry," acquires a rather negative image in the influential Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer have suggested that popular culture is like a factory producing standardized

²¹ Li Hsiao-t'i, "Shanghai jindai chengshi wenhua zhong de chuantong yu xiandai."

²² Cf. Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*.

²³ Benjamin, *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction*.

²⁴ James Monaco discussed three principal forces involved in the history of cinema, namely, economics, politics, and aesthetics, see Monaco, *How to read a film*, pp. 195-292.

²⁵ Saunders, *Hollywood in Berlin*, p. 2.

²⁶ Cf the introduction of Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, pp. 3-11.

²⁷ Sloan, *The Loud Silents*.

²⁸ Belton, *Movies and Mass Culture*.

²⁹ Schwartz, "Film and history."

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cultural goods to manipulate the masses into passivity. Accepting the classical Marxist analysis of society, they link the term "Culture Industry" to a political criticism of capitalism and postulate that the culture industry has undermined the revolutionary movement of working classes.³⁰ When applied to the Chinese situation in the 1920s and 1930s, this argument seems to lose much of its validity.

As stated above, the early twentieth century witnessed a trend of what can be called "Enlightenment Movement" in China. Film's introduction into China as well as its ensuing popularity in the urban areas coincided with this broad social trend. Intellectual discourses on "enlightenment" found their way into this emergent field. Many Chinese authors shared the opinion of the anonymous American film critic quoted in the opening, viewing film as an educational agency. For example, a popular fiction writer named Zhou Shoujuan 周瘦鵑 (1895 - 1968) stated at the beginning of a 1919 article in his film column in the *Shenbao*: "Fiction is not the only tool in the service of enlightening the people. The *shadowplay* (film) is an important key to this purpose. (蓋開通民智，不僅在小說，而影戲實一主要之鎖鑰也。)"³¹

In Zhou's opinion, commercial films' educational role was comparable to that of fiction, the "civilizing mission" of which had been emphasized by the preeminent reformist Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873 - 1929) in his influential 1902 essay "Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi 論小說與群治之關係" (On the relationship between fiction and ruling the people) published in the fiction journal *Xin xiaoshuo* 新小說 (New Fiction) launched by Liang himself.³² Besides, theatre was also held to be a major vehicle of enlightenment (to be elaborated in Chapter Three [3.1]). Zhou Shoujuan's idea is by no means a lonely voice. In 1921, a would-be film director named Jie Fu 絮父 (Lu Jie 陸潔, 1894 - 1967) wrote that "It has been a common recognition that *shadowplay* has the power to improve social morals and to facilitate popular education. (影戲有轉移風化，普及教育之能力，已人人共識之)"³³

In this intellectual milieu, as my study will demonstrate, filmmaking joined "the business of enlightenment." At the same time, the commercial nature of film industry, to be sure, should never be forgotten. The second aphorism quoted in the opening showcases the

³⁰ Cf. Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; Adorno. *Negative Dialectics*.

³¹ Zhou Shoujuan, "Yingxi hua 影戲話 (1)," SB 20 Jun. 1919: 15. For a detailed analysis of this essay, see Chen Jianhua, "Zhongguo dianying piping de xianqu: Zhou Shoujuan 'Yingxi hua' dujie."

³² Liang Qichao, "Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi 論小說與群治之關係," *Xin xiaoshuo* 1.1, Oct. 1902.

³³ Jie Fu, "Zhongguo yingxi zhi mengya 中國影戲之萌芽 (2)," *Chunsheng ribao* 8 (8 May 1921).

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centrality of money-making in this trade. "Can *shadowplay*(film)-making make money? (攝製影戲還能賺錢否?)" is the title of a 1926 article by Hong Shen 洪深 (1894 - 1955), a Harvard graduate, dramatist, as well as one of Mingxing's screenwriters/directors.³⁴ The article analyzes the economic situation of the Chinese film industry, surrounding the single question if filmmaking could make money. It suggests that contemporary Chinese intellectuals who are habitually held to be enthusiasts about enlightenment were not totally indifferent to economic matters.

However, I will contend that "commodification" which is identified in the Culture Industry theory of the Frankfurt School as a negative force played a positive role in spreading intellectual ideas in the critical time of China's modern transition. This aspect has yet to be seriously investigated in scholarly research on Chinese cinema. In the following, I will provide an analytical – rather than comprehensive – survey of scholarship on early Chinese cinema, which has been a fast-growing academic field since the early 1980s both in China and the West.³⁵ My focus is on two issues closely relevant to the argument of my study: the received wisdom on early Chinese cinema, and the linkage between cinema, modernity and Shanghai's urban culture.

Chinese Film Studies: An Analytical Survey

1. Yuanyang hudie pai 鴛鴦蝴蝶派? Zuoyi 左翼? GMD 國民黨?

The seminal work of Chinese film history is the two-volume *Zhongguo dianying fazhan shi* (ZDFZS) written by Cheng Jihua 程季華 (1921 -), Xing Zuwen 邢祖文 and Li Shaobai 李少白, and first published in the early 1960s in Beijing. The project was under the auspices of Xia Yan 夏衍 (1900 - 1995) and his political associates who worked for Shanghai film studios in the 1930s and held PRC's high government offices in the 1950s. As an official history of Chinese cinema, ZDFZS is narrated principally along the orthodox ideological line of the Communist regime.³⁶

Despite its political bias, Cheng's work remains the most comprehensive survey of the subject and has become the major source of references for innumerable spinoff publications, both inside and outside mainland China.³⁷ Its apparent partisan position may

³⁴ Hong Shen, "Shezhi yingxi haineng zhuanqian fou 攝製影戲還能賺錢否?" XWB 1 Jan. 1926: "Yuandan zengkan 元旦增刊" 3.

³⁵ For a general survey of the literature on Chinese film studies in English, see Zhang, *Screening China*, pp. 43-93; for a survey of Chinese publications see Zhang, "A typography of Chinese film historiography."

³⁶ For the story about this book's publication, see Chen Huangmei 陳荒煤, "Chongban xuyan 重版序言," in ZDFZS, pp. 1-13.

³⁷ For example, Du Yunzhi's *Zhongguo dianying shi* published in Taiwan (1972), Jay Leyda's

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have been ignored, but its analytical framework is still widely adopted and sources extensively quoted by others. One strategy which official historians apply to analyze 1920s and 1930s cinema, in this seminal study, is to categorize the personnel of the film industry loosely under three groups, the "*Yuanyang hudie pai* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派" (Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School, standard shorthand *Yuanhu* 鴛蝴), "*Zuoyi wenyi gongzuozhe* 左翼文藝工作者" (left-wing cultural workers, shorthand *Zuoyi*), and "*Guomindang yuyong wenren* 國民黨御用文人" (hack writers of the GMD).³⁸ Throughout this book I use the terms *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD to refer to, **strictly**, what conventional histories, primarily ZDFZS, have defined and categorized as such. In other words, I do **not** use the three titles as descriptive terms to qualify individual filmmakers and films as intrinsically "left" or "right" or something else. To avoid confusion, I use *pinyin*, rather than their standard English translations, to highlight this particular way of using the three terms in this study.

According to ZDFZS's view, filmmaking in the 1920s was predominantly a speculators' device to make money by extensively adapting *Yuanhu* popular stories, while largely untouched by intellectual ideas of the day.³⁹ In the 1930s, in a period of deepening national crisis, the film industry became a major battlefield of political struggles between the *Zuoyi* writers bent on promoting the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s socialist agenda, and GMD writers supporting the anti-communist wing of the Nationalist Party (GMD). Only in the latter period did the film industry begin to produce movies on "serious" themes and with "socially conscious" qualities due to the involvement of *Zuoyi* intellectuals.⁴⁰

To be sure, these three terms are not the Communist film historians' invention. They appeared frequently in contemporary sources (to be elaborated in Chapter Two). Essentially, these categories are integral to the master narrative of modern Chinese literary and cultural history. Generally speaking, this "mainstream" originated in the intellectual project to establish a "New Culture" around the May Fourth Movement in 1919. Simply put, this "New Culture" is characterized by iconoclasm and the introduction of Western ideas and values, such as democracy and science.⁴¹ The canonization of "May Fourth" and "New Culture," particularly after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, has had

Dianying/Electric Shadows, published in the USA (1972). Survey histories (*Tongshi* 通史) published in mainland China are numerous, to name just a few, Zhong Dafeng's *Zhongguo dianying shi* (1995), Lu Hongshi's *Zhongguo dianying shi* (1998).

³⁸ See ZDFZS, vol. I.

³⁹ ZDFZS, pp. 53-57.

⁴⁰ ZDFZS, pp. 202-203; 302-305.

⁴¹ For the earliest comprehensive study of the May Fourth Movement see Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*. For a concise overview of the event, its implications as well as existing scholarship on this topic, see Mitter, *A bitter revolution*, chapter 1, pp. 3-40.

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profound implications for the historiography of modern Chinese literature and other fields. Other styles of cultural expressions, such as the so-called *Yuanhu* literature, have been largely marginalized by this May Fourth canon.⁴² The above stated standard account of Chinese film history is a revealing example.

This established "May Fourth paradigm"⁴³ has been increasingly questioned in recent scholarship.⁴⁴ But in the field of Chinese film studies, this issue is far from being adequately explored and seems to be gradually fading out of favour. The focus has tended to move from "traditional" historically-based topics towards issues of a theoretical nature such as feminism and post-colonialism, among others.⁴⁵ However, the received paradigm is still being used, in one way or another, in the scholarship even from the last two decades.

The earliest and most influential essay that introduced this paradigmatic view to Western academia, albeit with significant differences, was published in 1985 by literary historian Leo Ou-fan Lee.⁴⁶ Lee states that the tradition of "socially conscious" cinema, comparable to the May Fourth literary tradition of "social realism," was first established in the early 1930s when "a number of leftwing dramatists and writers" joined Mingxing and produced a number of "serious films." This literary tradition, however, "had apparently little effect on the burgeoning film industry which in the 1920s remained a commercial enterprise for urban popular entertainment."⁴⁷ Though he rejects the official view that the Chinese Communist Party provided the main thrust for the "left turn" of the film industry, he adopts, to a large degree, the dominating narrative of the CCP official history nevertheless.

Lee's opinion is repeated in some more recent studies. Paul Pickowicz, for instance, suggests in his 1993 essay that there was no "May Fourth tradition of filmmaking" in the 1920s and that not until the early 1930s "significant strains of basic May Fourth thought began to be reflected" in Chinese silent films.⁴⁸ In Pang Laikwan's 2002 monograph on the "Left-wing Cinema Movement," she underlines the "mutual apathy" between the movie

⁴² Cf. Wagner, "The canonization of May Fourth."

⁴³ The term is widely used, for example, in Hockx, *Questions of Style*, p. 5; Kai-wing Chow, *Beyond the May Fourth Paradigm*.

⁴⁴ Early works that rediscover neglected New Literature writers and popular writers include Hsia (1961), Lee (1973), Link (1981). Recent studies that move in similar directions include Lydia Liu (1995), Dolezelova-Velingerova (2001), Gimpel (2001), Hockx (2003). For a brief survey of this situation see Hockx, pp. 2-6.

⁴⁵ This tendency is clearly shown in Zhang Yinjing's survey of methods and issues that seem most compelling to scholars of Chinese cinema since the 1980s. Their focuses have been inclined to shift from "traditional" historical research, genre studies, to psychoanalytic criticism, feminist criticism, among others, which largely draw upon contemporary Western cultural theories. See Zhang, *Screening China*, pp. 93-113.

⁴⁶ Lee, "The tradition of modern Chinese cinema: Some preliminary explorations and hypotheses." It is published in Chris Berry edited *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema*, which marks "the first serious attention" Chinese cinema received in Western academic circles, see "preface", p. i.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁴⁸ Pickowicz, "Melodramatic representation and the May Fourth Tradition of Chinese cinema," pp. 296-8.

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industry and the Chinese intelligentsia in the 1920s and the distinction between the 1920s "commercial cinema" devoted to "romantic subjects" and the 1930s "left-wing cinema" that treated "the political theme."⁴⁹

To be sure, each of these studies has cast some new light on early Chinese cinema, but they all accept the presumed divide between 1920s "commercial" cinema and 1930s "serious" cinema. In other words, they have not challenged the established "May Fourth paradigm." There are two possible reasons. First, these studies all concentrate on the 1930s while disregarding the films produced in the 1920s. Paul Pickowicz has also noticed this imbalance and pointed out in his 2007 essay that the 1920s has been one of the three most ignored periods in Chinese film studies.⁵⁰ My study of Mingxing's films produced in the 1920s will demonstrate that indeed, many May Fourth ideas found their dramatic representations on the silver screen already during this early period.

Second, few studies, if any, have paid serious attention to the mechanisms of cultural production as well as the agents of commerce. My study of Mingxing's commercial operations will show that, if seen through this prism, the so-called *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD filmmakers share some features in common. In a nutshell, my study will question the master narrative through re-examination and re-evaluation of these rarely studied aspects – the 1920s films and the role of commerce. In the following I will give an overview on a more recent favourite scholarly topic of Chinese cinema studies. The topic is concerned with cinema's engagement with Shanghai's urban culture and Chinese modernity in the Republican era. My aim is to look at which issues have been addressed and in which respects my study can make its contribution to the understanding of cinema's role in China's modern transformation.

2. *Cinema, Shanghai, and Modernity*

Shanghai was undoubtedly the hub of Chinese film industry during the Republican period.⁵¹ Cinema had been an integral part of the city's urban culture, which represents the most vivid example of "Chinese modernity" in many respects.⁵² "Modernity" has been an

⁴⁹ Pang, *Building a new China in cinema*, pp. 23, 31, 92-93.

⁵⁰ The other two are the wartime period (1937 to 1945) and the early state socialist era (1949 to 1976). See Pickowicz, "From Yao Wenyuan to Cui Zi'en," p. 43.

⁵¹ For contemporary assessments regarding Shanghai's leading position in the Chinese film industry see North, ed, *The Chinese motion picture market* (Trade Information Bulletin No. 467). United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, April 1927; Löwenthal. "The present status of the film in China" (1936). I would like to thank Prof. Rudolf Wagner for drawing my attention to Löwenthal's article which presents a comprehensive overview of early Chinese film industry from a precious contemporary perspective.

⁵² A rapidly expanding scholarship has treated the cultural history of Republican Shanghai from a variety

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extensively explored and heatedly debated concept; to thoroughly examine its multiple dimensions is beyond the purpose of this study.⁵³ In the Chinese historical context, the concept was generally linked with a series of economic changes as well as institutional and ideological adjustments to a new commercial/industrial/national order as the aftermath of China's encounter with the West in the mid-nineteenth century.⁵⁴

Conceptually, as Leo Ou-fan Lee suggests, "modernity" in China was closely associated with a new linear consciousness of time and history which derived from the Chinese reception of a Social Darwinian concept of evolution at the turn of the century. In this new scheme, present (*jin* 今) and past (*gu* 古), new (*xin* 新) and old (*jiu* 舊) became polarized as contrasting values, with present/new perceived as "progressive" and "modern" while past/old as "backward" and "obsolete." Subsequently, to equate "modernity" with "Western civilization" became the dominating worldview to which the new intelligentsia subscribed, especially the so-called "May Fourth intellectuals."⁵⁵

In this context, Chinese modernity can be understood as a multifaceted phenomenon embodied by tangible physical and material changes, socio-political transformations, as well as elusive changes in values, beliefs and ideas. Cinema engaged in the construction and imagination of "Chinese modernity" at various levels. A great deal has been written on the interplay between cinema, the cultural history of Republican Shanghai and China's modernity in recent scholarship.⁵⁶

The first edited volume taking up this subject is *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922-1943*, edited by Zhang Yingjin and published in 1999. The volume outlines cinema's engagement with various aspects of Shanghai's urban culture, ranging from the traditional teahouse culture, the city's urban venues (movie theatres, dancing halls, etc), to print culture; from public discourse on urban women such as cabaret girl, movie star and prostitute, to censorship and film music. It is argued that "film culture, when defined in a

angles. To name a few, Wakeman, et al. eds, *Shanghai sojourners*; Wakeman, *Policing Shanghai*; Lu, *Beyond the neon Lights*; Cochran, ed, *Inventing Nanjing Road*; Lee, *Shanghai modern*; Yeh, *Shanghai love*; Meng, *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires*; Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor*; Des Forges, *Mediasphere Shanghai*.

⁵³ In the Western context, the concept is generally associated with a set of fundamental institutional transformations which began to take hold in Europe in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period. These include the emergence of a new economic system of capitalist production and exchange, the forging of a new political system characterized by the formation of the "nation-states," the gradual expansion of systems of knowledge and learning that were essentially secular than religious in character, as well as a set of cultural transformations and broad changes in values and beliefs, in attitudes and orientations. For a concise survey of some institutional dimensions of Western modern societies, see Thompson, *The Media and Modernity*, pp. 44-52.

⁵⁴ See Murphey, *The Treaty Ports and China's Modernization*, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁵ See Lee, *Shanghai modern*, pp. 43-47.

⁵⁶ Besides the three volumes to be introduced below in detail, there are a relatively early thesis and a monograph that also touch upon the topic. See Cambon, "The dream palaces of Shanghai"; Hu Pingsheng, *Kangzhan qian shinianjian de shanghai yule shehui (1927-1937)*.

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specific sociopolitical context, provides a rich and fascinating site for an archaeology of knowledge in modern China."⁵⁷

In Leo Ou-fan Lee's 1999 monograph *Shanghai Modern*, a chapter is devoted to Shanghai cinema which Lee views as part of "a new urban culture" in the 1930s and early 1940s.⁵⁸ He first delineates "the urban milieu of Shanghai cinema" with an emphasis on movie theatres, movie magazines, and movie guides. In this urban setting, he argues, "cinema figured prominently as both a new commodity and a new item in the modern lifestyle of leisure and entertainment."⁵⁹ In this way, films and the activities of film-going, both the emblem of modern urban lifestyle, "contributed a share to the construction of a Chinese modernity."⁶⁰ He proceeds to examine the popular taste of the contemporary audience and Chinese film's narrative aesthetics and to analyze how this taste was shaped by the print culture and how Chinese cinema became a modern hybrid genre consisting of diverse cultural elements.

Zhang Zhen approaches early Shanghai cinema through quite a different lens in her 2005 monograph *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937*.⁶¹ Drawing upon Miriam Hansen's concept "vernacular modernism,"⁶² she conceives cinema as "a unique catalyst for the production of a global vernacular and a modern sociophysiological sensorium" (25). Therefore she aims at writing a "sensorial history" (3) or a "materialist cultural history" (31) of early Shanghai cinema. She contends that early film culture in China acted as "a complex translation machine and motor for change" and "generated a mass-mediated social and aesthetic experience and an inclusive vernacular modernity" (xxx). Grounded in two interlocking categories, "experience" and "embodiment" (25), and employing the method of "historical intertextual analysis" (xxxi), she maps out a richly-textured picture of what she calls "urban modernity and vernacular experience" (xxxi) of Shanghai, juxtaposing physical and cultural landscape of the city,

⁵⁷ Zhang, "Introduction," in Zhang, ed, *Cinema and urban culture in Republican Shanghai*, p. 4.

⁵⁸ See Chapter 3 "The urban milieu of Shanghai cinema," Lee, *Shanghai modern*, pp. 83-114. For an only slightly different version of this chapter see "The urban milieu of Shanghai cinema, 1930-1940," in Zhang, ed, *Cinema and urban culture in Republican Shanghai*, pp. 51-96.

⁵⁹ See the version in Zhang edited volume, p. 74.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 96.

⁶¹ This work is constructed within a unique conceptual framework which involves a cluster of terms and concepts that can be only best understood in the context. For this reason, I extensively quote the terms and phrases in her original and put page numbers in parentheses.

⁶² "Vernacular Modernism" is a concept established by American film scholar Miriam Hansen. She argues that "American movies of the classical period offered something like the first global vernacular" for mediating and articulating the modern experience. See Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses," p. 68. Quoted in Zhang Zhen, p. 2.

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such as amusement hall and illustrated newspaper, and cinematic texts of martial arts film, modern girls, and horror films.

Taken together, the three books have painted a colourful portrait of early Shanghai cinema, which is predominantly perceived as a symbol of modern urban culture. However, the above-quoted writings by Zhou Shoujuan and Jie Fu (as well as many others to be discussed later) indicate that contemporary urban intellectuals not only consumed cinema as a modern commodity, but also called for the modern medium to undertake a didactic mission. The latter aspect and its particular interconnections with modernism and entertainment, which do not receive adequate attention in these books, will be explored in my study. Next, I will introduce the framework of this study.

Structure, Methodology, Source, and Terminology

Film has multiple dimensions: it can be considered as an art form, an economic institution, a cultural product, and technology. Accordingly, film historians Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery have divided the field of film history into four major areas, namely, aesthetic film history, technological film history, economic film history, and social film history.⁶³ Though the framework was formulated two decades ago, and, as the authors themselves have admitted, neither revolutionary nor new, it still remains valid and useful in understanding the history of cinema. Drawing upon this framework, I position my study of Mingxing principally under the categories of "economic film history" and "social film history."

These categories are well suited to the objective of this study. As the title "Commercializing Ideologies: Intellectuals and Cultural Production at the Mingxing Motion Picture Company" suggests, my goal is not so much to present a comprehensive survey of Mingxing's history, but rather to focus on *cultural production* within the studio. Key questions I want to address are: how were Mingxing *shadowplays* (films) produced and how did they function as what Zhou Shoujuan phrased "an important key to this purpose [of enlightening the people]"?⁶⁴ Chief aspects of this *production* include the commercial and institutional context, film producers (mainly screenwriters and directors), and products (films). Through explorations of these sectors, I seek to reveal the mechanism behind this production, a mechanism that operated with commercial drives and intellectual urges. I will contend that this mechanism is instrumental in making the popular medium function as an educational agency. The first aspect – the commercial context – falls within

⁶³ Allen and Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice*, pp. v, 37-8.

⁶⁴ Zhou Shoujuan, "Yingxi hua (1)," SB 20 Jun. 1919: 15.

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the "economic history," while the latter two – producers and products – under the "social history." Accordingly, my exploration is threefold, organized into seven chapters.

1. The "Economic History" of Mingxing (Chapter 1)

On the first level, in Chapter One, I delineate an institutional history of Mingxing. This aspect remains under-explored in the existing literature.⁶⁵ Douglas Gomery has reminded film scholars of a simple fact that "the studios were and are economic institutions" in the first place.⁶⁶ The economic nature of the film industry, however, has long been a seriously ignored realm both in the scholarship of Western and Chinese cinema.⁶⁷ It is partly a consequence of the aesthetic orientation of film study, and more important, of the paucity of business data.⁶⁸ As far as historical data are concerned, historians of Chinese cinema perhaps have more difficulties than their Western colleagues due to more serious material losses resulting from war, social unrest and political campaigns.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, there is still a considerable amount of available (and underutilized) data that can help piece together a picture of Mingxing's economic history. These data include archival materials such as the company's business records (annual reports to stockholders, pamphlets for soliciting investment, bank loan agreements),⁷⁰ government documents (censorship files, conference proceedings);⁷¹ publicity materials such as promotional

⁶⁵ An outline of Mingxing's institutional history can be obtained from the survey histories of Chinese cinema. See, for instance, ZDFZS. Besides, there are two preliminary case studies on Mingxing: Dong Lifu, "Mingxing dianying zhipian gongsi chutan" and Sun Lei, "Mingxing yingpian gongsi, 1922-1937" (a chapter in Lu Hongshi, ed. *Zhongguo dianying*, pp. 115-173).

⁶⁶ Gomery, *The Hollywood studio system*, p. 3.

⁶⁷ For the dearth of economic cinema history in the Western scholarship see Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, p. 133; also see Edward Buscombe, "Notes on Columbia Pictures Corporation 1926-41," in Staiger, *The Studio System*, p. 17. For the similar situation in Chinese film studies see Zhang, *Chinese national cinema*, p. 9.

⁶⁸ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, p. 133.

⁶⁹ Partly due to the extensive losses of original films and film-related archival materials, Zhang Yingjin calls the scholarly research of early Chinese cinema "the archaeology of knowledge." See Zhang, *Cinema and urban culture in Shanghai*, p. 4. The situation in the US is much better. Corporate records of some major studios have been recovered and collected by academic institutions. See Allen and Gomery, pp. 40, 133.

⁷⁰ Important business records kept in the Shanghai Municipal Archives (上海檔案館) include: the company's statutes (*Mingxing gufen youxian gongsi zhangcheng* 明星股份有限公司章程, SMA, Y9-1-457); fifth, seventh and eighth annual reports (*Juesuan baogao* 決算報告, SMA, Y9-1-459; Y9-1-460; Y9-1-461); and documents about bank loan (*Jiaotong yinhang Shanghai fenheng chengzuo Mingxing yingpian gongsi yakuan de wanglai wenshu* 交通銀行上海分行承做明星影片公司押款的來往文書, SMA, Q55-2-1371). Other records, such as its chronology, announcements to call for investment, and others, can be found in film yearbooks, local newspapers, etc (cf. "List of Primary Source Materials").

⁷¹ Important government files regarding censorship include *Jiaoyu Neizheng bu dianying jiancha weiyuanhui gongzuo zong baogao* 教育內政部電影檢查委員會工作總報告 (available in the digital library CADAL); *Zhongyang dianying jiancha weiyuan hui gongbao* 中央電影檢查委員會公報 (available in the digital library NDLOC). Other archival documents are found in the Shanghai Municipal Archives and No. 2 Historical Archives of China (中國第二歷史檔案館, Nanjing).

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journals,⁷² film plot sheets (*shuoming shu* 說明書) for distribution by movie theatres; as well as other miscellaneous sources including fan magazines, theatre advertisements, among others.⁷³

Drawing extensively upon these types of primary source, Chapter One reconstructs the institutional history of Mingxing. The chapter sets out to profile the setting of Mingxing's founding – the 1922 Shanghai film world, including movie theatres, local film production, spectatorship, the film press, and censorship. I proceed to chronicle the industrial history of Mingxing. Though generally following a chronological order, I attempt to highlight the structure of the company and its economic conduct in three sectors: production, distribution and exhibition, informed by the "Industrial Analysis" approach.⁷⁴ This investigation will reveal the financial weakness that faced the business constantly. Only analyzed against this backdrop may the trajectory of the company's "social history" be adequately understood.

2. *The "Social History" of Mingxing*

Built upon the analysis of the institutional context, I proceed, beginning in Chapter Two, to consider the core of the cultural production: producers and products. Informed by the sociology of film developed by Ian Jarvie, Allen and Gomery regard the research object of social film history principally in terms of three questions: (a) who made films and why? (b) who saw films, how and why? (c) what was seen, how and why?⁷⁵ Answers to question (b) are predicated on audience study. Despite its significance in understanding cinema's social history, the question is not the major concern of this study. Concentrating on my focal questions on *production*, I investigate points (a) and (c).

The investigation begins with an outline of standard histories of Chinese cinema, which is the object of Chapter Two. In addition to presenting the standard story and definitions of key terms, the most important task of this chapter is to identify the so-called three "groups" of Mingxing's creative staff and films based upon accepted standards, such as standard reference works. The existing literature abounds with sweeping generalization regarding

⁷² Mingxing published three promotional journals: *Mingxing tekan* 明星特刊 (May 1925 – Jan. 1928, available in China Film Archives 中國電影資料館), *Mingxing yuebao* 明星月報 (May 1933 – Sep. 1934, Fudan University Library 復旦大學圖書館); *Mingxing banyuekan* 明星半月刊 (Apr. 1935 – Jul. 1937, Library of the Institute of Chinese Studies, Heidelberg University).

⁷³ Cf. "List of Primary Source Materials." Most periodicals I have consulted are kept in the Library of the Institute of Chinese Studies, Heidelberg University; and the Shanghai Municipal Library (上海圖書館).

⁷⁴ The approach is suggested by Gomery, see Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System*, p. 3; Tino Balio used the method to study the American film studio United Artists in his two books: *United Artists: The Company Built by the Stars* (1976) and *United Artists: The Company That Changed the Film Industry* (1987).

⁷⁵ Jarvie, *Movies and Society*, p. 14; Allen and Gomery, p. 38.

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these "groups," but never presents an exact picture about who are the so-called *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD writers working for Mingxing. The chapters that follow will re-examine these writers (Chapters 3, 4) and works (Chapters 5, 6, 7), cutting across the usual divides and discarding the accepted labels.

(1) *Who made films and why? - The Creative Staff (Chapters 3, 4)*

I use "intellectuals" in the title of this study as a generic designation for the creative staff at Mingxing. However, the term needs to be explained when used in this context. A standard English translation for the Chinese term *zhishi fenzi* 知識分子, "intellectual" (or intelligentsia) in the Western usage usually refers to a social class of people engaged in complex mental and creative labour directed to the development and dissemination of culture.⁷⁶ Yet the contemporary use of *zhishi fenzi* in China is in a much broader sense. In a journal's special section named "new lexicon" (*xin ciyuan* 新辭源), an author traced the etymology and Western usage of *zhishi jieji* 智識階級 (synonym for *zhishi fenzi*), and concluded that "its ordinary usage in China is not in such a strict sense; the term simply denotes the educated people. (不過現在我國通常所慣稱的智識階級並不有這樣嚴格的意義, 只是指受教育的人們罷了。)"⁷⁷

Given the low literacy rate in China at the time, this broader definition of "intellectual"/*zhishi fenzi* makes more sense. I consider "intellectual" in this contemporary usage a proper term to name the persons I study – writers, dramatists, film directors, journalists, and cultural entrepreneurs. Chapters Three and Four examine these "producers" of Mingxing films. I focus my attention on these questions: Which fields of career had these persons engaged in before their involvement with Mingxing? For what reasons did they join (or start) the company? What roles did they play in the cultural production?

Chapter Three discusses Mingxing's five founding members and the company's creative staff working mainly in the 1920s, while Chapter Four analyzes those who worked for the company in the 1930s. This way of demarcation is not based on the chronological divide between the two decades but on the different social and intellectual milieux on the two sides of the divide largely due to the Japanese invasions in 1931 and 1932. It is true that the creative staff in the 1920s consisted mainly of popular writers and journalists, namely, those who are conventionally labelled as *Yuanhu*, while in the 1930s, many members of

⁷⁶ Cf. Gove, ed, *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*, p. 1174.

⁷⁷ The entry of "zhishi jieji 智識階級" is written by Jinggao 敬杲, published in the section "xin ciyuan 新辭源" in *Shenbao yuekan* 1.2 (15 Aug. 1932): 136-7.

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Zuoyi literary organizations joined the company and some protégés of GMD officials were employed at the same time. Probing beneath the surface, however, I would argue that the rationale behind Mingxing's managers' decision-making kept consistent. A combination of considerations for the company's reputation, profitability as well as interpersonal networks determined whom to recruit. This mechanism helped bring a number of influential writers and dramatists into the film world. These persons functioned as an intermediary to bridge the intellectual world and the film industry and to transform intellectual ideas into understandable moving images on the screen. Ideas conveyed through film products will be scrutinized in the remaining chapters.

(2) *What was seen, how and why? - Film Works (Chapters 5, 6, 7)*

I use the term "ideology" in the title of this study to refer to the ideas in Mingxing's films for the reasons mentioned below. The concept "ideology" first appeared in late eighteenth-century France.⁷⁸ Whether in social and political discourses or in everyday language today, the concept has many different uses and shades of meaning, more often than not in a negative sense. In this study, I use the term as what may be called "a *neutral conception* of ideology."⁷⁹ According to John Thompson's analysis, ideologies in this usage can be regarded as "systems of thought," "systems of belief," or simply thought of in terms of "isms" – conservatism, communism, Marxism, and the like.

In the Chinese context, new systems of thought and belief, mostly from the West, had been increasingly introduced into China since the late nineteenth century. The trend reached the climax during the May Fourth period when new Chinese intellectuals were intoxicated with diverse Western "isms" (*zhuyi* 主義), such as anarchism, liberalism, individualism, socialism, and Darwinism. From about 1920 onwards, social revolutionary ideology (explicitly, Marxist-Leninist ideology) gained momentum and evolved into a dominating discourse.⁸⁰ *Yishi* 意識, the standard Chinese translation for "ideology" in its narrow Marxist sense, became a new term prevalent in the intellectual as well as popular press.

⁷⁸ For a comprehensive survey of the history and theory of the concept, see Thompson, *Ideology and modern culture*, Chapters 1 and 2.

⁷⁹ According to Thompson, this is one common response to the ambiguous heritage of the concept of ideology in the literature of social and political theory since the 1970s or so. See Thompson, *Ideology and modern culture*, p. 5.

⁸⁰ Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, pp. 182ff, 289ff. Also see Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, pp. 280ff.

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In an era that saw an influx of "new terms for new ideas,"⁸¹ both *zhuyi* and *yishi* entered the everyday lexicon of Chinese, conveying an ambiguous and broad meaning of elevated ideas. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, for example, they were "appropriated" into the glossary of film terms.⁸² In this usage, *zhuyi* or *yishi* are loosely equivalent to "theme," "subject" or "central idea," and simultaneously carry a connotation that *the* theme or central idea belongs to the new and modern systems of thought and belief. The "misuse" of *zhuyi*/ism and *yishi*/ideology in this context gives us a fascinating clue about the opinions of the contemporary: cinema was apparently seen as a tool to popularize profound ideologies (*zhuyi/yishi*). Hence I use "ideology" in a broad sense, as systems of thought and belief generally, and in the context of early Chinese cinema, as what had been termed *zhuyi* and *yishi* specifically. The last three chapters are devoted to examine the ideologies expressed in Mingxing films, the end result of economic operations/institutional developments (analyzed in Chapter 1) and participation of various writers and dramatists (Chapters 3, 4). I attempt to inquire how commercialism and didacticism intermingled in cinematic expressions and finally, which ideas the filmmakers intended to bring to an audience for the purpose of education.

Closely related to the master narrative of Chinese film history, quite a number of Mingxing films, mostly the so-called *Zuoyi* films, have been treated as "Classics" and analyzed textually and artistically.⁸³ I will extend my attention to a wider range of lesser-known films by all the three "groups" of filmmakers and compare both style and content (subjects, ideas) of these films. Mingxing released altogether 193 feature films (143 silent, 50 sound). Only 25 of them have survived and 9 of them have been reproduced on VCD or DVD format and sold publicly (see Appendix I). However, over 115 films' synopses or scripts are available in Mingxing's promotional journals or reprinted in reference works.⁸⁴ Given the limited availability of films, I have to rely on printed materials more than filmic sources. These printed materials include film synopses and scripts, intertitles (*zimu* 字幕), publicity texts and reviews (to be elaborated in Chapter 6, 175-8). To be sure, unavailability of most films entails a weakness of my study. But the available unfilmic

⁸¹ The phrase is the title of a 1915 book by A. H. Mateer published in Shanghai (*New Terms for New Ideas*), A recent monograph also use this title (Lackner, et al., eds, *New terms for new ideas*, 2001).

⁸² I will discuss the usage of *zhuyi* and *yishi* as film terms in more detail in Chapters Four and Five.

⁸³ For example, *Laogong zhi aiqing* (*Labor's Love*, 1922) by Zhang Zhen (1999), *Nü'er jing* (*A Bible for Daughters*, 1934) by Paul Pickowicz (1991), *Malu tianshi* (*Street Angel*, 1937) by Ma Ning (1989), *Shizi jietou* (*Crossroads*, 1937) by Chris Berry (1989), among others.

⁸⁴ See ZWDJB, ZZDY, and Zhongguo dianying yishu yanjiu zhongxin, *Zhongguo yingpian dadian*, and Zhongguo dianying gongzuozhe xiehui, *Wusi yilai dianying juben xuanji*.

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sources are quite adequate and useful to the purposes of this study because my method is not highly dependent on viewing the films.⁸⁵

While Western academia has yielded a wealth of what Bordwell calls "Grand Theories" to analyze films,⁸⁶ this study will take a relatively old one, the method of reading narrative and thematic motifs. I have been inspired by Siegfried Kracauer who extracts recurrent motifs from films to examine the messages behind in his book *From Caligari to Hitler*.⁸⁷ But my approach differs from Kracauer's method which encompasses analyses of visual motifs. Given the extensive losses of filmic materials, my study will not examine the visual dimension, though the importance of moving images is beyond doubt. Approaches I take in different chapters are different. While Chapter Five analyzes both narrative and thematic motifs through case studies, Chapters Six and Seven focus on thematic motifs and take a panoramic view. My purpose is to present a multi-dimensional picture of Mingxing's film output.

In Chapter Five, through examining narrative and thematic motifs, I argue that the formula "melodrama plus isms," which means a combination of formal elements of melodrama and central themes containing certain elevated ideas, is central to film production at Mingxing. The "melodramatic style," in the original sense of the English term according to Mingxing's director Yao Sufeng 姚蘇鳳 (to be elaborated in Chapter 5, 143),⁸⁸ was the favourite with ordinary movie-goers. Meanwhile, isms met the expectations of film critics and materialized the notion of didacticism. I will show that this formula proved effective in pursuing commercial interests and in fulfilling social responsibility at the same time.

This chapter consists of four case studies. A comparison between Mingxing's first two feature-length films, *Zhang Xinsheng* 張欣生 (1922) and *Gu'er jiuzu ji* 孤兒救祖記 (*An Orphan Rescues his Grandfather*, 1923), will reveal how this formula was established.

⁸⁵ Facing the similar difficulties, historians of Western silent film have increasingly resorted to non-filmic sources and even believe that the recognition of "the media-intertext" of early cinema has opened entirely new areas of research. See Elsaesser, et al. eds, *Early cinema*, p. 3.

⁸⁶ What David Bordwell calls "Grand Theories" include film-based semiotics, psychoanalysis, textual analysis, feminism, post-structuralism, multiculturalism, and so on. He raises his critique that these theories discuss film "within a scheme which seeks to describe or explain very broad features of society, history, language, and psyche," while neglecting "concrete interpretations of films and filmic contexts." In contrast, he proposes the "middle-level research" which engages in "in-depth, problem-driven inquiry" without such overarching theoretical commitment. See Bordwell, "Contemporary film studies and the vicissitudes of Grand Theory." in Bordwell and Carroll, eds, *Post-Theory*, pp. 3-36.

⁸⁷ Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*. For a critical analysis of his thesis and method see Allen and Gomery, *Film history*, pp. 159-164.

⁸⁸ Sufeng 蘇鳳, "Luliu qianghua de bianju zhe yan 《路柳牆花》的編劇者言," *Yingmi zhoubao* 1.2 (3 Oct. 1934): 38.

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Three cases examined in the following, *Yuli hun* 玉梨魂 (Jade Pear Spirit, 1924), *Kuangliu* 狂流 (Wild Torrent, 1933) and *Yongyuan de weixiao* 永遠的微笑 (Forever Smiling, 1936), will testify to the effectiveness of the formula. These three films fall under the conventional categories of *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi*, and GMD respectively. Examined with the analytical tool of "melodrama plus isms," the alleged distinction between these categories is clearly blurred. Moreover, this formula served as an important agent of popularizing ideologies. Chapters Six and Seven scrutinize a wide range of ideas and issues reflected in Mingxing films through analyzing films' thematic motifs.

In Chapter Six, I examine contemporary intellectual ideas in Mingxing films. These ideas can be grouped in three broad categories. One is related to domestic issues and women, one concerning labour, class and the ills of the society, and the other pertaining to revolution and nationalism. Generally, these issues resonated with the contemporary intellectual discourse on modernity and national salvation. Mingxing films helped to popularize (melodramatize) a variety of new ideas which elitist intellectuals were eager to bring to the masses.

In Chapter Seven, I sort out two recurring motifs, the antithesis between city and countryside, and the relationship between love and revolution. City is constantly portrayed as negative; and revolution prevails over romance on most occasions. I argue that these representations address the tensions of the transitional society and mirror dominating values. These motifs are not necessarily explained in political terms. As a matter of fact, they appear in the films not only by the so-called *Yuanhu* writers, but also *Zuoyi* and GMD writers. Through the mechanism of "melodrama plus isms," prevalent intellectual ideas found a channel to reach the movie-going public.

In conclusion, in addition to a summary of this study, I present a brief outline of Mingxing's distribution and exhibition networks. The purpose is to suggest the extent to which ideas contained in films reached the masses. The brief investigation concludes the story of Mingxing and offers further insights into how commercialism facilitated enlightenment or education in the process of China's modern transformation. This question, fundamentally, is the focal concern of this study.

Part I The Institution

Chapter One
The Institutional History

On 18 February 1922, the leading Shanghai newspaper *Xinwenbao* 新聞報 (Daily News) carried an announcement on its front page by a motion picture company in the process of being founded:¹

As motion pictures are spreading around the globe like a tidal wave, we Chinese ask ourselves: do we want to play a role on this world stage? We have considered this issue, and we have determined. We have recognized that motion pictures meet the spiritual needs of the audience, and represent genuine values of new life. We are convinced that motion pictures can be an important supplement to education in the family, in society and schools. Moreover, we have realized that if we do not rally to action, foreign movies will flood China. We hasten to found this company because we hasten to gain some face for our people. Yet, making motion pictures is not easy! Our company can only get started when the right talents in screenwriting, directing and cinematography have been brought together. Otherwise we are condemned to repeat the forerunners' failure. For this enterprise, most fortunately, we have not only talents well-versed in filmmaking, but also those in business management in the entertainment industry. Therefore, we are determined to start. Honourable readers! Do you sympathize with our cause? If you do and would like to invest, you are more than welcome. The capital is fixed at 100,000 Yuan, divided into 20,000 shares at 5 Yuan per share. The founding members will purchase one half, i.e. 50,000 Yuan, the remainder is reserved for investors. For more information please contact our preparatory office.

將要普及到全世界的影戲潮流，問我們中國人：究竟要不要在世界舞台上占一個位置？我們想了，我們想定了，我們承認影戲是確確乎能夠代表觀眾心理的，確確乎能夠代表新人生的真意義的。我們認定影戲是大可以補家庭教育、社會教育和學校教育之不足的。我們並且看到，假使中國人不辦，恐怕外國影戲也要蓬蓬勃勃地蔓延到全中國的。我們所以亟於起來組織這一公司，替中國人爭回一點兒體面，但是制造影片，談何容易？造意的人才和導演的人才，還有攝制影片的技師，都該羅致妥當，才可以著手創辦。不然又要蹈人家在前的覆轍了。現在萬千之幸，非獨對內制造的人才，已經有了，而且對外經營的人才，也很多精熟公共娛樂的理財好手，所以堅決地籌備起來。諸君啊！你們有同情嗎？如其與有同情，願意來投資的話，那是不勝歡迎之至。資本額定洋十萬元，分作二萬股，每股洋五元，一次繳足。由發起人先認半數，即五萬元。其余一萬股由各界認購。要知詳章，請到本籌備處索取。

The announcement was Mingxing's first public appearance. The message conveyed gives us valuable insights into the essentials of the company's business. Firstly, Mingxing was not established with major investment by powerful industrialists or capitalists, but with a small fund raised by the founders and "shareholders." A commercial venture built on a weak financial basis, it perhaps had no choice but to prioritize profit-seeking ahead of

¹ "Mingxing yingpian gufen youxian gongsi zhaogu qi 明星影片股份有限公司招股啓," XWB 18 Feb. 1922: A1. The announcement appeared in the XWB from 18 to 23 February and in the SB from 19 to 24 February. Within the same time frame, an advertisement for recruiting students by Mingxing's acting school, the *Mingxing yingxi xuexiao*, appeared in the XWB and SB.

other targets. Secondly, the founders emphasized the educational function of motion pictures and their enterprise as a nationalist effort to stave off imported movies and, ultimately, to serve the advancement of the nation. Admittedly, these great claims served as rhetoric that buttressed their call for investment through *zhaogu* 招股 (the sale of the initial membership interests). Nevertheless, the analysis of the company's history below will show that the "rhetoric" also carries real significance. In a way, it reflects a business tenet, namely, "commercialism plus conscience" (*Yingye zhuyi jia liangxin* 營業主義加良心).

Zheng Zhengqiu 鄭正秋 (1889 - 1935), one of Mingxing's founding members and the "spiritual leader" of the company, initially advanced the idea to combine "commercialism (*yingye zhuyi* 營業主義) and didacticism (*jiaoyu zhuyi* 教育主義)" in 1918 as he was managing a drama troupe named *Yaofeng* 藥風 (literally, "Remedying [Corrupted] Morals").² Zheng reiterated this idea in a 1925 article: "To combine 'commercialism' with 'conscience' has long been our principle for the selection of material (for each play)." (取材在營業主義上加一點良心的主張，這是我們向來的老例。)³ This study is organized around the two poles of commercialism and didacticism, exploring the implications of the balance between mercenary and educative motives.

This chapter investigates the institutional history of Mingxing, focusing on why and how "commercialism" had to be one of the leitmotifs of Mingxing's business tenet. How "didacticism"/"conscience" was embodied in film production will be examined in the following chapters. Prior to the institutional history, I present a panoramic view of the 1922 Shanghai film world, into which Mingxing was born. I will demonstrate that this historical environment provided the major thrust for the formation of the business tenet "commercialism plus conscience."

1.1 1922: A Panorama

Motion pictures were first publicly shown to a Chinese audience in Shanghai in the late 1890s.⁴ Since then, exhibition venues had moved from Chinese teahouses, restaurants to

² See "Yaofeng xuanyan 藥風宣言," SB 3 June 1918: 5.

³ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Zhongguo yingxi de qucai wenti 中國影戲的取材問題," MT 2 (June 1925).

⁴ It is widely accepted that motion pictures were first introduced to China on 11 August 1896 at the *Xu Garden* (*Xuyuan* 徐園) in Shanghai. See ZDFZS, p. 8. According to a recent research, however, the first public screening of films in China took place in May 1897 at the Richard Hotel in Shanghai. See Huang Dequan, "Dianying chudao Shanghai kao."

nickelodeon-style theatres and modern movie houses.⁵ By 1922, over twelve cinemas had opened in Shanghai, most of which were operated by Western entrepreneurs and located in the foreign concessions. The *Hongkew* 虹口 (opened in 1908), *Victoria* 維多利亞 (1909), *Olympic* 夏令配克 (1914), *Carter* 卡德 (1917), *China* 萬國 (1917) and *Empire* 恩派亞 (1921) were owned by Antonio Ramos from Spain, the *Apollo* 愛普盧 (1910) by S. G. Hertzberg from Portugal, the *Helen* 愛倫 (1913) by A. Runjahn, a British national, the *Donghe* 東和 (1914) by a Japanese, and the *Zhongguo* 中國 (1920) by another Spanish named B. Goldenberg. Only the *Isis* 上海 (1917) was owned by a Chinese named Zeng Huantang 曾煥堂.⁶

Taking a random sample of the 15 February 1922 *Shenbao*, five movie houses ran advertisements in the newspaper's theatre page, which was reserved chiefly for theatre advertising.⁷ Leafing through the newspaper of the period, it is apparent that feature films of *detective* and *romance* genres, imported primarily from France, the UK, and the US, dominate the programmes, while short comedies by Charlie Chaplin (1889 - 1977) and Harold Lloyd (1893 - 1971) also appear frequently. An essayist sarcastically remarked on the quality of movies in the *Shenbao*'s column "ziyou tan 自由談" (unfettered talk): "In one out of every five moving pictures, irrespective of in which country they are produced, we will inevitably see a hero holding out a pistol to show his power, or a heroine offering her lips for a kiss to show her love."⁸ He concluded that "this amply demonstrates that the cause of social education has succumbed to the magic of money (可足見社會教育的事業終被金錢的魔力征服了)."⁹ Apparently, his comments carry an overtone of criticism against entertainment movies and hint at his belief that cinema should serve the cause of education.

⁵ In the early years, motion pictures were displayed along with the Chinese traditional variety shows at teahouses and restaurants. In 1903, a Spanish businessman, Antonio Ramos, introduced regular film shows at the *Qingliange* Teahouse (Green Lotus Pavilion). Shortly afterwards, he built the nickelodeon-style *Huanxian* Theatre in the downtown Shanghai and began to show the first feature films, such as *The Great Train Robbery* (Dir.: Edwin S. Porter, Scr.: Edwin S. Porter & Scott Marble, 1903). In 1908, Ramos built the first modern movie house in Shanghai, the 250-seat *Hongkew* Theatre. From then on, cinema became an established part of the entertainment industry and underwent an unbroken expansion in the Chinese metropolis in the ensuing years. For early film exhibitions cf. ZDFZS, pp. 7-13.

⁶ See Shanghai Tongshe, ed, *Shanghai yanjiu ziliao xubian*, pp. 533-535, 541-542; Wang Ruiyong, "Shanghai yingyuan bianqianlu," pp. 82-85.

⁷ They are the *Apollo*, *New Helen*, *Gonghe*, *Isis*, and the Chinese-owned *Hujiang*. To take the *Isis* as an example, *Pojing yuan* 破鏡圓 (a five-reel *romance*), *Mimi dianguang* 秘密電光 (a *detective* serial) and *The Greatest Question* starring Lillian Gish were on programme. Films showing at the other cinemas were similar in genre. In addition, several shorts are on their programmes, such as a comedy starring Charlie Chaplin (1 reel), a British comedy, as well as newsreels. See SB 15 Feb. 1922: 12.

⁸ Zhang Huang 張凰, "Shangying yugan 賞影余感," SB 15 Feb. 1922: 17, "Ziyou tan" (Unfettered talk).

⁹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER ONE

While movie theatres proliferated, domestic filmmaking lagged far behind. In 1922, only two studios existed in Shanghai apart from Mingxing, i.e. the Shanghai Film Company (上海影戲公司) and the Film Department of the Commercial Press (商務印書館活動影戲部). The two studios released a few shorts, most of which were adapted from traditional fairy tales.¹⁰ Film production in China began in 1909 when a Jewish-American named Benjamin Brodsky formed the China Film Company (Chinese name: *Yaxiya* 亞西亞) in Shanghai. In the following decade, a handful of Chinese-owned film companies emerged, but most lasted only for a short time. They turned out a number of short comedies, newsreels, Peking Opera films, and short features. Most productions generated tiny profit and gained little public response.¹¹

It was not until the beginning of the 1920s that three feature-length films emerged and proved that native Chinese films could make money. The *romance* genre *Haishi* 海誓 (Sea Oath, 6 reels, 1921) and the *detective plus thriller* genre *Hongfen kulou* 紅粉骷髏 (The Vampires, 14 reels, 1921) obtained huge commercial success.¹² Based on a sensational real-life case in which a courtesan was murdered for money, ten-reel *Yan Ruisheng* 閻瑞生 kept a week-long run at Ramos' first-run cinema *Olympic* in July 1921, grossing over 4000 Yuan.¹³ The returns are remarkable if one consider the fact that the initial capital of the Shanghai Film Company founded in 1920 was only 1,000 Yuan.¹⁴

While these Chinese-made features with compelling plots appealed to a large local audience, they invited a great deal of criticism from contemporary film reviewers. For example, Guan Ji'an 管際安 (1892 - 1975), a prominent journalist and editor, expressed his dissatisfaction with *Yan Ruisheng* because the film features "a licentious prostitute and a wicked bandit" (放浪奢侈之妓女, 浮蕩兇險之強盜) while apparently lacking didactic values.¹⁵ According to Jie Fu 繫父 (Lu Jie), it can be certain that "there must be a lot of

¹⁰ See "Filmography 1905-July 1937" in ZDFZS, p. 525, p. 523.

¹¹ Some of the major attempts include Zhang Shichuan's *Huanxian* Company (幻仙) in 1916, the China Film Research Society (中國影戲研究社) formed in 1920, and Guan Haifeng's *Xinya* Company (新亞) in 1921; each turned out only one picture. In 1919, a reputable gentry-merchant named Zhang Jian 張謇 started the ambitious China Film Ltd. Co. (中國影片製造股份有限公司) with the initial capital of 100,000 Yuan, but it closed down four years later after making a Peking Opera film, a short comedy and some newsreels. Cf. ZDFZS, pp.16-17, 23-49.

¹² Guan Haifeng 管海峰, "Wo paishe *Hongfen kulou* de jingguo 我拍攝《紅粉骷髏》的經過," Zheng Yimei 鄭逸梅, "Cong *Haishi* tandao Shanghai yingxi gongsi 從《海誓》談到上海影戲公司," both in Wang Hanlun, et al., *Gankai hua dangnian*, pp. 23, 26.

¹³ Xu Chihen, *Zhongguo yingxi daguan*; also see Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁴ ZDFZS, p. 45.

¹⁵ Guan Ji'an's opinion about *Yan Ruisheng* is quoted by Jie Fu 繫父 in "Waijie duiyu *Yan Ruisheng* yingxi zhi piping 外界對於《閻瑞生》影戲之批評," *Chunsheng ribao* 23 (23 May 1921).

people who will echo Mr. Guan's opinion (此等論調，我知繼管君而起者，必大有人在)." ¹⁶ Clearly, emphasizing film's "noble purpose" (陳義高尚), in Jie Fu's words, ¹⁷ was a main theme in the intellectual discourse on this new medium at the time.

At the same time, Jie Fu understood the difficulties that faced *Yan Ruisheng's* producer, the China Film Research Society (中國影戲研究社) founded in 1920. Jie Fu explained that "Chinese capitalists" (中國的資本家) were unwilling to invest in filmmaking ventures and the China Film Research Society could only raise a small number of capital to start the company. For this reason, according to Jie Fu, the company decided to produce a film "catering to the popular taste" (邀社會歡迎) as a necessary step to establish the company economically. ¹⁸ The tension between commercialism and didacticism seems to have existed at the dawn of the Chinese film industry. There is another example that illustrates this tension. The Commercial Press, mainly a textbook publisher, produced a series of non-fictional educational films, which, however, did not make any business sense. ¹⁹ It is not surprising that Mingxing's organizers would draw lessons from these early trials and pay careful attention to the balance of "commercialism" and "conscience" when running their own business.

Who attended the movies in Shanghai around 1922? What was the social composition of the early movie-going public? Jay Leyda suggests that the regular patrons of the first-rate foreign-managed theatres were foreigners of the business and diplomatic communities as well as some Chinese who wished to see foreign films for reasons of official position, financial capacity, educational background, or merely status or "for the recuperation of jaded minds." ²⁰ But movies were by no means enjoyed only by the privileged few. Rather, this novel form of entertainment seemed to have speedily achieved widespread popularity among the lower-middle social strata of the Shanghai urban population, made up of such groups as shop clerks, workers, small merchants, housewives, and so on.

Zhou Jianyun 周劍雲 (1893 - 1967), one of Mingxing's founder members, wrote in 1922, "In the last five years, the power of moving pictures is growing just like the rising sun. It even has become a hot chat topic of women and children." ²¹ Guan Ji'an gave a more

¹⁶ Jie Fu, *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Bai Yin 柏蔭, "Duiyu Shangwu yinshu guan shezhi yingpian de pinglun he yijian 對於商務印書館攝製影片的評論和意見," *Yingxi zazhi* 1.2 (1922), reprinted in ZWD, p. 1057. Also see ZDFZS, pp. 32-33.

²⁰ See Leyda, p. 24. The source Jay Leyda quoted is M.-c. T. Z. Tyau, *China Awakened* (New York: Macmillan, 1922, the author was an English-educated Chinese writer).

²¹ Zhou Jianyun, "Yingxi zazhi xu 影戲雜誌序," *Yingxi zazhi* 1.2 (25 Jan. 1922): 7.

concrete example, "A Chinese housewife once said, if Pearl White came to Shanghai she would be happy to pay as much as ten Yuan for admission to see her in person."²² Pearl White (1889 - 1938) was an American film actress, the so-called "Stunt Queen" of silent films, most notably *The Perils of Pauline* (a 1914 serial). She was a favourite with Shanghai audiences as the movies starring her were showing at Shanghai theatres around this time.²³

There is a term, *xiao shimin* 小市民 (petty urbanites), that often particularly refers to the middle-lower strata of Shanghai residents.²⁴ Mostly of rural origins, they had migrated to Shanghai after it became a treaty port city in 1842. The majority of the "petty urbanites" lived on a modest income, but certainly not at the bottom of society. They constituted the main body of consumers of urban popular entertainments. Their cultural tastes were conventionally considered "low-brow" or "vulgar" owing to their limited education (yet they were not illiterate). The term *xiao shimin* carries a sense of derogatory connotation primarily because a group of May Fourth intellectuals launched a polemic against a wide range of popular cultural products catering to the taste of these urban residents in the 1920s and 1930s. For example, the prominent writer Mao Dun 茅盾 (1896 - 1981) criticized the "feudal" nature of popular fiction and films attractive to the "petty urbanites."²⁵ The term with the pejorative connotation even persists today. But its polemical nature seriously reminds us of a careful use of the term in academic writing. For this reason, I choose the neutral designation "middle-lower social strata of the Shanghai residents" in this study.

Tickets of some foreign-run cinemas were quite expensive, but there were affordable options for the lower-middle class clientele. For instance, while the first-rate theatre *Isis* charged a three-tiered admission prices from 0.2 to 1 Yuan for each show, the *Gonghe* Theatre (共和) located in the Chinese area charged 0.12 to 0.5 Yuan, the Chinese-owned *Hujiang* 滬江 charged only 0.1 to 0.3 Yuan.²⁶ With 0.3 Yuan, a housewife of the day could buy roughly 500 g beef, or ten eggs, or 2000 g cucumbers.²⁷ The most popular amusement centres (*youle chang* 遊樂場), *Da shijie* 大世界 (the Great World) and *Xin shijie* 新世界

²² Guan Ji'an 管際安, "Yingxi shuru zhongguohou de bianqian 影戲輸入中國後的變遷," *Xi Zazhi* 1922, reprinted in ZWD, p. 1314. Pearl White is referred to as 宝莲 in Chinese.

²³ For her widespread popularity in Shanghai see *Yingxi zazhi* 1.1 (Apr. 1921).

²⁴ For the academic discussion of *Xiao shimin*, see Lu, *Beyond the neon lights*, p. 167; Yeh, "Progressive journalism and Shanghai's Petit Urbanities," in Wakeman, et al., eds, *Shanghai sojourners*; Zhang, *An amorous history of the silver screen*, pp. 64-65.

²⁵ Mao Dun, "Fengjian de xiaoshimin wenyi 封建的小市民文藝," *Dongfang zazhi* 30.3 (1 Jan. 1933).

²⁶ SB 15 Feb. 1922: 12.

²⁷ Shrimps sold at 0.35 Yuan/500 g, beef 0.3 Yuan/500 g, egg 0.03 Yuan/each, cucumbers 0.08 Yuan/500g. See SB 4 Jul. 1923: 18.

(the New World), charged 0.2 Yuan for admission.²⁸ Seen in this light, ticket fees of the *Gonghe* and *Hujiang* sounded affordable to the Shanghai residents with medium incomes. People of this class, large in number, would continue to constitute the substantial part of spectators when an increasing number of Chinese-made films entered the market in the years to come. It was their tastes that Mingxing's executives perhaps had to be most careful to cater to.

It deserves special notice that the earliest regular movie spectators included a significant proportion of educated people, consisting of writers, journal editors, and college and high school students. Some of these themselves soon became involved in the nascent film industry. Zhou Jianyun, for example, a writer and editor in the 1910s, described himself as "a fanatic of theatre, and cinema as well."²⁹ Movie-going was also one of the favourite pastimes of Bao Tianxiao.³⁰ Cheng Bugao 程步高 (1894 - 1966), a student of the missionary Aurora College, later to become Mingxing's director, was fascinated not only with movies on the screen but also foreign movie magazines available only at a few Western-run bookstores.³¹ These members of the educated class were to play a significant part in introducing "high" ideas to the common people through the new medium.

As cinema became increasingly commonplace for Shanghai residents by 1922, the subject matter gained coverage in the popular press. Some literary and theatre journals opened special sections dedicated to the topic.³² Since the late 1910s, Shanghai's leading daily newspaper *Shenbao* had been running an irregular film column in its feuilleton "ziyou tan" (Unfettered Talk), alongside more conventional contents of theatre reviews, short essays and serialized fiction. In April 1921, the first Chinese film magazine, *Yingxi zazhi* 影戲雜誌 (its own English title: Motion Picture Review), published its inaugural issue. Though much space was devoted to foreign movies and actors/actresses, the self-assumed task of the magazine was "to amend the distorted image of the Chinese in foreign films and to encourage Chinese people to produce films fit to promote the glory of our country."³³ Clearly, the editors of the fan magazine also advanced some serious thoughts that reflected

²⁸ The New World and the Great World were the most popular entertainment centres of the city, each housing multifunction theatres, dancing halls, skating rinks, and a variety of bars, teahouses, shops, and gardens. The Great World attracted fifteen thousand to twenty-five thousand customers daily during its golden age. See Lu, *Beyond the neon lights*, p. 115. For their admission fees see the advertisements in SB 15 Feb. 1922: C9.

²⁹ Zhou Jianyun, "Yingxi zazhi xu".

³⁰ Bao Tianxiao, *Chuanyinglou huiyilu xubian*, p. 653.

³¹ Cheng Bugao, *Yingtian yijiu*, p. 134.

³² For example, a literary journal named *Xinsheng zazhi* published in Shanghai between 1921 and 1922 included a film section titled "Yingxi" (*Shadowplay*); *Chunsheng ribao* (1921), a tabloid mainly dedicated to the subject matter of drama, also had an irregular film column.

³³ Zhou Jianyun, "Yingxi zazhi xu": 8.

the rising nationalist awareness among current Chinese intellectuals. The film press would become an important forum for the utterance of intellectual opinions in the near future. These opinions, as I have shown and will continue to show in the following, prompted the film industry to promote cinema's educational function along with the pursuit of profits.

The imported medium also attracted the attention of a group formed by members of the traditional gentry. At the end of 1922, ten reputable gentry-scholars and educators affiliated with the Jiangsu Educational Association (*Jiangsusheng Jiaoyu hui* 江蘇省教育會) formed a film censorship board.³⁴ They formulated three criteria to evaluate films: first, films that "agree with educational principles and have positive impacts on society" (確合教育原理, 能於社會發生良好影響者) are to be approved, second, films principally designed to make money will not be censored if contain no fundamental flaws (通常影片但为营业关系可无流弊者本会不加可否), and third, films "injurious to the customs and mores of society" (有害风化) will receive corresponding punishment.³⁵ As a non-governmental organization, the board had very little legal power over the film industry. Nevertheless, its establishment demonstrates that the traditional Chinese elites had recognized the power of cinema and attempted to exert a moral influence on it.

The above investigation has made it clear that by 1922 cinema had enjoyed considerable popularity among various social strata in the treaty port city Shanghai and attained a great deal of attention on the part of the opinion leaders of the press as well as traditional elites. Movie theatres were mainly ran by Western entrepreneurs and proved lucrative, while the commercial success of a few domestic productions revealed potential profitability of the filmmaking venture. Cinema was accepted as a new form of entertainment; meanwhile, Chinese intellectuals emphasized its value for enlightening the people and promoting nationalism. Against this backdrop, it is understandable that a combination of commercialism and didacticism was deemed indispensable to the success of a film enterprise. The emergence of these two themes in cinema's early years in China drives me to inquire into Mingxing's history by looking at the interplay between commercial and intellectual forces.

Yet first and foremost, at the juncture when Mingxing's founding members decided to start their business, these persons should have been convinced that filmmaking could make money and they had been prepared for embarking on this venture. As Zheng Junli 鄭君里

³⁴ Cheng Shuren, *Zhonghua yingye nianjian*, "Dianying shencha hui," n.p. Also cf. Shu Ping 舒平, "Zhongguo dianying zhizui 中國電影之最," *Shanghai dianying shiliao* 23, p. 262.

³⁵ Cheng Shuren, op. cit.

(1911 - 1969), a pioneering film historian as well as a famous actor and director, observed: "The prerequisites for the development of a domestic film industry were eventually in place in the early 1920s. A number of intellectuals (esp. students returning from abroad) directly influenced by the capitalist culture came to realize cinema's economic and cultural function, and mastered the practical technical knowledge."³⁶ The year 1922 saw the dawn of a glowing epoch of Chinese native film industry. In the spring of the year, Mingxing was founded. The following section delineates the industrial history of Mingxing and will demonstrate that running this business was not easy. The pursuit of "commercialism" is indispensable for its survival. This aspect should never be neglected when we seek to understand and analyze the cultural production within the company.

1.2 Chronicling the History of Mingxing

The Birth

The origin of Mingxing can be traced back to a stock exchange crisis that erupted in Shanghai in 1921. Starting in July 1920, an upsurge of speculations began at Shanghai's Stock and Produce Exchanges, culminating in a severe crisis by late 1921. Among 112 exchange companies registered by the end of November 1921, only 12 survived by March 1922.³⁷ Zhang Shichuan 張石川 (1890 - 1953) was one of the investors involved into the craze. Having obtained a 2000-Yuan support from his father-in-law, Zhang rented an office room on the *Guizhou* Road (貴州路) and opened the "Mutual Stock & Produce Exchange Company" (大同日夜物券交易所) in October 1921. From 19 October to 4 December 1921, it ran a series of advertisements in local newspapers to solicit investments.³⁸ Appended to the advertising text is a full list of the company's staff, which consists of Zhang Shichuan (director), Zheng Zhegu 鄭鷓鴣 (1880 - 1925), Zheng Zhengqiu, Ren Jinping 任矜蘋 (1896 - ?) and another nine persons (members of the preparatory committee), and T. H. Suffert (consultant).³⁹ Most of them were to become the founding members of Mingxing soon afterwards.

According to Zhang Shichuan's wife, Zhang changed his mind and quit stock market

³⁶ Zheng Junli, "Xiandai zhongguo dianying shilue," ZWD, p. 1392.

³⁷ Ding Richu, ed, *Shanghai jindai jingji shi*, vol. 2, pp. 239-240; for contemporary record see Pott, *A short history of Shanghai*, pp. 253-254.

³⁸ See advertisements in the SB of the period.

³⁹ SB 19 Oct. 1921: 1.

speculation because he sensed the impending crisis, while still waiting for his licence.⁴⁰ As he had some experience in filmmaking, he contemplated movie production as an alternative venture. In February 1922, shortly after the Chinese New Year, passers-by walking past the *Guizhou* Road may have been surprised to see that the signboard hanging outside the Mutual Exchange's office had overnight changed to "Mingxing yingpian gufen youxian gongsi 明星影片股份有限公司," its own English name being "Star Motion Picture Producing Co., Ltd."⁴¹ Mingxing's history began with a preparatory office that started operation in this room.

The preparatory office was headed by Ding Boxiong 丁伯雄. We now have no information about his background. Zhang Shichuan was the vice-manager, and the other members were Zheng Zhengqiu, Ren Jinping, Zheng Zhegu, Zhou Jianyun, Zhang Shichuan's younger brothers (Zhang Juchuan 張巨川 and Zhang Weitao 張偉濤), as well as Shu Weixuan 舒慰萱, He Maotang 何懋堂, Zhan Songshan 詹松山, and Ding Zhixin 丁治新.⁴² Within the next few months the group undertook preparatory measures. Four fields of activity can be made out. Fundraising presumably was most crucial. To this aim, the first step was to place advertisements such as the call for investment quoted above with the leading newspapers for a week from 18 to 24 February 1922. As a second measure to raise funds and public interest, they banqueted some thirty local print journalists at a first-rate restaurant on 19 February 1922.⁴³ As a publicity event, the banquet showed some effect. Several news reports about Mingxing appeared in the *Shenbao* and *Xinwenbao*, probably also some other newspapers, over the following days.⁴⁴

Third, Mingxing took over a film magazine, the *Yingxi zazhi*, and adapted it to be its promotional journal.⁴⁵ The third issue of the magazine published a manifesto of Mingxing and a few other articles that reiterated some "high-sounding" ideas in terms of the motivations for the founding of the company.⁴⁶ The manifesto states, for example, that Mingxing would benefit "not only the stockholders but also the country when Mingxing's

⁴⁰ He Xiujun, "Zhang Shichuan he Mingxing yingpian gongsi," p. 115.

⁴¹ Ibid. For the English name of the company see the cover of the third issue of *Yingxi zazhi* (25 May 1922).

⁴² XWB, 18 Feb. 1922: A1.

⁴³ "Mingxing gongsi yan baojie ji 明星公司宴報界記," SB 20 Feb. 1922: 16 "benbu xinwen" (Local News).

⁴⁴ For example, "Choubeizhong zhi Mingxing yingpian gongsi 籌備中之明星影片公司," SB 21 Feb. 1922, "benbu xinwen": 16; "Mingxing gongsi yanke 明星公司宴客," XWB 21 Feb. 1922: D3.

⁴⁵ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Mingxing gongsi faxing yuekan de biyao 明星公司發行月刊的必要," *Yingxi zazhi* 1.3 (25 May 1922): 9.

⁴⁶ "Mingxing yingpian gufen youxian gongsi zuzhi yuanqi 明星影片股份有限公司組織緣起" and Ibid. in *Yingxi zazhi* 1.3 (25 May 1922).

releases would replace foreign movies and show at both Western and Eastern theatres."⁴⁷ Zheng Zhengqiu proclaimed that Chinese intellectuals had a duty to "create an atmosphere reverberating with liveliness to change the lethargic situation" and that "Mingxing was obligated to assume this responsibility."⁴⁸

Fourth, an affiliated acting school named Mingxing *Shadowplay* School (*Mingxing yingxi xuexiao* 明星影戲學校) was set up in order to recruit and train their own actors and actresses, while also to provide jobs for the staff of the former Mutual Exchange Company. According to its advertisement for recruiting students, the school had two classes, a day-class from 4 to 6 p.m. for women students, and a night-class from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. for men. An excellent teaching staff and two headmasters, a Chinese and a foreigner were promised. Regarding the entry requirements, the advertising text stresses that most Western actors/actresses are very moral persons and students who wish to enter the school must follow certain moral rules and be prepared to dedicate themselves to the cause of pure art.⁴⁹

This call for students met with an enthusiastic response. Over 300 candidates came for an entrance examination held in April 1922. Dong Tianya 董天涯, a member of Mingxing's founding staff, recalled later that the numbers of candidates and spectators, who stopped to see what was going on, congested the intersection of *Nanjing* Road and *Guizhou* Road where the school was located.⁵⁰ Eventually 87 students were enrolled (of which only 17 were women). With Zheng Zhengqiu as headmaster, Zheng Zhegu, Zhou Jianyun, and Tang Hao 唐豪 as teachers, the school opened on 14 April 1922. Seven courses – screenwriting, directing, performance, introduction to cinema, photography, developing and printing techniques, and making up skills – were on the school's curriculum.⁵¹

However, teaching quality was perhaps not as "excellent" as promised. We know of one disappointed student, Li Pingqian 李萍倩 (1902 - 1984), who would become one of Mingxing's major directors in the 1930s. In a 1933 article, Li Pingqian said that he had broken off his university studies to enter Mingxing *Shadowplay* School "for art's sake."⁵² But only three months later, he dropped out because he felt "disappointed" and "bored."⁵³

⁴⁷ "Mingxing yingpian gongsi zuzhi yuanqi," *Yingxi zazhi* 3 (25 May 1922): 10.

⁴⁸ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Mingxing gongsi faxing yuekan de biyao."

⁴⁹ See advertisement in SB 19 Feb. 1922: 2.

⁵⁰ Tan Chunfa, *Kai yidai xianhe*, p. 243.

⁵¹ MXNB.

⁵² Li Pingqian, "Guoqu zhi zhushu yu jianglai zhi xiwang 過去之追述與將來之希望," first published in *Xiandai dianying* 2, 1933, reprinted in ZWD, p. 349.

⁵³ Li Pingqian. "Guanyu dianying de yifeng xin 關於電影的一封信," first published in *Dianying yishu* 1, 1932, reprinted in ZWD, p. 385.

CHAPTER ONE

It appears understandable that, themselves possessing only limited knowledge and experience in filmmaking, the teachers failed to meet the expectations of a passionate and keen young man. Besides, the fact illustrates that grand ideas advanced by Mingxing's founders existed alongside a much more prosaic reality and limited resources. Six months later, only 34 out of 87 students completed the courses and some of them joined Mingxing.⁵⁴

We have no clue from the available sources when the preparatory office ceased operation and the company was formally founded. The company's start appears less than auspicious. The head Ding Boxiong and another four members of the preparatory office quit soon.⁵⁵ Even worse, efforts to solicit investors were a total failure. In the end, Zhang Shichuan, Zheng Zhengqiu, Zhou Jianyun, Ren Jinping, and Zheng Zhegu, the five founding members, raised about 10,000 Yuan (approximately equals less than 5000 U.S. \$ then) to start the business.⁵⁶ For comparison, in the same period a school for the education of American children in Shanghai was erected at a cost of \$500,000 and an American community church was built at a cost of more than \$200,000.⁵⁷ It is evident that Mingxing's financial basis was extremely weak. This initial capital of 10,000 Yuan was barely sufficient to produce two feature-length films, as average production costs per film (feature) were 4000-6000 Yuan in the 1920s.⁵⁸

To be sure, Mingxing was not the only film company short of capital at this time. For example, Mingxing's future competitor, *Tianyi* 天一 (Unique Film Production), was founded also with 10,000 Yuan in 1925.⁵⁹ Zhou Jianyun pointed out sadly that the prime growth obstacle to the Chinese film industry was the fact that most Chinese capitalists

⁵⁴ MXNB.

⁵⁵ No document relating to Mingxing's history mentions the names of Ding Boxiong, Shu Weixuan, He Maotang, Zhan Songshan, and Ding Zhixin as the company's founding members. See Mingxing, "Mingxing gongsi shi'ernian jinglishi 明星公司十二年經歷史," ZWD, pp. 31-48; MXNB. Both were written by Mingxing's publicity department in the mid-1930s. For the histories written by contemporary historians see Xu Chihen, *Zhongguo yingxi daguan*; Gu Jianchen, "Zhongguo dianying fada shi," ZWD, p. 1362. Also see He Xiujun, p. 115.

⁵⁶ There are at least three versions concerning the number of the original capital. According to "Mingxing yingpian gongsi shi'ernian jingli shi" (ZWD, p. 32), it is 40,000 Yuan; according to MXNB, 50,000 Yuan; while Zhang Shichuan's wife stated that it was "roughly 10,000 Yuan raised by the five founders," although 50,000 Yuan was the number announced to the public (He Xiujun, p. 115). Considering that both the first two versions were provided by Mingxing's publicity division, who had good reason to embellish the company's own history, He Xiujun's version appears more credible.

As for the rate of change, in January 1927, one Yuan equals approximately \$0.53 United States currency. See North. *The Chinese Motion Picture Market*, p. 16.

⁵⁷ Arnold, et al. eds., *China: A commercial and industrial handbook*, pp. 515-6.

⁵⁸ See Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*, pp. 30, 45.

⁵⁹ See an interview with Shao Zuiweng 邵醉翁, the founder of *Tianyi*: Sha Ji 沙基, "Zhongguo dianying yiren fangwen ji 中國電影藝人訪問記," ZWD, p. 1234.

were unwilling to invest in a line of business which they regarded with contempt.⁶⁰ This observation agrees with what we have learned from Jie Fu's aforementioned 1921 article.⁶¹ Such an attitude can explain Mingxing's abortive attempt to solicit investors. Founded on such a weak financial basis and defining itself as an independent commercial enterprise that "[did] not – and [would] not – accept any financial aid from any political party,"⁶² Mingxing had to rely exclusively on box-office incomes. In other words, "commercialism" had to be the overriding concern of Mingxing's executives. In the next part I explore the first two years of the company's existence, which can be seen as a process of trial-and-error. Mingxing's filmmakers experimented with different genres of film and finally found out a genre which proved to be most attractive to the audience.

Trial-and-error: Early Productions

Mingxing's first experiment is a short newsreel that records the scenes of a welcome parade for the French general Joseph Joffre (1852 - 1931) when he visited Shanghai on 8 March 1922. The newsreel was shown at Shanghai's YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) in early April.⁶³ Film production formally started several months later when necessary facilities had become available: the Italian merchant Enrico Lauro provided the studio; a British citizen named Goodall supplied the camera, print machine and darkroom and also worked as cameraman, with Zhang Shichuan's brother Zhang Weitao as his assistant.⁶⁴ Zhang Shichuan was the director and Zheng Zhengqiu provided the scenarios. Most actors and actresses were students of its acting school, and Zheng Zhegu and Zheng Zhengqiu often played leading roles in early productions.⁶⁵

The first releases were three short slapstick-style comedies. Three-reel *Huaji dawang youhuji* 滑稽大王游滬記 (The King of Comedy Visits Shanghai), a fictional story about a visit by Charlie Chaplin to Shanghai, and *Laogong zhi aiqing* 勞工之愛情 (Labourer's love, 3 reels) which features a comic romance between a fruit-peddler and an old doctor's daughter, ran at Ramos' *Olympic* Theatre for only four days in October 1922 and never showed at other major theatres in Shanghai within months (see Table 1.1 in Appendix II).

⁶⁰ Zhou Jianyun. "Zhongguo yingpian zhi qiantu 中國影片之前途," first published in *Dianying yuebao*, 1928; reprinted in ZWD, p. 725.

⁶¹ Jie Fu, "Waijie duiyu Yan Ruisheng yingxi zhi piping 外界對於《閻瑞生》影戲之批評," *Chunsheng ribao* 23 (23 May 1921).

⁶² Lu Xiaolu 陸小洛, "Mingxing gongsi jinkuang lueshu 明星公司近況略述," *MY* 2.5 (1 Dec. 1934): 38.

⁶³ Shanghai Tongshe, ed, *Shanghai yanjiu ziliao*, p. 498. For news reports on Joffre's visit to Shanghai see SB 8 Mar. 1922.

⁶⁴ See MXNB.

⁶⁵ "Filmography" in ZDFZS, p. 529.

Danao guai xichang 大鬧怪戲場 (Disturbance at a Peculiar Theatre), in which Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd meet at a theatre and trigger a series of disturbances, also showed at the *Olympic* for four days and then at Ramos' theatre outlets, the *Empire*, *Hongkew*, *China*, and *Carter*, in the following eight days (see Table 1.1).⁶⁶

Judged by the lengths of runs, these short comedies presumably failed to attract a mass audience. The box-office of Mingxing's first feature-length film turned out soon later, *Zhang Xinsheng* 張欣生, was much better. The film was based on an actual court case which had been put on stage and received wide popularity. The film ran for 27 days at six Shanghai cinemas in early 1923 (see Table 1.1). According to *Shenbao*'s monthly review of local film exhibitions, only a small number of audience attended the movie when it was screened at the *Olympic* with admission fees between 1 and 1.5 Yuan, while subsequent exhibitions with lower prices (0.2-0.8 Yuan) attracted large crowds.⁶⁷ By 5 March, box-office incomes reportedly amounted to over 6000 Yuan (596.4 Yuan at the *Olympic*, 3182.6 Yuan at the *Empire*, 1562.3 Yuan at the *Carter*, and 1341.2 Yuan at the *Hongkew*).⁶⁸ In addition, the film was shown outside Shanghai at no less than three theatres in Beijing, two in Tianjin, one in Hankou, one in Ji'nan, and one in Nanjing.⁶⁹

However, this amount of box-office revenues was still unable to meet the expenditure of running the business. According to Mingxing's self-compiled chronology, by the end of the company's first year, it had almost been on the brink of bankruptcy.⁷⁰ It was the phenomenal success of *Gu'er jiuzu ji* 孤兒救祖記 (An Orphan Rescues His Grandfather, hereafter *Orphan*) that rescued and largely consolidated the young company.⁷¹ It was reported that immediately after *Orphan*'s preview, a theatre manager from Southeast Asia

⁶⁶ See advertisement in SB 26 Jan. 1923: 17, etc.

⁶⁷ "Ge yingyuan eryue zhi huigu 各影院二月之回顧," SB 6 Mar. 1923: 17.

⁶⁸ "Zhang Xinsheng yingpian yingyan zhi jingguo 《張欣生》影片映演之經過," SB 8 March 1923: 17 "benbu xinwen."

⁶⁹ According to an investigation conducted by the Shanghai Municipal Police, the film was screened at the Olympic Theatre, Empire Cinema, China Cinema, Chapoo Road Cinema, Carter Road Cinema (all belonging to the Ramos Amusement Company), the Koong Wo Cinema (Chinese City), and the Woochow Road Cinema in Shanghai, Ka Ming Cinema (Chinese City), Ka Ming Cinema (outside Chinese City), Tsoong Tien Sien Cinema (Chinese City) in Beijing, Sing Ming Cinema (Japanese Concession) and Sien Jui Sien Cinema (French Concession) in Tianjin, Isis Cinema (French Concession) in Hankou, and Tsinanfu Cinema in Jinan. See the letter written by the Commissioner of Police of the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC) to the acting secretary of the SMC, dated 30 July 1923, SMA U1-3-2401, p. 5.

For newspaper advertisements see "Zhang Xinsheng xingjiang yunjin 《張欣生》行將運津," SB 24 Feb. 1923: 17 "benbu xinwen", advertisement of its exhibition at the Nanjing Huayuan Hotel in SB 17 Mar. 1923: 2.

⁷⁰ MXNB.

⁷¹ See MXNB; also see a brief account of its own history in an advertisement Mingxing posted for soliciting investment: XWB 9 Oct. 1926: A1.

purchased a print at the high price of 8000 Yuan.⁷² Premiered on 21 December 1923, the film kept a record of running for almost 100 days at ten Shanghai cinemas (see Table 1.1). Outside Shanghai, it was distributed to major Chinese cities, including Suzhou, Nanjing, Tianjin, Beijing, and Hankou, as well as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asian cities.⁷³ It is interesting to note that a stage adaptation appeared at a Shanghai theatre hosting traditional local opera of Guangdong Province.⁷⁴ This suffices to illustrate the film's popularity. *Orphan's* huge success was not only economically important. It helped establish a pattern for Mingxing's further productions, which will be elaborated in Chapter Five. With the handsome profits *Orphan* created, the previously shaky business was allowed to expand starting in spring 1924.

The Expansion Programme, 1924 - 1925

In March 1924, only three months after *Orphan's* premiere, Mingxing moved from a *tingzijian* 亭子間 (literally, "pavilion room," at cheap rental prices) to a Western-style house (*yangfang* 洋房) on the main street of the French Concession, Avenue Joffre 332 (at the intersection with Rue Paul Beau).⁷⁵ Its acting school began recruiting new students of both sexes, free of tuition fee.⁷⁶ New staff was hired: the cameraman Wang Xuchang 汪煦昌 and an expert in make-up named Xu Hu 徐琥, both returned students who studied film production in France.⁷⁷

Half a year later, an expansion programme was launched. In September, Mingxing ordered a set of cinematographic equipment from the US, France, Germany and the UK, which cost 50,000 Yuan.⁷⁸ According to an advertisement in the *Shenbao* of 1 January 1925, Mingxing now owned seven movie cameras (an American "Bell & Howell," a French "Debie," a German "Ernemann," etc.), four printers (Bell & Howell and Debie), fourteen mercury vapour lamps, and nine carbon-arc lamps.⁷⁹ About the same time, a

⁷² MXNB.

⁷³ See newspaper advertisements. For example, it was screened at Suzhou's YMCA (XWB 12 Feb. 1924: A1), at Nanjing's Public Lecture Hall (XWB 15 Feb. 1924: A1), etc. Also see Yu Muyun. *Xianggang dianying shihua*, p. 143, Huang Ren, et al. eds. *Taiwan dianying bainian shihua*, p. 36.

⁷⁴ XWB 16 March 1924.

⁷⁵ "Mingxing yingpian gongsi qianru xinwu 明星影片公司遷入新屋," SB 27 Mar. 1924: "benbu zengkan" 1.

⁷⁶ See advertisement in XWB 13 Mar. 1924: D1.

⁷⁷ For Wang Xuchang's biography see "Liufa dianying jishi Wang Xuchang lueli 留法電影技師汪煦昌略歷," SB 2 Apr. 1924: "benbu zengkan" 1. Also see "Zhongguo dianyingjie xiaoxi 中國電影界消息" in *Dianying zazhi* 1 (May 1924).

⁷⁸ "Kuaiman wuxiandian 快慢無線電," *Dianying zazhi* 5 (Sep. 1924).

⁷⁹ See SB 1 Jan. 1925: "Yuandan zengkan" 18. The brand names are given in Chinese: 倍而好 (Bell & Howell), 杜勃溜 (Dubrie), 安尼美 (Ernemann), and an English brand 滾利斯韋 whose original name I cannot identify.

glass-wall studio was being built on a four-*Mu* 畝 (2668 m²) plot on Hart Road in the International Settlement, at expenses of over 10,000 Yuan.⁸⁰

The studio was completed in early 1925 and thus allowed filming independently from daylight and weather conditions. It was reported that this studio and its equipment were unrivalled in Shanghai (為各攝影公司冠).⁸¹ Subsequently, Mingxing began to employ more staff. Fifteen vacancies for actresses were advertised in January of the year, promising monthly wages from 50 to 300 Yuan.⁸² The Mingxing *Shadowplay* School reopened in April, with places for forty new students. It was announced that Shen Gao 沈浩 and Hong Shen 洪深, who had returned from studies of cinema and theatre in the US, were to teach at the school.⁸³

More importantly, Mingxing purchased a theatre, the *Shenjiang yiwutai* 申江亦舞台, which was located at the intersection of the *Yunnan* 雲南 Road and *Beihai* 北海 Road and had a seating capacity of about 1180.⁸⁴ Refurbished and renamed *Zhongyang daxiyuan* 中央大戲院 (its own English name: Palace Theatre), it opened on 24 April 1925.⁸⁵ According to the opening manifesto, its self-assumed mission was to promote the Chinese film industry to counter the long foreign monopolization of the Shanghai cinema market. Accordingly, it promised to give priority to Chinese-made films and to show foreign movies with Chinese subtitles.⁸⁶ For this reason, the theatre eventually earned the name "Guopian zhi gong 國片之宮" (the palace of Chinese films).

At the same time, Mingxing took measures to enhance publicity. In May 1925, a promotional journal entitled *Mingxing tekan* 明星特刊 (Mingxing Special Issue) was launched. Edited by Zhou Jianyun and Song Chiping 宋癡萍, issues of the journal usually accompanied releases of new films. It ceased publication in January 1928, after altogether 29 issues.⁸⁷ Also in this month, Mingxing officially registered with the Ministry of

⁸⁰ "Kuaiman wuxiandian 快慢無線電," *Dianying zazhi* 5 (Sep. 1924).

⁸¹ *Dianying zazhi* 10 (Feb. 1925), 12 (Apr. 1925).

⁸² "Mingxing yingpian gongsi zhaopin nüyanyuan 明星影片公司招聘女演員," XWB 10 Jan. 1925: A1.

⁸³ See advertisement "Mingxing yingxi xuexiao xuzhao nannü xinsheng 明星影戲學校續招男女新生," XWB 18 Apr. 1925: A2; and *Dianying zazhi* 12.

⁸⁴ According to *Shanghai yanjiu ziliao xubian*, it had 1177 seats. See "Guopian zhi gong 國片之宮" in *Shanghai yanjiu ziliao xuji*, p. 562. According to a register of Shanghai theatres, it had 1184 seats, namely, *Teting* 特厅 514, *Hualou* 花楼 96, *Louting* 楼厅 332, and *Zhengting* 正厅 242. See "Shanghai shi xijuyuan shangye tongye gonghui choubei hui huiyuan dengji diaocha biao 上海市戲劇院商業同業工會籌備會會員登記調查表," SMA, S320-4-8-64, dated 15 October 1950.

⁸⁵ See "Guopian zhi gong" in *Shanghai yanjiu ziliao xuji*, pp. 547, 561-563. Also see its advertisement in XWB 22 Apr. 1925: A1.

⁸⁶ "Zhongyang daxiyuan kaimu xuanyan 中央大戲院開幕宣言," XWB 22 Apr. 1925: A1.

⁸⁷ MXNB.

Agriculture and Commerce (*Nongshang bu* 農商部). Its registered capital was 100,000 Yuan, all raised through shares (*zhaogu* 招股).⁸⁸ Between 1923 and 1925, Mingxing's executives invested much effort into soliciting further investment. A first successful step was to persuade three powerful figures of the Shanghai business community, Fang Jiaobo 方椒伯, Yuan Lüding 袁履登, and Lao Jingxiu 勞敬修, to invest in the company. They then became nominal "directors" (*weiyuan zhang* 委員長) of the fundraising campaign.⁸⁹ In order to seek more investment from individuals or companies, Mingxing repeatedly advertised in leading newspapers. In addition, personal resources provided useful channels. It was reported that Zhang Shichuan and Zhou Jianyun travelled to South China and obtained an investment of 30,000 Yuan by Mai Junbo 麥君博.⁹⁰

After registering with the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, Mingxing was officially established as a limited liability company. It issued "The Statutes of the Mingxing Motion Picture Co. Ltd." (*Mingxing gufen youxian gongsi zhangcheng* 明星股份有限公司章程) which specified the company's organization, rights and responsibilities of shareholders, the method of calculating annual dividends, and other related matters.⁹¹ Names of shareholders were listed in the appendix of this document. Interestingly, we find some prominent individuals and leading corporations on the list, such as Shi Liangcai 史量才 (1880 - 1934), the editor-in-chief of the *Shenbao*, and the Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Co. Ltd, one of the most successful Shanghai enterprises. Significant improvements in equipment and facilities, in personnel, as well as in financial and organizational structures having been made, production increased conspicuously in 1925. Nine feature films were produced through this year, whereas the total production of the first three years was only six features.

"Costume Drama Movement" and Mingxing's efforts in "vertical integration"

Roughly from 1925 on, the Shanghai film industry experienced a boom. While there were only 31 Chinese-run film companies in Shanghai in 1924, the number reached 141 by the end of 1926.⁹² However, only a minority actually produced films, and even less survived

⁸⁸ MXNB; also see "Mingxing yingpian gongsi shi'ernian jingli shi," in ZWD, p. 33.

⁸⁹ See Mingxing's advertisement for fundraising "Mingxing yingpian gongsi kuochong zhaogu tonggao (disan hao) 明星影片公司擴充招股通告 (第三號)," XWB 18 June 1924: A1.

⁹⁰ "Mingxing yingpian gongsi shi'ernian jingli shi," in ZWD, p. 34.

⁹¹ SMA, Y9-1-457. No publishing date can be found in the file. It ought to be published in 1925.

⁹² See Zhou Bochang 周伯長, "Yinian jian Shanghai dianyingjie zhi huigu 一年間上海電影界之回顧," SB 1 Jan. 1925: Yuandan zengkan 17; Cheng Shuren, et al., eds, *Zhonghua yingye nianjian*.

the fierce competition. Longer-lived companies were *Da Zhonghua* 大中華 (formed in 1924, amalgamated with *Baihe* 百合 in 1925 and renamed "Da Zhonghua baihe"), *Changcheng* 長城 (1924), *Shenzhou* 神州 (1924), *Tianyi* 天一 (1925), and *Minxin* 民新 (initially in Hong Kong, moved to Shanghai in 1926).⁹³ Tianyi initiated a trend and led the industry forward to a craze of making costume drama films (*guzhuang pian* 古裝片).

The leaders of Tianyi openly proclaimed that they embraced "old morals and Chinese civilization" and "strongly rejected Europeanization" (力避歐化) from the outset.⁹⁴ They sought for materials for film in folk tales, myths and legends that featured in the popular literature and traditional theatre (esp. *tanci* 彈詞 plays).⁹⁵ Costume drama films were highly success with middle-lower-class audiences, especially in the *Nanyang* 南洋 region (Southeast Asia) where labourers and merchants dominated the Chinese immigrants of this area.⁹⁶ According to Zhou Jianyun, *Nanyang* region had long been the largest market for Shanghai-produced films, a more reliable source of income than war-stricken mainland China.⁹⁷

Hence it is understandable that Tianyi's success engendered what Zheng Junli and other historians termed as "Costume Drama Movement" (*guzhuangpian yundong* 古裝片運動), sweeping the Shanghai film industry from 1926 onwards.⁹⁸ Two related genres soon joined, *wuxia pian* 武俠片 (martial arts film) and *shenguai pian* 神怪片 (film of immortals and demons). Between 1928 and 1931, some 250 of almost 400 Shanghai-produced films fell into these genres.⁹⁹ Mingxing engaged in this craze, turning out a tremendously popular martial arts film, *Huoshao Hongliansi* 火燒紅蓮寺 (*The Burning of the Red Lotus Temple*). Over a period of three years (1928-1931), the film was released in eighteen feature-length

⁹³ Cf. ZDFZS, chapter 2.

⁹⁴ *Lidi chengfo tekan*, Oct. 1925, published by Tianyi Film Company, quoted in ZDFZS, p. 83.

⁹⁵ According to Zheng Junli's research, many *guzhuang pian* films were adapted from plays of *tanci*, a play form widely popular since the beginning of the ninth century among the lower strata, compared to the high-class favorite *kunqu* (Kun Opera). See Zheng Junli, "Xiandai zhongguo dianying shilue," in ZWD, p. 1409.

⁹⁶ Xu Chihen, "Hushang ge zhipian gongsi zhi chuangli shi ji jingguo qingxing 滬上各制片公司之創立史及經過情形," ZWD, p. 89 (first published in *Zhongguo yingxi daguan*, 1927).

The *Nanyang* region included colonies along the Pacific Ocean such as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and Rangoon or Yangon (Burma) under Britain, Java (Indonesia) and Bangkok (Thailand) under Holland, Annam (Vietnam) under France, the Philippines and Honolulu under the US. Chinese immigrants – over 70 percent of them merchants, coolies and plantation or farm workers – occupied a certain part of the populations of *Nanyang*. See Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*, p. 47.

⁹⁷ Zhou Jianyun, "Zhongguo yingpian zhi qiantu 中國影片之前途," ZWD, p. 730 (first published in *Dianying yuebao* 1, 2, 4, 8, 1928).

⁹⁸ For researches on the subject, see Zheng Junli, "Xiandai zhongguo dianying shilue," ZWD, pp. 1407-16; Lu Hongshi, "Shangye dianying: diyici langchao 商業電影：第一次浪潮," in *Zhongguo dianying: miaoshu yu chanshi*, pp. 100-14; Jia leilei, *Zhongguo wuxia dianying shi*; and Chen Mo, *Zhongguo wuxia dianying shi*.

⁹⁹ 30 were released in 1928, 85 in 1929, 69 in 1930, 43 in 1931, and 14 in 1932, see Shen Yun, *Zhongguo dianying chanyeshi*, pp. 52-53.

parts. It initiated a trend of *huoshao pian* 火燒片, films that contained burning scenes. Numerous films of this kind appeared during the period.¹⁰⁰

The craze declined in 1932 when the central government's censorship committee banned films of this kind for the reason that these films "spread superstitious ideas" among the masses.¹⁰¹ This period is usually regarded as "chaotic" and "turbulent," no matter by contemporary intellectuals and later historians.¹⁰² Economically and institutionally, however, it was a period of significant development for the Chinese film industry in general and for Mingxing in particular. The returns Mingxing obtained with *Huoshao Hongliansi* had been great. Besides, during the period, Mingxing took significant steps in the direction of what may be called "vertical integration," the Hollywood industrial mode of integrating production, distribution and exhibition. In April 1926, Zhang Shichuan and a few friends invested 100,000 Yuan to establish the first Chinese-owned theatre chain, the *Zhongyang Theatre Company* (*Zhongyang yingxi gongsi* 中央影戲公司).¹⁰³ It operated seven theatres in Shanghai: the Empire, Carter, China, and Victoria (renamed as *Xin zhongyang* 新中央), all rented from Ramos at 60,000 Yuan per year, as well as *Zhonghua* 中華, *Ping'an* 平安 and *Palace*. The company promised that their theatres would give priority to domestic films.¹⁰⁴ In 1931, Ramos sold his theatres to the company at 800,000 Yuan. The theatre chain was broken up in March 1936.

In order to control film distribution, on 26 June 1926, Mingxing, together with three other Shanghai studios (上海, 大中華百合, 神州) founded a joint distribution company, the *Liuhe Company* (六合, which gave itself the English name "United Film Exchange").¹⁰⁵ Its office was in the building where the *Zhongyang Company* was located,

¹⁰⁰ See ZDFZS, pp. 133-134.

¹⁰¹ See the government file "Jiaoyu Neizheng bu jinzhi Honglian si yingpian geji zhi yingyan 教育內政部禁止紅蓮寺影片各集之映演," dated 29 Jun. 1932, in *Jiaoyu neizheng bu dianying jiancha weiyuanhui gongzuo zong baogao* 教育內政部電影檢查委員會工作總報告, p. 61. For a detailed discussion on the prohibition of this film genre, see Xiao, "Constructing a new national culture," pp. 190-193.

¹⁰² See Bihua 筆花, "Jinhou de Zhongguo dianying jie 今後的中國電影界," *Yingxi shenghuo* 1.9 (31 Mar. 1931):1; Gu Jianchen, "Zhongguo dianying fada shi," ZWD, p. 1369; Zheng Junli, "Xiandai zhongguo dianying shilue," ZWD, p. 1407.

¹⁰³ See "Shanghai dianyingyuan de fazhan 上海電影院的發展," in *Shanghai yanjiu ziliao xuji*, pp. 536-538; "Zhongyang yingxi gongsi zuzhi zhi jingguo 中央影戲公司組織之經過," in Xu Chihen, *Zhongguo yingxi daguan*; Zhou Jianyun, "Zhongguo yingpian zhi qiantu 中國影片之前途," ZWD, p. 724.

¹⁰⁴ See the advertisement for the company's opening in XWB 1 Apr. 1926.

¹⁰⁵ There are several different versions concerning the members of the *Liuhe Company*. The version I adopt is its advertisement in the XWB the day before its opening (25 Jun. 1926: A4), in which only the four studios were mentioned. *Minxin* 民新 was added in an advertisement in the *Shenzhou tekan* 4 (1926), reprinted in ZWD, p. 103. In the inaugural issue of *Liuhe's* publicity journal (*Dianying yuebao* 1, Apr. 1928), one can find a list of films distributed by *Liuhe*. Films produced by the *Huaju* 華劇 and *Youlian* 友聯 were included in the list. When the company closed down on 30 June 1929, an announcement published in *Dianying yuebao* (No.

Jinke Road (仁記路) 35. In August of the year, the company's *Huabei* 華北 Agency was opened in Tianjin, responsible for distribution to Beijing, Tianjin, Ha'erbin, Tangshan, Dalian and other cities in Northern China.¹⁰⁶ Shortly afterwards, the Xiang'e 湘鄂 Agency was opened in Hankou, taking charge of the business in Hunan and Hubei provinces.¹⁰⁷ Three other agencies were located in Beijing, Chongqing, and Wuhu.¹⁰⁸

Liuhe's biggest competitor was Tianyi which owned a strong distribution network in Southeast Asia. For this reason, Liuhe's strategy was to try to dominate markets in inland China. Consequently, many new movie theatres were built with funds partly or entirely from Liuhe.¹⁰⁹ This strategy helped to bring the new medium to a wider public in China. Only three years later, however, the joint distribution company was broken up, due to conflicts of interests between its members.¹¹⁰ Mingxing's executives Zhang Shichuan, Zheng Zhengqiu and Zhou Jianyun, together with a few others, founded another distribution company named *Huawei* 華威 (literally, "China's glory").¹¹¹ It was primarily the distributor of Mingxing films, while also selling sound film and radio equipment and investing in provincial theatres in Wuxi, Ningbo, Hankou, among others.¹¹²

Unlike its Hollywood counterparts who owned their own distribution agencies and theatre chains,¹¹³ Mingxing never established a vertically-integrated system in a strict sense. *Zhongyang*, *Liuhe* and *Huawei* were independently registered companies (not Mingxing's subsidiaries), though their close ties with Mingxing were obvious. The lack of capital might have been a critical factor that prevented full vertical integration. On 9 October 1926, Mingxing ran a whole-page advertisement in the *Xinwenbao* to call for fresh investment, offering the sale of 40,000 shares at 10 Yuan per share.¹¹⁴ Mingxing's executives planned to invest 120,000 Yuan into an office building and a glass-wall-steel-

11&12, Sep. 1929) shows that the *Liuhe*'s members included *Shanghai*, *Mingxing*, *Dazhonghua baihe*, *Minxin*, *Huaju*, and *Youlian* (*Shenzhou* not there). We can assume that these companies joined and withdrew at different times. Due to this complicated situation, the seven film companies appeared in different combinations in the secondary accounts by Xu Chihen, Fan Yanqiao, Du Yunzhi, Li Suyuan/Hu Jubin, Zhang Yingjin, and Shen Yun.

¹⁰⁶ See advertisement in XWB 7 Aug. 1926: A1.

¹⁰⁷ See advertisement in XWB 10 Aug. 1926: A1.

¹⁰⁸ Cheng Shuren, et al., eds, *Zhonghua yingye nianjian*.

¹⁰⁹ See advertisements and reports in *Dianying yuebao*.

¹¹⁰ See "Liuhe yingpian yingye gongsi qishi 六合影片營業公司啟事," *Dianying yuebao* 11&12 (Sep. 1929). According to Lu Jie (an executive of *Dazhonghua baihe*), the relationship between the studios involved was disharmonious. See *Lu Jie riji zhaicun* 陸潔日記摘存. *Zhongguo dianying ziliao guan*, 1962, quoted in Shen Yun, p. 52.

¹¹¹ See "Huawei maoyi gongsi qishi 華威貿易公司啟事," *Dianying yuebao* 11&12 (Sep. 1929).

¹¹² "Shanghai shangye chuxu yinhang yingpian ye diaocha 上海商業儲蓄銀行影片業調查," SMA, Q275-1-1949, pp. 34-53, dated 1931-1936.

¹¹³ See Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood studio system: a history*.

¹¹⁴ XWB 9 Oct. 1926: A1.

frame studio, 100,000 Yuan in cinematographic equipment, 50,000 Yuan in film production, and 130,000 Yuan in building movie theatres in inland China.¹¹⁵ This grand plan came to nothing, however, and this subscription of investment was never mentioned in the company's self-compiled chronology and history, which only recorded its successful *zhaogu*-actions in 1925 and 1928.¹¹⁶

Despite the financial difficulties, Mingxing was expanding and its production increased steadily during the period. While nine films were produced in 1925, the number rose in the following years, with eleven in 1926, thirteen in 1927, fifteen in 1928, sixteen in 1929, seventeen in 1930, and twenty-one in 1931. By late 1926, Mingxing had 26 leading performers (thirteen female) and four production teams, under the direction of Zhang Shichuan, Zheng Zhengqiu, Hong Shen and Bu Wancang 卜萬蒼 (1903 - 1974) respectively.¹¹⁷ In 1927, it moved into new premises on Route Doumer in the French Concession. In addition to a studio that had been moved from its old site, a new one was built, which allowed for two production teams to work simultaneously.¹¹⁸ According to the company's balance report published in the *Mingxing banyuekan* (Mingxing Semimonthly), during the period from 1924 to 1931, except 1927, the company made a profit each year (see Table 1.2).

In 1928, after having raised 200,000 Yuan, Mingxing registered with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (*Gongshang bu* 工商部) of the Nanjing government established in April 1927.¹¹⁹ After the Nationalist Party (GMD) established the Nanjing government, controls over the film industry gradually tightened. Business operations of Mingxing were certainly subject to government cinema administration. At the same time, interestingly, the commercial film studio offered useful services to the government that was in need of this medium as a propaganda tool. In the following I will outline the government's cinema administrative infrastructure and then look at the cooperation between Mingxing and the government. The survey will demonstrate that didacticism did not conflict with the government's agenda and commercialism also played a role when Mingxing interacted with the authorities.

Seeking Mutual Benefit: Mingxing and the Nationalist Government

¹¹⁵ Yan Duhe, *Mingxing yingpian gongsi tianzhao xingu jihuashu* 明星影片公司添招新股計劃書, quoted in Sun Lei, "Mingxing yingpian gongsi: 1922-1937," p. 150.

¹¹⁶ "Mingxing yingpian gongsi shi'er nian jingli shi," ZWD, p. 33. Also see MXNB.

¹¹⁷ See Mingxing's advertisement for *Zhaogu* in XWB 9 Oct. 1926: A1. For the four production teams see Xu Chihen, *Zhongguo yingxi daguan*, also so Gong Jianong, *Gong Jianong congying huiyi lu*, pp. 71-2.

¹¹⁸ MXNB.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

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The following overview of the Nanjing government's cinema administration is primarily based on an official document published in 1934, the proceedings of a conference on cinema affairs organized by the Propaganda Department of the Nationalist Party (中國國民黨中央宣傳委員會).¹²⁰ As illustrated in Chart 1, at the highest level was the administrative bureau "Cinema Advisory Commission" (電影事業指導委員會) directly affiliated to the supreme propaganda organ of the GMD, the Propaganda Department of the Nationalist Party. In 1935, the bureau was reorganized to be "Central Cinema Administration Bureau" (中央電影事業處). Subordinate to this bureau was the Central Script Censorship Committee (中央電影劇本審查委員會) and the Central Film Censorship Committee (中央電影檢查委員會) which derived from the Board of Censors of the Ministries of Education and Interior (教育內政部電影檢查委員會) established in March 1931.

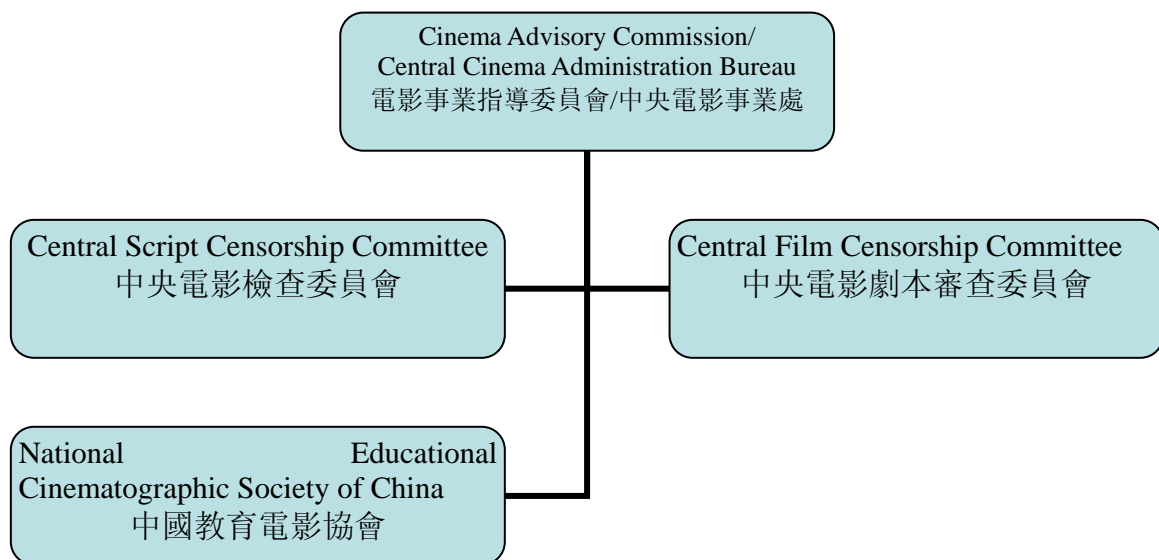


Chart 1 Cinema Administrative Infrastructure of the Nanjing Government

Besides, there was a semi-governmental organization, the National Educational Cinematographic Society of China (its own English name for *Zhongguo jiaoyu dianying xiehui* 中國教育電影協會, NECSA).¹²¹ Founded in Nanjing in August 1932, the society gradually developed a nation-wide network of branches and membership. Promotion of

¹²⁰ Zhongyang xuanchuan weiyuanhui dianying gu 中央宣傳委員會電影股, ed, *Zhongguo guomindang zhongyang xuanchuan weiyuanhui zhaoji quanguo dianying gongsi fuzeren tanhuahui jiniance* 中國國民黨中央宣傳委員會召集全國電影公司負責人談話會紀念冊 (hereafter *Jinian ce*), Mar. 1934. Also cf. "Nanjing dianying xingzheng jiguan gaikuang 南京電影行政機關概況," DS 5.14 (10 Apr. 1936): 349.

¹²¹ See *Zhongguo jiaoyu dianying xiehui huiwu baogao* 中國教育電影協會會務報告 (1932); Fang Zhi 方治 ed, *Zhongguo jiaoyu dianying xiehui diwujie nianhui tekan* 中國教育電影協會第五屆年會特刊 (May 1936).

"educational cinema" (*Jiaoyu dianying* 教育電影) and cinema's educational function was its main task. Its executive committee consisted of top officials of the government and the party (e.g. Chen Lifu 陳立夫, Pan Gongzhan 潘公展, Chen Bulei 陳布雷, Shao Yuanchong 邵元冲), leading figures of the film industry (Zheng Zhengqiu, Luo Mingyou 羅明佑), prominent intellectuals and artists (Hong Shen, Wang Pingling 王平陵, Luo Jialun 羅家倫, Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻), and others.¹²²

According to Xiao Zhiwei's research, the top agenda of the Nanjing administration on cinema was to ban dialect films and films on superstitious and pornographic subjects, which were deemed immediately subversive to national building.¹²³ Instead, the authorities encouraged the film industry to produce socially responsible films with didactic values. For example, in his address to the 1934 conference on cinema affairs, Chen Lifu, a member of the Cinema Advisory Commission, stressed that "our country need cinema to take up educator's role (國家需要電影擔任教育的任務)" and hence he proposed that a film should be "seventy percent educational and thirty percent entertaining" (七分教育三分娛樂).¹²⁴ Clearly, Mingxing's principle to pursue "didacticism" was congruent with the agenda of the authorities.

At the same time, the film industry attempted to make their demands known to the government. For example, at the aforementioned film conference, film studios, including Mingxing, urged the government to develop a customs policy against the growing encroachment of imported movies, to reduce bureaucratic red tape in film censorship, to offer financial aids to the industry, to ensure more effective administration at the local level, among others.¹²⁵ In sum, as a journalist summarized, film studios' overarching concern was nothing but to wish the authorities to understand the difficulties facing film entrepreneurs (體恤商艱).¹²⁶ Financial difficulties were primary.

It may be appropriate to characterize the relationship between the film industry and the GMD regime as "mutual need." The newly-founded regime, whose rule still remained precarious in many respects by the time,¹²⁷ was in need of support from the commercial companies, in both ideological and practical terms. Until 1936 there was no authority-run

¹²² *Zhongguo jiaoyu dianying xiehui huiwu baogao* 中國教育電影協會會務報告 (1932).

¹²³ Xiao, "Constructing a new national culture."

¹²⁴ "Dianying shiye zhidao weiyuanhui changwu weiyuan Chen Lifu xiansheng yanshuo 電影事業指導委員會常務委員陳立夫先生演說," in *Jinian ce*, p. 46.

¹²⁵ These were the prominent issues raised by the film industry at the meetings. Cf. *Jinian ce*, pp. 43-53.

¹²⁶ "Disan ci dianying tanhua hui xiangji 第三次電影談話會詳記," *DS* 5.17 (1 May 1936): 406-7.

¹²⁷ For the precarious state of the GMD regime's rule during the Nanjing decade see Eastman, *The abortive revolution*.

film studio that could serve the need of propaganda or other uses by the government and the party. On many occasions government officials had to turn to commercial film companies for help to record speeches, meetings, and the like. Mingxing as a leading film studio which owned professional equipment and experienced staff became an ideal option. Following evidence will show that Mingxing was happy to carry out this kind of tasks and made use of these opportunities to serve its own interests.

For example, newsreels could be shown before feature films and sometimes became particular attractions to the audience. As early as late March 1927 when Chiang Kaishek's Nationalist Army occupied Shanghai, Mingxing produced a two-reel newsreel – a record of Chiang's public speeches and activities in Shanghai.¹²⁸ Months later, Mingxing's film crew was invited to shoot Chiang Kaishek and Song Meiling 宋美齡's wedding ceremony.¹²⁹ The former was shown before Bao Tianxiao's film *Meihua luo* 梅花落 (1927) and the latter before a Martial Arts film, *Shandong Ma Yongzhen* 山東馬永貞 (1927). Interestingly, both the advertisements highlighted the newsreels to attract the attention of the audience.¹³⁰

Government archival files reveal that between 1927 and 1929, Mingxing was occasionally enlisted to produce short films for the Public Utilities Bureau of the Shanghai Municipal Government (*Shanghai shi gongyong ju* 上海市公用局).¹³¹ Most of the films were concerned with the new government's efforts in improving the city's infrastructure, such as ferry services, waterworks, among others.¹³² Sometimes, Mingxing's film crew was invited to Nanjing to shoot "anti-Japanese speeches" given by the Prime Minister and presidents of the government's five *Yuan*.¹³³ Among all the tasks, the most "privileged" one was perhaps a mission to make a documentary about the extermination campaign against the communists (*jiaofei* 剿匪) in Jiangxi. This is a vivid example of how Mingxing sought benefit from this kind of mission.

According to a detailed record of this event in the *Mingxing banyuekan*, this was Chiang Kaishek's personal order.¹³⁴ But according to a news item in the fan magazine *Yingxi shenghuo*, Mingxing was offered this opportunity due to its managers' "active contacts" with the *Lizhi she* 勵志社 (Moral Encouragement Society), a semi-military society

¹²⁸ See XWB 29 Mar. 1927: A1.

¹²⁹ See XWB 3 Dec. 1927: A1.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ See the archive document SMA, Q5-3-3264, dated 21 Dec. 1927.

¹³² See the official correspondences (dated 15 Aug. 1929) in *ibid*.

¹³³ Wang Qianbai 王乾白, "Ganxing jishi: wei Jiang Weiyuanzhang deng she jiaofei shengpian 贛行紀實——為蔣委員長等攝剿匪聲片" (I), *MY* 1.3 (1 Jul. 1933): 1.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 1. Unless otherwise noted, the following account about this event is based on this source.

CHAPTER ONE

responsible for propaganda.¹³⁵ This report hints at Mingxing's willingness to carry out the task which might have been deemed glorious and beneficial to the company. On 29 April 1933, a fifteen-person camera crew led by Zhang Shichuan embarked on the journey toward Jiangxi, escorted by two officials of the *Lizhi she*. During the voyage upward the Yangtze River, the film crew recorded a track of steamship whistles that was in need in a film under production and shot a few reels of the picturesque scenery which was to be used in a musical film later.

The crew arrived in Nanchang on 2 May and began working the next day. They first recorded a speech given by the president of the Jiangxi provincial government in order to mobilize his people to combat the "communist-bandits" with full courage and determination. Afterwards they went to a public stadium to shoot an assembly of a voluntary organization made up of local peasants, whose mission was to transport military supplies to the front. Followed was Chiang Kaishek's speech to his soldiers at a Martyrs' Cemetery. The focus of the second day's filming was Chiang's wife Song Meiling and a women's relief association she organized. They shot the association members' activities, such as packing comfort gifts, visiting the injured, as well as Song's speech to wounded soldiers. In the ensuing days, the film crew travelled through a rugged area to the front, where they recorded Chiang's talks to his officers, some officers' addresses to their soldiers and the soldiers' speeches. Besides, they shot exterior scenes that feature a fort outside the town, soldiers in the trench, marching troops, and the remnants of civilian houses allegedly destroyed by the "communist-bandits." Back to Nanchang, they shot another few addresses Chiang delivered to his subordinates and departed for Shanghai on 14 May.

The benefit Chiang Kaishek gained from the commercial film company was obvious. The contents he required to record – numerous speeches, popular supports, relief activities, soldiers and troops, crimes supposedly committed by the enemy – are typical of wartime propaganda. The film was to be shown to his soldiers for propaganda purpose. For Mingxing, this task was to its benefit too. First, it gained some immediate benefits. In addition to the "by-products" (the sound track and scenery footage) that could be used in its own films, it received an unexpected "order" to produce an anti-communist film for the Jiangxi provincial government.¹³⁶ As a commercial company, this kind of "order" was certainly welcome for it could bring in additional income. Second, probably more importantly, Zhang Shichuan regarded this task as an honour and believed that personal

¹³⁵ According to a brief news item, Zhang Shichuan, Zhou Jianyun and Hong Shen had been eager to obtain the opportunity to produce the "revolutionary film" through contacts with the *Lizhi she* in Nanjing. See *Yingxi shenghuo* 220 (5 Mar. 1933).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* But unfortunately no source provides further information about the progress of the plan.

contacts with Chiang Kaishek and senior officials around Chiang had helped him establish a closer tie with the highest leadership of the nation. This, he supposed, would potentially do good to their business.¹³⁷ And it did, perhaps. Mingxing was assigned to perform some "privileged tasks" by government sectors or high officials soon later, though no hard evidence overtly points to the causal linkage to the task in Jiangxi.

In August 1933, only three months after their journey to Jiangxi, the Ministry of Railways asked Mingxing to produce a travel documentary to showcase famous historic sites and natural scenery along three major railways of China (Jinpu 津浦, Jiaoji 膠濟, and Longhai 隴海).¹³⁸ Since free accommodation and transportation were offered by the inviters, Zhang Shichuan decided to take full advantage of the opportunity to make a few feature films set in these scenic sites at the same time. Three stories respectively set in the Tai Mountain (泰山), Hua Mountain (華山) and Xi'an (西安) were soon prepared and a forty-person team including its leading actors/actresses and production staff was formed. During the journey they completed on-location shooting for the three films, *Huashan yanshi* 華山豔史 (Romance on the Hua Mountain), *Dao Xibei qu* 到西北去 (*Go Northwest*), and *Taishan hongmao* 泰山鴻毛 (Feather on the Tai Mountain).¹³⁹

There are additional examples. For instance, the *Lizhi she* asked Mingxing to produce two documentaries, one regarding the Central Military Academy, the other political personages' speeches in 1934.¹⁴⁰ It was reported that Chen Lifu asked Mingxing to make an educational film, *Yinshui weisheng* 飲水衛生 (Hygiene of Drinking Water), with a script written by Chen himself.¹⁴¹ To stay on good terms with government officials proved to be beneficial to their business. In June 1936, Mingxing attained from the Communication Bank (交通銀行) a large mortgage (160,000 Yuan), with Chen Lifu's brother Chen Guofu 陳果夫 as the guarantor.¹⁴² This large sum of money is vital to the company because from 1931 onwards Mingxing was plunged into tough economic situations due to various reasons to be elaborated below.

1931: A Troubled Year

¹³⁷ He Xiujun, pp. 143, 155.

¹³⁸ MXNB.

¹³⁹ For records of the journey see "Beixing tongxun 北行通訊," serialized in *MY* 1.5 (1 Sep. 1933), 1.6 (1 Oct. 1933).

¹⁴⁰ *DS* 3.25 (7 Jul. 1934): 495.

¹⁴¹ *Beiyang huabao* 1106 (vol. 23), 6 Jun. 1934, p. 3.

¹⁴² See *Jiaotong yinhang Shanghai fenhang chengzuo Mingxing yingpian gongsi yakuan de wanglai wenshu* 交通銀行上海分行承做明星影片公司押款的來往文書, SMA, Q55-2-1371, pp. 9-10.

1931 is a troubled year in which Mingxing sustained three devastating blows.¹⁴³ First, cinema's transition to sound caused great problems. In 1930, Mingxing cooperated with the Pathé Records and spent 120,000 Yuan producing the first Chinese *sound-on-disc* film *Genü hong mudan* 歌女紅牡丹 (Sing-song Girl Red Peony). Premiered at the *Xinguang* 新光 Theatre (its own English name: *Strand*) on 15 March 1931, the film met with a favourable reception. Yet its success was soon outshone by two real sound films using synchronized *sound-on-film* technology, *Yuguo tianqing* 雨過天青 (Reconciliation) by Huaguang 華光 and *Gechang chunse* 歌場春色 (A Singer's Story) by Tianyi. In order to catch up with its rivals, in July 1931, Mingxing sent Hong Shen to the US to purchase equipment for making real sound films. Hong Shen signed a contract with the Multicolor Company for using its *sound-on-film* technology, purchased equipment for sound and colour film at a cost of about 200,000 Yuan, and hired several technicians (cameramen Jack Smith and James Williamson, sound technician Sydney Lund, etc.) to whom Mingxing had to pay high salaries. Unfortunately, the equipment Hong purchased was of poor quality.¹⁴⁴ Even worse, the first film produced with the latest equipment, *Tixiao yinyuan* 啼笑因緣 (Fate in Tears and Laughter, hereafter *Fate*), was to be another severe blow to Mingxing.

Fate was intended to be a "block-buster" movie from which Mingxing had expected high returns. It is no exaggeration to call the original novel by Zhang Henshui 張恨水 (1895 - 1967) a "supremely popular" work and "probably the most widely read Chinese novel in the first half of the twentieth century."¹⁴⁵ Initially serialized in the *Xinwenbao* in 1929-1930, the novel was published in book form in 1931 and has been reprinted numerous times, as well as circulated through various media, film, radio, stage play, comic book, and TV serial.¹⁴⁶ Mingxing soon recognized its potential to be a hit if put on screen and declared on 18 September 1930 that they planned to adapt the novel into a six-episode film.¹⁴⁷ To ensure best production, Zhang Shichuan deployed Mingxing's best resources.

¹⁴³ "Mingxing yingpian gongsi shi'ernian jingli shi," ZWD, pp. 34-35.

¹⁴⁴ For Mingxing's experiment with talkies, see *Ibid.*, MXNB, and Xu Bibo 徐碧波, "Zhongguo yousheng dianying de kaiduan 中國有聲電影的開端," in Wang Hanlun, et al., *Gankai hua dangnian*, pp. 33ff. For Hong Shen's trip to the US, see Bihua 筆花, "Hong Shen zuo chen fanguo 洪深昨晨返國," *Yingxi shenghuo* 1.32 (22 Aug. 1931).

¹⁴⁵ Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, p. 22, p. 12.

¹⁴⁶ For the book's popularity see Zhang Mingming 張明明 (Zhang Henshui's daughter), "Youguan *Tixiao yinyuan* de ersan shi," YHYZ, pp. 222-236. Also see Huayan yigai 華嚴一丐, "*Tixiao zhongzhong* 啼笑種種," first published in *Shanhu* 珊瑚 21 (1 May 1933), YHWZ, p. 234.

¹⁴⁷ "Mingxing yingpian gongsi kaishe *Tixiao yinyuan* qishi 明星影片公司開攝《啼笑因緣》啟事," XWB 18 Sep. 1930: 5.

He budgeted 1,200,000 Yuan for production, arranged for brilliant stars to play the leads (Hu Die 胡蝶, Zheng Xiaoqi 鄭小秋, and Wang Xianzhai 王獻齋), applied its latest equipment, and spent two months on on-location exterior filming in Beijing.¹⁴⁸

The first episode of *Fate* was premiered on 26 June 1932 at the *Nanking Theatre*.¹⁴⁹ Three days later, the theatre received a verdict from the Supreme Court in which screening *Fate* was declared illegal and had to be discontinued immediately. The cause was that a small film studio headed by Gu Wuwei 顧無為 had registered the *screenplay* of *Tixiao yinyuan* with the Copyright Board of the Ministry of Interior (*Neizheng bu* 內政部). Gu sued Mingxing for copyright infringement, though Mingxing had procured authorization by the author and the publishing house for adapting the *novel*. After a long lawsuit and private negotiations, Mingxing won at a high cost. As Gu Wuwei was under the protection of the powerful gangster Huang Jinrong 黃金榮 (1867 - 1953), Mingxing found an equally strong protector, the Green Gang head Du Yueheng 杜月笙 (1888 - 1951), to act as intermediary. But Mingxing had to pay 100,000 Yuan for Du's mediating and for the "loss" of Gu Wuwei.¹⁵⁰

From late September 1932 on, the following episodes of the film started to be screened.¹⁵¹ To their great disappointment, these episodes failed to create satisfactory box-office returns.¹⁵² According to contemporary film critics, the movie itself was mediocre, lacking gripping plot and outstanding acting.¹⁵³ The Japanese invasions of Manchuria and

¹⁴⁸ See reports on Mingxing's production team in Beijing in *Yingxi shenghuo*, nos. 37-45 (26 Sep. – 21 Nov. 1931), also see Hu Die, *Hu Die huiyi lu*, pp. 60-74.

¹⁴⁹ See the advertisement in XWB 26 Jun. 1932: 20.

¹⁵⁰ The case caused a great sensation at the time and was mentioned in quite a lot of memoirs and essays. See He Xiujun, pp. 134-7; Dong Tianya 董天涯, "Paishe *Tixiao yinyuan* de fengbo," *Shanghai wenshi ziliao* 7; Zhang Mingming, "Youguan *Tixiao yinyuan* de ersan shi," pp. 230-1. For primary evidences see newspaper announcements by both parts in XWB 8 Nov. 1931: 1; 9 Nov. 1931: 2; 30 Jun. 1932: 3; 1 Jul. 1932: 6; 2 Jul. 1932: 7; 4 Jul. 1932: 7. Furthermore, many reports on the case appeared in the press, see Zhong Li 重力, "Guangmang sishe, quanguo zhumu de mingxing yingpian gongsi zhi beicheng dazhan 光芒四射、全國矚目的明星影片公司之'背城大戰'," *DS* 1.6 (6 May 1932): 1, 1.7 (7 May 1932): 1; "Tixiao yinyuan zhi falü wenti 《啼笑因緣》之法律問題," *DS* 1.31 (31 May 1932); Hu De 胡德, et al, "Mingxing zhi *Tixiao yinyuan* turan tingying zhi jingguo yu neimu 明星之《啼笑因緣》突然停映之經過與內幕," *DS* 1.61 (30 Jun. 1932).

¹⁵¹ The second episode showed from 25 September, the third from 18 October, the fourth from 21 October, the fifth from 18 December, and the sixth from 23 December. See the advertisements in XWB on corresponding dates.

¹⁵² This was made clear in many contemporary news reports, see Shen Jun 深君, "Mingxing gongsi zhi xin celue 明星公司之新策略," *DS* 166 (14 Oct. 1932); a news item in *Yingxi shenghuo* 130 (25 Nov. 1932); Chen Sishan 陈斯善, "Mingxing gongsi tongku de huiyi 明星公司痛苦的回憶: 啼笑因緣打錯主意," *DS* 3.12 (6 Apr. 1934): 229.

¹⁵³ Meng Jue 夢覺, "Erji *Tixiao yinyuan* 二集啼笑因緣," *DS* 150 (27 Sep. 1932); Qian Qing 倩, "Sanji *Tixiao yinyuan* 三集啼笑因緣," *DS* 171 (19 Oct. 1932).

Shanghai in September 1931 and January 1932 may have been a more decisive reason.¹⁵⁴ After the Manchuria Incident, Chinese film industry lost its markets in Northeast China. The 1932 bombing in Shanghai destroyed sixteen of the city's 39 movie theatres. These destroyed theatres were mostly located in the Zhabei 閘北 and Hongkou 虹口 districts, a part of the city where Chinese films tended to be screened. Furthermore, wartime recession hit the spending power of movie-goers.¹⁵⁵ We may expect that box offices of *Fate* were heavily affected by this situation. Mingxing's executives had to accept the reality that *Fate* failed to be a hit for coming out at an inopportune time. Late in 1931, Mingxing suffered another blow. Its plan to buy a twenty-*mu* (13334 m²) plot for construction of new studios was abortive and incurred a loss of 100,000 Yuan. By then, Mingxing had run into debt which was said to have reached 600,000 Yuan.¹⁵⁶

Increased size of the business and financial difficulties, 1933-1935

Near the end of 1932, Mingxing was sunk in straitened circumstances, even unable to pay salaries.¹⁵⁷ The only remedy was to boost production. On 14 October 1932, its executives convened an emergency meeting at which they took six decisions. The first of these was to "to call for screen scripts and to recruit performers."¹⁵⁸ A month later, they launched another stimulus plan with three goals: to recruit creative personnel, to solicit further investment and to speed up production.¹⁵⁹ The number of its output increased rapidly in 1933, totalling 23 features. Unfortunately, however, these films failed to produce satisfactory profits. As the company's balance report (see Table 1.2) shows, it suffered a deficit of 85,687.39 Yuan in 1933. According to Zhou Jianyun, the company was in "dire straits" in late 1933.¹⁶⁰ A foreign finance company, the American Commercial and Exchange Bank (Chinese name: *Huizhong yin gongsi* 匯眾銀公司), prosecuted Mingxing

¹⁵⁴ The Japanese invasions of Manchuria on 18 September 1931 (known as the *Manchurian Incident*, or the *September 18 Incident*) and of Shanghai on 28 January 1932 (known as the January 28 Incident, or the Shanghai War of 1932) represented early events in the Second Sino-Japanese War commenced in 1937. The two incidents spurred a strong anti-Japanese sentiment among the Chinese people. See John K Fairbank, et al. eds, *The Cambridge History of China* (vol. 13), pp. 499-504.

¹⁵⁵ Zheng Junli analyzed the Japanese invasions' impact on the Chinese film industry in Zheng Junli, "Xiandai zhongguo dianying shilue," ZWD, p. 1429.

¹⁵⁶ "Mingxing yingpian gongsi shi'ernian jingli shi," ZWD, p. 35.

¹⁵⁷ "Mingxing gongsi fenqi faxin, bu jingqi zhong zhi yimu 明星公司分期發薪，不景氣中之一幕," *DS* 203 (20 Nov. 1932).

¹⁵⁸ Kai Mola 開末拉, "Mingxing gongsi de yige jinji huiyi 明星公司的一個緊急會議," *Yingxi shenghuo* 90 (16 Oct. 1932).

¹⁵⁹ "Bu jingqi zhong zhi Mingxing gongsi beicheng jieyi 不景氣中之明星公司背城借一," *DS* 195 (12 Nov. 1932).

¹⁶⁰ Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong 懷正秋兄," *MB* 6.2 (1 Aug. 1936).

for 450,000 Yuan debt it had not yet paid off as scheduled.¹⁶¹

There is no exaggeration that the opportune success of Zheng Zhengqiu's film *Zimei hua* 姊妹花 (Twin Sisters) rescued the company from bankruptcy. Premiered on 14 February 1934 (Chinese New Year's Day) at the *Xinguang* Theatre, the film set a new box-office record, running for sixty days at this first-run theatre.¹⁶² It was reported that it showed altogether in 53 Chinese cities (in eighteen provinces) and ten foreign cities (in six countries), grossing over 200,000 Yuan.¹⁶³ The company morale was largely boosted. In April 1934, Zheng Zhengqiu and Zhou Jianyun organized "the Comrades' Association for Revitalization" (*Fuxing tongzhi hui* 復興同志會) and announced a revitalization programme with an emphasis on improving administration and bettering the quality of film production.¹⁶⁴

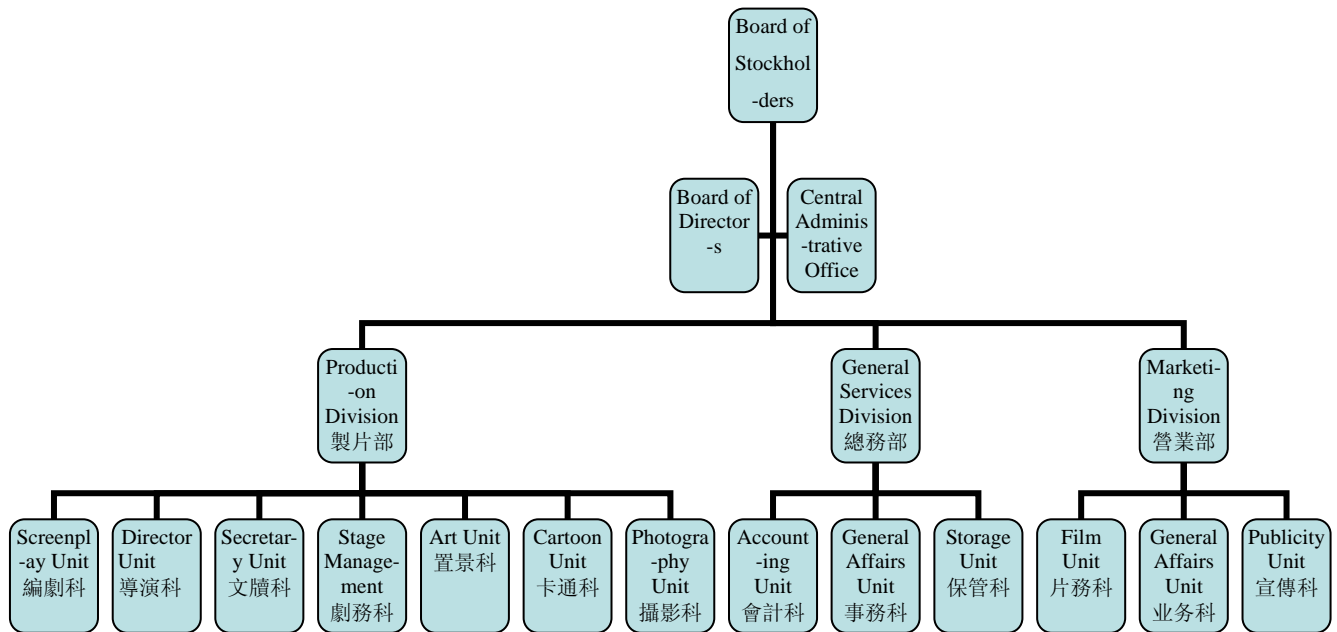


Chart 2 Enterprise Architecture (Source: "Mingxing yingpian gongsi jinkuang lueshu," in *Mingxing yuebao* 2.5, 1 Dec. 1934)

After the reorganization, a three-tiered administrative structure was established (see Chart 2). At the highest level are the Board of Stockholders (股東會), Board of Directors (董事

¹⁶¹ Only the Chinese name 匯眾銀公司 is given in the reports in Chinese newspapers. Its English name is according to Leyda, p. 90.

For this lawsuit see "Mingxing qianzhai bei gaoshang fating 明星欠債被告上法庭," *DS* 496 (21 Sep. 1933); "Mingxing yu Huizhong yin gongsi de guansi 明星與匯眾銀公司的官司," *DS* 498 (23 Sep. 1933). Zhou Jianyun's account differed slightly from *Diansheng's* reports. Zhou said that the finance company prosecuted Mingxing out of revenge because it failed to merge Mingxing with 300,000 Yuan.

¹⁶² XWB 10 Feb. 1934: "benbu fukan" 4; XWB 13 Apr. 1934.

¹⁶³ MXNB.

¹⁶⁴ For the organization of the *Fuxing tongzhi hui*, see MXNB, also see Qi Shi 奇士, "Mingxing *Fuxing tongzhi hui* zhi bianxiang *Zimei hua* qingongyan 明星復興同志會之變相《姊妹花》慶功宴," *DS* 3.13 (13 Apr. 1934): 251.

會) and the Central Administrative Office (總管理處). Subordinate to these boards and office are three divisions/部, the Production Division (製片部) consisting of seven units/科 (Screenplay/編劇, Director/導演, Secretary/文書, Stage Management/劇務, Art/置景, Cartoon/卡通 and Photography/攝影 Units), the General Services Division (總務部) consisting of three units (Accounting/會計, General Affairs/事務, and Storage/保管 Units), and the Marketing Division (營業部) consisting of three units (Film/片務, General Affairs/業務, and Publicity/宣傳 Units). By this time Mingxing had become a medium-scale enterprise taking organizational form as a limited liability company.

Nevertheless, the income created by *Zimei hua* and the revitalization programme were unable to revive Mingxing's economy completely. At the end of the Chinese lunar year of 1934 (February 1934), it had to request movie theatres to advance a sum of box-office receipts to meet all the expenses involved at the turn of the year (*nianguan* 年關).¹⁶⁵ About the same time, the lease on its current business premises expired. Its executives borrowed over 100,000 Yuan to buy a larger property (22 *Mu*/14,666.7 m²) situated in the *Fenglin qiao* 楓林橋 (Maple Grove Bridge) area outside the foreign settlement and concession.¹⁶⁶ The company moved to the new premises in May 1935.¹⁶⁷ Since a new studio on the new site was under construction, they purchased a studio and equipment from a small film company (the *Yucheng gongsi* 玉成公司) for temporary use, at the expenses of 45,000 Yuan.¹⁶⁸ The new studio, 120 feet (approximately 36.6 m) in length, 60 feet (18.3 m) in width, and 30 feet (9.1 m) in height, was completed in June 1936. It was claimed to be "the largest film studio in China."¹⁶⁹ This may be the truth. According to a 1935 report on Chinese film industry in the *Chinese Economic Bulletin*, out of 55 Chinese film studios in 1934 (48 in Shanghai), Mingxing maintained the leading position, followed by Lianhua and Tianyi.¹⁷⁰

Although the size of the business was steadily increasing, financial problems never

¹⁶⁵ "Mingxing gongsi jingji jiongpo zhi yiban 明星公司經濟窘迫之一斑," *DS* 4.10 (15 Mar. 1935): 198.

¹⁶⁶ For the frictions between Mingxing and the land owner which were finally resolved on court see Yingtan 影探, "Mingxing yingpian gongsi die bei susong 明星影片公司迭被訴訟-屋主勒令遷讓明年三月出屋," *DS* 3.39 (10 Oct. 1934): 764. For the information about Mingxing's new site see MXNB, and Yingtan 影探, "Mingxing jiepan Yucheng quanbu shengcai 明星接盤玉成全部生財," *DS* 4.21 (24 May 1935): 417.

¹⁶⁷ See "Mingxing rizhi," *MB* 1.3 (16 May 1935): 20.

¹⁶⁸ Yingtan, "Mingxing jiepan Yucheng quanbu shengcai," *DS* 4.21 (24 May 1935): 417.

¹⁶⁹ See the text beside two photos of the new studio in *MB* 7.1 (16 Oct. 1936). For the information about the construction and the size of the studio, see "Close up," *MB* 3.6 (1 Jan. 1936), MXNB, and "Mingxing sheying chang xunli 明星攝影場巡禮," *DS* 5.29 (24 Jul. 1936): 712.

¹⁷⁰ "Cinema enterprises in China," *Chinese Economic Bulletin* 16.5 (2 Feb. 1935): 105-6; quoted in Löwenthal, "The present status of the film in China," p. 89.

ceased disturbing Mingxing. In August 1935, shortly after Mingxing moved to its new premises, its authorities decided to reduce its staff to the extent of over 100, while the aggregate number was over 300.¹⁷¹ Besides, the payment of staff salaries was heavily delayed.¹⁷² In September, 15% to 34% average reductions in salary were announced.¹⁷³ All the evidence indicates the economic weakness within the company. Under the circumstances, its Studio II was set up in July 1936. The immediate drive was an urgent need to boost its economy.

The Studio II

Three factors provided the main thrust for the founding of the Studio II. First, when the main studio on the new site was completed in June 1936, with the aforementioned temporary studio, Mingxing was capable of having two film crews working at the same time. This made the founding of the Studio II materially possible. Second, as mentioned above, also in June 1936, with the GMD senior official Chen Guofu as guarantor, Mingxing attained from the Communication Bank (交通銀行) a large mortgage (160,000 Yuan) on all its property and assets.¹⁷⁴ This large sum of funds made the plan financially feasible. Third, a personal factor was involved. It was reported that a note of discord had long existed between Zhang Shichuan and Zhou Jianyun, especially after the death of Zheng Zhengqiu in 1935, who used to act as a mediator.¹⁷⁵ While Zhang Shichuan was both president and chief of production, Zhou Jianyun was in virtual control of the company's finance for years. Both were probably unhappy with this situation. The problem could be resolved, as a journalist observed, by the founding of the Studio II which was under the total control of Zhou Jianyun, while leaving the Studio I in the hands of Zhang Shichuan.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ *Shanghai shangye chuxu yinhang youguan yingpian ye diaocha ziliao* 上海商業儲蓄銀行有關影片業調查資料, SMA, Q275-1-1949, p. 96 (dated 25 Aug. 1935); for the number of Mingxing's staff, see p. 90. According to *Diansheng's* report, the lay-offs amounted to 200. See Mi Tan 密探, "Mingxing gongsi caiyuan 200 yu ren 明星公司裁員二百餘人," *DS* 4.33 (16 Aug. 1935): 676.

¹⁷² "Mingxing gongsi zhi suoxin fengchao 明星公司之索薪風潮," *DS* 4.34 (23 Aug. 1935): 702.

¹⁷³ Man 曼, "Mingxing gongsi choulao zhidu genben gaibian 明星公司酬勞制度根本改變," *DS* 4.36 (6 Sep. 1935): 741.

¹⁷⁴ See *Jiaotong yinhang Shanghai fenhong chengzuo Mingxing yingpian gongsi yakuan de wanglai wenshu* 交通銀行上海分行承做明星影片公司押款的來往文書, SMA, Q55-2-1371. For newspaper reports, see "Mingxing gongsi xiang Jiaotong yinhang ju'e jiekuan 明星公司向交通銀行巨額借款," *DS* 5.25 (29 Jun. 1936): 604. Also see "Mingxing gongsi guangyan baoren ji 明星公司廣宴報人紀," *DS* 5.32 (14 Aug. 1936): 804.

¹⁷⁵ See "Yi yinguan touzi Mingxing shiwu wan, Zhou Jianyun yu Zhang Shichuan jue xieshou hezuo 一銀團投資明星十五萬, 周劍雲張石川決攜手合作," *DS* 4.50 (20 Dec. 1935): 1120.

¹⁷⁶ "Zhang Shichuan yao Zhou Jianyun jiaochu jingji quan 張石川要周劍雲交出經濟權," *DS* 5.14 (10 Apr. 1936): 344; "Zhou Jianyun lingchuang xin tianxia, Mingxing fenchang jiang zhengshi chengli, Ying Yunwei,

Officially, the founding of the Studio II was part of a gigantic programme announced on 1 July 1936.¹⁷⁷ Zhou Jianyun explained the plan in detail to a foreign reporter. According to Zhou, the first item on the programme was to give the Chinese moviegoers a more varied diet in film themes. Also, the production programme would be speeded up, which was enabled by the newly established Studio II, together with the original Studio I. Besides quicker production, Zhou further introduced, the new programme also attempted to select best stories. This method of selection would be in the hands of "a special committee consisting of country's foremost scenario writers and directors." Another item on the programme was to recapture the lost market catering to the overseas Chinese by producing a film with Chinese players, Chinese background and stories but with English dialogue. Most important, Zhou added, was to improve their technique, including better music, clearer dialogue and photography.¹⁷⁸

Though Zhou Jianyun's plan was ambitious, the Studio II had only a very brief life. Seven months later, due to a huge loss of 100,000 Yuan, it was shut down with only four films released, *Shengsi tongxin* 生死同心 (Unchanged Heart in Life and Death), *Qingming shijie* 清明時節 (Around Qingming Festival), *Shizi jietou* 十字街頭 (Crossroads), and *Malu tianshi* 馬路天使 (Street Angel).¹⁷⁹ A journalist suggested that there were three possible reasons for the loss: first, film production hugely fell behind schedule; second, film markets were shrinking; and third, the films released failed to generate satisfactory box-office returns.¹⁸⁰

Epilogue

On 7 July 1937, the full-scale Sino-Japanese war broke out. A month later, the Battle of Shanghai (also known as "Battle of Songhu" 淞滬戰爭 or "August 13 Incident" 八一三事變) began. After three-month fierce battle, Shanghai fell into the hands of the Japanese troops, leaving the International Settlement and French Concession unoccupied by the

Yuan Muzhi deng wangfeng laigui 周劍雲另創新天下，明星分廠將正式成立，應雲衛袁牧之等望風來歸," *DS* 5.1 (1 May 1936): 404.

¹⁷⁷ For the full text of the programme, see "Mingxing gongsi gexin xuanyan 明星公司革新宣言," *MB* 6.1 (16 Jul. 1936).

¹⁷⁸ "Star Motion Picture Co. Seeks New Era For Chinese Movies: Launches Program to Speed Up Production, Improve Photography, Scenarios and Direction; Rents New Studio" (dated 10 July, 1936), in *Shanghai shangye chuxu yinhang youguan yingpian ye diaocha ziliao* 上海商業儲蓄銀行有關影片業調查資料, SMA, Q275-1-1949, p. 88.

¹⁷⁹ "Bannian lai kuishi shiwan yuan yishang, Mingxing yi er chang shixing hebing 半年來虧蝕十萬元以上，明星一二廠實行合並," *DS* 6.6 (5 Feb. 1937): 321.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Japanese until December 1941, known as the "Solitary Island" (*Gudao* 孤島). The new business premises which Mingxing moved into in 1935 were located in the city's Chinese area and were occupied by the Japanese as barracks ever since the fall of the district.¹⁸¹ The company virtually ceased operating from then on. Nominally, however, it still existed and we can find some traces of its nominal existence.

Four films produced immediately prior to the war, *Guta qi'an* 古塔奇案 (A Strange Case in the Old Pagoda), *Si qianjin* 四千金 (Four Daughters), *Yeben* 夜奔 (Escape at Night), and *Muqin de mimi* 母親的秘密 (Mother's Secret), were screened at the *Jincheng* 金城 Theatre (its own English name: Lyric) between February and July 1938 (see Appendix I). Around this time, Mingxing produced a horror film, *Kongbu zhiye* 恐怖之夜 (A Horrible Night), directed by Wu Cun 吳村 and starring Gong Qiuxia 龔秋霞, Yan Gongshang 嚴工上, and others, all its old employees.¹⁸² It was shot in the former Tianyi Company's studio which was rented by Zhang Shichuan and renamed as *Datong* Studio (大同攝影場) in March 1938.¹⁸³ This remains the single film Mingxing released after the outbreak of the war. Also at this time, the banned martial arts serial *Huoshao Hongliansi* (*The Burning of the Red Lotus Temple*, 1928 - 1931) was allowed to show at theatres because the government considered the difficulties facing the film industry during the war time.¹⁸⁴ The film met with enthusiastic reception from the audience again. With considerable box-office revenues, Mingxing was able to pay the salaries due the employees and planned to reopen.¹⁸⁵

But the plan was never materialized. On 13 January 1939, Mingxing's Japanese occupied premises caught on fire. According to contemporary news reports, the conflagration completely destroyed the large studios and workshops. When the French Fire Brigade arrived at the scene soon after the fire was reported, Japanese officers refused the help and took a threatening attitude towards the French fire-fighters. Chinese brigades arrived later were unable to go into action owing to the lack of water. No effort was made to bring the fire under control by the Japanese. The blaze was still in full swing some four and a half hours after it had first been noticed. The origin of the fire was a mystery.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Thanks to an archival file of the correspondence between Mingxing and the Communication Bank between 1936 and 1941, we learn a great deal of detailed information about the last stage of Mingxing. See *Jiaotong yinhang Shanghai fenheng chengzuo Mingxing yingpian gongsi yakuan de wanglai wenshu* 交通銀行上海分行承做明星影片公司押款的來往文書, SMA, Q55-2-1371.

¹⁸² It was premiered on 1 June 1938 at Jincheng. See XWB 31 May 1938: 10.

¹⁸³ For the reorganization of the Datong Studio, see SMA, Q55-2-1371, p. 76. Also see "Mingxing jia Datong sheyingchang kaipai Kongbu zhi ye 明星假大同攝影場開拍恐怖之夜," DS 7.8 (15 Apr. 1938): 149.

¹⁸⁴ "*Huoshao Honglian si 18 ji tongguo* 火燒紅蓮寺 18 集通過," DS 7.12 (13 May 1938): 227.

¹⁸⁵ Zhu Ming 朱明. "Mingxing fuxing youwang 明星復興有望," DS 7.30 (16 Sep. 1938): 584.

¹⁸⁶ "Fenglin qiao Mingxing gongsi sheying chang fenhui 楓林橋明星公司攝影場焚毀," SB 14 Jan. 1939: 16.

CHAPTER ONE

Though some efforts to restart the business had been made thereafter, even after the war, Mingxing never managed to reopen.¹⁸⁷ Mingxing's executives did not officially announce when the company was closed down, but it is reasonable to consider 1938 when it produced its last film the last year of its existence.

Summing up, over the seventeen years Mingxing had been growing from a small film studio to a leading company with an extensive distribution network and a theatre chain virtually of its own. Substantial progress having been made notwithstanding, the business had always been operating on an unstable financial basis. This mirrors the inherent weakness of the nascent Chinese film industry that developed during the period when China was crippled by social and political chaos and economic backwardness.¹⁸⁸ The landscape of cinematic production and products was ultimately decided by this situation. Profit-seeking had to outweigh all other considerations for mere survival. However, for a cultural enterprise that operated in the intellectual climate fraught with eager aspirations to reinvigorate the nation and to enlighten its people, money-making was not enough. Didacticism had to join. The chapters that follow will look at cultural production at Mingxing, examining how the two motifs, commercialism and didacticism, worked in tandem. I will first present the standard story in Chapter Two and then employ extensive primary source material to reconstruct the cultural history of Mingxing, with a focus on producers (Chapters 3, 4) and products (Chapters 5, 6, 7).

Also see "Japanese Soldiers Point Rifles at French Firemen During Blaze" (an article from an English newspaper, dated 14 Jan. 1939, see SMA, Q275-1-1949, p. 88).

¹⁸⁷ For example, it was reported that Zhou Jianyun, Hu Die and Zheng Chaofan planned to restore Mingxing, but failed. See "Hu Die yu Zhou Jianyun, Zheng Chaofan deng choubei fuxing Mingxing gongsi 胡蝶與周劍雲，鄭超凡等籌備復興明星公司," *Qingqing dianying* 16.17 (20 Jun. 1948).

¹⁸⁸ For the historical background of the period Cf. Hsü, *The rise of modern China*, pp. 572-6; 663-73.

Part II The Producers

Chapter Two

Yuanhu 鴛鴦/Zuoyi 左翼/GMD 國民黨: The Standard Story

This chapter delineates the "standard story" of pre-war Chinese cinema, focusing on Mingxing's creative staff and film works in this story. As stated in introduction, this story is first introduced in the official history of Chinese cinema, *Zhongguo dianying fazhan shi* 中國電影發展史 (ZDFZS), in the early 1960s. It has been repeated, in one way or another, in both volumes by the Taiwanese historian Du Yunzhi 杜雲之 (1923 -) and the American historian Jay Leyda (1910 - 1988), as well as many other spinoff publications, though political stances of these works are different. For this reason, the following account of the "standard story" is mainly based on ZDFZS, sometimes taking consideration of the narratives by Du, Leyda and others.

The categories of "*Yuanyang hudie pai* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派" (Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School, shorthand *Yuanhu* 鴛鴦),¹ "*Zuoyi wenyi gongzuozhe* 左翼文藝工作者" (left-wing cultural workers, hereafter *Zuoyi*),² and "*Guomindang yuyong wenren* 國民黨御用文人" (hack writers of the GMD, hereafter GMD) have been central to this story.³ In this chapter, I will present the standard definitions of these terms and identify Mingxing's creative staff and film works under each category according to these accepted standards. The following chapters will revisit these writers and films and will show how this "standard story" presented in ZDFZS does not help to make sense of early Chinese cinema.

2.1 "*Yuanyang hudie pai* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派"

The standard history of Chinese cinema has it that between 1921 and 1931, the Chinese film industry was "developing in turbulence" (在混亂中發展).⁴ During this period the leading creative personnel of the industry were asserted to be members of the so-called *Yuanyang hudie pai*. As stated above, this story is closely associated with the standard narrative of modern Chinese literature. For this reason, I will first present an overview of this literary "school" and then look at the "school" in the standard story of Chinese cinema.

¹ The term *Yuanyang hudie pai* first appears on p. 54 in ZDFZS.

² The term *Zuoyi* first appears on p. 171 in ZDFZS.

³ The term *Guomindang yuyong wenren* first appears on p. 295 in ZDFZS.

⁴ "Developing in turbulence" (在混亂中發展) is the heading of Chapter 2 (treating the period 1921-1931) of ZDFZS.

Yuanyang hudie pai: A brief overview

The term *Yuanyang hudie pai* can be traced back to the late 1910s, primarily referring to the classical-style love stories in which the traditional symbols of mandarin ducks and butterflies for pairs of lovers were often liberally used. Initially the scope of the term was limited to a small, but very widely read, group of authors, among whom Xu Zhenya 徐枕亞 (1889-1937), Li Dingyi 李定夷, and Wu Shuangre 吳雙熱 were the most prominent. From the early 1920s onward, many radical May Fourth writers used the term broadly in an attack on *all* kinds of popular "old-style" (*jiupai* 舊派) fiction, no longer exclusively referring to love stories.⁵

114 periodicals, ten fiction supplements of leading newspapers, and 45 tabloids (*xiaobao* 小報) are classified as the main platforms of the *Yuanhu* literature in a standard reference book, *Yuanyang hudie pai yanjiu ziliao* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派文學資料 (Research materials on the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School).⁶ The best-known of these are the weekly *Libai Liu* 禮拜六 (Saturday), the supplements "ziyou tan 自由談" (Unfettered Talk) of the *Shenbao* and "kuaihuo lin 快活林" (Forest of Lightheartedness) of the *Xinwenbao*, as well as some tabloids, such as *Jingbao* 晶報 (Crystal) and *Luobinhan* 羅賓漢 (Robin Hood). Among a total of 495 *Yuanhu* writers, the most prominent figures are Xu Zhenya, Li Hanqiu 李涵秋 (1873 - 1923), Bao Tianxiao, Zhou Shoujuan, and Zhang Henshui, usually known as the "Five Tiger Generals" (*wu hujiang* 五虎將).⁷ *Yuanhu* fiction developed a few subgenres such as the "love story" (*aiqing xiaoshuo* 愛情小說), "social or scandal story" (*shehui xiaoshuo* 社會小說, or *heimu xiaoshuo* 黑幕小說), "detective story" (*zhentan xiaoshuo* 偵探小說), and "knight-errant story" (*wuxia xiaoshuo* 武俠小說). Each category contains one or two outstandingly successful works.⁸

The readership of this popular literature is assumed to be primarily urban residents of the

⁵ For the origin and later uses of the term, cf. Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, pp. 7-8, and Fan Boqun, *Minguo tongsu xiaoshuo Yuanyang hudie pai*, pp. 40-43. For the primary source concerning the term's genesis, see Ping Jinya 平襟亞, "Yuanyang hudie pai mingming de gushi 鴛鴦蝴蝶派命名的故事," YHYZ, pp. 179-181.

⁶ YHWZ, pp. 627-639.

⁷ See the preface to YHYZ, p. 4.

⁸ Such works were *Yuli hun* (Jade Pear Spirit, by Xu Chenya, in the "love story" genre), *Guanglin chao* 廣陵潮 (Tides of Yangzhou, by Li Hanqiu, in the "social story" genre), *Zhongguo Fu'ermosi Huo Sang tan'an* 中國福爾摩斯霍桑探案 (Cases of the Chinese Sherlock Holmes Huo Sang, by Cheng Xiaoqing 程小青, in the "detective story" genre), *Jianghu qixia zhuan* 江湖奇俠傳 (Chronicle of the Strange Roving Knights, by Pingjiang bu xiaosheng 平江不肖生, in the "knight-errant story" genre), and *Tixiao yinyuan* (Fate in Tears and Laughter, by Zhang Henshui, a mixture of "love," "social" and "knight-errant" genres). Cf. Link, pp. 9-23.

middle-lower classes. Numbers of readers are substantial. Publishers and authors estimated that the number of copies of the best-selling novels (such as *Yuli hun* 玉梨魂/*Jade Pear Spirit*) in the 1910s and 1920s reached several hundred thousand, perhaps exceeding 400,000. Since most sold copies were read circulated among several readers, Perry Link estimated that during the 1910s and 1920s, a period during which the city's population grew from some 1.4 to around 3.2 million, the most popular stories must have reached between 400,000 to 1,000,000 people in Shanghai alone.⁹

This immensely popular literature, however, has a negative image in both the public mind and conventional academic discourses ever since the 1920s. This can be attributed to the May Fourth intellectuals, who, in order to promote their "new" literature, launched a fierce polemic against this literature that dominated the print markets of the time. For example, Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881 - 1936) compared "Mandarin-Ducks-and-Butterflies-style literature" (*Yuanyang hudie shi wenxue* 鴛鴦蝴蝶式文學) to traditional "talent-meets-beauty" (*caizi jiaren* 才子佳人) fiction.¹⁰ A Ying 阿英 (Qian Xingcun 錢杏邨, 1900 - 1977) called "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School writers" (*Yuanyang hudie pai zuojia* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派作家) "evil sons of feudal society" (*fengjian yunie* 封建餘孽).¹¹ In short, *Yuanhu* novels were blamed for being the opposite of "progressive" in all respects: "old-fashioned" (舊式) in style and form, and transporting "feudal ethics" (封建道德).¹² Further, these writings were claimed to be typical products of the "corrupt" treaty port city Shanghai.¹³ *Yuanhu* writers were depicted as "literary beggars" (文丐) or "literary prostitutes" (文娼), providing their readers with nothing but escapist entertainment.¹⁴

⁹ The figure of "several hundred thousand" is given by Fan Yanqiao (YHYZ, p. 275). Link gave his ground for this estimate as follows: "On the question of multiple readership per volume, through borrowing or renting, Roswell Britton estimates that popular periodicals around 1910 would be shared by perhaps ten to twenty readers per copy (*The Chinese Periodical Press*, p. 129). Lin Yutang cites ten readers per copy as the "number usually given" for multiple readership of newspapers in the early thirties (*Press and Public Opinion*, pp. 148-9). For popular novels in book form, an average of four or five readers per copy would appear a safe, rough estimate, supported by the estimates of Butterfly personnel such as Ch'eng She-wo (interview, July 26, 1973), Pao T'ien-hsiao (Hong Kong, December 6, 1972) and Ch'en Hsiao-tieh (T'aichung, July 25, 1973). These inevitably rough figures yield the estimate of four hundred thousand to one million readers in Shanghai for the most popular novels." See Link, p. 16.

¹⁰ Lu Xun 魯迅, "Shanghai wenyi zhi yipie 上海文藝之一瞥," YHYZ, p. 5 (first published in *Wenyi xinwen* 文藝新聞, 27 Jul. and 3 Aug. 1931).

¹¹ Qian Xingcun 錢杏邨, "Shanghai shibian yu Yuanyang hudie pai wenyi 上海事變與鴛鴦蝴蝶派文藝," YHYZ, p. 76 (first published in *Xiandai zhongguo wenxue lun* 現代中國文學論, Shanghai: Hezhong shudian 合眾書店, Jun. 1933).

¹² Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白, "Lun dazhong wenyi 論大眾文藝," YHWZ, p. 799 (first published in 1931). For similar views cf. the contemporary articles reprinted in YHYZ (Part I), YHWZ (Part IV).

¹³ Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸, "*Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi: wenxue lunzheng ji daoyan* 《中國新文學大系: 文學論爭集》導言," YHWZ, p. 805 (first published in 1935).

¹⁴ C.S. "Wenchang 文娼," YHWZ, p. 740.

The dominating narrative of modern Chinese literary history has been shared by the conventional historiography of Chinese cinema. In the official history (ZDFZS), the 1920s are introduced as follows: "As the Chinese film industry was undergoing an excessive prosperity due to an influx of speculative investment, *Yanhu* writers flooded into the film world around 1921, relying upon their close bonds with feudal forces and compradors (在中國電影事業被投機家們競相投資而畸形繁榮的情況下，鴛鴦蝴蝶派文人以他們與封建勢力和買辦階級的血緣關係，於 1921 年前後，便大批地滲入到電影創作部門中來)。"¹⁵ The authors proceed that the overwhelming majority of the some 650 features released in this decade were either directed/written by *Yuanhu* authors or adapted from their novels. Some leading figures of this "school" worked as screenwriters and publicists at both Chinese-run and foreign studios, and some others even started their own film companies. Films produced by *Yuanhu* authors tended to transport "feudal ethics" (封建道德) and depict "eating, drinking, men, and women" (飲食男女) and "devils and demons" (怪力亂神).¹⁶

Some memoirs by the former employees of the film industry, mostly published in the early 1980s in mainland China, present similar views and have reinforced existing generalizations. Ke Ling 柯靈 (1909 - 2000), who had been editor and screenwriter in the thirties and forties, reminisced in 1983 that the *Yuanhu* school, Civilized Play (*Wenming xi* 文明戲), and cinema all emerged in Shanghai and epitomized the "ten-mile foreign mall" (*shili yangchang* 十里洋場, alluded to Shanghai) in which "feudalism" joined "colonialism."¹⁷ Sun Yu 孫瑜 (1900 - 1990), a distinguished director of the thirties, studied theatre and cinema in the United States and returned to Shanghai in 1927. Upon his arrival, he recalled, he was astonished by the lack of "revolutionary spirit" of the May Fourth Movement on the screen, and was disappointed by the "imperialist" and "feudal" world view that persisted in most films of the day.¹⁸ Who exactly were the *Yuanhu* writers whose films disappointed Sun Yu?

The *Yuanhu* trajectory at Mingxing

The authors of *Zhongguo dianying fazhan shi* (ZDFZS) do not present a list of the so-called *Yuanhu* writers who worked in the film industry; only some examples are given as

¹⁵ ZDFZS, pp. 54-55.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁷ Ke Ling, "Shiwei wusi yu dianying huayi lunkuo—dianying huigu lu," p. 339.

¹⁸ Sun Yu, "Wusi yundong yingxiang xia de sanshi niandai dianying," p. T3.

the representatives of this "school." Among these, Bao Tianxiao, Cheng Xiaoqing 程小青 (1893 - 1976), Yan Duhe 嚴獨鶴 (1889 - 1968) and Yao Sufeng 姚蘇鳳 (1906 - 1974) had relationships with Mingxing.¹⁹ In fact, many more so-called *Yuanhu* writers were Mingxing's employees or screenwriters. In this section I will draw a full list of Mingxing's *Yuanhu* staff. Membership in the *Yuanhu* school will be "assigned" on the basis of lists of publications and authors in the standard reference works, i.e. "A Catalogue of *Yuanhu* Fiction" (鴛鴦蝴蝶派小說分類目錄) in YHYZ and "Catalogues of the Journals and Fiction of the *Yuanhu* School" (鴛鴦蝴蝶派報刊小說目錄) in YHWZ. Since the "school" had no stated manifesto, programme and membership list, these criteria are the best option and have been generally accepted in literary history. Statistic information about Mingxing's creative personnel and cinematic output can be obtained in (a) a full list of Mingxing's screenwriters and directors (*Mingxing Banyuekan* vol. 7, no. 1), (b) a full list of Mingxing's releases ("Filmography" in ZDFZS and SMA Q55-2-1371).

Using these sources, we find that of 20 directors and 44 screenwriters who had directed or wrote at least one film for Mingxing, only nine are usually considered *Yuanhu* writers whose writings appear in the above-mentioned catalogues. Of these, Bao Tianxiao and Yao Sufen were regular staff for a period of time, Xu Zhenya, Yan Duhe, Li Hanqiu, Pingjiang Buxiao sheng 平江不肖生 (1889 - 1957), Chen Lengxue 陳冷血, Cheng Xiaoqing, Zhang Henshui, Xu Zhuodai 徐卓呆 (1881 - 1958) contributed one or more screen scripts or novels. Of 193 feature films Mingxing produced, only 29 were written or directed by these so-called *Yuanhu* writers or adapted from their novels. Besides, Song Chiping 宋癡萍, Zhu Dake 朱大可 (1898 - ?) and Fan Yanqiao 范煙橋 (1894 - 1967) who are also conventionally labelled as *Yuanhu* worked as publicists for Mingxing at different times. Table 2.1 is a list of Mingxing's *Yuanhu* writers, their posts and working periods at the company, as well as their film works. This table is useful in that many people and works mentioned here will be re-examined in the following chapters and will be proved to have shown much resemblance to those under the categories of *Zuoyi* and GMD. In the following I discuss the so-called *Zuoyi* cinema, a major category in the official history ZDFZS. While *Yuanhu* filmmaking is often associated with the 1920s, the *Zuoyi* film creation is claimed to have begun in the early 1930s.

2.2 "Zuoyi 左翼"

¹⁹ ZDFZS, p. 56.

In ZDFZS, the years between 1931 and 1937 appear as the period during which "the Party led the Cultural Movement in Chinese Cinema" (黨領導了中國電影文化運動), first in the "Zuoyi dianying yundong 左翼電影運動" (Left-wing Cinema Movement, 1931-1935) and subsequently in the "Guofang dianying yundong 國防電影運動" (National Defence Cinema Movement, 1936-1937).²⁰ This period has been an extensively explored topic.²¹ However, the term *Zuoyi dianying* 左翼電影 (left-wing cinema) has been used at different levels by different scholars in part due to the intrinsic ambiguity of the term itself. In the following, I start by tracing the origins of the term *Zuoyi dianying*, proceed to identify Mingxing's alleged *Zuoyi* employees, and finally outline the standard story about the so-called *Zuoyi* cinema.

Definitions

As is generally accepted, the term *Zuoyi dianying* 左翼電影 first appeared in September 1931 in a manifesto of the Chinese League of Left-wing Dramatists (*Zhongguo zuoyi xijujia lianmeng* 中國左翼戲劇家聯盟, standard shorthand *Julian* 劇聯/Dramatists League. I will use *Julian* throughout the book). It is a branch organization alongside the Chinese League of Left-wing Writers (*Zhongguo zuoyi zuojia lianmeng* 中國左翼作家聯盟, hereafter *Zuolian* 左聯) established in March 1930.²² It is briefly mentioned in this manifesto that the *Julian* planned to launch a "*Zhongguo zuoyi dianying yundong* 中國左翼電影運動" (Chinese left-wing cinema movement), or a "'Puluo·Jinuo' yundong 普羅·機諾'運動" (a phonetic translation from Russian, namely, "proletarian cinema movement").²³ No definition was provided, except ambiguous references to form and task. For example, scripts of *Zuoyi* cinema should be devoted to "exposing [social problems]" (劇本內容暫取暴露性) and to "fighting against the tendencies of bourgeoisie and feudalism" (同布爾喬

²⁰ See ZDFZS's table of contents, pp. (4)-(10).

²¹ There are a few survey histories including studies of the "left-wing cinema" (ZDFZS, Leyda, Du Yunzhi, Yingjin Zhang [2004], Jubin Hu, etc), two monographs (Laikwan Pang, Vivian Shen), many essays by the participants of the "movement" (Yu Ling, Ke Ling, Sun Yu), mainland scholars (Li Shaobai), overseas scholars (Leo Lee [1985], Chris Berry [1989], Paul Pickowicz [1991 and 1993], Ning Ma, Zhiwei Xiao [2007]).

²² See ZDFZS, p. 17-9; Yu Ling, "Dang zai jiefang qian dui zhongguo dianying de lingdao yu douzheng." *Zhongguo dianying* 5 (1959): 32; Pang, p. 3. For the "leftist cultural movement," see Wong, *Politics and Literature in Shanghai*.

²³ The manifesto of the Dramatists League, "Zuijin xingdong gangling 最近行動綱領" (The directive of the most recent activities), was first published in *Wenxue daobao* 文學導報 1.6/7 (23 Oct. 1931), reprinted in ZZDY, pp. 17-8.

亞及封建的傾向鬥爭).²⁴

In the following years, numerous *Zuoyi* films – according to later definitions – were released, but most filmmakers and critics of the *Zuoyi* camp eschewed overt mention of the term. The reason may be that Communist and leftist ideas would arouse government censorship.²⁵ We can find only a few clues that indicate how "*Zuoyi* cinema" was envisioned by the "*Zuoyi* writers" themselves. The film critic Chen Wu 塵無 (1911 - 1938, a CCP member) wrote, "Since the September 18 and January 28 Incidents (Japanese invasions of Manchuria and Shanghai), Chinese cinema has been changing. The direction of this change is anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism (反帝和反封建)."²⁶ There's another example. A Ying (a CCP member) called some films released after the September 18 Incident, such as *Sange modeng nüxing* 三個摩登女性 (Three Modern Women), *Chengshi zhi ye* 城市之夜 (The Night of the City), *Kuangliu* 狂流 (Wild Torrent, all are *Zuoyi* films identified later), "works with a new trend" (具有新的傾向的片子).²⁷

This "new trend" was explicitly marked as "leftward" (*zuqing* 左傾) by the GMD official Lu Diping 魯滌平 (1887 - 1935) in a confidential letter in which he called the central government's attention to the Communists' penetration of the Shanghai film industry.²⁸ Some anti-Communist organizations called the films "going red" (赤化電影) and accused them of diffusing "proletarian ideologies" (普羅意識) and portraying "class struggles, conflicts between the poor and the rich," as well as "the ills and dark side of our society."²⁹ In government documents, they are referred to as "left-leaning films" (左傾色彩影片) or "films inciting class struggle" (鼓吹階級鬥爭影片).³⁰

The phrase "*Zuoyi* cinema" seldom appeared in the contemporary film press. In the 1934 film yearbook, Gu Jianchen 谷劍塵 (1897 - 1976) mentioned that "a host of *Zuoyi* writers

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ For the antagonism between the CCP and the GMD as well as the authorities' persecution of leftist intellectuals during the Nanjing decade (1927-37) see Eastman, et al, eds., *The Nationalist Era in China, 1927-1949*, pp. 1-114. For film censorship during the period see Xiao, *Film Censorship in China, 1927-1937*.

²⁶ Chen Wu 塵無, "Zhongguo dianying zhilu (shang) 中國電影之路 (上)," *MY* 1.1 (1 May 1933).

²⁷ Fengwu 鳳吾 (A Ying), "Lun Zhongguo dianying wenhua yundong 論中國電影文化運動," *MY* 1.1 (1 May 1933).

²⁸ Lu Diping 魯滌平 was the president of the GMD's Zhejiang Provincial Branch. This confidential letter was sent to the Executive Yuan (*Xingzheng yuan*) of the Nanjing government. See No. 2 Historical Archives (Nanjing), 2 (2)-271/16J1505, dated 5 April 1933.

²⁹ "Shanghai yingjie changong tongzhijie kuaiyou daidian 上海影界鑾同志會快郵代電," *Damei wanbao* 15 Nov. 1933: 3, and "Zhongguo qingnian changong da tongmeng wei chanchu dianyingjie chihua huodong xuanyan 中國青年鑾共大同盟為鑾除電影界赤化活動宣言," *Damei wanbao* 23 Jan. 1934: 3.

³⁰ *Jiaoyu Neizheng bu dianying jiancha weiyuanhui gongzuo zong baogao* 教育內政部電影檢查委員會工作總報告, pp. 50, 64.

who organized the *Julian* (Dramatists League) to propagate the notion of class struggle" had been attempting to enter the film world in order to initiate propaganda campaigns. The consequence was "a change in films' ideology/*yishi*" (影劇意識的轉變).³¹ In his 1936 essay on Chinese film history, Zheng Junli saw the early 1930s as "a period in which domestic cinema revived" (土著電影復興期) and stated that "Chinese cinema began to depict the social reality and to try to meet the needs of the time, and finally occupied a position in the Chinese cultural sphere (文化界) used to be dominated by literature and fine arts."³² But he never named the period with a politically-based term.

"*Zuoyi* cinema" became a commonly-used term only when the CCP came to power in mainland China in 1949. In April 1957, the Minister of Propaganda Lu Dingyi 陸定一 (1906 - 1996) addressed a conference, officially endorsing the pre-1949 "*Zuoyi* cinema project" (左翼的電影事業).³³ Yu Ling 于伶 (1907 - 1997), a film critic in the 1930s and then a top cultural official in Shanghai, interpreted Lu Dingyi's reference to "*Zuoyi* cinema" as "revolutionary films produced by Party members, *Julian* members, and many progressive filmmakers who united themselves under the leadership of the Party."³⁴ In 1962 the official history ZDFZS was published, in which the name *zuoyi dianying yundong* (left-wing cinema movement) was first "created."

In 1993, the thousand-page volume *Zhongguo zuoyi dianying yundong* 中國左翼電影運動 (The Chinese left-wing cinema movement) was published, which contains a list of seventy-four films now officially canonized as "*Zuoyi*."³⁵ A definition appears in *Zhongguo dianying da cidian* 中國電影大辭典 (Chinese Cinema Encyclopaedia) published in 1995.³⁶ "*Zuoyi* cinema" is defined as "anti-imperialist and anti-feudal films produced during the Left-wing Cinema Movement between 1933 and 1935 launched by the underground Communist film group under the leadership of the General League of Chinese Left-wing Culture (中國左翼文化界總同盟)." In addition, "patriotic and anti-Japanese films produced in 1936 in the name of 'National Defence Cinema' (國防電影) are considered a derivative of the *Zuoyi* cinema in a broader sense".³⁷

³¹ Gu Jianchen, "Zhongguo dianying fada shi," ZWD, p. 1379.

³² Zheng Junli, "Xiandai zhongguo dianying shilue," ZWD, p. 1430.

³³ Lu Dingyi, "Zai Shanghai dianying zhipian gongsi suoshu ge chang, tuan de chengli dahui shang de jianghua 在上海電影制片公司所屬各廠、團的成立大會上的講話," quoted in Yu Ling, "Dang zai jiefang qian dui zhongguo dianying de lingdao yu douzheng," p. 29.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Chen Bo, et al., eds, *Zhongguo zuoyi dianying yundong* (ZZDY).

³⁶ Zhang Junxiang and Cheng Jihua, eds., *Zhongguo dianying da cidian*, p. 1411.

³⁷ Ibid. As the definition shows, in a strict sense, the "left-wing cinema" should be confined to those films made between 1932 and 1935, but "National Defense" films produced in the following two years are usually

CHAPTER TWO

Outside mainland China, the Taiwanese historian Du Yunzhi adopted the concept "*zuoyi dianying*" in his three-volume film history published in the 1970s. Under the title of "The Rise and Decline of *Zuoyi* Cinema" (左翼電影的興衰), he wrote: "Since the January 28 Shanghai War, the infiltration of red bacteria (赤色細菌) had led to a remarkable change in the Chinese film world. Red men of letters (赤色文人), in collusion with some left-leaning, self-styled 'progressive' intellectuals, became active in the film world."³⁸ He further summarized several characteristics of the "*Zuoyi* cinema:"

1. *Zuoyi* films were intended to provoke anti-imperialist and anti-Japanese sentiments among the masses in the name of resisting imperialist (primarily Japanese) invasion. The *Zuoyi* camp expected the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relation and the outbreak of the war with Japan. If the government prioritized fighting against Japan, the Communist districts could escape annihilation.
2. *Zuoyi* films were devoted to exposing the dark side of the society. At the time, as a result of the great depression, China was suffering recession in industry and commerce, grave unemployment, rural impoverishment, and social unrest. These problems were exaggerated in *Zuoyi* films which tried to give the audience an illusion that the "old world" was close to its end and a much more promising "new world" was to arrive.
3. *Zuoyi* films aimed to instigate "class struggle," to incite riots, and to intrigue to overthrow the government in the name of combating feudalism, capitalism, and the exploitation from landlords and "local tyrants and evil gentry" (土豪劣紳).³⁹

From a vantage point beyond political and ideological divides, Jay Leyda avoided the term "*Zuoyi* cinema" and used the politically neutral term "patriotic films" instead. He viewed the emergence of these films in the early 1930s as an answer to "changed audience demands" and the economic recession of the film industry caused by the Japanese aggression. He held that the films that combined "revolutionary fervor and patriotic excitement" were "schematic but effective," for "audiences so moved mean financial success as well." Therefore, he called this trend in filmmaking "economically reasonable patriotism."⁴⁰

Since the 1980s, scholars have tended to strip the term of its narrow political meaning and to re-examine the 1930s and 1940s Chinese films through a different prism. The literary historian Leo Ou-fan Lee compared these films to contemporary literature and noticed that "an overriding obsession with the ills of contemporary society" was common to art creations of the day. For this reason, he applied the term "social realism" to describe the artistic style of these films, "a committed art burdened with ethical and emotional

included into the "left-wing cinema" category. For the representative of this view see the preface to ZZDY (Yang Hansheng, "*Zuoyi dianying yundong de ruogan lishi jingyan*," p. 5). I adopt the broader definition of the "left-wing cinema" in this paper.

³⁸ Du Yunzhi, p. 106.

³⁹ Ibid, pp. 107-8.

⁴⁰ Leyda, p. 77.

weight but not necessarily with doctrinaire propaganda."⁴¹ Along the same line, Pang Laikwan used the term "*Zuoyi* cinema" in her monograph on the subject as "an umbrella covering, whether completely or partly, for those films that display the filmmakers' strong sense of social mission and ethical commitment to the nation and its people, as well as for the films that contain elements of class consciousness or revolution, and concerns about the poor and the disenfranchised."⁴²

To conclude, three dominant perspectives can be made out. Within the CCP camp, anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism (反帝反封建) have been agreed to characterize "*Zuoyi* cinema." However ambiguous these notions are, they repeatedly appear in the initial *Julian* (Dramatists League) document, the 1930s articles by Communist critics (Chen Wu, A Ying), the 1950s speech of the PRC's cultural official (Lu Dingyi), and the 1990s film encyclopaedia. In their rival camp, the characteristic features have been identified as class struggle, mass riots, social upheavals, rural poverty, and urban unemployment (Lu Diping, Du Yunzhi). Scholars out of the opposing camps prefer to view these films as the result of collective intellectual efforts to create a socially conscious cinema (Zheng Junli, Leo Lee, Pang) or of a subtle balance between commercial interests and nationalism (Leyda). Which films were in fact referred to when people talked about "*Zuoyi* cinema," "works with a new trend," "red films," or "social realism" films? The following section identifies the Mingxing employees and films which are classified under *Zuoyi* category by different standards.

***Zuoyi* films and filmmakers at Mingxing**

There have been different versions which provide different lists of *Zuoyi* filmmakers and films. I select four which represent the opinions from diverse standpoints (see Table 2.2). ZZDY (*Zhongguo zuoyi dianying yundong*) offers a most inclusive list that comprises seventy-four films. In this study when I speak of "*Zuoyi* films," I refer to this list which is the official standard for identification of so-called *Zuoyi* films. Pang Laikwan also relies on this official list to identify *Zuoyi* films in her monograph on this subject. In addition I provide three other lists for a comparison and useful references. One is from ZDFZS (*Zhongguo dianying fazhan shi*), in which some fifty films are labelled explicitly as *Zuoyi*. To be sure, ZDFZS published in 1963 is the basis for ZZDY published in 1993. The two versions disagree only over works by non-Party members, such as Hong Shen, Zheng

⁴¹ Lee, "The tradition of modern Chinese cinema," p. 7.

⁴² Pang, p. 5.

Zhengqiu, and Ouyang Yuqian 歐陽予倩 (1889 - 1962). ZZDY's list includes them all, while Cheng Jihua uses vague wording to assess these films in ZDFZS. According to Xiao Zhiwei, "The expansion of the list (ZZDY's) reflects both the more relaxed political environment in post-Mao China and the party's new effort at presenting its struggle against the Nationalists in the 1930s as based on broad coalition."⁴³ The third version is from Du Yunzhi who represents the opposite standpoint from that of the Communist historians and compilers. Du seldom labels works by non-CCP members as *Zuoyi*. In addition, I draw upon some contemporary official documents and an anti-Communist organization's announcement to provide a valuable contemporary perspective.⁴⁴

An interrelated question is who should be identified as "*Zuoyi* cultural worker." As mentioned above, the PRC's cultural official regarded "Party members, *Julian* (Dramatists League) members, and many progressive filmmakers" as participants in the *Zuoyi* cinema project.⁴⁵ GMD's confidential documents also identify the "left-leaning film employees" (左傾電影從業員) as those affiliated with the Communist Party, the *Julian* and the *Zuolian* (Leftist League).⁴⁶ It seems safe to identify the CCP members and *Julian/Zuolian* members as "*Zuoyi* cultural workers" (see Table 2.3). Tables 2.2 and 2.3 provide full lists of Mingxing's alleged *Zuoyi* films and cultural workers. I will revisit these persons and films in the following chapters, exploring under which circumstances these persons joined Mingxing and these films were turned out; to what extent they differ from (or resemble) those under *Yuanhu* and GMD categories; and how these persons and works related to Mingxing's business tenet "commercialism plus conscience." Prior to the re-examination, I will present the standard story concerning *Zuoyi* filmmaking below.

The Standard Story

The standard story about "*Zuoyi* cinema" in the ZDFZS can be paraphrased as follows.⁴⁷

⁴³ See Xiao, *Film Censorship in China*, chapter 4, p. 17.

⁴⁴ The official documents include Lu Diping's confidential letter (No. 2 Historical Archives, 2 (2)-271/16J1505), a report of investigation on the Communists' activities in the film world conducted by the Investigation Bureau of the Military Committee of the Government (國民政府軍事委員會調查統計局), see "Gongchandang zai dianying jie huodong qingkuang 共產黨在電影界活動情況," SMA, Q235-1-17, pp. 5-10. For the announcement see "Zhongguo qingnian changong da tongmeng wei chanchu dianyingjie chihua huodong xuanyan 中國青年鑿共大同盟為鑿除電影界赤化活動宣言," *Damei wanbao* 23 Jan. 1934: 3.

⁴⁵ Lu Dingyi, "Zai Shanghai dianying zhipian gongsi suoshu ge chang, tuan de chengli dahui shang de jianghua 在上海電影制片公司所屬各廠、團的成立大會上的講話," quoted in Yu Ling, "Dang zai jiefang qian dui zhongguo dianying de lingdao yu douzheng," p. 29.

⁴⁶ See "Gongchandang zai dianying jie huodong qingkuang," SMA, Q235-1-17, pp. 5-10, and Lu Diping's confidential letter, No. 2 Historical Archives, 2 (2)-271/16J1505.

⁴⁷ Unless otherwise noted, the following account is based on ZDFZS, and page numbers of quotations will be given in parentheses for ease of reference.

The opening page of the so-called "Zuoyi cinema movement" began in September 1931, when the *Julian* (Dramatists League) passed the aforementioned manifesto, "*Zuijin xingdong gangling* 最近行動綱領" (The directive of the most recent activities). In the following months, as the Japanese invasions of Manchuria and Shanghai provoked an impassioned anti-Japanese reaction, the film industry realized the necessity to produce patriotic films and hence "accepted the leadership of the CCP's underground organization and turned left (接受了中國共產黨地下組織的領導, 開始了向左轉)." (183)

In mid-1932, Mingxing recruited three "Zuoyi cultural workers," Xia Yan, A Ying, and Zheng Boqi, to work for its script committee as "script consultants" (*Bianju guwen* 編劇顧問). This marked the beginning of the so-called Zuoyi cultural workers' penetration of the film world. Some months later, the CCP officially set up the "Film Group" (*Dianying xiaozu* 電影小組) as a branch organization of its Cultural Committee (*Wenhua weiyuanhui* 文化委員會). It consisted of five members: Xia Yan, A Ying, Wang Chenwu 王塵無, Shi Linghe 石凌鶴, and Situ Huimin 司徒慧敏, all Party members. Under the leadership of this Party organization, many *Julian* members (Shen Xiling 沈西苓, Wang Ying 王瑩, Hu Ping 胡萍, Shu Xiuwen 舒秀文, and others) began working in the industry as screenwriters, directors, performers, and technicians (183-185). Another important arena of Zuoyi cultural workers' activities was newspapers' film columns and supplements. They published a great number of film reviews and theory articles introducing Communist ideologies (186-187).⁴⁸

The production of *Zuoyi* films reached its peak in 1933. Three major Shanghai studios, Mingxing, Lianhua, and Yihua 藝華, released altogether 25 *Zuoyi* films. Many small-scale Shanghai studios also began producing "progressive" films (203-290). These films treated themes related to "anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism" (反帝反封建, 205), such as "class struggle in the countryside" (農村的階級鬥爭, 206), "lives and struggles of the working class" (工人生活和鬥爭, 214), "class conflicts between the poor and the rich in the city" (都會生活貧富懸殊階級尖銳對立, 217), "imperialist economic encroachment" (帝國主義經濟侵略, 221), and "lives of educated women and youth" (知識婦女、知識青年生活, 228).

The "marvellous success" (輝煌成就) of the movement provoked a fierce reaction on the part of the Nationalist government (292). On the one hand, the Nanjing regime

⁴⁸ For a detailed discussion of the Zuoyi film criticism see Lu Si, *Yingping yijiu*.

intensified anti-Communist propaganda, organized the National Educational Cinematographic Society of China (中國教育電影協會), compiled a film yearbook, established a state-run film studio, and launched polemics against *Zuoyi* film theory. On the other hand, censorship was reinforced to suppress *Zuoyi* filmmaking. Moreover, it resorted to "fascist actions," such as vandalizing the *Yihua* Company supposed to be a bastion of *Zuoyi* filmmaking in late 1933 (296).

The "Yihua Incident" ushered in "a new phase" (新的階段) during which *Zuoyi* filmmakers worked in a more difficult situation (300). With tightening controls, Xia Yan, A Ying, and Zheng Boqi were forced to leave Mingxing in October 1934. Nevertheless, they used their personal relationship with Mingxing's executives and employees to continue to exert influence on film production. In Xia Yan's words, they grasped every opportunity to "add some 'ideological' flavouring to a given story to impart it with certain didactic and propaganda value" (在這個既定的故事里面加上一點‘意識’的作料，使這部影片多多少少能有一點宣傳教育的意義).⁴⁹

In early 1936, the "*Zuoyi* cinema movement" entered its last stage, "National Defence Cinema" (國防電影).⁵⁰ On 27 January 1936, the National Salvation Association of Shanghai Cinema (上海電影界救國會) was formed, which marked "the unity of Chinese patriotic film workers (中國愛國的電影工作者...新的團結)" (417). Shortly afterwards, the slogan of "National Defence Cinema" was put forward and some films that materialized this concept were turned out. From then on, *Zuoyi* film workers again predominated in filmmaking at Mingxing (424-6). The script committee was restored, headed by Ouyang Yuqian. Its Studio II was set up, which absorbed many "*Zuoyi* cultural workers" such as Ying Yunwei 應云衛, Yuan Muzhi 袁牧之, Chen Bo'er 陳波兒 and He Luting 賀綠汀. This Studio produced some classics of Chinese *Zuoyi* cinema, such as *Shengsi tongxin* 生死同心 (Unchanged Heart in Life and Death, 1936), *Yasui qian* 壓歲錢 (A New Year Coin, 1936), *Shizi jietou* 十字街頭 (Crossroads, 1937), and *Malu tianshi* 馬路天使 (Street Angel, 1937). After the Sino-Japanese War broke out in July 1937, many studios and theatres were destroyed in the bombing and a large number of film employees

⁴⁹ For the original text see Xia Yan, "Zhongguo dianying de lishi he dang de lingdao," *Zhongguo dianying*, Nov./Dec. 1957, quoted in ZDFZS, p. 327.

⁵⁰ The slogan had close relation with "National Defence Literature" (*Guofang wenxue*), which was put forward under the even more urgent threat of Japanese invasion at the end of 1935 in order to form a broader anti-Japanese united front within the literary circle. As a result, the Leftist League was dissolved at the beginning of 1936. For a detailed discussion of the controversies about the "National Defense Literature" slogan and the dissolution of the Leftist League, see Wong, pp. 177-205, and Hsia, *The gate of darkness*, pp. 101-45.

left Shanghai. The "Zuoyi cinema movement" came to an end.

Another important category of the standard story of 1930s Chinese cinema is so-called "GMD hack writers" (國民黨御用文人). In the standard history of Republican China, the antagonism between the Communists and Nationalists basically defined the political landscape after the 1927 coup and the establishment of the Nanjing government. Concomitantly, Shanghai's film world prior to the war with Japan has long been conceived of as a locus of an open struggle between the two camps, the "Zuoyi cultural workers" and "GMD hack writers." The following section presents the standard story about the latter category.

2.3 "GMD hack writers 國民黨御用文人"

One version of the story is provided by ZDFZS, which treats the GMD strand as a sub-plot of the "Zuoyi cinema movement." As mentioned above, it is claimed that the surge of *Zuoyi* films in 1933 met with ruthless suppression from the Nationalist government. One of the measures the government took was to "recommend" a few pro-government writers to work for leading Shanghai film studios. In the case of Mingxing, according to ZDFZS, two so-called "reactionary" films (*fandong yingpian* 反動影片) written by the "GMD hack writers" were released in 1934.⁵¹ Yao Sufeng was one of the "GMD hack writers," reportedly earmarked by the party's top official Pan Gongzhan 潘公展 (1894 - 1975).⁵² He wrote a screenplay entitled *Fudao* 婦道 (Doctrine for Women, 1934), which is said to have "resonated with the GMD's endorsement of feudal morality (呼應了國民黨反動派對封建道德的鼓吹)."⁵³ The other one was Wang Pingling 王平陵 (1898 - 1964), who served as an editor of the GMD's official organ *Zhongyang ribao* 中央日報 (Central Daily News), a censor of the Script Censorship Committee, and on several other committees affiliated to the party's Central Propaganda Department.⁵⁴ The screenplay he wrote for Mingxing is *Chonghun* 重婚 (Bigamy, 1934), a film allegedly with aim to counter the effect of *Zuoyi* films which call for class struggle in the countryside.⁵⁵

With the infusion of the GMD force and the withdrawal of the "Zuoyi film workers," according to ZDFZS, the "progressive" filmmaking at Mingxing began to ebb. Only when

⁵¹ ZDFZS, p. 328.

⁵² Xia Yan, *Lanxun jiumeng lu*, p. 241.

⁵³ ZDFZS, p. 328.

⁵⁴ See Ge Shao'ou 葛紹歐, "Wang Pingling." in *Zhonghua minguo mingren zhuan*, vol. 4, pp. 50-1.

⁵⁵ ZDFZS, p. 330-1.

the Studio II was founded in July 1936 did the "progressive" force gain momentum again. The Studio I, however, still clung to the "reactionary" principle of production. *Yongyuan de weixiao* 永遠的微笑 (Forever Smiling, 1936) with Liu Na'ou 劉吶鷗's script is testimony to this "reactionary" trend of filmmaking.⁵⁶ It is maintained that the only purpose of the film was to defend the legitimacy of the "law" promulgated by the Nationalist regime in the service of its governance.⁵⁷

According to ZDFZS, the antagonism between the *Zuoyi* and GMD camps was also manifest in the theoretical debate, known as "soft-cinema versus hard-cinema debate" (*dianying de ruanying zhizheng* 電影的軟硬之爭).⁵⁸ It was triggered by a series of articles published in the *Xiandai dianying* 現代電影 (Modern Screen), a film journal edited by Liu Na'ou in 1933. The authors of these essays, Liu Na'ou, Huang Jiamo 黃嘉謨 and some others, criticized *Zuoyi* films for their "over-emphasis on 'yishi/ideology' (內容偏重主義)" and function as "tools of propaganda (宣傳品)." For these reasons they termed *Zuoyi* films as "hard cinema" (*yingxing yingpian* 硬性影片). Instead, they put forward the idea that cinema was a medium for entertainment and artistic expression, comparable to "ice cream for the eyes and sofa for the mind" (給眼睛吃的冰激淋, 給心靈坐的沙發椅), and thereof defined its nature as "soft."⁵⁹ Critics of the so-called *Zuoyi* camp reacted strongly and the debates soon extended to other Shanghai newspapers, such as the *Chenbao* 晨報 (Morning Post) and the *Minbao* 民報 (People's Daily). This "soft/hard" debate lasted for three years until 1936.

The other version of the story is provided by the Taiwanese historian Du Yunzhi, who looked at the same period from an opposite point of view. According to him, it was the Nationalist government's "endeavour" to support the film industry by strengthening censorship, founding a state-run film studio and other film organizations. Besides, the government's film policy placed particular emphasis on "encouraging theoretical debates and nurturing filmmakers." (理論爭鬥和扶植影人)⁶⁰

One of the "theoretical debates" highlighted in Du's volume while ignored in ZDFZS

⁵⁶ ZDFZS, pp. 424-6.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 455.

⁵⁸ There is a chapter that centres on the "soft vs. hard cinema debate" in ZDFZS, see pp. 395-412. The story recounted here is based on the ZDFZS version, further details will be provided later when treating Liu Na'ou and his films.

⁵⁹ The essays include "Zhongguo dianying miaoxie de shendu wenti 中國電影描寫的深度問題," "Dianying zhi sesu yu dusu 電影之色素與毒素," etc. See ZDFZS, pp. 396-7.

⁶⁰ See chapter 8 "Dianying jiancha, fudao he guoying yingye 電影檢查、輔導和國營影業" (Film censorship, instruction, and state-run film enterprise), Du Yunzhi, pp. 122-130.

was the "Nationalist Literary Movement" (*Minzu zhuyi wenyi yundong* 民族主義文藝運動). The "movement" was launched in June 1930 by a group of GMD-affiliated intellectuals, such as Pan Gongzhan and Wang Pingling, in order to counteract the influence of *Zuoyi* literature.⁶¹ In October 1930, a Shanghai film journal named *Dianying yuekan* 電影月刊 (Movie Monthly) published a special issue on the subject of "Nationalist Cinema Movement" (*Minzu zhuyi dianying yundong* 民族主義電影運動), which, Du Yunzhi stated, marked the expansion of the "Nationalist Literary Movement" to the cinema field.⁶²

With regard to the government's efforts in "nurturing filmmakers" (as well as the film industry at large), three examples Du Yunzhi gave are concerned with Mingxing. One strategy was to try to "win over Zhang Shichuan and Xu Xinfu 徐欣夫" who are labelled by Du as "rightists" (*youpai* 右派) at Mingxing. Second, Mingxing was provided with an opportunity to make a documentary film for the Ministry of Railways. Third, writers "in support of the government," such as Wang Pingling, Huang Jiamo, Liu Na'ou, Huang Tianshi 黃天始, and Yao Sufeng, were earmarked to Mingxing and other Shanghai-based studios.⁶³

However different the standpoints of the PRC's official history and the Taiwan published volume have been, they share at least one view in common, namely, the belief that there existed a hostile confrontation, even harsh antagonism, between the *Zuoyi* and GMD camps on the arena of film production. Four members of Mingxing's staff are identified both in ZDFZS and Du Yunzhi's volume as "GMD hack writers" (see Table 2.4).

This is the sketch of the standard story of pre-war Chinese cinema introduced in ZDFZS and spin-off publications. Evidence to be presented below will prove that the story developed within the categories of *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD writers is incomplete and biased. As mentioned in the introduction, the official history ZDFZS was written from the mid-1950s to early 1960s, under the auspice of Xia Yan and his political associates. As

⁶¹ For a concise introduction of the movement and its confrontation with the Leftist League see Wong, pp. 122-5.

⁶² Du Yunzhi, p. 126. For another brief discussion about the movement see Jubin Hu. *Projecting the nation*, pp. 86-7. It is the fourth issue of *Dianying yuekan*, dated 10 Oct. 1930. Some of the articles are Bao Luoshi 包羅多, "Zhongguo xuyao you minzu tezheng de yingpian 中國需要有民族特征的影片"; Tang Songgao 唐崧高, "Zhongguo yingyou zhongguo de xinxing dianying 中國應有中國的新興電影"; Lu Mengshu 盧夢殊, "Minzu zhuyi yu zhongguo dianying 民族主義與中國電影"; Jun Liang 君良, "Zhongguo dianying jie qilai juli minzu zhuyi yundong 中國電影界起來努力民族主義運動"; Li Chunsen 李椿森, "Minzu zhuyi dianying de jianshe 民族主義電影底建設"; Qiuyuan 秋原, "Dianying zhi minzu xing 電影之民族性".

⁶³ Du Yunzhi, pp.126-7.

CHAPTER TWO

shown above, Xia Yan was an active participant in the 1930s Shanghai film world. Between 1953 and 1966, he was the Vice Minister of Culture (文化部副部長) of the PRC.⁶⁴ However, during this period, when the project of compiling ZDFZS was also in progress, Xia Yan and his associates were confronting constant threats of political purges. From the 1957 "Anti-Rightist Campaign" (反右運動) to the "Cultural Revolution" (文化大革命) that started in 1966, they had to stave off attacks from their political rivals, the filmmakers with career background in Yan'an 延安, who attempted to convict Xia Yan and his associates as followers of the "bourgeois cultural and artistic line" (資產階級文藝路線).⁶⁵ Therefore, Xia Yan and his colleagues felt it extremely necessary to defend themselves by stressing the "leftist" thrust of their film practices in 1930s Shanghai.

As a result, according to Xiao Zhiwei's research, ZDFZS's narrative of 1930s Chinese cinema is teleological, primarily reflecting the political interests of Xia Yan and his associates.⁶⁶ The book's writers' decision on which filmmakers and films to be included in the *Zuoyi* list, how much space to be allocated to them, and what should be the appropriate amount of praise or criticism for them was based not on the historical reality, but on individual filmmakers' political standing in the late 1950s. Hence, Xiao has argued that the impetus behind the creation of what he calls "leftist cinema myth" was Xia Yan and his political associates' desire "to use the past to serve the political needs of the moment, namely, to cast themselves as revolutionary heroes, dedicated to the party and loyal to the communist cause," and ultimately, "to win, or at least survive, the power struggles."⁶⁷ The following chapters, a re-examination of the persons and films mentioned in this standard story as paraphrased above, will testify to the bias of the story and present untold stories which contemporary sources would like to unveil. In my own narrative, I will not give any individual filmmakers particular labels. The terms *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD are only used in the sense in which they are used in this standard story presented in this chapter. I will illustrate that in the actual history of Mingxing, commercialism and didacticism – rather than individual filmmakers' political standing – surfaced as leading motifs that determined whom to employ and which kinds of film to produce.

⁶⁴ See Shen Yun, "Xia Yan shengping nianbiao (disi gao)," pp. 50-51.

⁶⁵ For the Yan'an-Shanghai cleavage and Yan'an clique's attacks on Xia Yan see Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949*, pp. 129ff. For introduction of the "Anti-Rightist Campaign" in the film world, cf. Hu Jubin, *Xin Zhongguo dianying yishi xingtai shi*, pp. 11, 135; For evidence of attacks on Xia Yan see Benkan bianjibu 本刊編輯部, "Pipan Xia Yan tongzhi de zichan jieji wenyi luxian 批判夏衍同志的資產階級文藝路線," *Dianying yishu* 電影藝術, no. 3, 1966, pp. 8-16; also cf. Shen Yun, pp. 50-51.

⁶⁶ For a careful study of the historical circumstances in which ZDFZS emerged and the factionalism and power struggles surrounding the book's birth see Xiao, "The Myth about Chinese Leftist Cinema."

⁶⁷ Xiao, "The Myth about Chinese Leftist Cinema," p. 18.

Chapter Three
Cultural Professionals at Mingxing (I):
Founding Members and Creative Staff in the 1920s

This chapter examines Mingxing's five founding members; the first creative members Mingxing employed – Bao Tianxiao and Hong Shen; as well as the publicists and screenwriters working at the company mainly in the 1920s, such as Song Chiping, Zhu Dake, and many others. Most of these persons had actively engaged in the Shanghai cultural industry since the 1910s. My focal questions will be why and how the founding members joined together and started the business; why the group of popular writers and journalists were employed; and how the motifs of commercialism and didacticism emerged in Mingxing's founding members' early careers and how the interplay of these two elements determined the recruitment of Mingxing's creative staff.

3.1 The Five "Tiger Generals" *Hujiang* 虎將¹

Zhang Shichuan, Zheng Zhengqiu, Zhou Jianyun, Zheng Zhegu and Ren Jinping, the five founding members of Mingxing, were called "Mingxing Five *Tiger Generals*" (*Mingxing wu hujiang* 明星五虎將), namely, "important figures," by their contemporaries.² At the outset, they distributed the tasks: Zhang Shichuan became general manager and film director, Zheng Zhegu stage manager, Zheng Zhengqiu was in charge of screen scripts, Ren Jinping responsible for public relations and Zhou Jianyun for publicity and distribution. In addition, Zheng Zhengqiu and Zheng Zhegu acted in their own films on several occasions.³ As Zhou Jianyun recalled, the team worked smoothly and harmoniously, until Zheng Zhegu died in 1925 and Ren Jinping left the company a year later to organize his own film company, the *Xinren* 新人 Film Company.

¹ *Hujiang* is a Chinese slang, literally means "tiger general" and implies "important figure." People often call Mingxing's five founders "*wu hujiang*". For example, see "Mingxing wu hujiang 明星五虎將," *Zhongguo yingxun* 15 (28 June 1940).

² "Mingxing wu hujiang 明星五虎將," *Zhongguo yingxun* 1.13 (14 June 1940), 1.14 (21 June 1940), 1.15 (28 June 1940), 1.16 (5 July 1940).

³ Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong 懷正秋兄," *MB* 6.2 (1 Aug. 1936). Also see "Hushang ge zhipian gongsi chuangli shi ji jingguo qingxing 滬上各制片公司之創立史及經過情形," Xu Chihen, *Zhongguo yingxi daguan*, n.p.

The initial bond that brought them together was, in Zhou's words, the "theatre movement" (*xiju yundong* 戲劇運動).⁴ Prior to the founding of Mingxing, all of them had been involved in a variety of theatre-related cultural enterprises. Besides, most of them were active participants in the world of publishing, as journalists, theatre critics, editors, and employees or managers of publishing houses. In what follows I shall first profile their family and education backgrounds, and proceed to map out their early careers in the fields of theatre and publishing. My purpose is, first, to point out the interpersonal connections and social networks which, I would argue, were vital to their future enterprise particularly in terms of who would be recruited into the company; and second, to examine how the belief to combine commercialism and didacticism developed in their early careers. My emphasis will be on Zhang Shichuan, Zheng Zhengqiu and Zhou Jianyun because they played much more important roles in business operations and cultural production at Mingxing than the other two who worked at the company for only a brief period of time. From this depiction it will become clear that Mingxing's cultural landscape dominated by the interplay of commercialism and didacticism had taken root in this early period.

Short biographies

Zhang Shichuan was born in 1890 as the eldest son of a silk-merchant family in Ningbo, a coastal city noted for its long tradition of producing astute Ningbo merchants.⁵ Ningbo traders maintained financial control or powerful influence in the treaty port city Shanghai in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, particularly in three critical areas: finance, trade relations with the foreign community, and the trade and native banking that served as the foundation of all their activities.⁶ Zhang Shichuan was to become a member of this community. When he was fifteen years old, his father died. As a result he had to quit school and go to Shanghai to earn money for himself and his family. Through recommendation by his uncle Jing Runsan 經潤三 (? - 1916), a prominent comprador-merchant in Shanghai, he became a junior clerk at the advertisement division of an American real estate agency. Zhang was an ambitious young man. He applied himself to learning English, perhaps at the *Yucui gongxue* 育才公學 (*Yucui* Public School), one of Shanghai's earliest Western-style schools.⁷

⁴ Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong".

⁵ Zhang's short biography is mainly based on He Xiujun, pp. 110-111; also cf. Liu Siping, *Zhang Shichuan congying shi*, pp. 1-2.

⁶ Jones, "The Ningpo Pang and Financial Power at Shanghai," p. 83.

⁷ According to an entry of a register, Zhang graduated from the *Yucui gongxue*. See "Shanghai shi xijuyuan shangye tongye gonghui choubei hui huiyuan dengji diaocha biao 上海市戲劇院商業同業工會籌備會會員

According to his wife and contemporary records, Zhang Shichuan was a typical "Ningbo merchant" in many respects: diligent, shrewd, and pragmatic.⁸ Compared to the other founder-members of Mingxing, he looked more like a true businessman concerned more with profit than grand ideas. And he seldom deliberately camouflaged this trait. In fact, to obtain good luck in business he changed his name, replacing the character "shi 蚀" which means "loss in business" as one of its meanings in Chinese with "shi 石," stone.⁹ Supplementary to Zhang Shichuan's entrepreneurial flair was the intellectual power of Zheng Zhengqiu, the "spiritual leader" of Mingxing. As Zhang Shichuan stated, "Zhengqiu's brain plus my energy" was critical to Mingxing's success.¹⁰

In 1889, Zheng Zhengqiu was born into a wealthy merchant family engaged in the opium trade in Shanghai.¹¹ His father was a *jinshi* 進士-holder (graduate of the highest-level civil service examination) and served as a local official in the late Qing period. Zheng Zhengqiu received classical education in his early childhood, and later studied at the Western-style school *Yucai gongxue*. Several years later, he began to run their family business, an opium wholesale store. But he displayed little talent in doing business and it has been said that the opium store lost much money under his management.¹² Subsequently, his father purchased an official position for him in the provincial government of Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 in Hubei. However, only one or two years later Zheng left his position and returned to Shanghai because he had no enthusiasm for politics.

His true fascination was theatre and was to soon emerge as a theatre critic and a practitioner of a new genre of drama (to be elaborated later). Zheng's ideas and ideals concerning theatre were shared by Zhou Jianyun, his close colleague throughout the 1910s to 1930. Zhou Jianyun was later known for his social ability and unique skills in management.¹³ Zheng Zhengqiu compared Zhou to "the general in charge of seeking

登記調查表," SMA, S320-4-8-64, dated 15 October 1950.

⁸ See He Xiujun; for contemporary records, see, for example, Hu Tou 戶頭, "Mingxing gongsi de 'san daheng' yu 'san xiaoheng' 明星公司的'三大亨'與'三小亨'," DS 199 (16 Nov. 1932). For the prominent characters of Ningbo merchants, cf Jones, "The Ningpo Pang and Financial Power at Shanghai," p. 74.

⁹ Ibid., p. 110. Ouyang yuqian still uses his original name 張蝕川 in his memoir, when he talked about Zhang's activities around 1914. See Ouyang Yuqian, "Tan Wenmingxi," p. 76.

¹⁰ Zhang Shichuan, "Ku Zhengqiu laoge 哭正秋老哥," MB 2.2 (1 Aug. 1935): 6.

¹¹ Unless otherwise noted, the following account of Zheng's early life is primarily based on a short biography published in the special issue of the *Mingxing banyuekan* shortly after his death: "Zheng Zhengqiu xiansheng xiaozhuan 鄭正秋先生小傳" MB 2.2 (1 Aug. 1935): 5, and Mu Zi, "Zheng Zhengqiu shengping xinian." Also cf. his biography: Tan Chunfa, *Kai yidai xianhe*.

¹² There's another version: according to Zhu Shuangyun, Zheng's friend and collaborator in the later *Xinmin* New Play Troupe, he was skilled at doing business and had ever made big profits, but then lost much money for he trusted wrong persons. See Ouyang yuqian, "Tan Wenmingxi," p. 73.

¹³ "Xiaoshuojia yu dianying jie zhi guanxi 小說家與電影界之關係," in Xu Chihen, *Zhongguo yingxi daguan*.

provisions for his troop" in the management team of Mingxing, while Zhang Shichuan was "a man of action rather than a sociable person" and he himself "had low competence in dealing with financial problems."¹⁴ Probably for this reason, Zhang Shichuan and Zheng Zhengqiu headed the filmmaking operation, while Zhou Jianyun supervised distribution and the handling of the company's finances. However, Zhou's early career was that of a typical bookish "lettered man" and resembled that of Zheng Zhengqiu in some respects.

Born in Anhui Province in 1893, Zhou Jianyun moved to Shanghai with his family at the age of nine.¹⁵ He received Western-style education at a missionary school, the *Shangxian tang* 尚賢堂 (its own English name: the International Institute of China), established by the American missionary Gilbert Reid (1857 - 1927), and later at a middle school affiliated to the *Jiangnan Arsenal*.¹⁶ He later reminisced that at the time reform and revolutionary journals were his favourite reading, such as Liang Qichao's *Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報 (New People's Gazette) and Yu Youren's *Minxu bao* 民呼報 (People's Sighs). He was deeply influenced by the new-style public journalism that, as he described, "promoted revolutionary spirit, aroused people's nationalistic awareness, introduced the new learning, and criticized the old social system."¹⁷ As a hot-blooded young man eager to voice his opinions on current affairs, he frequently contributed his essays to the journals he so avidly read.¹⁸ Zhou graduated from high school in the first years of the Republic. As his family was unable to afford university education, he started writing theatre reviews for newspapers to make a living and met Zheng Zhengqiu, Zhang Shichuan, as well as Zheng Zhegu and Ren Jinping in the mid-1910s.

Zheng Zhegu, born in 1880, was the eldest member of the initial management team of Mingxing.¹⁹ He graduated from the *Jiangnan Military Academy* (*Jiangnan lushi xuetao* 江南陸師學堂), which was founded by Zhang Zhidong in Nanjing in 1896 (shortly after

¹⁴ "Mingxing wu hujiang 明星五虎將," *Zhongguo yingxun* 15 (28 June 1940).

¹⁵ For the biography of Zhou Jianyun cf. Xu Chihen, *Zhongguo yingxi daguan*, "Mingxing wu hujiang," *Zhongguo yingxun* 15 (28 June 1940), and "Zhou Jianyun," *Zhongguo dianyingjia xiehui zhongguo dianyingshi yanjiubu*, ed. *Zhongguo dianyingjia liezhuan*, vol. 1, pp. 176-181. Unless otherwise noted, the following account is a synthesis of the data from these sources.

¹⁶ *Shangxian tang* (literally, "the Hall of Respect for the Worthies") was a mission institute founded in Beijing in 1897, with the aim to win over the higher classes in China. In 1902 the institute opened in Shanghai. It held conferences, gave lectures, organized special study classes, and possessed a museum and some publications. See Lian, *The conversion of missionaries*, pp. 174-177.

The *Jiangnan Arsenal* (*Jiangnan zhizaoju*) was one of the two earliest key self-strengthening industrial efforts in the mid-nineteenth century. It was established in Shanghai in 1865. It produced ships, ammunition, tools and machinery. Western scientific and engineering works were translated there. See Schoppa, ed. *The Columbia guide to modern Chinese history*, p. 169.

¹⁷ Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong," *MB* 6.2 (1 Aug. 1936).

¹⁸ For example, *Minli bao*, *Tianduo bao*, *Zhonghua minbao*, etc. See *Ibid*.

¹⁹ The profile of Zheng Zhegu's life is based on Zhou Jianyun, "Zheng Zhegu jun 鄭鷓鴣君," *Dianying zazhi* 1 (May 1924).

China's failure in the Sino-Japanese War, 1894-1895) and aimed at training military officers preparing to establish the "Self-strengthening Troop" (*zhiqiang jun* 自強軍) at the lower-Yangtze area.²⁰ After graduation, Zheng Zhegu served the Qing dynasty as a high military officer. On the eve of the dynasty's fall, he joined the anti-Qing revolutionary force and was soon on the Qing government's blacklist. He eluded capture disguised as a merchant until the founding of the Republic. After this experience, he decided to distance himself from politics and turned to a sphere he was genuinely interested in, theatre. For this reason, he met the other founders of Mingxing in the mid-1910s. As a respected local businessman, he was elected to be a member of the standing board of the Shanghai Chinese Ratepayers' Association, an important organization representing the Chinese residents in Shanghai's foreign settlements.²¹

The youngest founder-member of Mingxing was Ren Jinping, born in 1896. He was a native of Zhejiang Province and grew up in Shanghai.²² Little is known about his educational background. According to Xu Chihen, He led a passionate and energetic life, pursuing various occupations simultaneously. He was dean of a girls' school (the *Minsheng nixue* 民生女學), the director of a newspaper's advertisement division (the *Shangbao* 商報), and a member of the Shanghai Student Union during the May Fourth Movement.²³ Moreover, he was a genial person who cultivated a wide circle of friends, among which were some leading political and commercial personalities of Shanghai. At Mingxing's precarious early stage, as mentioned in Chapter One, he persuaded Fang Jiaobo, Yuan Lüden, and Lao Jingxiu, three members of the "merchant elite" of the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce (*Shanghai zongshanghui* 上海總商會), to invest in the business.²⁴ Mingxing's position in the business community of Shanghai was thus greatly enhanced.

Summing up, the five "tiger generals" of Mingxing displayed certain common features. Except for Zheng Zhegu who was 42 years old at the point of Mingxing's founding, other four were fairly young, between 28 and 33. Almost all of them had received Western-style middle-level education and had been active in Shanghai's commercial and cultural world. In March 1922, the leading Shanghai tabloid *Jingbao* 晶報 (Crystal) elected "Top Hundred Personages in Recent Shanghai" (上海最近一百名人).²⁵ Zheng Zhengqiu and Ren Jinping

²⁰ See Qu Lihe, *Qingmo jiaoyu xichao*, pp. 422-24.

²¹ Xiao jizhe 小記者, "Mingxing shi yi mingxing 明星失一明星," XWB 16 Apr. 1925: E1.

²² Unless otherwise noted, Ren Jinping's brief biography is primarily based on "Ren Jinping," Xu Chihen, *Zhongguo yingxi daguan*.

²³ Except the above source, for his various jobs and posts see SB 31 Jan. 1923: 1.

²⁴ For introduction of these "merchant elites" cf. Fewsmith, *Party, state, and local elites in Republican China*.

²⁵ Jiao Bo 嬌波, "Shanghai zuijin yibai mingren biao," *Jingbao* 30 Mar. 1922. I'd like to thank Shi Yun 時鑿

were on this list. This is suggestive of their fame in Shanghai's cultural circle. Next, I will provide a close look at two major arenas of their activities, theatre and publishing, in order to show how the five persons crossed paths and how they prepared themselves, consciously or unconsciously, for their later business in terms of both practical and intellectual resources.

In the world of theatre

In early-twentieth-century China, a far-reaching "modern" transformation was under way in theatre, while traditional form of performing arts, the Peking Opera in particular, still enjoyed enormous popularity. The transformation was manifold. Firstly, reform took place at the institutional level, particularly reflected in the changing of performance venues. Traditionally, plays were performed in teahouses (*chayuan* 茶園) and patrons were charged for drinks rather than for admission. This may indicate, as suggested by a scholar, that "Chinese people were reluctant to accept theatre to be a legitimate type of business."²⁶ After foreigners had built a number of Western-style theatres in major treaty ports since the mid-nineteenth century, the first Chinese-run Western-style theatre, the New Stage (*Xin wutai* 新舞臺), opened in Shanghai on 26 October 1908. It chiefly hosted Chinese plays and catered to the tastes of local Chinese audiences. Following its lead, many theatres of this type sprang up in China's major cities and gradually replaced traditional teahouses. Theatre became established as a branch of the modern entertainment industry.²⁷

At the same time, artistic form and content changed. Traditional Chinese theatre relies on standard patterns of music, singing, and acting associated with well-established character roles. Stories are usually drawn from popular history, legends, myths, or literary works, acting out an ideal moral order of traditional society. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a new form of theatre emerged, staging current events and with actors in modern, sometimes Western, costumes, while still largely preserving traditional modes of performance. Shortly afterwards, an entirely foreign form of drama was introduced, with spoken dialogues and naturalistic acting style in accordance with the Western dramatic conventions. This form was called "New Play" (*xinju* 新劇) or "Civilized Play" (*wenming*

for sharing with me this piece of material.

²⁶ See Fu Jin, *Ershi shiji zhongguo xiju de xiandaixing yu bentuhua*, pp. 19-20.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 20, also see Goldstein, "From teahouse to playhouse: theaters as social texts in early-twentieth-century China," pp. 770-5.

xi 文明戲) initially, and decades later evolved into what was termed "Spoken Drama" (*huaju* 話劇).²⁸

Together with institutional reforms and formal innovations, the concept that theatre serves as an effective tool for popular education and enlightenment gained importance in the last Qing decades.²⁹ To be sure, this concept is rooted in the tradition of Chinese theatre. For example, in the preface to *Taohua shan* 桃花扇 (The Peach Blossom Fan), a classical Chinese play written by Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648 - 1718), the author stresses that play (傳奇) is suitable for "warning the people and changing (improving) social mores (驚世易俗)."³⁰ However, as discussed in the introduction, the sense of China's national crisis in the face of the West since the mid-eighteenth-century pushed the new Chinese intelligentsia to embrace the idea of *kai minzhi* 開民智, to raise educational levels of the population at large. In this context, theatre's social function was rediscovered and fervently promoted.

Following the lead of Liang Qichao who advocated the didactic role of fiction and theatre in 1902,³¹ the future Communist leader Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879 - 1942) published an influential essay, "Lun xiqu 論戲曲" (On drama), in 1904. This essay contains an oft-quoted saying that reads: "theatre houses are the schools for the masses, and actors are the teachers of the people (戲館子是眾人的大學堂，戲子是眾人大教師)."³² The notion extended well into the May Fourth period. For example, the May Fourth writer Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (1898 - 1958) wrote in 1921: "[...] art should take over part of educator's responsibility. Since theatre possesses the outstanding capability of moving the audience, it must assume a particularly huge responsibility."³³

Judging from the biographical information provided above, most of the five Mingxing founders spent their formative years in this environment in early-twentieth-century Shanghai. Initially, all of them were Peking Opera fans except for Zhang Shichuan. Both

²⁸ For a survey of these historical changes, see "Introduction." in Gunn, ed, *Twentieth-century Chinese drama*; Eberstein, "Opera vs Spoken Drama"; Ge Yihong, ed, *Zhongguo huaju tongshi*; and Li Hsiao-t'i, *Opera, society, and politics*.

²⁹ For a detailed discussion of the relationship between theatre and the "Enlightenment Movement" during the late Qing period, see Li Hsiao-t'i, *Opera, society, and politics*; and *Qingmo de xiaceng shehui qimeng yundong*.

³⁰ Kong Shangren, "Taohua shan xiao yin 桃花扇小引," *Taohua shan*, p. 1.

³¹ Liang Qichao, "Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi 論小說與群治之關係," *Xin xiaoshuo* 1.1, Oct. 1902.

³² San Ai 三愛 (Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀), "Lun xiqu 論戲曲," *Anhui suhuabao* 11 (10 Sep. 1904): 1-2. The version in literary Chinese was published in *Xin xiaoshuo* 2.2 (Feb. 1905). For a close reading of this essay cf. Li. *Qingmo de xiaceng shehui qimeng yundong*, pp. 169-173.

³³ Zheng Zhenduo, "Guangming yundong de kaishi 光明運動的開始," *Xiqu* 1.3 (July 1921): 7.

Zheng Zhengqiu and Zhou Jianyun made references to their fascination with Peking Opera since childhood in their writings.³⁴ Zheng Zhegu was even a quite skilled actor.³⁵ Ren Jinping, together with Zheng Zhegu and Zhou Jianyun, was a member of the *Jiuji she* 久記社, a Peking Opera fans' club (*piaofang* 票房).³⁶ At the same time, exposure to novel ideas and new forms of theatre shaped their views on this art form and its relationship with education, politics and commerce. Except Ren Jinping, all of them later became practitioners of the new genre of theatre - New Play (*xinju* 新劇).

Among them, Zheng Zhengqiu was the first who embarked on a theatre-related career. In late 1910, Zheng Zhengqiu contributed a long essay to the revolutionary newspaper *Minli bao* 民立報 (People's Rise).³⁷ Serialized from 26 November to 8 December 1910, the essay analyzes the distinctive styles of over seventy leading Peking Opera actors of the period.³⁸ The essay is anything but revolutionary; yet the fact that Zheng chose this recently-founded revolutionary newspaper for publication shows his positive stance towards this kind of print medium. The essay marks a turning point in Zheng Zhengqiu's life. He soon became known as an active theatre critic, journalist and editor, writing for a variety of Shanghai newspapers (to be elaborated in the next section).

Initially, Peking Opera was his main subject. As his friend Xu Banmei 徐半梅 reminisced, Zheng was best known for his comments on "*Erhuang Xipi* 二簧西皮" (referring to "Peking Opera") in the press. His connoisseurship and dedication went so far that on one occasion he spent over a month to analyze a single episode in a Peking Opera play.³⁹ At the same time, however, he was favourably disposed towards the "New," namely the Western-style New Play, as well as new ideas accompanying the new genre. In June 1911, for instance, Xu Banmei was going to establish a New Play troupe, the Company for the Education of Society (*Shehui jiaoyu tuan* 社會教育團). Zheng wrote an article in which he expressed his belief that the founding of the troupe would be beneficial to

³⁴ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Zhengqiu xiping 正秋戲評," *Minquan huabao* 9 (5 Apr. 1912); Zhou Jianyun, "Yingxi zazhi xu 影戲雜誌序," *Yingxi zazhi* 1.2 (25 Jan. 1922): 7; Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong 懷正秋兄," *MB* 6.2 (1 Aug. 1936).

³⁵ Zhou Jianyun, "Zheng Zhegu jun 鄭鷓鴣君," *Dianying zazhi* 1 (May 1924).

³⁶ See *Chunsheng ribao* "Supplement for the Jiuji she," 3 July 1921.

³⁷ The *Minlibao* was a revolutionary newspaper formed by Yu Youren (1879 - 1964) on 11 October 1910 in Shanghai with a radical stance against the Manchu government. See Qin Shaode, *Shanghai jindai baokan shilun*, pp. 61-62; "Yü Yu-jen 于右任," in Boorman, ed, *Biographical dictionary of Republican China*, vol. IV, p. 75.

³⁸ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Lilisuo xiyuan 麗麗所戲言," see the feuilleton pages of the *Minli bao* (26 Nov. - 8 Dec. 1910).

³⁹ Xu Banmei, *Huaju chuangshiqi huiyilu*, p. 37.

"popular education (社會教育)" and "the evolution of theatre (戲劇進化)." ⁴⁰ After the founding of the Republic in 1912, he directed his attention increasingly to this new genre. In an article titled "Xinju tan 新劇談" (On New Play) published in the *Chunsheng ribao* 春聲日報 (Spring Voice Daily) edited by Zhou Jianyun, Zheng Zhengqiu talked about this shift of his focus, stating that he had realized that "the New Play (*xinju* 新劇) was more important than the old theatre (*jiuxi* 舊戲)" in terms of educational values. ⁴¹

On the issue of theatre's function, Zheng's attitude was in step with prevalent intellectual convictions. In a 1911 article published in the *Minli huabao*, for example, he advanced that "theatres are laboratories for social education, and actors are teachers to educate the people (劇場者社會教育之實驗場也，優伶者社會教育之良導師也)." ⁴² The modernist vocabulary is close to Chen Duxiu's formulation in his 1904 article on drama quoted above. In another article, when Zheng learned that the Company for the Education of Society (*Shehui jiaoyu tuan*) was to be affiliated to the Great Stage (*Da wutai* 大舞臺), a commercial theatre, he expressed serious misgivings that "the troupe will demean into a tool for making money and lose its value in educating the masses (落於貿利一途而失社會教育團之價值)." ⁴³ Clearly, he promoted theatre as a useful tool of popular education, while its potential in making commercial profit was despised.

As a critique positioned outside the entertainment industry and wealthy enough not to depend on his income from writing for his livelihood, Zheng was in a position to make such lofty comments. In 1913, however, he became an insider of the entertainment industry. Was he still able to live up to his own standard then? Zheng Zhengqiu's involvement with New Play commercial practice should be traced back to the *Yaxiya* 亞西亞 Film Company (its own English name: China Film Company) founded in 1909 by the Jewish-American Benjamin Brodsky. In 1912, American businessmen Yashell and T. H. Suffert took over the company and looked for a Chinese assistant to produce films. Their friend Jing Runsan recommended his nephew Zhang Shichuan, who, however, had no former experience with cinema and theatre. Since Zhang Shichuan's task was to make "shadowplays" (*yingxi* 影戲), which he understood to be a form of theatre, he naturally thought of seeking help from his friend Zheng Zhengqiu. ⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Fenmo chang zhong zhi zahuodian 粉墨場中之雜貨店," *Minli huabao* 21 June 1911.

⁴¹ Zhengqiu, "Xinju tan 新劇談 (1)," *Chunsheng ribao* 2 (2 May 1921).

⁴² Zheng Zhengqiu, "Fenmo chang zhong zhi zahuodian 粉墨場中之雜貨店," *Minli huabao* 21 June 1911.

⁴³ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Fenmo chang zhong zhi zahuodian 粉墨場中之雜貨店," *Minli huabao* 27 June 1911.

⁴⁴ See Zhang Shichuan, "Zi wo daoyan yilai 自我導演以來," *MB* 1.3 (16 May 1935): 10-14; ZWD, p. 401.

Sometime in 1913, they began to shoot short films. Scripts were either written by Zheng Zhengqiu or adapted from stage plays. Actors (no actress was engaged at this time) were recruited from a New Play theatre troupe. With Zhang and Zheng as directors and Yashell as cameraman, they produced several short films – short comedies, adaptations of traditional stories and plays, natural-scenery films, and newsreels. Judging by their plot summaries, these films carry few, if any, serious messages that are intended for popular education.⁴⁵ The outbreak of the First World War cut off the supply of German raw film and brought the film company to an end. To maintain the immediate livelihoods of the actors, in September 1913, Zheng Zhengqiu organized these persons to be a New Play troupe, the *Xinmin she* 新民社 (New People Society). Its first play *E Jiating* 惡家庭 (The evil family) was staged from 14 September on at the *Moudeli* 謀得利 Theatre. The play was quite successful and was performed eight times within a year.⁴⁶ Its advertisement proclaimed, "We use the theatre house as a classroom and turn actors into teachers. This play provides a gripping, life-like description of evils in a family."⁴⁷ However, there remained a gap between the declared intent and the actual effect.

Ouyang Yuqian, who saw the play at the time, was less impressed: "except for a plot with lots of twists and turns that aimed to attract the audience, I cannot see anything valuable in this play, [...] let alone a [meaningful] 'central idea' (*zhongxin sixiang* 中心思想)." ⁴⁸ Its advertising text shows that the story is of "a porter who returns money he has found and obtains a beauty, a heartless man who maltreats a luckless woman, and a shrew who abuses a poor maid (走腳夫還金得佳人，薄情郎欺凌薄命女，潑辣婦虐待苦丫頭)." ⁴⁹ This plotline in fact appears to be a collage from standard, stereotypical stories, hardly pertaining to "enlightenment" or "education." At the same time, however, plays of this kind, usually termed "family drama" (*jiating xi* 家庭戲), were "understandable to even women and children... and hence welcomed far and wide," as Xu Banmei remarked.⁵⁰

The *Xinmin* Society's success boosted the new theatrical genre. Commercial New Play troupes mushroomed in 1914; the year was hence historically called "*Jiayin zhongxing* 甲

⁴⁵ For the plot summaries see Shou Yue 瘦月, "Zhongguo zuixin huodong yingxi duanluo shi 中國最新活動影戲段落史," *Xinju zazhi* 新劇雜誌 2 (Jul. 1914). For a detailed discussion about the China Film Company and these films, see Huang Xuelei, "Nanfu nanqi yu ta de jingdian hua."

⁴⁶ For reviews of the play see Dun Gen 鈍根, "Jutan 劇談," SB 16 – 20 Sep. 1913 "Ziyou tan." For dates of the play's performances see Hiroshi Seto, *Xinmin she shangyan yanmu yilan*, <http://www.ne.jp/asahi/seto/ryuu/>.

⁴⁷ SB 14 Sep. 1913: 9.

⁴⁸ Ouyang Yuqian, "Tan Wenmingxi," p. 72.

⁴⁹ SB 14 Sep. 1913: 9. Ouyang Yuqian also provided a synopsis of the play, see *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Xu Banmei, *Huaju chuangshiqi huiyilu*, p. 52.

寅中興" ([New Play's] thriving in 1914).⁵¹ Quite a few later Mingxing employees and founders were involved in this trend. Zhou Jianyun formed the *Qimin she* 啓民社 (Society for Enlightening the People) in 1914, with the declared goal of "enlightening the people and reforming society."⁵² During this period he became acquainted with Zheng Zhengqiu and Zhang Shichuan.⁵³ Zheng Zhegu founded the New Play troupe *Dajiangdong jushe* 大江東劇社 (East of the River) also in 1914.⁵⁴ Later he joined the renowned pioneering New Play society *Xinju tongzhi hui* 新劇同志會 (New Play Comrade Society) that had been founded by Lu Jingruo 陸鏡若 in 1912.⁵⁵ Song Chiping, Dong Tianya, Dong Tianmin 董天民, and Ouyang Yuqian, all of whom would become Mingxing's employees later, were members of this troupe.⁵⁶

Among numerous New Play troupes emerging around this time, the *Minming she* 民鳴社 (People's Voice Society), funded by Zhang Shichuan's uncle and managed by Zhang Shichuan, became the most powerful rival to Zheng Zhengqiu's *Xinmin* Society.⁵⁷ In January 1915, the *Xinmin* Society merged with the *Minming*. Zheng Zhegu and Ouyang Yuqian were actors of the troupe for a period.⁵⁸ In the following years, Zheng Zhengqiu launched several more short-lived New Play groups, including a school named *Yaofeng juxue guan* 藥風劇學館 (*Yaofeng* Theatre School, 1916). Zheng Zhegu was invited to teach at this school.⁵⁹ In these groups, Zheng Zhengqiu assumed diverse roles, serving – at times concurrently – as manager, director, playwright, actor and teacher.

As an active participant in the new theatre, rather than a critic aloof from the commercial field, as discussed in the opening of Chapter One, Zheng Zhengqiu developed the notion of combining "commercialism" (營業主義) and "didacticism" (教育主義) as a tenet for theatre creation. In addition to above-quoted "Yaofeng xuanyan 藥風宣言" (Manifesto of

⁵¹ It was first coined by Zhu Shuangyun 朱雙云 in *Xinjushi* 新劇史 (A history of New Play, published in Shanghai 1914) and generally used by later historians, for example, see Ge Yihong, p. 26.

⁵² Zhou Jianyun, "Jutan huaijiu lu 劇壇懷舊錄," *Wanxiang* 萬象 4.3 (Sep. 1944): 35-6, also see Ouyang yuqian, "Tan Wenmingxi," p. 83.

⁵³ Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong."

⁵⁴ See "Dajiangdong jushe qishi 大江東劇社啟事," SB 5 Sep. 1914: 8.

⁵⁵ Zhou Jianyun, "Zheng Zhegu jun," *Dianying zazhi* 1 (May 1924).

⁵⁶ See Ouyang Yuqian, "Huiyi Chunliu," p. 33.

⁵⁷ The *Minming* Society was founded on 28 Nov. 1913 and closed down on 3 Jan. 1917, see Seto, *Minming she shangyan yanmu yilan*.

⁵⁸ See Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong," Ouyang Jingru and Dong Xijiu, "Ouyang Yuqian nianbiao," in *Ouyang Yuqian xiju lunwenji*, p. 467.

⁵⁹ The other groups include *Yaofeng xinjuchang* 藥風新劇場 (*Yaofeng* New Play Stage, 1918), *Dafeng xinjushe* 大風新劇社 (*Dafeng* New Play Society, 1919), and *Hepingshe xinjubu* 和平社新劇部 (New Play Division of the Peace Society, 1919). See Mu Zi, "Zheng Zhengqiu shengping xinian," pp. 98-99.

the *Yaofeng* Troupe) which contains this idea,⁶⁰ this articulation can be found in some other places, such as Zheng's announcement to withdraw from the New Stage (新舞臺),⁶¹ and an advertisement for the last performance of the *Yaofeng* Troupe.⁶² On the one hand, it is not surprising that Zheng Zhengqiu promoted the ideology that theatre can facilitate popular education considering the general intellectual background introduced above. On the other, however, Zheng differed from the elitist intellectuals who had advanced the idea by the fact that he participated in the commercial practice of the new theatre. He was aware that "commercialism" was integral to this new cultural practice for its very survival. Hence, a balance between "commercialism" and "conscience"/"didacticism" was the ideal he constantly pursued. The emerging field of the new theatre brought about this idea and brought together these like-minded young men, such as Zhou Jianyun and Zheng Zhegu, who would venture into an even newer field, cinema. Another related field of their activities in the 1910s is journalism and publishing. I will further demonstrate that Mingxing founders' extensive engagement in this field helped them bring valuable intellectual resources into their future careers in the film world.

In the world of journalism and publishing

It is well known that the development of new printing techniques as well as the introduction of Western-style commercial newspapers instigated the growing prosperity of the publishing industry in the treaty-port city Shanghai during the second half of the nineteenth century.⁶³ This growing market created new professions for Chinese literati in the wake of the decline and ultimate abolishment of the system of civil service examinations. Most of Mingxing's founding members were participants in this world in the 1910s in Shanghai.

As mentioned above, Zheng Zhengqiu made his name as a theatre critic in the early 1910s. Prior to his involvement with New Play, he had been editor of and chief contributor to the *Minli bao*'s supplement *Minli huabao* 民立畫報 (People's Rise Pictorial, 2-10.1911) and the *Minquan bao*'s supplement *Minquan huabao* 民權畫報 (People's Right Pictorial, 3-10.1912). Both the pictorials feature satirical cartoons and theatre reviews. Subsequently, Zheng launched his own small periodical in November 1912, the *Tuhua jubao* 圖畫劇報

⁶⁰ See "Yaofeng xuanyan 藥風宣言," SB 3 June 1918: 5.

⁶¹ "Zheng Zhengqiu tuoli Xiao wutai 鄭正秋脫離新舞臺," SB 26 May 1918: 8.

⁶² SB 23 Oct. 1918: 8.

⁶³ An expanding scholarship has treated the issue of Shanghai print culture in the late Qing and early Republic, for example, Mittler, *A newspaper for China?*, Judge, *Print and politics*, Ye, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial*.

(Theatre Pictorial, 11.1912 – 8. 1917), which contain similar contents.⁶⁴ Around this time, he met Zhang Shichuan who was also involved in this field. According to Zheng's reminiscence, when Zhang Shichuan invited him to make films for the *Yaxiya* Film Company in 1913, he was editing the *Tuhua jubao*, while Zhang Shichuan was working at the *Shanghai xiaobao she* 上海小報社 (Shanghai Tabloid). They had already been on good terms (很有交情).⁶⁵

Zhou Jianyun made the acquaintance of Zheng Zhengqiu in 1915. According to Zhou Jianyun, Zheng visited him one day to express his appreciation for Zhou's articles in support of him when he met with malicious attacks by his colleagues in the *Minming* Society.⁶⁶ By the time, Zhou had made his name for his "bitter articles published in the periodicals of 'new thought' (*xin sichao zazhi* 新思潮雜誌)."⁶⁷ Throughout the second half of the 1910s, he worked in a variety of occupations. According to himself, he served as chief-editor of a small newspaper called *Jinsheng ribao* 金聲日報 (*Golden Voice Daily*, circa 1915); was a regular contributor or columnist to the *Feiting bao* 飛艇報 (*Airship*, edited by Guan Ji'an, circa 1915), *Fanhua zazhi* 繁華雜誌 (Plentiful Magazine, 1914 - 1915), and *Minguo ribao's* feuilleton "Random Talk" (*Xianhua* 閒話).⁶⁸ In addition, he was the director of the wealthy Jewish merchant Silas Aaron Hardoon's private library at his *Aili Garden* (*Aili yuan* 愛儷園); and editor of the *Jinzhang* 錦章 and *Jiaotong* 交通 Publishing Houses.⁶⁹

During this period, the five founders of Mingxing became acquainted with each other, and cooperated on several enterprises. In August 1915, Zhang Shichuan's uncle Jing Runsan (together with the prominent Shanghai entrepreneur Huang Chujiu 黃楚九) founded the famous amusement centre "New World" (*Xin shijie* 新世界), which housed various forms of amusement, such as theatres, ice rinks, and vaudevilles, and became a most popular entertainment venue for Shanghai residents and numerous visitors to the city.⁷⁰ Zhang Shichuan assisted his uncle in managing the "New World" and launched a small newspaper named *Xin shijie ribao* 新世界日報 (New World Daily) in July 1917.⁷¹

⁶⁴ Mu Zi, "Zheng Zhengqiu shengping xinian," pp. 96-7.

⁶⁵ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Zi wo daoyan yilai," ZWD, p. 398.

⁶⁶ Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong."

⁶⁷ *Zhongguo yingxun* 15 (28 June 1940).

⁶⁸ Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong."

⁶⁹ Xu Chihen, *Zhongguo yingxi daguan*, n.p.

⁷⁰ The New World opened on 4 Aug. 1915, see the ad in SB 3 Aug. 1915: 9; For an introduction of the New World, see Lu, *Beyond the neon lights*, p. 115.

⁷¹ *Xin shijie ribao* was published between 26 July 1917 and 3 March 1927. See the microfilms of the

Zheng Zhengqiu was invited to take up the editorship as "director" (*shezhang* 社長). Zheng then recruited Zhou Jianyun as editor.⁷²

In late 1918 or early 1919, Zhou Jianyun, Zheng Zhengqiu, Zheng Zhegu, Ren Jinping and some others started a small publishing house named *Xinmin tushuguan* 新民圖書館 (New People Publishing House). Zheng Zhengqiu was the chief executive (*dongshi zhang* 董事長), Zheng Zhegu the manager (*jingli* 經理) and Zhou Jianyun the chief editor (*zong bianji* 總編輯).⁷³ Aside from numerous books, the *Xinmin* Publishing House published two journals, the *Jiefang huabao* 解放畫報 (Emancipation Pictorial) and the *Chunsheng ribao* 春聲日報 (Spring Voice Daily), both edited by Zhou Jianyun, with Zheng Zhegu and Zheng Zhengqiu as distributors (*faxing ren* 發行人), respectively.⁷⁴

The inaugural issue of the *Jiefang huabao* is dated 4 May 1920, the first anniversary of the May Fourth Movement. It mainly deals with the problem of the emancipation of women, dedicated not to "profound thought which had been introduced in (academic) journals" (不談高深的學理，因為已經有專門書報) but to "discussing and criticizing plain and significant problems of life and promoting emancipation and improvement of the common people in order to reform the society and elevate the nation (只揀極平凡極切要的人生問題，討論，批評，做解放的工夫，做改造的工夫，引著多數平民，向光明路上走，以實現人的生活，盡人的責任，來革新舊社會，振興我們的國家)"⁷⁵ Its regular or irregular columns include "Commentary" (*Pinglun* 評論) which offers short commentaries on issues such as "why binding breast (為什麼束胸)" (no. 1), "socializing between men and women and marriage problem (男女社交和婚姻問題)" (no. 3.), "the problem of women's education (女子教育問題)" (no. 5); "Tide of Thought" (*Sichao* 思潮) that introduces miscellaneous thoughts mainly concerning the "women's problem (婦女問題);" "News" (*Xinwen* 新聞) regarding women's emancipation in China and abroad; "Knowledge" (*Zhishi* 知識) dedicated to the introduction of scientific knowledge; and

newspaper.

⁷² Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong."

⁷³ Ibid.; Also see Zhou Jianyun, "Zheng Zhegu jun 鄭鷓鴣君," *Dianying zazhi* 1 (May 1924).

⁷⁴ See colophons of these journals. Four issues of the *Jiefang huabao* are available in China-US Million Book Digital Library Project (<http://www.cadal.zju.edu.cn/Index.action>). *Chunsheng ribao* is available as microfilm in the Shanghai Municipal Library.

⁷⁵ Zhou Jianyun, "*Jiefang huabao* xuanyan 解放畫報宣言," *Jiefang huabao* 1 (4 May 1920), reprinted in Zhonggong zhongyang Makesi, Engesi, Liening, Sidalin zhuzuo bianyi ju yanjiu shi. ed, *Wusi shiqi qikan jieshao*, pp. 548-52. For a short introduction of the journal also see Chow, *Research guide to the May Fourth Movement*, p. 79.

literary sections such as "Poetry" (*Shi*), "Fiction" (*Xiaoshuo* 小說), "Drama" (*Juben* 劇本) that publish new-style poems, short stories, and plays in *baihua*, the vernacular language.⁷⁶

In many ways, the *Jiefang huabao* is a typical product of the May Fourth era. It displays characteristics of the expanding periodical press of the period, such as the adoption of the vernacular, the introduction of Western scientific knowledge, and the promotion of women's emancipation.⁷⁷ According to Zhou Jianyun, bold criticisms of the government and supports of students' demonstration within the magazine's pages often incurred penalties of thirty or forty Yuan from the Municipal Police.⁷⁸ The regular contributors to the magazine deserve special notice. Some of them, such as Pan Gongzhan and Ye Chucang 葉楚傖 (1887 - 1946), later became high-ranking cultural officials in the GMD government after 1927 and supervised the film industry. Others, such as Gu Kenfu, Xu Zhuodai (Xu Banmei), Guan Ji'an, ventured into the infant Chinese film industry at about the same time as Mingxing's founders. Qian Xingcun (A Ying), a future Communist, was to play a significant role in the 1930s at Mingxing. With hindsight, Mingxing's founders seem to have been prepared for their future business by building up a network of people who were to become influential, though certainly unconsciously at the time. The fact at least indicates that Mingxing's founders belonged to a circle of active and ambitious young men.

Between 1 May and 8 August 1921, the *Xinmin* Publishing House published a four-page small daily paper, the *Chunsheng ribao* (Spring Voice Daily), which focuses on theatre, while also carrying sections on commentaries, serialized fiction and cinema reviews. As editor-in-chief, Zhou Jianyun wrote many editorials and commentaries. In one editorial, for example, he stated that he was tired of "empty talk about politics" and preferred to practice the idea of "to substitute aesthetic education for religious indoctrination" (*meiyu dai zongjiao* 美育代宗教) advanced by Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868 - 1940).⁷⁹ For this purpose, in another article, Zhou Jianyun wrote that he opted for using theatre to "enlighten the masses" (*kai minzhi*).⁸⁰ Articles by Zheng Zhengqiu and Zheng Zhegu occasionally appear.⁸¹ Near the end of 1921, the *Xinmin* Publishing House was sold out because,

⁷⁶ Tables of contents of the periodical's sixteen issues (4 May 1920 - 30 Oct. 1921) are available in *Wusi shiqi qikan jieshao*, pp. 693-701.

⁷⁷ For an introduction of countless journals published after the May Fourth Movement and their common features see *Wusi shiqi qikan jieshao* and Chow, *Research guide to the May Fourth Movement*.

⁷⁸ Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong."

⁷⁹ Zhou Jianyun, "Shuzhi 述旨," *Chunsheng ribao* 2 (2 May 1921).

⁸⁰ Zhou Jianyun, "Tongxin yu 痛心語," *Chunsheng ribao* 48 (17 Jun. 1921).

⁸¹ For example, Zheng Zhengqiu's "Xinju tan 新劇談" is serialized in no. 2, no. 14 and other issues. Zheng Zhegu's "Tianzhong jie zhi tianchan yipie 天中節之天蟾一瞥" is published in no. 50.

according to Zhou Jianyun, its shareholders felt that the business was not sufficiently lucrative.⁸² In the next year, these persons would join again and start Mingxing.

To sum up, since the early 1910s, Mingxing's founders had actively engaged in Shanghai's cultural industry, the interlinked spheres of New Play and publishing in particular. They had worked in close collaboration and maintained contact with productive, creative, and influential people. Their experience had prepared them for their enterprise to be launched soon later with regard to management skills and resources, such as social networks and channels for fundraising. Furthermore, as moderately educated people who shared the contemporary intellectual convictions and commanded expertise with various forms of popular media, I argue, they acted as a bridge between the elitist intelligentsia who were eager to spread their new thoughts to a wider public and the less educated people to whom academic journals were hardly accessible.

After Mingxing was consolidated in 1924, many people with similar or different career backgrounds joined and played their part in bringing Zheng Zhengqiu's idea of combining "commercialism" and "didacticism" to fruition. In the following, I will examine Bao Tianxiao and Hong Shen, two earliest members of Mingxing's creative staff. My aim is to explore the factors that led Mingxing's managers to recruit Bao and Hong. I will illustrate later that (1) to a varying degree, these are also the factors that determined Mingxing's recruitment of numerous later employees at different times, be it so-called *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD writers; (2) these factors are connected with Mingxing's business tenet "commercialism plus conscience."

3.2 Bao Tianxiao and Hong Shen

Bao Tianxiao

In the spring of 1925, Mingxing employed Bao Tianxiao as screenwriter at the impressive monthly salary of 100 Yuan, together with the Harvard graduate Hong Shen as director at 40 Yuan.⁸³ Until Bao and Hong joined, Zheng Zhengqiu was the only screenwriter and Zhang Shichuan the only director. The employment of them can be regarded as part of the expansion programme that began in autumn 1924 (see Chapter 1, 35-7). By the time of Bao's employment by Mingxing, Bao had been a prominent member of the Shanghai publishing and literary scene for nearly two decades. Born in a merchant family in Suzhou

⁸² Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong."

⁸³ Bao Tianxiao, *Chuanying lou huiyilu*, pp. 654-655; For Hong's salary see Hong Shen, "Wo de dagu shiqi yijing guole me 我的打鼓時期已經過了麼?" in Sun Qingwen ed, *Hong Shen yanjiu zhuanji*, p. 239.

in 1876, Bao Tianxiao received traditional education, passed the *shengyuan* 生員 degree (the lowest level of civil service examination) in 1894, and then worked as a tutor.⁸⁴ He came to Shanghai in the early 1900s and embarked upon a colourful and successful career as editor, essayist, novelist, translator, and teacher.

As an editor, he worked for the *Shibao* 時報 (Eastern Times) for nearly thirteen years (from 1906 to 1919), while also editing or co-editing a number of fiction magazines, such as *Xiaoshuo shibao* 小說時報 (Fiction Times, founded in 1909), *Funü shibao* 婦女時報 (Women's Times, 1912), *Xiaoshuo daguan* 小說大觀 (Fiction Miscellany, 1915), *Xiaoshuo huabao* 小說畫報 (Fiction Pictorial, 1917), and the aforementioned *Xingqi* 星期 (The Sunday, 1922). As a writer, he was well known for his translated novels that feature children and education, commonly known as "education fiction" (*jiaoyu xiaoshuo* 教育小說). Serialized in the *Jiaoyu zazhi* 教育雜誌 (Education Magazine) of the Commercial Press, some of these novels, such as *Xin'er jiuxue ji* 馨兒就學記 (from *Cuore* [An Italian Schoolboy's Journal] by Edmondo de Amicis), received praise from the Ministry of Education and were selected as set texts in new-style schools.⁸⁵ He also published a large amount of short stories, novels and essays in the popular press.

Bao became acquainted with some of Mingxing's executives in the mid-1910s.⁸⁶ According to Zheng Zhengqiu, in 1914, when he was managing the *Xinmin* Society, he adapted Bao's translated novel *Konggu lan* 空谷蘭 (Orchid in the Empty Valley) for the stage.⁸⁷ Bao Tianxiao's involvement with cinema began with this novel and Zheng Zhengqiu's invitation. In Bao's memoirs, he related his story as follows:⁸⁸

One day, Zheng Zhengqiu came to see me in my office. He said: "Our Mingxing Film Company would like to ask you to write some screen scripts. My colleagues asked me to make the proposition." I replied: "I'm afraid you are asking a blind person for directions. I have no idea how to write a screen script. I've never seen such a piece, how could I venture writing one?" Zhengqiu said: "It's quite easy. Invent a story, and then write the plotline down. Of course, some twists and turns are advisable. But you know, these are no more than *lihe beihuan* 離合悲歡 (literally, 'grief and joy, separation and union')." I laughed: "This sounds no different from a novella. Why is it called screen script?" Zhengqiu explained: "It's exactly the way we work. We've read some of your 4000- to 5000-character short stories. You could simply write a story like those, or shorter. Then we

⁸⁴ The brief biography of Bao Tianxiao is mainly based on his memoir *Chuanying lou huiyilu*. For the journals Bao edited and his translations see Fan Yanqiao, *Minguo jiupai xiaoshuo shilue*, YHYZ, pp. 285-286, 322-323.

⁸⁵ Cf. Mei Chia-ling, "Bao Tianxiao yu Qingmo Minchu de jiaoyu xiaoshuo."

⁸⁶ Tianxiao, "Konggu lan zhijin zhi lishi 《空谷蘭》至今之歷史," *MT* 8 (*Konggu lan hao*), 1 May 1926.

⁸⁷ Zheng Zhengqiu, "She Konggu lan yingpian de dongji II 攝《空谷蘭》影片的動機(下)," *MT* 7 (*Xinren de jiating hao*), 1 Jan. 1926.

⁸⁸ Bao Tianxiao, *Chuanying lou huiyilu*, pp. 654-655.

CHAPTER THREE

can add some material, divide it into scenes, and expand it into a screen script. What do you think about the idea?"

I hesitated at first, but as someone critically noted, I have strong curiosity for different genres of literature and art. No matter whether my talent was sufficient or not, I felt I would like to try things out (*changshi* 嘗試), as Hu Shizhi 胡適之 put it.

I had never written a piece of the so-called screen story or screen script, but if what Zhengqiu said was true, that was really easy and there was no harm in trying. Before I could reply, Zhengqiu continued: "My colleagues suggest that you write a screen script for us each month, and we pay you 100 Yuan. We can sign a one-year contract first. Now you don't have to hasten to write screen scripts. You could rewrite two novels, *Konggu lan* and *Meihua luo* 梅花落 (Fallen Plum Blossoms), and give us a brief synopsis for each. We want to put them on the screen. You won't refuse us, will you?"

Only now did I realize that the real purpose of Zheng Zhengqiu's visit was to ask for my assent to produce the two stories on the screen. The suggestion to write screen scripts was in fact secondary. [...] A 5000-character story was to be paid 100 Yuan. Compared to the payment of 2 Yuan for 1000 characters for fiction manuscripts, this salary was fairly high.

The story suggests that it were the personal ties between Bao and Zheng (and probably with Zhang Shichuan and others as well) that made it possible to have the established writer join the fledgling film company. Another important piece of information is that Mingxing's executives regarded stories such as *Konggu lan* and *Meihua luo* as the right type to appeal to a mass audience. Bao Tianxiao's films will be examined in some detail in Chapters Six and Seven. Suffice it here to say that these stories are characterized by particularly complicated plots, with many sudden turns leading to emotional swings from extreme grief to extreme joy, or in Zheng Zhengqiu's words, *lihe beihuan*, a Chinese idiom which literally means "grief and joy, separation and union" and is often used to describe a person's life or a fictional story with many violent changes and emotional turbulences. *Konggu lan* is a typical story of this kind, which may be appropriately called melodrama (to be elaborated in Chapter Five), and proved to be a great success with contemporary movie audiences.

The history of the story itself is complex. Its original was a Victorian best-seller entitled *East Lynne* by Ellen Wood (1814 - 1887). After serialization in 1860 in London, numerous stage and film adaptations appeared in Europe and America within decades. In 1900, Kuroiwa Ruikō (1862 - 1920) translated it into Japanese and serialized it in the famous Tokyo tabloid *Yorozu Chōhō*. Ten years later, Bao Tianxiao introduced it to Chinese readers by the name of *Konggu lan* and serialized in the *Shibao* since 11 April 1910. It attracted a vast audience and was published in book form by the *Youzheng* Bookstore (有正書局) soon afterwards. As mentioned above, Zheng Zhengqiu's *Xinmin* Society staged it in April

1914. It became one of the most frequently performed plays during the period and a recognized classic of the New Play repertoire.⁸⁹

In 1925, Mingxing put the story on the screen. Premiered on the Chinese New Year's Day (13 Feb. 1926) at the *Zhongyang* Theatre, it was showing for two weeks at relatively high admission rates, and a rerun was demanded a few days later. At the time average film runs were only between four to seven days.⁹⁰ On the front page of the 8 March 1926 *Xinwenbao*, we find an advertisement for the film's rerun with the title "空谷蘭" displayed in a strikingly large size, much larger than the title of the newspaper (see Fig. 1). Soon afterwards, it was released to the provincial and foreign markets.⁹¹ It was reported that the film set the record in the silent era of Chinese cinema and generated returns of 132,337.17 Yuan.⁹²



Fig. 1 the front page of 8 Mar. 1926 *Xinwenbao*

Clearly, the employment of Bao Tianxiao who had shown great skill at producing this kind of popular story was quite rewarding. "Commercialism" was perhaps the main consideration for recruiting Bao Tianxiao. However, Bao's films were by no means had nothing to do with didacticism. I will elaborate on this point in Chapter Six. Suffice it here to quote Xu Chihen 徐恥痕, the editor of the 1927 book *Zhongguo yingxi daguan* 中國影戲大觀 (its own English title: *Filmdom in China*), who introduced Bao Tianxiao in this book as the following (emphasis marks are mine):⁹³

⁸⁹ For a detailed study of the story's cross-Eurasian tour, see Huang Xuelei, "From *East Lynne* to *Konggu lan*."

⁹⁰ See XWB's advertisements during the period.

⁹¹ XWB 8 Feb. 1926: A1, 27 Feb., 3 Mar.; Also see "Mingxing yingpian gongsi wei jingjin kaiying konggu lan qishi 明星影片公司為京津開映空谷蘭啟事," XWB 26 Feb. 1926: A2.

⁹² MXNB.

⁹³ Xu Chihen, *Zhongguo yingxi daguan*, Chapter "Xiaoshuo jia yu dianying jie zhi guanxi 小說家與電影界之關係" (The relationship between the novelists and the film world), n.p.

He initially had little interest in movies and only occasionally went to cinema as a distraction after his work. Gradually he has recognized that film is a form of social education and can be compared to fiction. Hence he began to write film scripts for film companies. Mingxing is the first film company which was willing to pay for his scripts at a high price and soon later recruited him as "director of screenwriting" (*bianju zhuren* 編劇主任). The films he wrote, such as *Kelian de guinü* 可憐的閨女 (A Pitiful Girl), *Duoqing de nüling* 多情的女伶 (A Romantic Actress), and *Furen zhi nü* 富人之女 (Daughter of a Wealthy Family), all have the function of changing (bettering) the social mores and manners. 君初不甚嗜電影，偶至影院，亦不過文字余暇，聊資消遣而已。既而覺電影亦為社會教育之一種，與小說有異途同歸之妙，乃稍稍撰制劇本，供制片公司之採用。明星公司首先以重金購之，旋且聘為編劇主任，所編如《可憐的閨女》《多情的女伶》《富人之女》，皆具移風易俗之功。

It is clear that, in Xu Chihen's opinion, in addition to the popular appeal Bao Tianxiao's films also possessed educative values. Mingxing's executives would continue to recruit popular writers of Bao Tianxiao's like. In early 1925, however, the person who joined Mingxing together with Bao was Hong Shen, a 31-year-old university lecturer and playwright with widely different education and career background from that of Bao. In what follows I attempt to find the rationale behind the recruitment of Hong Shen.

Hong Shen

Eighteen years younger than Bao Tianxiao, Hong Shen was a graduate of Tsinghua 清華 and Harvard Universities and taught Western literature at Fudan 復旦 University in 1925.⁹⁴ A theatre major who dreamt of becoming "Chinese Ibsen,"⁹⁵ he had actively engaged in theatre practice in writing and directing after returning to Shanghai in 1922 from the US. He took inspiration from Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* (1920) and wrote a play of realistic style, *Zhao Yanwang* 趙閻王 (Yama Zhao).⁹⁶ Presented at the *Xin wutai* 新舞臺 (New Stage) in February 1923, the play met with a lukewarm reception from the average audience. Some even thought that Hong Shen was "mad" by staging a play of such an alien genre.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, it created an opportunity for Hong to get to know a few like-minded dramatists, such as Ouyang Yuqian and Tian Han 田漢 (1898 - 1968).⁹⁸ On recommendation of Ouyang, Hong Shen joined the *Xiju xieshe* 戲劇協社 (Drama

⁹⁴ For Hong Shen's chronology see Qin Xiqing, "Hong Shen shengping yu chuanguo nianbiao."

⁹⁵ See Hong Shen, "Wo de dagu shiqi yijing guole me?" p. 237.

⁹⁶ The play's English translation (translated by Carolyn T. Brown) is selected in Gunn ed, *Twentieth-century Chinese drama: an anthology*, pp. 10-40.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ For the details that Hong Shen, Ouyang Yuqian and Tian Han got to know between each other, see Tian Han, "Dai xu," *Ouyang Yuqian wenji*, p. 7, and Tian Han, "Yi Hong Shen xiong," in *Hong Shen yanjiu zhuanji*, p. 30.

Cooperative Society), a Spoken Drama (*huaju* 話劇) society which was founded in 1921 as a school society and evolved into a commercial theatrical company later.⁹⁹

Hong Shen made his name by directing *Shao nainai de shanzi* 少奶奶的扇子, which he adapted from Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*. It was premiered in April 1924 at a school hall and presented for the second time at the *Olympic Theatre* from 30 June to 2 July, with admission fees as high as 2 and 3 Yuan.¹⁰⁰ It was perhaps the first time that this new genre *Spoken Drama/huaju* achieved commercial success and attracted a large audience, mostly from what a member of the *Xiju xieshe* called the "leisured classes," such as the writer Mao Dun.¹⁰¹ Around this time, as Mingxing was seeking an infusion of new blood, its executives noticed the young dramatist Hong Shen.

In late 1924, at the request of Zheng Zhengqiu, Gu Jianchen 谷劍塵 introduced Hong Shen to Zheng.¹⁰² Gu Jianchen used to be a regular contributor to the *Jiefang huabao* and worked for Mingxing for a short period as headmaster of its acting school. At this time, Gu was also a member of the *Xiju xieshe*.¹⁰³ Hong Shen accepted Mingxing's job offer and began to work in spring 1925. One of his tasks was to teach at the Mingxing *Shadowplay School* which reopened in April 1925.¹⁰⁴ Drawing upon his personal relationship with Mao Dun, he once invited the famous writer to give a lecture to the students of the school.¹⁰⁵

Hong Shen's first film *Feng da shaoye* 馮大少爺 (Young Master Feng) was turned out in August 1925. Mingxing advertised the screenwriter Hong Shen as "a theatre expert trained in the USA" (*Liumei xiju zhuanjia* 留美戲劇專家).¹⁰⁶ A student trained in the playwriting class of the Harvard professor George Pierce Baker and an admirer of Henrik Ibsen and Eugene O'Neill, he tended to employ the techniques of realism instead of melodrama.¹⁰⁷ In an article for the publicity of *Young Master Feng*, Zheng Zhengqiu characterized this film as "subtle" (*hanxu* 含蓄) and "meaningful" (*juanyong* 雋永) rather

⁹⁹ See Ying Yunwei 應云衛, "Huiyi Shanghai *Xiju xieshe* 回憶上海戲劇協社," in ZHWSJ II, pp. 1-10.

¹⁰⁰ See its ad on XWB 21 Jun. 1924: A1.

¹⁰¹ Gu Zhongyi said that the play "attracted the attention of the Shanghai leisured classes to Spoken Drama." See Gu Zhongyi 顧仲彝, "Xiju xieshe de guoqu 戲劇協社的過去" (*Hong Shen yanjiu zhuanji*, p. 70). Mao Dun attended the play and knew Hong Shen at the time. See Mao Dun, "Zhu Hong Shen xiansheng 祝洪深先生" (*Hong Shen yanjiu zhuanji*, p. 57).

¹⁰² Zhang Wei, "Zhongguo zaoqi dianyingshi shang de youguan renwu," *Shanghai dianying shiliao* 23, p. 129. As Hong Shen recalled, it was "several months later [after the performance of *Lady Windermere's Fan*]" that Mingxing recruited him as "script resultant." (See "Wo de dagu shiqi yijing guoqu le me?" p. 239).

¹⁰³ See *Jiefang huabao*; Zhang Wei, "Zhongguo zaoqi dianyingshi shang de youguan renwu," p. 129; Ying Yunwei, "Huiyi Shanghai *Xiju xieshe*."

¹⁰⁴ "Mingxing wuxiandian 明星無線電," *Dianying zazhi* 12 (Apr. 1925).

¹⁰⁵ Mao Dun, "Mao Dun huiyi lu," p. 302.

¹⁰⁶ See the advertisement for his first film *Feng da shaoye* in XWB 23 Sep. 1925.

¹⁰⁷ Hong Shen declared his opinion on directing in "Siyue li de qiangwei chuchu kai zhi guanggao 《四月裡底薔薇處處開》之廣告." *MT* 13 (30 June 1926).

than exciting or sentimental, and he further called on "those who have attended the play *Shao nainai de shanzi* and read Hong Shen's articles in the *Dongfang zazhi* 東方雜誌 (*Eastern Miscellany*, a magazine published by the Commercial Press, designed for intellectual readers)" to attend the movie.¹⁰⁸ The film received much critical acclaim, but failed to appeal to the ordinary movie-goer, maintaining a mediocre record of six-day run at the *Zhongyang* Theatre.¹⁰⁹ As mentioned above, Bao Tianxiao's *Konggu lan* released only half a year later enjoyed two-week run and a rerun soon later.

It deserves analysis that at this early stage, Mingxing's executives recruited the Western educated dramatist whose works could not ensure a wide popularity but attracted the patrons of Western-style drama and the readers of intellectual journals. Evidence suggests a number of possible reasons. First, the showy title "a theatre expert trained in the USA" (*Liumei xiju zhuanjia* 留美戲劇專家) hints that Hong Shen's "status" as a Western educated "expert" was regarded as important to the company's prestige. In fact, educational backgrounds of the employees who had studied abroad were always highlighted in Mingxing's advertisements and publicity texts. For example, the cameraman Wang Xuchang 汪煦昌 was publicized as "an expert who studied film production in France," and Shen Gao 沈浩, the teacher of its acting school, as "returned student" (*liuxue sheng* 留學生) from the US.¹¹⁰ Obviously Mingxing's executives wanted to impress newspaper readers (potential movie-goers) with the company's high-quality staff.

Second, Zheng Zhengqiu's article suggests that the tastes of the middle- and high-class movie-goers were also respected probably because these people could voice their opinions in the press. Contemporary sources show that film reviewers generally held Mingxing's productions to be "unsophisticated" (非藝術) because of their "popular appeal" (偏於通俗).¹¹¹ For example, in a review of *Xiao pengyou* 小朋友 (Little Friends, 1925) scripted by Bao Tianxiao, the author wrote: "For the middle- and lower -class audience, [the film] is quite touching and its educational value is great. For the members of the intelligentsia, however, the film may not be able to gratify their expectations (一般中等社會或下等階級

¹⁰⁸ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Feng da shaoye zhi guanggao: ti zhongguo dianying jie dachu xin tianxia 《馮大少爺》之廣告：替中國電影打出新天下," *MT* 4 (12 Sep. 1925).

¹⁰⁹ It showed at *Zhongyang* from 23 to 28 Sep. 1925. See ads in XWB. For the critical acclaim the film received see *MT* 4, 5; also see reviews to be quoted below.

¹¹⁰ See "Liufa dianying jishi Wang Xuchang lueli 留法電影技師汪煦昌略歷," *SB* 2 Apr. 1924: "benbu zengkan" 1; the advertisement "Mingxing yingsi xuexiao xuzhao nannü xinsheng 明星影戲學校續招男女新生," XWB 18 Apr. 1925: A2.

¹¹¹ Xinleng 心冷, "Zhongguo yingpian xinping 中國影片新評," *Guowen zhoubao* 國聞週報, 3 May 1925 (reprinted in *MT* 2, 5 Jun. 1925).

的觀眾看來，頗有感化的力量，收效一定不淺，智識階級中人，或未能十分滿足欲望)." ¹¹²

Seen in this light, the recruitment of Hong Shen may be understood as a measure to counter this image. Both Zheng Zhengqiu's article and advertisements for *Young Master Feng* stress that it is "a sophisticated work" (雋品) that "assimilates [elements of] literature and art (文學與藝術同化的作品)." ¹¹³ The artistic characteristics of the film, such as being "realistic," "subtle" (含蓄), and "meaningful" (雋永), were recognized and acclaimed by contemporary critics. It was hailed as a great artistic accomplishment which was "unprecedented" (空前的) in China, ¹¹⁴ the "best film" among Mingxing's releases (明星自出片以來最佳者). ¹¹⁵ Three years later, in a reader's letter to Hong Shen published in the *Minguo ribao* (Republican Daily), the reader expressed his/her admiration for Hong's films (particularly *Young Master Feng*) despite these films' "unpopularity with the mass audience." ¹¹⁶ It is hard to judge if these expressions of admiration involve exaggerations. Suffice it to say that positive critical opinions certainly projected a positive image for Mingxing.

In this sense, the employment of Hong Shen was equally rewarding, though his films were generally not as profitable as those by Bao Tianxiao. While ordinary movie-goers' responses determined a film's box office, intellectual audiences' attitudes moulded the public image of the company. Both were important to the business. Generally saying, the popular writer Bao Tianxiao was recruited principally for considerations for commercialism, while the university teacher Hong Shen was enlisted for sophistication and didacticism. To be specific, three major factors worked in tandem: interpersonal connections, commercial interests (i.e. the potential of the popularity of one's works), and respectability (i.e. the company's public image influenced by individual screenwriters' social standing, as well as artistic style and central ideas of their films). These factors often intertwined, however As mentioned previously, Bao Tianxiao's films also contained

¹¹² Tianlang 天狼, "Wei Xiao pengyou huihan ji 為《小朋友》揮汗記," *Shanghai huabao* 上海畫報, 30 Jun. 1925 (reprinted in MT 3, 27 Jul. 1925).

¹¹³ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Feng da shaoye zhi guanggao," op.cit; for the film's ad see XWB 23 Sep. 1925.

¹¹⁴ Tang Yueshi 唐越石, "Ping Feng da shaoye yingpian 評《馮大少爺》影片," SB 4 Sep. 1925: 18.

¹¹⁵ Ji Cheng 吉誠, "Tan xinpian Feng da shaoye 談新片《馮大少爺》," SB 5 Sep. 1925: "benbu zengkan" 4. For the similar opinion see Xiao jizhe 小記者, "Ping Feng da shaoye 評《馮大少爺》," XWB 24 Aug. 1925: "benbu fukan" 1.

¹¹⁶ He Wan 何琬, "Zhi Hong Shen jun yifeng xin 致洪深君一封信," *Minguo ribao* 11 Mar. 1928, "Dianying zhoukan 電影週刊."

elevated ideas to cater to critics' tastes for the benefit of Mingxing's public image. At the same time, Hong Shen's contribution to the company was not limited to didacticism.

While Bao Tianxiao stopped working for Mingxing after 1927 (for reasons unknown to us), having contributed altogether ten screen scripts, Hong Shen worked for Mingxing for a much longer period – nearly twelve years, though mostly part-time. He was one of the company's most prolific directors and screenwriters, leaving behind 21 films either written or directed by him (see Appendix I). Moreover, he was said to have been the employee Zhang Shichuan trusted most. According to Zhang's wife He Xiujun, "Shichuan admired him (Hong Shen) greatly. They felt like old friends at the first meeting. (石川對他佩服得五體投地。二人一見如故)"¹¹⁷ A journalist observed, "Zhang always places much trust in Hong Shen."¹¹⁸ Hong was even regarded as one of the "Powerful Three" (*san daheng* 三大亨) at Mingxing.¹¹⁹ His tasks were surprisingly varied. Apart from being screenwriter or director, he took leading roles in some of these films, travelled to the US to purchase sound equipment, and to Beijing to publicize *Konggu lan*, arranged accommodation for the shooting team of *Tixiao yinyuan* (Fate in Tears and Laughter, 1931) in Beijing, and was even responsible for trivial matters, such as interviewing candidates who applied for jobs as tailors at Mingxing.¹²⁰

As the size of the enterprise was increasing since the mid-1920s, following Bao Tianxiao and Hong Shen, a growing number of popular writers and journalists entered Mingxing, taking posts mainly at two sectors, publicity and screenwriting. In the following I will draw a portrait of these employees and test if the aforementioned three factors also worked in Mingxing's recruitment of these persons.

3.3 Popular writers and journalists at Mingxing: A portrait

Publicity has always been an important sector in the film industry. Pioneer film entrepreneurs in China seem to have realized this already in the infant stage of this industry. Publicists were hired to write intertitles (*zimu* 字幕) for silent films, to compose synopses

¹¹⁷ He Xiujun, p. 123.

¹¹⁸ "Hong Shen dingli xiangzhu, Zheng Xiaoqiu zuo fu daoyan 洪深鼎力相助，鄭小秋做副導演," *DS* 5.17 (1 May 1936): 411.

¹¹⁹ Hutou 戶頭, "Mingxing gongsi de 'San daheng' yu 'San xiaoheng'," *DS* 199 (16 Nov. 1932).

¹²⁰ He took leading roles in *Aiqing yu huangjin*, *Wei nüshi de zhiye*, and *Jiushi jinghua*. For his various tasks see Bihua, "Hong Shen zuochen fanguo 洪深昨晨返國," *Yingxi shenghuo* 32 (22 Aug. 1931); "Mingxing yingpian gongsi wei Jing Jin kaiying Konggu lan qishi 明星影片公司為京津開映空谷蘭啟事," *XWB* 26 Feb. 1926: A2; Hu Die, *Hu Die huiyi lu*; "Mingxing gongsi wei kaishe guzhuang pian tezhao caifeng guangao 明星公司為開攝古裝片特招裁縫廣告," *XWB* 21 Mar. 1927: A2.

(*benshi* 本事) to be printed in movie theatres' plot sheets (*shuoming shu* 說明書), to edit promotional journals, and to supply publicity materials to the press. Most people taking this post at Mingxing were active members on the literary and publishing scene.

Song Chiping was the first publicist Mingxing hired, working for the company between 1924 or 1925 and 1930. He was the author of the synopses of most Mingxing films released during the period and the editor of its promotional journal, the *Mingxing tekan* 明星特刊 (Mingxing Special Issue).¹²¹ He graduated from the Nanyang Public School (*Nanyang gongxue* 南洋公學), a premier modern educational institution in late Qing and early Republican China, which was the alma mater of many prominent literary figures, such as the famous popular writers Zhao Tiaokuang 趙苕狂 and Li Dingyi 李定夷.¹²² In addition, Song was a member of the Southern Society (*Nanshe* 南社, 1909 - 1936). The Southern Society was a famous literary group in modern Chinese history. It declared to wish to make use of literature as a form of political opposition, fighting against the autocracy of the Qing government. Its membership included a number of renowned revolutionaries such as Song Jiaoren 宋教仁, Huang Xing 黃興 and Chen Qimei 陳其美, as well as famed journalists and writers such as Shao Piaoping 邵飄萍, Yu Youren 于右任, Bao Tianxiao, Zhou Shoujuan and Xu Zhenya.¹²³

Like many of his contemporaries with similar educational background, Song Chiping took various occupations in journalism and education. His essays and short stories often appear in the popular journals.¹²⁴ Sporadic pieces of evidence suggest that he worked together with some of Mingxing's founders and employees on several occasions in the 1910s. He was an editor of the *Minquan* Publishing House (民權出版部), where Zheng Zhengqiu also worked for some time in 1912.¹²⁵ In 1918, both he and Zheng Zhengqiu were editors of the *Xiao wutai bao* 笑舞臺報 (Laughter Stage Daily).¹²⁶ Besides, as mentioned above, Song was a member of the pioneering New Play troupe *Xinju tongzhi*

¹²¹ For the synopses he wrote see ZWDJB.

¹²² For the short biography of Song see Zheng Yimei, *Nanshe congtan*, p. 139. For a discussion of the Nanyang Public School and its graduates see Gimpel, *Lost voices of modernity*, p. 187.

¹²³ See "Nanshe de shimo 南社的始末," in Shanghai tongshe, ed, *Shanghai yanjiu ziliao xubian*, pp. 486-502. Also see Zheng Yimei, *Nanshe congtan*.

¹²⁴ For the novels he wrote see YHWZ, p. 667.

¹²⁵ For Song Chiping's employment by the Minquan Publishing Devison, see Yao Min'ai 姚民哀, "Shuolin ruran tan 說林濡染譚," in YHYZ, p. 204 (first published in *Hong meigui* 2.40 [28 July 1926]).

¹²⁶ Mu Zi, "Zheng Zhengqiu shengping xinian," p. 98.

hui (New Play Comrade Society), whose members include Zheng Zhegu, Dong Tianya, Ouyang Yuqian and some other Mingxing employees.¹²⁷

It seems reasonable to assume that Song's personal ties with Zheng Zhengqiu, Zheng Zhegu, and probably the other executives might have motivated him to join the company. Moreover, his education, writing skills and work experience in journalism made him qualified to be a film studio publicist. Judged by his affiliation with the Southern Society and some other literary societies, such as the *Yunshe* 云社 (Cloud Society),¹²⁸ he might have established an extended personal network in the publishing industry. This network was of valuable help to the fledgling film studio. As the competition in the film industry was intensifying in the second half of the 1920s, media exposure became increasingly important.

This was manifested in the additional tasks which Song Chiping's successor Zhu Dake had to tackle. Zhu Dake was also an active participant in the publishing world. He was one of the founders of the famous tabloid *Jingangzuan bao* 金剛鑽報 (Diamond, 1923 - 1937),¹²⁹ served the editorships of the *Xinwenbao*, *Shenbao*, among others, and had written numerous novels and essays for various journals.¹³⁰ He joined Mingxing's publicity division around 1930. In addition to the routine jobs as what Song did, he was assigned the task of supplying the press with studio newsletters, star photos and stills.¹³¹ This task entailed close contact with the press. Zhu's capability in this job beyond doubt was based on his career background. Much the same can be said of Fan Yanqiao, director of Mingxing's publicity unit (*wenshu ke* 文書科) after 1935, whose career path was similar to those of Song and Fan in many respects.¹³²

The reason for recruiting Yan Duhe was slightly different. Yan Duhe was one of the most prominent editors and writers of the day. He had served as editor-in-chief of the *Xinwenbao*'s feuilleton "Kuaihuo lin" for nearly thirty years, and launched or edited

¹²⁷ See Ouyang Yuqian, "Huiyi Chunliu," p. 33.

¹²⁸ This is a literary group formed in 1928 by Fan Yanqiao, Song Chiping, Yao Sufeng and some others. See Zheng Yimei, *Nanshe congfan*, pp. 28-9.

¹²⁹ For introduction of the tabloid cf YHYZ, pp. 507-9.

¹³⁰ Zhu Dake's short biography, written by Zheng Yimei, is included in "Minguo jiupai xiaoshuo mingjia xiaoshi 民國舊派小說名家小史," in YHYZ, pp. 555-6.

¹³¹ According to a news report, Zheng Zhengqiu convened a meeting on 28 June 1931, at which they discussed how to improve their publicity campaigns. See Fu Yuan 馥園, "Zheng Zhengqiu nuli xuanchuan 鄭正秋努力宣傳," *Yingxi shenghuo* 25 (4 July 1931): 34.

¹³² See *DS* 5.4 (24 Jan. 1936), also see *MB* 7.1 (16 Oct. 1936). For the biographical information of Fan see Zheng Yimei, *Nanshe congfan*, pp. 200-201; also cf. Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, p. 164, p. 169; Fan Yanqiao, "Xingshe ganjiulu 星社感舊錄," YHWZ, pp. 197-200.

numerous popular magazines.¹³³ Yan never became a regular staff member of Mingxing, but provided his support at important junctures. In 1926, when the company published a call for new share subscriptions (*zhaogu* 招股), Yan Duhe signed as the editor of the *zhaogu* pamphlet.¹³⁴ In 1930, when an adaptation of Zhang Henshui's best-seller *Tixiao yinyuan* into a serial film was planned (see Chapter 1, 47-9), Yan was invited to write the screen script.¹³⁵ Obviously, he was not the only qualified candidate for these tasks which were not overly demanding in themselves. The reason for Mingxing's leaders to seek and publicize Yan's support, I assume, was the expectation that Yan's fame and prestige would attract investors and audiences. On 1 April 1926, Yan was invited to address the opening ceremony of the Zhongyang Theatre Company (*Zhongyang yingxi gongsi*), virtually Mingxing's theatre chain (see Chapter 1, 39).¹³⁶ This can be seen as another piece of evidence that demonstrates Yan's reputation.

Another area of the popular writers' contribution to Mingxing was film production. As shown in Chapter Two, dozens of films released by Mingxing were either written by recognized popular writers or adapted from their novels. A reader's letter published in the *Mingxing tekan* of 1 November 1927 provides an insight with regard to why Mingxing's managers chose these works for film adaptation. In this letter, the reader proposed to seek story material for film production from the novels by "celebrated writers" (*mingjia* 名家). Li Hanqiu 李涵秋's works, as he or she suggested, were good choices because these novels "feature not only romances but also social problems, combine serious matters with humour, and clearly show right and wrong (不惟涉及愛情，而且切合社會，莊諧並作，邪正分明)." ¹³⁷

It was reported that inspired by the reader's suggestion, Mingxing adapted Li Hanqiu's novel *Xiaofeng qiyuan* 俠鳳奇緣 (A Strange Tale of the Knight-Errant Phoenix, 1927) on the screen. Li was certainly a "celebrated writer" of the day. His best-known work is the ten-volume "social novel" *Guangling chao* 廣陵潮 (Tides of Yangzhou), which engendered a trend of satirical novels of this kind in the late 1910s.¹³⁸ Li was also a regular contributor

¹³³ For Yan Duhe's biography see *Shanghai xinwenzhi bianzhuai weiyuan hui*, ed, *Shanghai xinwen zhi* (online version, n.p.).

¹³⁴ The pamphlet is entitled "Mingxing yingpian gongsi tianzhao xingu jihuashu 明星影片公司添招新股計劃書," See XWB 9 Oct. 1926: A1. For its contents see Sun Lei, "Mingxing yingpian gongsi," pp. 149-151.

¹³⁵ See XWB 18 Sep. 1930: 5.

¹³⁶ Xiao jizhe 小記者, "Ji Zhongyang yingxi gongsi zhi kaimuli 記中央影戲公司之開幕禮," XWB 2 Apr. 1926 "benbu fukan."

¹³⁷ Ye Yan 葉剡, "Zhuzhang yong Hanqiu xiaoshuo zuo dianying juben de yifeng xin 主張用涵秋小說作電影劇本的一封信," *MT* 27 (1 Nov. 1927).

¹³⁸ Link, p. 22.

to and editor of several leading Shanghai newspapers' feuilletons and leisure magazines in the late 1910s and early 1920s.¹³⁹

Apart from Li Hanqiu (as well as Bao Tianxiao), recognized "celebrated writers" whose novels were put on the screen by Mingxing include the bestselling authors Xu Zhenya and Zhang Henshui, the detective fiction writer Cheng Xiaqing, "comic story" (滑稽小說) writer Xu Zhuodai (Banmei), knight-errant fiction author Pingjiang Buxiaosheng, as well as Chen Lengxue who published numerous serialized novels in the *Shibao*. When publicizing the films by these writers, the original authors were always highlighted. Examples can be found in the advertisements for *Yuli hun* 玉梨魂 (Jade Pear Spirit, 1924) by Xu Zhenya,¹⁴⁰ *Baiyun ta* 白雲塔 (The White Cloud Pagoda, 1928) by Chen Lengxue,¹⁴¹ *Tixiao yinyuan* (1931) by Zhang Henshui,¹⁴² and *Chuangshang renying* 窗上人影 (1931) by Cheng Xiaqing.¹⁴³ For instance, the advertisement for *Chuangshang renying* (Fig. 2 left, the emphasis mark is my own) contains a line which reads "著名偵探小說作家程小青先生編劇兼說明" (The famous detective writer Mr. Cheng Xiaqing is [the film's] screenwriter and writer of intertitles.) Lesser-known screenwriters' names were seldom given in advertisements. For example, the advertisement for *Tiexue qingnian* (Fig. 2 right) by Zhu Ranchen 朱染塵, an unknown writer, only highlights the film's director Zhang Shichuan. These demonstrate that Mingxing's publicists deemed it an honour to have "celebrated writers" as its screenwriters.



Fig. 2 Advertisements for *Chuangshang renying* (left; source: XWB 11 Jun. 1931: 24) and *Tiexue qingnian* (right; XWB 31 Dec. 1931: 20)

¹³⁹ See Fan Yanqiao 范煙橋, "Zuijin shiwu nian zhi xiaoshuo 最近十五年之小說," YHWZ, pp. 252-255; also cf. Link, p. 250, p. 260.

¹⁴⁰ XWB 9 May 1924: A1.

¹⁴¹ XWB 11 Apr. 1928.

¹⁴² XWB 26 Jun. 1932: 20.

¹⁴³ XWB 11 Jun. 1931: 24.

An interrelated factor in these writers' involvement in film production is the wide popularity of their novels. Adaptations of these novels always meant a guarantee of box-office returns. As mentioned previously, on 18 September 1930, Mingxing declared that they planned to adapt Zhang Henshui's bestseller *Tixiao yinyuan* for the screen in an announcement in the *Xinwenbao*. At the opening of this announcement, it was stated that adaptations of some such "literary works" (*wenyi zuopin* 文藝作品), such as *Konggu lan* (Orchid in the Empty Valley, 1925), *Meihua luo* (Fallen Plum Blossoms, 1927), *Baiyun ta*, and *Taohua hu* 桃花湖 (The Peach Blossom Lake, 1930), had been great successes.¹⁴⁴ As is known, "literary work" (*wenyi zuopin* 文藝作品) was a highly commendatory term usually used by writers of the New Literature to refer to their writings.¹⁴⁵ Apparently, the adaptation of these popular novels involved no sense of shame or embarrassment on the part of Mingxing's managers.

By contrast, in the 1920s, May Fourth writers' works, often full of strange Western vocabulary and literary techniques, were commonly considered exceedingly difficult to understand, let alone to be joyfully appreciated. For example, a reader complained:¹⁴⁶

Recently, some bold youngsters apply the grammar of foreign languages to write novels in Chinese and even use the foreign punctuation marks. Such words as *de* 的, *di* 底, *de* 地, *ta* 她 (prepositions and pronouns invented by the practitioners of New Literature at the time) are extremely confusing and make sentences incomprehensible. [...] Now that these texts are neither fish nor fowl, anyone who has some knowledge about the *xiaoshuo* definitely won't read them.

像現在一般妄徒，拿外國的文法，做中國的小說，還要加上外國的圈點，用外國的款式，什麼的呀、底呀、地呀、她呀，鬧得烏煙瘴氣，一句通順的句子也沒有...既然變了非驢非馬，稍微有點小說智識的，就決不去看他。

There are many more examples to suggest that literary works of New Literature were virtually unreadable to average readers who were used to reading Chinese traditional *xiaoshuo* (fiction).¹⁴⁷ From the perspective of "commercialism," it seems understandable that Mingxing's managers preferred to choose the works by Bao Tianxiao, Zhang Henshui and other popular writers for screen adaptation. However, I will illustrate in Chapters Five to Seven that commercialism and didacticism are not mutually exclusive in these writers'

¹⁴⁴ See the advertisement for Mingxing's plan to film *Tixiao yinyuan* in XWB 18 Sep. 1930: 5. The success of these adaptations was stated at the opening in order to explain why they planned to adapt *Tixiao yinyuan* for the screen.

¹⁴⁵ For example, in a journal by the Chinese Literary Association (*Wenxue yanjiu hui* 文學研究會), a renowned May Fourth literary group, the editor defined the creative writings on the pages as "women de zuopin 我們的作品" (our works). See Hockx, "The Chinese Literary Association (*Wenxue yanjiu hui*)," p. 85.

¹⁴⁶ Hanyun 寒雲, "Pi chuangzuo 辟創作," in YHWZ, p. 170 (first published in *Jingbao*, 30 July 1921).

¹⁴⁷ A reader complained Lu Xun's *Kuangren riji* as unreadable. See Xihu ren 西湖人, "Bu lingwu de Shen Yanbing xiansheng 不領悟的沈雁冰先生," YHWZ, p. 173 (first published in *Jingbao*, 24 July 1922).

films. A lot of prevalent intellectual ideas were included in their films in the service of education or enlightenment.

To conclude, the three factors that caused Mingxing's leaders to recruit Bao Tianxiao and Hong Shen – interpersonal connections, potential popularity of film works, and concerns for the company's public image – also worked in the employment of these popular writers and the adaptation of popular novels. Drives to maximize box-office revenues and to pursue a positive company image constantly defined the cultural landscape of the enterprise. Commercialism and didacticism intermingled in fulfilling these tasks. Besides, interpersonal connections played an important role. Nearly all the persons examined in this chapter, Mingxing's founding members, publicists, and screenwriters, belonged to a class of what may be called *cultural professionals*. I have been inspired by Christopher Rea who uses this term to refer to those who engaged in a wide variety of public cultural enterprises in Republican Shanghai.¹⁴⁸

Compared to the generic term "intellectual" which is useful to my thesis in a general sense (see Introduction, 16), the term "cultural professional" is more accurate in a narrower sense. As this chapter has demonstrated, the activities of Mingxing's managers and employees cut across the boundaries between different cultural spheres - literary, theatrical and cinematic creation, journalism and business practice. Moreover, this politically neutral term is useful in that all the so-called *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD writers as cultural professionals displayed significant common features. In a changing social environment in the 1930s, an ostensibly new breed of intellectuals joined Mingxing. Nevertheless, beneath the surface, I will demonstrate, similar factors worked in determining the cultural production at Mingxing. These cultural professionals, both in the 1920s and 1930s, acted as intermediaries who brought resources and ideas from the spheres of theatre and print to the cinema world.

¹⁴⁸ See Rea, "Comedy and Cultural Entrepreneurship in Xu Zhudai's *Huaji* Shanghai," p. 52.

Chapter Four

Cultural Professionals at Mingxing (II): Creative Staff in the 1930s

This chapter discusses Mingxing's creative staff in the 1930s. As stated in the introduction, this way of organization is not based on the chronological divide between the two decades but on the different social and intellectual climates on the two sides of this divide largely due to the Japanese invasions in 1931 and 1932. The first section of this chapter explores the implications of the Japanese invasions as well as the rise of the Lianhua Film Studio and the popular film press. I will demonstrate that these factors interacted to urge the film industry to make patriotic or socially engaged films in the early 1930s. Under the circumstances, writers affiliated with the *Zuolian* 左聯 (中國左翼作家聯盟/Chinese League of Left-wing Writers) and *Julian* 劇聯 (中國左翼戲劇家聯盟/Chinese League of Left-wing Dramatists) became good choices as screenwriters for film studios. The second and third sections of this chapter discuss why Mingxing's executives favoured writers of these organizations. A close analysis will illuminate that factors that led the managers to employ the 1920s popular writers also worked in this 1930s setting. These factors can also explain why Yao Sufeng and Liu Na'ou, the ostensibly pro-government writers who were very active literary figures of the day, entered Mingxing in the mid-1930s. These two persons are the focus of the fourth section of this chapter.

The purpose of these analyses is to make clear that concerns for commercialism, which have diverse manifestations, rather than political and ideological motives, were always fundamental in determining whom to recruit into Mingxing. However, making money was not enough. For Mingxing, the leading Shanghai film company, seeking for a positive public image was always deemed indispensable to the business. The pursuit of didacticism through films by celebrated writers can be seen as a means to attain the goal of enhancing the company's reputation. This aspect will be analyzed in Chapters Five to Seven in more detail. In this chapter, I will concentrate on the producers and why they joined the company and had chance to get their ideas across to the movie-going public. This investigation begins with the early 1930s when China's national crisis became grave. The film industry would be affected in a profound way.

4.1 A Changing Ecology of the Film World in the Early 1930s

In the Aftermath of the Japanese Invasions, 1931-1932

The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 (known as the September 18 Incident) and the following attack on Shanghai in 1932 (the January 28 Incident) were crucial moments in the history of Republican China. Politically and militarily, these events were the prelude to the Sino-Japanese War that commenced in July 1937. Moreover, these crises spurred a wild surge of nationalism which was of far-reaching significance for the future of China.¹ These events also had practical consequences for the film industry. Apart from the lost markets and destroyed theatres (see Chapter 1, 48-9), film products began to assume a different look in order to cater to the nationalistic sentiments permeating the popular film press.

For example, a fan magazine named *Yingxi shenghuo* 影戲生活 (its own English name: Movie Weekly) ran a series of editorials to call on the film industry to take actions for such a cause immediately after the September 18 Incident.² Their titles alone tell us much about the editors' attitudes. Some of these read: "National disaster is approaching! We call upon the film industry to rise up against Japanese invaders! 國難臨頭! 忠告電影界起來抗日!" (by Bihua 筆花, no. 38 of this journal), "Arise! Comrades who are enthusiastic about cinema! Let's organize the 'Society for Anti-Japanese and Anti-Imperialism Films'! 起來! 熱心電影的同志們! 組織'抗日反帝電影指導社'!" (Sha 莎, no. 42), "Arise film world! Let's participate in the work for saving our nation! 電影界起來! 參加救國工作吧!" (Lu Zidong 陸紫東, no. 47).

Under the circumstances, on 3 October 1931, the government's film censorship committee decreed that movie theatres should screen more films on the themes of "national shame, soldiers' life, patriotism, adventure and science" (國恥, 軍隊生活, 愛國, 冒險, 科學影片).³ This document stressed that film was the most effective tool to mobilize public opinion to promote patriotism as the Japanese invasion of Manchuria had stirred up

¹ For the significance of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, cf. Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*.

² The magazine was edited by Tang Bihua 湯筆花 and published by *Zhongguo dianying yanjiushe* 中國電影研究社 (the Society of Research on Chinese Film) in Shanghai from 26 Dec. 1930 to 9 Jan. 1932. From 7 Sep. 1932, it continued publication as a daily. Of fifteen editorials published from no. 38 (3 Oct. 1931) to no. 52 (9 Jan. 1932, the last issue of vol. 1, publication of the magazine resumed eight months later), ten were concerned with anti-Japanese mobilization.

³ "Zhi ge shengshi jiaoyu tingju qing chi ge yingxi yuan duo xuan guochi junshi shenghuo aiguo maoxian kexue deng pian suishi yingyan yi li minqi gonghan 致各省市教育廳局請飭知各影戲院多選國恥軍隊生活愛國冒險科學等片隨時映演以勵民氣公函," in *Jiaoyu neizheng bu dianying jiancha weiyuanhui gongzuo zong baogao*, p. 63.

patriotic sentiments among the people.⁴ To respond to both public opinion and the official order, Mingxing soon began producing films on patriotic and military themes, such as *Tiexue qingnian* 鐵血青年 (The Youth of Iron) premiered on 31 December 1931,⁵ and *Guohun de fuhuo* 國魂的復活 (The Resurrection of the National Spirit) on 22 September 1932.⁶

Besides, many Shanghai film studios produced war newsreels.⁷ Since films on anti-Japanese themes were prohibited in the foreign settlements, these newsreels or films had to be shown at movie theatres in the Chinese parts of the city. Three major Chinese-run theatres, the *Fu'an* 福安, *Zhabei* 閘北, *Gonghe* 共和, hence made lucrative profits because these films attracted not only those who lived nearby but also the inhabitants of foreign settlements.⁸ Mingxing participated in this trend by turning out a ten-reel semi-documentary, *Shanghai zhi zhan* 上海之戰 (The Shanghai War), which tells a fictional story about a family affected by the war, mixed with newsreel footage of the battle and speeches by two heroic Chinese generals.⁹

It was a sound film and showed at an open-air theatre in the Chinese area of Shanghai from 3 August 1932. Charging 0.6 to 1 Yuan, a price higher than usual, the film still met with a fairly warm reception, running for ten consecutive days and another seven days later at the request of audiences.¹⁰ From mid-October, it showed at the Fu'an Theatre for another two weeks.¹¹ Box-office revenues from this film must have been satisfactory. Adding some "serious" and "patriotic" ingredients into a film became a trend in the early 1930s Shanghai film world. It had been suggested in many contemporary writings that the Lianhua Company's rise and the thriving film press had also been instrumental in triggering this

⁴ But after the ceasefire in May 1932 the government banned movies on anti-Japanese themes. Cf. Kerlan-Stephens, "The enemy is coming."

⁵ See the advertisement for *Tiexue qingnian* in XWB 31 Dec. 1931: 20.

⁶ See advertisement in XWB 22 Sep. 1932: 22.

⁷ For a careful and profound study of the Shanghai War and its visual reflection in Chinese cinema, see Kerlan-Stephens, "The enemy is coming" (forthcoming; quoted with the author's permission). According to her research in *Shenbao* and *Diansheng ribao*, ten newsreels on the Shanghai War, including one made by a foreign correspondent, were released between June and October 1932.

⁸ Ying Qiu 映球, "Zhanshi pianyi le huajie xiyuan 戰事便宜了華界戲院," *Yingxi shenghuo* 71 (25 Sep. 1932). It could also be proved by the advertisements in *Xinwenbao* of the period.

⁹ See the advertisement in XWB 5 Aug. 1932.

¹⁰ See advertisements in XWB 16 Aug. 1932: 2, 27 Aug.: 24. The name of the open-air theatre was *Bali Huayuan Lutian dianying chang* 巴黎花園露天電影場 (Open-air Theatre of the Paris Garden). The *Zhongyang* Theatre normally charged admission fees ranging from 0.4 to 0.9 Yuan, and the other theatres of the *Zhongyang* chain charged even lower prices.

¹¹ The film ran at *Fu'an* from 14 Oct. to 22 Oct. 1932, and continued to 25 Oct. at the request of the audience. See advertisements for the film in XWB 14 Aug. 1932: 19, 22 Aug.: 22.

trend.¹² In the following I examine how Lianhua contributed to the changing atmosphere of the film world and how Mingxing was affected.

The Rise of Lianhua

Mingxing, Tianyi, and Lianhua 聯華 (its own English name: the United Photoplay Service) were widely recognized as the "Major Three" Chinese film studios before the war.¹³ Lianhua was the youngest, but by no means the least powerful. It developed from a theatre chain which owned over twenty movie houses in northern China by the late twenties. Its manager Luo Mingyou 羅明佑 (1900 - 1967) was from an illustrious family and a graduate from Peking University. Lianhua was founded in March 1930; its Board of Directors consisted of many business and political notables. With its headquarter in Hong Kong, Lianhua owned four studios, three in Shanghai (the former *Minxin*, *Da zhonghua baihe*, and *Shanghai Yingxi*, all merged into Lianhua) and one in Hong Kong (the former *Xianggang yingye*).¹⁴ Obviously, since its inception Lianhua had manifested its ambition in developing a vertically-integrated entertainment corporation on a nation-wide scale, rather than merely a Shanghai-based studio.

While martial arts films were still thriving at the time of its founding (see Chapter 1, 37-9), Luo Mingyou raised a catching slogan "Reviving National Cinema" (*Fuxing guopian* 復興國片).¹⁵ Lianhua absorbed a number of talented young directors, such as Cai Chusheng 蔡楚生 (1906 - 1968), Sun Yu, and Fei Mu 費穆 (1906 - 1951), who produced some films with contemporary settings (usually elaborate, in Western style) and on socially engaged themes. An annual review published in the *Diansheng* 電聲 (its own English name: Movietone), an important film journal in the 1930s (to be elaborated soon later), regarded three Lianhua films of 1932, *Rendao* 人道 (Humanity), *Tianming* 天明 (Daybreak) and *Duhui de zaochen* 都會的早晨 (Dawn over the Metropolis), as the

¹² See "Dianying zhongxing dashi ji 電影中興大事記," ZWD, p. 1330 (first published in *DS* 1934); Zheng Junli, p. 1430, Hu Tu 胡塗, "Guochan dianyingjie de zhuangkuang 國產電影界的狀況," *Yingxi shenghuo* 142 (7 Dec. 1932), etc.

¹³ See, for example, an official overview of 1933 film industry: Guo Youshou 郭有守, "Ershi'er nian zhi guochan yingpian 二十二年之國產影片," ZWD, p. 1048. Also see Zheng Junli, p. 1428; Le Sheng 樂生, "Yijiu sansan nian de kaishi shiqi, sanda yingpian gongsi de xin qushi 一九三三年的開始時期, 三大影片公司的新趨勢" (I), *Yingxi shenghuo* 179 (17 Jan. 1933).

¹⁴ For Lianhua's history see "Lianhua yingye gongsi si'nian jingli shi 聯華影業公司四年經歷史," ZWD, pp. 72-78 (first published in 1934 *Zhongguo dianying nianjian*), also cf. Anne Kerlan-Stephens, et al., "La compagnie cinématographique *Lianhua* et le cinéma progressiste chinois, 1930-1937."

¹⁵ "Lianhua jinxing zhong de zhiqu 聯華進行中的旨趣," *Yingxi zazhi* 1.10 (31 Oct. 1930). Also see Luo Mingyou 羅明佑, "Wei guopian fuxing wenti jinggao tongye shu 為國片復興問題敬告同業書," ZWD, pp. 768-9 (first published in *Yingxi zazhi* 1.9).

harbingers of "Chinese cinema's change," from an obsession with "martial arts and romance" (*wuxia yanqing* 武俠言情) to the lives of "the masses" (*shehui dazhong* 社會大眾).¹⁶ These films, as a journalist saw it, won the favour of "the majority of modern youth" (現代多數的青年們) – in this context, educated young movie-goers and critics.¹⁷

In contrast to Lianhua's "modernized" (*modeng hua* 摩登化) image, *Diansheng's* journalists regarded Mingxing and Tianyi as "conservative" (*shoujiu* 守舊).¹⁸ Apparently, Lianhua's rise posed a serious challenge to Mingxing not only as a commercial rival but also with regard to the company's image in the public opinion, two interlocked aspects. It is described in another article that "as Lianhua rises, the *Zhongyang* Theatre (Mingxing's first-run theatre) has descended to be a paradise of distraction (*Yule xiang* 娛樂鄉) for concubines, boys of rich families, and the illiterate populace. Mingxing appears to be getting behind the times."¹⁹

It can be certain that Mingxing's executives disliked this public image. In the *Shenbao* of 1 January 1933, Mingxing announced two major plans for 1933: a film which would summarize the five-thousand-year history of China, and a series of films promoting China's major industries, namely silk, tea, coal, and salt.²⁰ A journalist commented that "the salient point of the plan is to produce films that look more novel (*xinying* 新穎) in order to keep pace with Lianhua's silent films."²¹ A few months later, when Mingxing released *Kuangliu* 狂流 (Wild Torrent) by the *Zuolian* (League of Leftist Writers) writer Xia Yan, the critic Shu Yan 舒湮 wrote in an article entitled "Xiang shi yiban miaomang 像詩一般渺茫" (As vague as a poem) that "[under the influence of Lianhua], the eldest brother Mingxing finally woke up to the reality of our time. In the face of the commercial competition, it had no choice but to wake up ([聯華的發展], 老大的明星公司, 似乎也有了時代意識的醒覺 (雖然在企業的鬥爭上, 他們非有這種醒覺不可的))."²²

¹⁶ "Dianying zhongxing dashi ji," ZWD, p. 1335 (first published in *DS*, 1934).

¹⁷ Le Sheng, "Yijiu sansan nian de kaishi shiqi, sanda yingpian gongsi de xin qushi" (I), *Yingxi shenghuo* 179 (17 Jan. 1933).

¹⁸ "Shanghai sanda guochan yingpian gongsi de zhongxin sixiang 上海三大國產影片公司的中心思想," *DS* 31 (31 May 1932): 122.

¹⁹ "Guangmang sishe, quanguo zhumu de Mingxing yingpian gongsi zhi 'beicheng dazhan' 光芒四射、全國矚目的明星影片公司之'背城大戰'," *DS* 1.6 (6 May 1932).

²⁰ "Mingxing yingpian gongsi yijiusansan nian de liangda jihua 明星影片公司 1933 年的兩大計劃," see SB 1 Jan. 1933 "Dianying zhuankan."

²¹ Le Sheng, "Yijiu sansan nian de kaishi shiqi, sanda yingpian gongsi de xin qushi" (II), *Yingxi shenghuo* 180 (18 Jan. 1933).

²² Shu Yan 舒湮, "Xiang shi yiban miaomang 像詩一般的渺茫," *Chenbao* 6 Mar. 1933: 10.

In short, Lianhua's "modern" image, as well as its grand economic ambitions, put Mingxing under pressure. According to an article published in the *Mingxing yuebao*, the "trade bible" (*shengyi jing* 生意經) for the industry was "to make money without being condemned as outdated."²³ To make films with "new" ideas necessitated "new" brains. In this respect Lianhua had set a fine example. Hence, following the "trade bible," Mingxing's managers started searching for new staff in the early 1930s. The question remained who were the proper types of "new" screenwriter. The question closely relates to whose condemnation the film studios were subjected to. Answers can be found in the popular film press. The following exploration will demonstrate that the film press exerted a great influence on the film industry.

The Popular Film Press

Up to the early 1930s, the popular film press had had a decade-long history in China.²⁴ In mid-1932 a sudden surge occurred, triggered by the *Diansheng ribao* 電聲日報 (its own English name: Radio Movie News), a daily newspaper launched on 1 May 1932, later changed to a weekly named *Diansheng* 電聲 (its own English name: Movietone). The paper ran star and industry news, film reviews and rankings of specific movies and soon became very popular with movie fans.²⁵ Following its lead, many Shanghai leading newspapers set up film sections or supplements, such as the *Shibao's* "Dianying shibao 電影時報" (Movie Times) launched on 21 May 1932, the *Shishi xinbao's* "Xin Shanghai 新上海" (New Shanghai) on 4 June, and the *Chenbao's* "Meiri dianying 每日電影" (Movie Daily) on 8 July.²⁶ In addition, countless film magazines and tabloids flooded the market, but most remained short-lived.²⁷

²³ Xu Meixun 許美墳, "Zhongguo dianying de xin shiming 中國電影的新使命," *MY* 1.4 (1 Aug. 1933): 4.

²⁴ For a discussion of the early Shanghai film press see Yiyun Gezhu 憶雲閣主, "Tan dianying kanwu 談電影刊物," *ZWD*, pp. 267-8 (first published in *Minguo ribao* 28 Aug. 1926); Xu Chihen, "Guanyu yingxi chubanwu zhi diaocha," *ZWD*, pp. 269-73 (first published in *Zhongguo yingxi daguan*, 1927). For an internet bibliographic database see "Zhongguo xiandai dianying qikan quanmu shuzhi 中國現代電影期刊全目書志" (A complete bibliography of contemporary Chinese film periodicals): http://memoire.digilib.sh.cn/SHNH/book/book_index.jsp.

²⁵ For an introduction of the journal, see the above mentioned bibliographic database (http://memoire.digilib.sh.cn/SHNH/book/book_introduction.jsp?bookId=18053).

For the *Diansheng's* impact on the Shanghai film press, see Li Li 離離 (Chen Wu), "Shanghai dianying kanwu de jiantao 上海電影刊物的檢討," *ZZDY*, p. 127 (first published in *Minbao* "Yingtian," May 1934). Also see "Dianying kanwu zhi kongqian jilu 電影刊物之空前紀錄," *DS* 191 (8 Nov. 1932).

²⁶ Most of them are still available to date as microfilms. For a comprehensive survey of these film columns see Lu Si's *Yingping yijiu*, Lili (Chen Wu)'s "Shanghai dianying kanwu de jiantao."

²⁷ "Dianying kanwu zhi kongqian jilu," *DS* 191 (8 Nov. 1932), 192 (9 Nov), 193 (10 Nov).

The growing number of film journals brought increasing demand for contributors. Consequently, as a contemporary author saw it, film critic (*yingping ren* 影評人) as a new profession emerged.²⁸ By the time, the *Zuolian* (Chinese League of Left-wing Writers) established in March 1930 and the *Julian* (Chinese League of Left-wing Dramatists) established in January 1931 had absorbed a cluster of prominent writers, dramatists and performers.²⁹ Writers affiliated with these organizations dominated the film columns of influential metropolitan newspapers soon. They formed the Film Critics Group (*Yingpingren xiaozu* 影評人小組) in mid-1932 and wrote reviews for almost all major Shanghai newspapers' film sections on a daily basis. For example, Chen Wu wrote for the *Shibao's* "Movie Times" (電影時報) and *Shenbao's* "Movie Supplement" (電影專刊), Xia Yan, A Ying and Zheng Boqi for the *Chenbao's* "Movie Daily" (每日電影) and Lu Si 魯思 for the *Minbao's* "Movie Scene" (影壇).³⁰

Browsing through these newspapers, we find that these writers' names appear frequently. As Mu Shiyong 穆時英 (1912 - 1940), a writer of the "new sensationism school" (*Xin ganjue pai* 新感覺派), overtly pointed out, "film criticism has been deployed by the left-wing *Wenzong* (General League) and *Julian* as a means to carry out their political policies (影評一開始就被左翼 '文總'、'劇聯' 當作執行政治的策略地主要路線使用著)."³¹ Another author wrote in a sarcastic tone: "[The surge of film journals] gave rise to the emergence of a host of 'progressive' (*qianjin de* 前進的) critics, who wish to use their 'progressive' ideologies (*yishi* 意識) to lead domestic movies onto a 'progressive' path."³²

"*Yishi*" (ideology) and "*qianjin*" (progressive), along with "*baolu* 暴露" (exposure), "*zhuanbian* 轉變" (change), and some others, belong to the vocabulary specific to these writings. The key term is *yishi*, which is so pervasive in their writings that Mu Shiyong called these texts "*yishi/ideology-centred film criticisms*" (意識檢討中心主義的影評).³³

²⁸ Lin Zhen 林真, "Dianying de guannian 電影的觀念," *MB* 6.4 (1 Sep. 1936). Also see Hou Feng 侯楓, "Tan dianying piping jia 談電影批評家," *MB* 3.5 (16 Dec. 1935).

²⁹ Cf. Wong, *Politics and literature in Shanghai*, p. 6. Many researches have been devoted to the phenomenon, for example, Hsia, *The gate of darkness*, Lee, *The romantic generation of modern Chinese writers* (part III "The romantic left").

³⁰ Lu Si, *Yingping yijiu*, pp. 3-9. Also see Xia Yan, *Lanxun jiumeng lu*, pp. 234-5; Yu Ling 于伶, "Huiyi 'Julian' hua yingping 回憶 '劇聯' 話影評," *ZZDY*, pp. 934-37; Ling He 凌鶴, "Zuoyi julian de yingping xiaozu ji qita 左翼劇聯的影評小組及其它," *ZZDY*, pp. 938-41.

³¹ Mu Shiyong 穆時英, "Dangjin dianying piping de jiantao 當今電影批評的檢討," *Furen huabao* 31 (25 Aug. 1935), n.p.

³² "Yijiu sansan nian xinxing sizhong dianying kanwu 一九三三年新興四種電影刊物," *DS* 238 (25 Dec. 1932).

³³ Mu Shiyong, op. cit.

The term is a neologism rather than simply an equivalent of the English term "ideology." At the first level, a film's "yishi/ideology" means the "theme," "subject" or "central idea" of this film.³⁴ At the second level, when it comes to *what* the "yishi/ideology" of a specific film is, the critics often employed a few Marxist categories, such as "feudalism" (封建主義) or "anti-feudalism" (反封建主義), "anti-imperialism" (反帝國主義) and "petit bourgeois" (小資產階級).³⁵ In a word, the term *yishi* was more often applied as a tool for subjective evaluation than for objective description. Therefore, they defined certain *yishi/ideologies* as "correct" and others "incorrect."

According to Chen Wu (a CCP member), in his article "Dadao yiqie miyao he duyao, dianying ying zuo dazhong de shiliang 打倒一切迷藥和毒藥，電影應作大眾的食糧" (Fighting against all hallucinogens and poisons; movies should be the food for the masses), "incorrect" *yishi/ideology* was manifest in two kinds of film. One is analogous to "hallucinogens" (*miyao* 迷藥), such as the Paramount film *The Love Parade* (1929) and some domestic movies which "use wine, women, singing and dancing to numb the consciousness of the masses, [...] and to make them yield to the capitalist system (資本主義的社會組織)." The other resembles "poison" (*duyao* 毒藥), such as *The Three Musketeers* (1921) and the "burning" films (*Huoshao hongliansi, etc*) which "transport the 'feudal' ideology (封建意識) and display extreme vulgarity."³⁶ Instead, he proposed six subject matters illustrative of "correct" *yishi/ideology* in another article entitled "Zhongguo dianying zhi lu 中國電影之路" (The Road of Chinese Cinema): anti-religion (反宗教), anti-landlords/usurers (反地主高利貸者), anti-warlords (反軍閥), anti-imperialists (反帝), anti-imperialists' collaborators (反对帝國主義走狗), and descriptions of catastrophes (災

³⁴ For example, Riku wrote: "What is the soul of a film? It lies in its script's 'yishi/ideology'." (影片的靈魂是什麼呢？是腳本的意識。) In this case, "yishi/ideology" can be replaced by "theme" or "central idea." See Riku, "Xu gudu chunmeng: cong yishi fangmian lai piban 《續故都春夢》：從意識方面來批判," *Shibao* 22 Aug. 1932: "Dianying shibao."

³⁵ For example, as the above quoted article proceeds, "The film's *yishi/ideology* reflects a group of wavering petit bourgeois who prefer to be decadent rather than to be progressive." (這本腳本的意識，可以代表一般欲頹廢不願欲前進的在動搖中的小資產階級。) See *Ibid*.

In a review of Sun Yu's *Huoshan qingxue*, Xia Yan and Zheng Boqi wrote: "The film is fraught with the **anti-feudal yishi/ideology**. It is a great progress the director has made. 這部片子充滿著反封建的意識。這是作者的偉大進步." This "anti-feudal *yishi/ideology*," as the two reviewers saw it, manifested itself in the portrayals of "evil acts of 'local tyrants and evil gentry' (*tuhao lieshen*, shorthand 'tulie') 土劣的惡行" and "revenge of the sons of peasants 農人子弟的復仇." See Xi Naifang 席耐芳, Huang Zibu 黃子布, "*Huoshan qingxue* (review I)," *Chenbao* 16 Sep. 1932: "Meiri dianying".

³⁶ Chen Wu, "Dadao yiqie miyao he duyao, dianying ying zuo dazhong de shiliang 打倒一切迷藥和毒藥，電影應作大眾的食糧," *Shibao* 1 Jun. 1932: 5 "Dianying shibao." The Chinese title for *The Love Parade* is 璇宮艷史; *The Three Musketeers* is 三劍客.

荒).³⁷ Clearly, these categories and notions are congruent with the Communist ideology the CCP was propagating at the time.³⁸

It is not difficult to disentangle how the film industry was connected to the intellectual background. Film companies had always been aware of the importance of the print media in moulding public opinion. It was said to have been an "open secret" that many film magazines received "financial aid" from studios or movie theatres and virtually became their publicity tool.³⁹ Film directors were keenly attentive to critical voices in the press. As Zhang Shichuan said in 1933, "Each time after my film's premiere, I would read all the reviews in the newspapers very carefully."⁴⁰ In his confidential letter to the central government, the GMD official Lu Diping's interpretation seems quite logical: Since the CCP or *Zuolian* writers dominated the film press and evaluated each individual film through the prism of "correct *yishi*/ideology," film directors had little choice but to produce films in favour of their opinions.⁴¹ On the part of the film industry, Lu further stated:⁴²

If the studios produce films disagreeing with the Communist ideology, the studios will be criticized by the CCP (reviewers) and box-office returns will be affected (for example, Mingxing's *Tixiao yinyuan* suffered huge losses due to CCP's criticism). Therefore, though aware of the danger (of producing such films), (film companies) had to act as a propaganda tool for the CCP in order to attain their goal of making money.

講到公司方面，因為營業關係，如果攝片不秉承共黨意志，那末便會遭受 C.P. 的惡評，影響他們的收入（明星公司的啼笑因緣，因受共黨惡評，大虧其本，便是一例），所以不得不明知危險，也唯有甘作共黨宣傳工具，以達不管一切祇求賺錢的目的。

Huang Jiamo 黃嘉謨, a writer not affiliated with the *Zuolian*, satirized the situation in his article "Yingxing yingpian yu ruanxing yingpian 硬性影片和軟性影片" (Hard Cinema and Soft Cinema) by saying that film producers were eventually "raped" by those who can be addressed as "Mr. *Yishi*" (意識先生).⁴³ To be sure, these individuals' opinions are not necessarily entirely objective. Taken together, however, there should be little doubt that writers of the *Zuolian* occupied an important position in the film press. It was in this setting that Mingxing recruited Xia Yan, A Ying and Zheng Boqi, the leading members of

³⁷ Chen Wu, "Zhongguo dianying zhi lu 中國電影之路," first published in *MY* 1.1 (1 May 1933) and 1.2 (1 Jun. 1933); reprinted in *ZZDY*, pp. 66-74.

³⁸ Cf. Luk, *The Origins of Chinese Bolshevism.*, pp. 227-35; For analyses of the concepts of struggle and uprising in Chinese Communist ideology, cf. Ristaino, *China's art of revolution*, pp. 179-92.

³⁹ "Dianying kanwu zhi kongqian jilu 電影刊物之空前紀錄," *DS* 191 (8 Nov. 1932); also see "Dianying gongsi shoumai xiaobao zhi neimu 電影公司收買小報之內幕," *DS* 3.19 (24 May 1934): 365; Ying Tan 影探, "Dianying hua baozhi de chuanran 電影化報紙的傳染," *DS* 32 (1 Jun. 1932).

⁴⁰ Zhang Shichuan, "Chuansheng tong li 傳聲筒裡," *MY* 1.1 (1 May 1933).

⁴¹ See Lu Diping's confidential letter, No. 2 Historical Archives, Nanjing, 2 (2)-271/16J1505, dated April 5, 1933, pp. 19-23.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴³ Jiamo 嘉謨, "Yingxing yingpian yu ruanxing yingpian 硬性影片与软性影片," first published in *Xiandai dianying* 1.6 (1 Dec. 1933), reprinted in *Sanshi niandai zhongguo dianying pinglun wenxuan*, p. 844.

the *Zuolian*, in summer 1932. The next section examines why they were the right persons Mingxing's managers decided to recruit and were able to enlist.

4.2 The recruitment of Xia Yan, A Ying, and Zheng Boqi

In the first place, personal ties between Zhou Jianyun and A Ying played an important role. A Ying came from Wuhu 蕪湖 of the Anhui Province, which was also the native place of Zhou Jianyun.⁴⁴ A Ying attended a Shanghai technical school in the late 1910s. During the May Fourth Movement he served as an editor of the news bulletin of the Shanghai Student Union (*Shanghai xuesheng lianhe hui* 上海學生聯合會). Both Zhou Jianyun and Ren Jinping worked for the organization too.⁴⁵ It is not surprising that A Ying became acquainted with Zhou, his fellow townsman. Evidence of their acquaintance emerges from the *Jiefang huabao*, edited by Zhou Jianyun and published in 1920 and 1921 by the *Xinmin* Publishing House (新民圖書館) established by four of Mingxing's founders (see Chapter 3, 86-88).

A Ying was a regular contributor to this magazine. His writings are purely literary, such as the poems "Life" (人生, no. 5, 10 Oct), "A kiss" (一吻, no. 6, 30 Nov), "Eternal memory" (永憶, no. 9, 31 Mar. 1921), "A dahlia" (大麗花, no. 13, 30 July); a short story "Let him in" (都讓他進來, no. 14, 30 Aug); and a play "The sorrows of the peasants" (農民的悲哀, no. 16, 30 Nov).⁴⁶ In addition, the *Xinmin* Publishing House published his first book *Ertong tongxin* 兒童通信 (Correspondence with the children).⁴⁷ After graduation, A Ying took a variety of jobs in his hometown, as a teacher, a postman, and some others. It is interesting to note that he worked for the Wuhu agency of the *Liuhe* Company for a period in the mid-1920s.⁴⁸ Zhou Jianyun was the manager of the joint movie distribution company (see Chapter One, 39-40).

In 1927, A Ying joined the Communist Party and gradually emerged as a leading figure of the party's propaganda campaigns. In October 1929, together with Xia Yan and Zheng Boqi, he founded the Shanghai Art Drama Society (*Shanghai yishu jushe* 上海藝術劇社),

⁴⁴ A Ying's biography is based on Zhang Junxiang and Cheng Jihua, eds., *Zhongguo dianying da cidian*, p. 6, and *Zhongguo dianyingjia liezhuan* (vol. I), pp. 76-83.

⁴⁵ Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong."

⁴⁶ For the tables of contents of all sixteen issues of the magazine, see Zhonggong zhongyang Ma Kesi, En Gesi, Lie Ning, Si Dalin zhuzuo bianyiju yanjiushi, ed, *Wusi shiqi qikan jieshao* (vol. II), pp. 693-701.

⁴⁷ "A Ying zhuzuo mulu 阿英著作目錄," in A Ying, *A Ying wenji*, p. 895.

⁴⁸ Cheng Shuren, *Zhonghua yingye nianjian*.

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which was said to be under the direct leadership of the CCP.⁴⁹ Further, he was one of the seven standing committee members of the *Zuolian*, along with Lu Xun, Tian Han, Xia Yan, Zheng Boqi, and others.⁵⁰ He was also a core member of the *Julian*. Xia Yan and Zheng Boqi were his close colleagues.

Xia Yan studied engineering at the Kyushu Engineering School in Japan.⁵¹ His real fascination, however, was philosophy, literature and politics. In April 1927, he returned to Shanghai and joined the CCP. He earned his livelihood by translating literary works from Japanese. In the meantime, he worked underground for the CCP, organizing drama troupes, editing literary magazines, and being a core member of the *Zuolian* and *Julian*. Zheng Boqi, five years older than A Ying and Xia Yan, was a graduate from the missionary Aurora College in Shanghai and the Kyoto Imperial University in Japan. He was an early member of the *Chuangzao she* (Creation Society), and had a varied and distinguished career in literature, journalism and theatre in the same period from the late 1920s to mid-1930s in Shanghai.⁵² He never joined the CCP, but was actively involved in the *Zuolian* and *Julian*. Against this backdrop Zheng Boqi, Xia Yan and A Ying joined together and entered Mingxing. The story is related in Xia Yan's memoirs as follows:⁵³

One day in early summer 1932, probably in late May, A Ying came to visit me. He said his fellow townsman and good friend Zhou Jianyun, the executive of the Mingxing Film Company, had asked him to invite three "new cultural workers" (新文藝工作者) to work for the company as "script consultants" (編劇顧問). Though being a layman of the trade, I felt tempted.

Shortly afterwards, we brought up the issue at a meeting of the Party's Cultural Committee (文委). The meeting was chaired by Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 and attended by Du Guoxiang 杜國庠, Tian Han, Yang Hansheng 陽翰笙, and Ding Ling 丁玲 (probably). Some participants, such as Tian Han, considered this a feasible project, while others voiced opinions against. Qu Qiubai suggested further investigations and careful consideration.

After the meeting, A Ying and I consulted with Hong Shen. To our surprise, Hong told us it had been him who had proposed the idea to Mingxing's leaders. He explained that the *Tixiao yinyuan* (Fate in Tears and Laughter) lawsuit and a scandal of its leading star Hu Die placed Mingxing's bosses into an awkward situation in financial and public image terms.⁵⁴ Moreover, the Japanese invasions evoked widespread patriotic zeal and made people lose interest in martial arts and hackneyed romantic films. Therefore, as Zhang Shichuan's "advisor," he suggested a "change in directions" (轉變方向) by recruiting "left-wing writers" (左翼作家). Zhang Shichuan trusted Hong Shen's opinions and agreed.

⁴⁹ Xia Yan 夏衍, "Nanwang de 1930 難忘的 1930 年," ZHWSJ I, p. 145; Xia Yan, *Lanxun jiumeng lu*, pp. 159-163. Also see Bernd Eberstein, *Das chinesische Theater im 20. Jahrhundert*, pp. 97-102.

⁵⁰ Yao Shixiao, p. 467; Wong, pp. 59-63.

⁵¹ His early career is primarily based on his memoir *Lanxun jiumeng lu*; and Shen Yun, "Xia Yan shengping nianbiao (disi gao)."

⁵² For his biography see *Zhongguo dianyingjia liezhuan* I, pp. 196-201. For a study of his varied career in 1930s Shanghai, see Ge Fei, "Dushi xuanwo zhong de duochong wenhua shenfen yu luxiang."

⁵³ Xia Yan, *Lanxun jiumeng lu*, pp. 224-232.

⁵⁴ It was rumoured that in September 1931, at the time the Japanese armies occupied Shenyang, Zhang Xueliang, the regional militarist who had held sway over the Northeast, was dancing with Hu Die in Beijing. For the details of the rumour see Hu Die, *Hu Die huiyi lu*, pp. 64-6.

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Further, we learned from Hong Shen that Mingxing's bosses would expect us to attend script meetings once or twice a month to discuss specific film scripts and ideally to contribute our own. In return, we would be paid 50 Yuan per month for consulting and extra for scripts. We were allowed to use pseudonyms and concealment of our political identity was guaranteed. At the end of June, we reported the results of our investigation to Qu Qiubai at a party meeting. Qu responded positively and said:

"Cinema is the most popular form in culture and art. When we will have 'seized power,' we will have to develop our own film industry. Now that we have this opportunity, it won't hurt to use the capitalists' equipment to learn some skills. Of course, it's only a try. Don't expect too much and don't fantasize that capitalists would allow you to make 'proletarian films' (無產階級電影). They only invited you three, and you have neither experience in filmmaking nor special skills to deal with capitalists, so you must be very careful."

On a summer evening, we met with Zhou Jianyun at a café. Zhou quite openly talked about Mingxing's urgent need for our help. I gingerly expressed our worries about censorship. Zhou agreed that censorship was inevitable, but not a big problem. He provided a somewhat mystifying explanation:

"You perhaps have little knowledge about this. Be it the Municipal Council or the GMD's Shanghai Branch, as long as we have acquaintances and 'burn joss-sticks' (which means 'bribe') when necessary, problems can be resolved. Precisely for this reason we will omit your real names in the appointment letters. I believe you fully understand these circumstances we have to deal with."

Soon afterwards, we attended a script meeting. Along with the three company executives, Hong Shen and another three directors, as well as a secretary were present. After Zhang Shichuan's short welcome address, Hong Shen delivered a long speech. We were shocked at Hong's "boldness" when he raised his voice and said:

"Each film is scrutinized by the Municipal Council and the GMD's Shanghai Branch. But 'there are no rules without exceptions' (he said this in English). So, please carefully read the censorship regulations first, and then try to come up with methods to cope with it."

We were even more surprised to see that Zhang Shichuan and Zheng Zhengqiu smiled and nodded, showing their tacit agreement with Hong's view. After a discussion about the situation, we reached the following conclusions: First, the attitude of Mingxing's leaders was sincere; it was not a trap. Second, Zhang Shichuan had the final say in all matters, and he trusted Hong Shen. Third, we thought Hong Shen was too "bold." As newcomers, we decided to act moderately and tried to foster good relations with the bosses and colleagues.

This is the only available version of the story. No other participants or witnesses have ever provided details that support or contradict this version.⁵⁵ But there is no doubt that the three *Zuolian* members, along with Tian Han, Yang Hansheng, and some others, joined the film industry. There is an implicit mention in the *Diansheng's* annual review: "In 1933, Chinese cinema style changed greatly. It now tended to present [the lives of] the masses. Film studios hastened to recruit celebrated screenwriters. Apart from Hong Shen who was already working for the company, Mingxing recruited Tian Han, Shen Duanxian (Xia Yan) and others to form a script committee. 1933年，中國電影作風起極大之轉變，其傾向都偏於大眾方面，各公司爭聘名家編劇，明星公司除已有之洪深外，又聘田漢、沈

⁵⁵ Mingxing's three leaders and some relevant directors left no written materials about the event; neither did A Ying and Zheng Boqi.

端先等組織劇本審定委員會"⁵⁶ Clearly, Hong Shen, Tian Han and Xia Yan are all *Zuolian* members. In January 1934, an organization named *Zhongguo qingnian changong da tongmeng* 中國青年鑷共大同盟 (Anti-Communist Ally of Chinese Youth) posted a public letter in leading Shanghai newspapers in order to intimidate studios and movie theatres which had produced or screened what it called "red" (*chihua* 赤化) movies.⁵⁷ Several Mingxing films were on this blacklist and among seven "red" writers it identified, five had relation with Mingxing: Tian Han, Xia Yan, A Ying, Mao Dun, and Shen Xiling.

It can be certain that Mingxing's executives were aware of the political identity of these writers as well as the risks of having them as employees. In fact, Zhang Shichuan received a warning from the generalissimo Chiang Kaishek as early as May 1933 when Mingxing's film crew was invited to shoot a propaganda film on the annihilation campaign against the Communists in Jiangxi (see Chapter 1, 44-5). According to their work log published in the *Mingxing yuebao*, one day, Chiang summoned Zhang Shichuan to his office and said: "I've heard that a lot of 'radicals' (過激份子) have infiltrated Shanghai's film studios and used film to their propaganda ends, for example, so-and-so (not specified in the text). Is this true? You come from Shanghai and work in the film world, you ought to know. Please tell me in detail as much as possible!" Obviously, "radicals" denote CCP members in this context. Zhang Shichuan's answer was fairly clever: "It may be true, but we have no hard proof, so I can't exactly tell who is and who is not."⁵⁸

Chiang probably never expected to learn anything substantial from Zhang Shichuan; he should have had other better channels to obtain information. The interview can be understood as a sign of warning. Yet interestingly enough, Zhang Shichuan seemed not to have taken the warning seriously. Xia Yan, A Ying and Zheng Boqi would not withdraw from Mingxing until one and a half years later. This indicates how much weight Mingxing's executives placed on having Xia Yan and his colleagues as screenwriters, great enough to make them take the risk dismissing the warning from Chiang Kai-shek and anti-Communist organizations. *Kuangliu* 狂流 (Wild Torrent) scripted by Xia Yan is a revealing example to illustrate why Mingxing's managers deemed these CCP and *Zuolian* writers so important.

⁵⁶ "Dianying zhongxing dashi ji," ZWD, p. 1336 (first published in *DS*, 1934).

⁵⁷ "*Zhongguo qingnian changong da tongmeng* wei chanchu dianying jie chihua huodong xuanyan 中國青年鑷共大同盟為鑷除電影界赤化活動宣言," *Damei wanbao* 23 Jan. 1934: 3.

⁵⁸ Wang Qianbai 王乾白, "Ganxing jishi - Wei Jiang Weiyuanzhang deng she jiaofei shengpian 贛行紀實——為蔣委員長等攝剿匪聲片" II, *MY* 1.4 (1 Aug. 1933): 13-4.

The film is set in the great Yangtze floods and revolves surrounding the conflicts between the villagers who are struggling against the floods and a local official who embezzles the relief funds (a detailed analysis of the film is to be conducted in Chapter 5, 162-8). Mingxing publicized the film as "a film of changed style" (*zhuanbian zuofeng zhi zuo* 轉變作風之作).⁵⁹ The *Chenbao's* film column "Meiri dianying" ran a series of reviews of the film for two days which occupy two whole pages. Most of the reviewers held positive opinions towards the film. Generally, these critics considered the film laudable for its exposé of "the vice of evil tyrants and local gentry (暴露著土豪劣紳的罪惡)"⁶⁰ and "the downfall of feudal forces" (封建勢力的崩潰沒落).⁶¹ The renowned writer Mao Dun, who had criticized the martial arts film *Burning* (*Huoshao hongliansi*) and the romance *Fate* (*Tixiao yinyuan*) as typical "feudal art works catering to petit urbanites" (封建的小市民文藝),⁶² spoke highly of *Torrent* and applauded Mingxing's "changed style" in his article published in the *Shenbao*.⁶³

Mao Dun's opinion was echoed in an article in the fan magazine *Yingmi zhoubao* (Movie Fans Weekly). The author called Mingxing's past releases "backward feudal works" (沒落的封建作品), which were demonstrated by *Burning* and *Fate*, while the recent works such as *Torrent* "works of the new school" (新派的作品). As he/she observed, *Torrent* brought to Mingxing "an unprecedented harvest in reputation" (聲譽上的空前的收獲) and "fairly satisfactory returns in box-office" (營業上相當可觀).⁶⁴ We have reason to argue that the screenwriter Xia Yan should have played an important role in bringing these positive critical opinions on *Torrent*. As mentioned above, Xia Yan himself was a regular contributor to the *Chenbao's* film column.⁶⁵ Two reviews of *Torrent* published in this newspaper were written by Zheng Boqi (under his penname Xi Naifang) and A Ying (Feng Wu).⁶⁶ Mao Dun was also a member of the *Zuolian*. In a word, most of the reviewers who

⁵⁹ For the film's ads see *Chenbao* 4 Apr. 1933: 10, XWB 11 Mar. 1933: "benbu fukan" 8.

⁶⁰ Sufeng 蘇鳳, "Xin de lianghao de shouhuo 新的良好的收獲," *Chenbao* 6 Mar. 1933: 10.

⁶¹ Shu Yan, "Xiang shi yiban de miaomang," *Chenbao* 6 Mar. 1933: 10.

Sufeng and Shu Yan's views are shared by many *Chenbao* reviewers. See An E 安娥's "*Kuangliu yishi lun* 狂流意識論", Xi Naifang 席耐芳's "*Kuangliu de pingjia* 狂流的評價", and Fengwu 鳳吾's "Du An E xiansheng de 'Kuangliu yishi lun' 讀安娥先生的《狂流意識論》." See *Chenbao* 6 and 7 Mar. 1933: 10, and also 10 Mar.: 10.

⁶² Mao Dun, "Fengjian de xiaoshimin wenyi 封建的小市民文藝," *Dongfang Zazhi* 30.3 (1 Jan. 1933).

⁶³ Mao Dun, "*Kuangliu yu Chengshi zhi ye* 《狂流》與《城市之夜》," *Shenbao* 24 Mar. 1933, "Ziyou tan," reprinted in ZZDY, p. 413.

⁶⁴ "Mingxing gongsi kai daoche 明星公司開倒車," *Yingmi zhoubao* 1.8 (14 Nov. 1934): 132.

⁶⁵ Evidence can be easily found in the newspaper.

⁶⁶ Xi Naifang 席耐芳, "*Kuangliu de pingjia* 狂流的評價," *Chenbao* 7 Mar. 1933: 10; Fengwu 鳳吾, "Du An E xiansheng de 'Kuangliu yishi lun' 讀安娥先生的《狂流意識論》," *Chenbao* 10 Mar. 1933: 10.

praised *Torrent* were Xia Yan's close colleagues. Positive opinions towards this film (and others by Zheng and A Ying as well) could certainly be expected. Though there is no direct evidence to link positive critical opinions to high box-office returns, the *Yingmi zhoubao's* journalist suggested this connection.

In addition, *Torrent* received positive evaluation from the authorities. In May 1933, it won a prize as one of the "Best Domestic Films" (*Guochan zuiyou pian* 國產最優片) in a government film competition.⁶⁷ As discussed in Chapter One (43), at the time, the government encouraged the film industry to produce socially responsible films with didactic values. It was highly probable that for this reason *Torrent* won this prize. In an annual report on Chinese cinema in 1933, the film censor Guo Youshou 郭有守 deemed it to be remarkable progress when the film industry stopped producing martial arts films and turned attention to "social realism" (社會寫實). *Torrent* was singled out as a successful piece of this genre.⁶⁸ This indicates that what the *Zuolian* writer Xia Yan promoted in his film did not conflict with the government's call for social engagement in filmmaking.⁶⁹

It has been clear that, indeed, *Torrent* perfectly agrees with the idea of "commercialism plus didacticism." It made money and was considered valuable in terms of education. Beyond doubt Mingxing's leaders were happy to see this result and considered the recruitment of Xia Yan and his colleagues a correct decision. In an oft-quoted essay entitled "How to Embark on a Progressive Road" (如何走上前進之路), Zheng Zhengqiu expressed his appreciation to "progressive film critics" (前進批評家) who had brought new thought (新思潮) to the film world and created a new environment (新的環境).⁷⁰ Zhang Shichuan also applauded the fact that cinema which had been separated from the territory of new culture (*xin wenhua* 新文化) now joined this realm.⁷¹

Mingxing's employees also responded to the "changed style" positively. The director Cheng Bugao stated that "in recent times we need screen plays with correct *yishi*/ideology (意識準確)."⁷² Li Pingqian, another director, declared that he would give up his old belief in "art for art's sake" and would follow "a group of new friends" to create "a new cinema"

⁶⁷ The competition was organized by a semi-government organization affiliated to the Ministry of Propaganda, the National Educational Cinematographic Society of China (its own English name for *Zhongguo jiaoyu dianying xiehui* 中國教育電影協會). See *Mingxing yuebao* 1.2 (1 Jun. 1933): n.p.

⁶⁸ Guo Youshou, "Ershi'er nian zhi guochan dianying 二十二年之國產電影," ZWD, p. 1045 (first published in *Zhongguo dianying nianjian*, 1934).

⁶⁹ Xiao Zhiwei has dealt with this topic in Xiao, "Sanshi niandai 'zuoyi dianying' de shenhua."

⁷⁰ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Ruhe zoushang qianjin zhi lu 如何走上前進之路," *MY* 1.1 (1 May 1933).

⁷¹ Zhang Shichuan, "Chuansheng tong li 傳聲筒裡," *MY* 1.1 (1 May 1933).

⁷² Cheng Bugao, "Women de zhanchang 我們的戰場," *MY* 1.1 (1 May 1933).

(新興的電影).⁷³ Mingxing's actress Ai Xia 艾霞 wrote, "There is no denying the fact that compared to the cinema of 1932, the 1933 cinema is epoch-making. It is no longer a distraction for the leisured classes."⁷⁴ When the celebrated star Hu Die was asked for her opinion on "the change of style" (轉變作風), she answered: "In the past, we placed too much emphasis on describing urban life; [...] now we are directing attention to rural life and farming."⁷⁵

These pieces of information testify to the positive attitude of Mingxing's leadership and staff towards these *Zuolian* writers and the "change of style." Practical benefits outweighed likely political risks. Upon careful analysis, it is clear that the reasons for employing Bao Tianxiao and the 1920s popular writers are also suitable for explaining why Xia Yan and his colleagues were recruited. The native-place tie between A Ying and Zhou Jianyun as well as the social networks between the *Zuolian* writers suggest that personal connections were fundamental in the first place. Further, these writers were able to produce films combining elements of commercialism and didacticism and to publicize their films through their social networks. In other words, Mingxing reaped the reward of both money and respectability. In this intellectual and social situation in the early 1930s, *Zuolian* writers became better choices and made more business sense. Along with Xia Yan, A Ying and Zheng Boqi, many other members of the *Zuolian* and *Julian* joined Mingxing.

4.3 Members of the *Zuolian* and *Julian* at Mingxing: A portrait

As shown in Chapter One (49), Mingxing was hit by huge losses and its leaders were keen on enlisting new talents (*rencai* 人才) in order to boost production in late 1932.⁷⁶ As the size of the enterprise grew constantly, demand for seasoned creative personnel was always high. In this setting, many members of the *Zuolian* and *Julian* entered the company. In the following, I will further examine the interplay of different factors that led up to Mingxing's recruitment of some of the most important figures of the *Zuolian* and *Julian*: Shen Xiling 沈西苓 (1904 - 1940), Tian Han, Ouyang Yuqian, and Ying Yunwei 應云衛 (1904 - 1967).

⁷³ Li Pingqian, "Guoqu zhi zhuishu yu jianglai zhi xiwang 過去之追述與將來之希望," ZWD, p. 350 (first published in *Xiandai dianying* 2, 1933).

⁷⁴ Ai Xia 艾霞, "1933 nian, wo de xiwang 1933年, 我的希望," MY 1.3 (1 Jul. 1933).

⁷⁵ "Hu Die nüshi dui Hangzhou jizhe fabiao 'zhuanbian zuofeng' de yijian 胡蝶女士對杭州記者發表'轉變作風'的意見," MY 2.1 (1 Nov. 1933).

⁷⁶ Kai Mola 開末拉, "Mingxing gongsi de yige jinji huiyi 明星公司的一個緊急會議," *Yingxi shenghuo* 90 (16 Oct. 1932); "Bu jingqi zhong zhi Mingxing gongsi beicheng jieyi," DS 195 (12 Nov. 1932).

Shen Xiling, a member of the *Julian* and the *zuoyi meilian* 左翼美聯 (League of Left-wing Artists, shorthand *Meilian* 美聯), was one of Mingxing's leading directors in the last years of the company's existence. He joined Mingxing in late 1932, together with some of his fellow members of these organizations, such as Situ Huimin 司徒慧敏 (sound technician), Ke Ling 柯靈 (publicist), and Wang Ying 王瑩 (actress). According to the *Diansheng's* news reports, they were all former employees of Tianyi and were "poached" by Mingxing, after Hong Shen's persuasion.⁷⁷ By the time Shen Xiling joined Mingxing, he had never directed a film. He studied fine arts in Japan and worked as an apprentice art designer at a professional drama troupe in Japan for a period. After coming back to China in the late 1920s, he joined the *Chuangzao she*, the *Shanghai yishu jushe* founded by Xia Yan, A Ying and Zheng Boqi, as well as the *Julian* and *Meilian*.⁷⁸ At Tianyi he was a set designer. After joining Mingxing, he was provided with a rare opportunity to direct his own screenplay - *Nüxing de nahan* 女性的吶喊 (Cry of the Women).

The screenplay was initially written for Tianyi, but had been refuted because Tianyi's manager Shao Zuiwong thought the play was not in his interest.⁷⁹ At this point, as a *Diansheng's* journalist speculated, Mingxing was testing the audience's tastes and considered it harmless to experiment with a screenplay with "new" ideas (明星正在測量社會觀眾的心理，對於新一點的劇本未始不可嘗試一下).⁸⁰ What does the journalist mean by using the word "new" (*xin* 新)? Another article published in the same magazine provides a clue: "Its title alone will tell you what a 'modern' (*modeng* 摩登, more accurately, 'fashionable') movie it can be. It is exactly the kind of film the critics would term 'a work that catches up with the times' (跟上時代的作品)."⁸¹ Months later, Mingxing publicized the film by stressing that it was "a new production after we changed our style (*gaibian zuofeng* 改變作風)."⁸²

This is a vivid example of how the "yishi/ideology-centred film criticisms" affected Mingxing executives' decision-making. They would not have trusted an inexperienced

⁷⁷ "Tianyi gongsi zhongyao zhiyuan zong cizhi: Hong Shen de lalong chengong 天一公司重要職員總辭職：洪深的拉攏成功," *DS* 195 (12 Nov. 1932). This news report can be proved by "Mingxing yingpian gongsi zhongyao zhiyanyuan biao 明星影片公司重要職演員表" (*MB* 6.1, 16 July 1936), on which these persons are listed.

⁷⁸ *Zhongguo dianying jia liezhuan*, pp. 84-91.

⁷⁹ Tie Hua 鐵花, "*Nüxing de nahan* shi Shen Xiling he Tianyi de zhengqi zhizuo 女性的吶喊是沈西苓和天一的爭氣作品," *DS* 250 (10 Jan. 1933).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ "'Nahan de nüxing' - Wang Ying jiaru Mingxing gongsi '吶喊的女性'——王瑩加入明星公司," *DS* 189 (6 Nov. 1932).

⁸² Tie Hua, *op. cit.*

young man to direct a film if this were not a script they supposed to be able to cater to the critics' taste. In fact, the film proved to be a failure because of Shen's lack of experience. With the help of Zhang Shichuan and Li Pingqian the film was completed.⁸³ But Shen Xiling's talent as a film director grew and received wide recognition later. A film he directed in 1935, *Chuanjia nü* 船家女 (The Daughter of a Boatman), won a prize in the annual government film competition and he was awarded a special prize too.⁸⁴ Some of his films have become recognized classics of early Chinese cinema, such as *Shizi jietou* 十字街頭 (The Crossroad, 1937).

It was reported that Shen Xiling had planned to leave Mingxing for Lianhua but was persuaded by Zhou Jianyun to stay at Mingxing for an extended period.⁸⁵ As a journalist observed, "Shen is a celebrated writer and Zhou Jianyun admires him greatly (沈為名作家，故極為周所器重)."⁸⁶ The phrase "celebrated writer" (*ming zuojia*) reminds us of the popular writer Li Hanqiu, who was labelled with the very same tag in a reader's letter (see Chapter 3, 99). This induces us to speculate that in the popular mind the 1920s popular writer and the 1930s *Zuolian* writer enjoyed equal status as celebrities, and "celebrated writers" were always welcome by Mingxing's executives. The following examination of Tian Han will further illustrate that Mingxing's executives regarded the fame of individual writers they employed as important to their enterprise.

In conventional histories of Chinese cinema, Tian Han is known for the films he wrote for Lianhua and Yihua, such as *Sange modeng nüxing* 三個摩登女性 (Three Modern Girls, Lianhua, 1932) and *Minzu shengcun* 民族生存 (National Existence, Yihua, 1933).⁸⁷ There is no reference to his involvement with Mingxing in the 1930s. However, contemporary data say differently. Both the above-cited *Diansheng's* annual review and the GMD official Lu Diping's confidential letter mentioned that Tian Han (under the penname Chen Yu 陳瑜) was a member of Mingxing's Script Committee.⁸⁸ It was reported in another news item in the *Yingxi shenghuo* that Chen Yu (Tian Han) was present at a Mingxing script meeting in

⁸³ See Sufeng 蘇鳳, "Guanyu Shen Xiling xiansheng he Nüxing de nahan 關於沈西苓先生和《女性的吶喊》," ZZDY, pp. 424-6 (first published in *Chenbao* 15 Apr. 1933); also see Tie Hua, op. cit.

⁸⁴ "Guopian pingxuan jingguo zhixiang 國片評選經過志詳," DS 5.28 (17 Jul. 1936): 686. Also see "Zhongyang xuanchuan bu juban guochan yingpian pingxuan 中央宣傳部舉辦國產影片評選," *Zhongyang ribao* 1 Jun. 1936.

⁸⁵ "Mingxing gongsi guangyan baoren ji 明星公司廣宴報人記," DS 5.32 (14 Aug. 1936): 805-6.

⁸⁶ "Shen Xiling Zhao Dan shifou tuoli jiang zhengshi 沈西苓趙丹是否脫離將證實," DS 4.29 (19 Jul. 1935): 598.

⁸⁷ ZDFZS, pp. 250, 273.

⁸⁸ "Dianying zhongxing dashi ji 電影中興大事記," ZWD, p. 1336 (first published in DS, 1934); Lu Diping's letter, No. 2 Historical Archives, Nanjing, 2 (2)-271/16J1505, dated April 5, 1933.

February 1933. Together with Mingxing's three executives, as well as Hong Shen, Yao Sufeng, and others, he discussed the screen script *Jianmei zhilu* 健美之路 (A road to fitness and beauty), a film directed by Chen Kengran 陳鏗然, a director who did not belong to any political camps.⁸⁹

It cannot be pure coincidence. These seemingly trivial pieces of information invite us to consider the fact that though having not contributed any film script to Mingxing in the 1930s, Tian Han participated in various activities, not confined to film creation. Mingxing's executives treated these writers as advisors and friends. Not only professional knowledge but also the symbolic capital they possessed as well as resources in terms of social networking were deemed useful. Tian Han was typically such a "celebrated writer," one of the most eminent literary figures in Shanghai at the time.

He received college education in Japan and started a varied career in literature, theatre and education in the 1920s in Shanghai, writing and translating play scripts, participating in literary societies, editing literary magazines, launching drama troupes, and teaching.⁹⁰ The *Nanguo she* 南國社 (South Nation Society) is his best known project, which has almost become a synonym for his name. Established in the autumn of 1927, the society is commonly known as a Spoken Drama/*huaju* society, though it claimed to have literature, fine art, music, and film divisions as well. Both Hong Shen and Ouyang Yuqian – close friends of Tian Han since the early 1920s – joined the society, participating as actors and teaching voluntarily at its affiliated art school.⁹¹ Later Tian Han became a leading figure of the *Zuolian* and joined the Communist Party in 1932.

In 1927, Tian Han wrote a film script named *Hubian chunmeng* 湖邊春夢 (A spring dream by the lake) for Mingxing. It was advertised as "an art film aimed at raising the level of the audience's taste (提高觀眾程度之藝術電影)," "written by a literary giant (文學大家), Mr. Tian Han," and based on his knowledge of "both old and new literature (新舊文學)."⁹² Calling the piece an art film is no exaggeration. It tells a story about masochism,

⁸⁹ Lao Yanyuan 老演員, "Mingxing gongsi zuori juwu huiyi 明星公司昨日劇務會議," *Yingxi shenghuo* 207 (20 Feb. 1933). According to the news, the meeting was held at 4 p.m. on 19 Feb 1933, very close to the date of the confidential letter (5 April 1933).

⁹⁰ Tian Han's biography is based on his chronology: Zhang Xianghua, ed. *Tianhan nianpu*, pp. 25ff.

⁹¹ For the *Nanguo* Society's history, see Tian Han, "Women de ziji pipan 我們的自己批判," *Tian Han wenji* 田漢文集 14, pp. 240-353 (first published in *Nanguo yuekan* 2.1, 1930); also see Ge Yihong, pp. 93-104. For research on Tian Han and the *Nanguo* Society, see Chen Xiaomei, "Tian Han and the *Nanguo* Phenomenon" and "Reflecting on the Legacy of Tian Han."

⁹² See its ad in XWB 9 Oct. 1927. It was directed by Bu Wancang 卜萬蒼 and premiere at the *Zhongyang* Theatre on 9 October.

surrounding a lovelorn playwright and a female masochist.⁹³ Tian Han acknowledged in his memoirs that at that time he was deeply influenced by Freudian theory and the Japanese writer Junichiro Tanizaki who was obsessed with destructive erotic themes.⁹⁴ The film appeared particularly unusual in view of Mingxing's usual preference for melodrama as well as the time of its release - a year when the film world was caught in a craze for martial arts films (see Chapter 1, 37-9). Even Tian Han himself felt surprised that Mingxing was willing to "spend much money on such an experiment without hope of high reward (不惜多金為此未必能賣錢之嘗試)."⁹⁵

I would argue that Mingxing decided to produce the film out of consideration for the company's reputation. The advertising text, particularly the phrases "art film," "raising the level of the audience's taste," and "literary giant," reminds us of the publicity texts for Hong Shen's films (see Chapter 3, 93-5). Making these "art films" by famous Western-educated playwrights was considered beneficial to Mingxing's public image. There is another indication of how Tian Han and, associated with him, the *Nanguo* Society meant respectability.

In late 1932, three Spoken Drama/*huaju* performers of the *Nanguo* Society made their debut in Mingxing films. Hu Ping 胡萍, who played the lead in *Guohun de fuhuo* (The Resurrection of the National Spirit, 1932), was advertised as "a member of the *Nanguo* Society, well-known throughout the nation (在大江南北的人們, 沒有一個不知道的)," who had received professional training by Tian Han, "a celebrated writer (赫赫有名的文學家)."⁹⁶ Tang Huaiqiu 唐槐秋, who played the male lead in *Shilian* 失戀 (Love Failure, 1932), was publicized as "a dramatist of modern Amateur Drama (namely, 'Spoken Drama/*huaju*') and the leading actor of the *Nanguo* Society (現代愛美劇家前南國社台柱)."⁹⁷ Aside from Tian Han, Ouyang Yuqian and Ying Yunwei were also active practitioners of Spoken Drama/*huaju*, members of the *Julian*, and joined Mingxing in the mid-1930s. The following examination will show that interpersonal connections are instrumental in making them join Mingxing.

⁹³ For the plot of the film see "Benshi" (by Chiping) and "Zimu" (by Tian Han) in ZWDJB, pp. 1038-44. Tian Han himself stated that the film treated the theme of masochism, see *MT* 26 (Oct. 1927).

⁹⁴ Tian Han, "Yingshi zhuihuai lu 影事追懷錄," in ZWD, p. 1557.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ XWB 15 Oct. 1932: 23.

⁹⁷ XWB 21 Feb. 1933: 1.

Ouyang Yuqian took the post as the head of Mingxing's Script Committee in October 1935.⁹⁸ He wrote or directed three films in 1936, *Haitang hong* 海棠紅 (Red Begonia), *Xiao Lingzi* 小玲子 (Little Lingzi) and *Qingming shijie* 清明時節 (Around Qingming Festival). Ying Yunwei started working at Mingxing in July 1936, serving as the director (*Changwu zhuren* 廠務主任) of the newly-built Studio II. He directed only one film, *Shengsi tongxin* 生死同心 (Unchanged Heart in Life and Death, 1936). Both of them had maintained a long-standing acquaintance with Mingxing executives due to their common interest in theatre and activities in this arena.

Born in a gentry family in Hunan Province, Ouyang Yuqian received traditional education in his hometown and Western-style education in Japan.⁹⁹ He joined the first Chinese New Play/Spoken Drama society *Chunliu she* 春柳社 (Spring Willow Society) in Tokyo and remained an outstanding theatre practitioner throughout the early decades of the twentieth century. He was a member of many New Play troupes of the 1910s (*Xinju tongzhi hui* 新劇同志會, *Shehui jiaoyu tuan* 社會教育團, and *Minming she* 民鳴社), of Spoken Drama troupes of the 1920s (*Minzhong xiju she* 民眾戲劇社, *Xiju xieshe* 戲劇協社, *Nanguo she* 南國社), and of the *Julian* in the 1930s. Besides, he was a prominent Peking Opera actor, enjoying a fame comparable to Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳 (1894 - 1961).

Not surprisingly, Ouyang and Mingxing's founders had chances to cooperate with each other from the 1910s onwards. In early 1915, when Zheng Zhengqiu's *Xinmin* Society was merged into Zhang Shichuan's *Minming* Society (see Chapter 3, 83), they performed a play provided by Ouyang Yuqian, namely, *Danao Ningguo fu* 大鬧甯國府 (Havoc in the Ning Family) adapted from *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (Dream of Red Chamber). Months later, Ouyang joined the *Minming* Society.¹⁰⁰ An advertisement shows that in July 1915 Ouyang Yuqian acted in the play *Meihua luo* 梅花落 originally written by Bao Tianxiao and later adapted to be a film by Mingxing.¹⁰¹ In summer 1915 in Hangzhou, Zhou Jianyun, then a member of the *Qiming* New Play Troupe, invited Ouyang to perform a role in his play *Shensheng zhi ai* 神聖之愛 (Sacred Love).¹⁰² These pieces of evidence clearly demonstrate Ouyang's personal relationship with Mingxing's managers.

⁹⁸ "Mingxing riji 明星日記," *MB* 3.2 (1 Nov. 1935).

⁹⁹ The brief biography is based on: Ouyang Jingru and Dong Xijiu, "Ouyang Yuqian nianbiao," in *Ouyang Yuqian xiju lunwenji*, pp. 463-84; Tian Han, "Dai xu," *Ouyang Yuqian wenji*, pp. 1-23.

¹⁰⁰ Ouyang Jingru, p. 467.

¹⁰¹ *SB* 5 Jul. 1915: 12.

¹⁰² See the preface to the script "Shensheng zhi ai 神聖之愛" (Zhou Jianyun), published in *Jiefang huabao* 8 (28 Feb. 1921).

In the 1920s, when Zhang, Zheng and Zhou had moved on to film and Ouyang had become a star on the Peking Opera stage, some clues show that Ouyang was still happy to help his old friends. In 1926, he accompanied Hong Shen to Beijing and Tianjin to publicize the film *Konggu lan* (Orchid in the Empty Valley).¹⁰³ A news report tells us that Ouyang spent a night rehearsing the Mingxing performers for a Peking Opera episode, which was to be presented in Bao Tianxiao's film *Duoqing de nüling* 多情的女伶 (A Romantic Actress, 1926).¹⁰⁴

In explaining the reason for his decision to take the position at Mingxing, Ouyang Yuqian said: "Ten years ago, Mr. Zheng Zhengqiu invited me to join Mingxing. At the time I was a Peking Opera actor and earned a very substantial salary, so I declined. Last year, when I came back from Europe, Mr. Zhang [Shichuan] and Mr. Zhou [Jianyun] invited me again, I thought I had no reason to refuse."¹⁰⁵ In view of his decades-long friendship with Mingxing's leaders there is no reason to doubt this statement. Though appointed as a member of the creative staff and having written and directed three films, Ouyang went beyond his responsibilities. For example, in early 1936, he resorted to his family resources to help Mingxing with a bank loan.¹⁰⁶

Ying Yunwei joined Mingxing probably mainly for personal reasons as well. Ying had a long and successful career in the Shanghai shipping industry, while actively engaged in the pioneering field of Spoken Drama/*huaju* in the meantime. He had managed the *Xiju xieshe* (Drama Cooperative Society) for a decade. Hong Shen, Ouyang Yuqian, Shen Gao, and Gu Jianchen, all involved with Mingxing at certain times, were the members of the society.¹⁰⁷ His film career formally started in the mid-1930s, when he worked for *Yihua*, *Diantong*, and a number of other studios. When talking about why he entered Mingxing, Ying Yunwei said he was an old friend of Zheng Zhengqiu who had invited him to join the company nearly a decade earlier.¹⁰⁸ According to a report in the *Diansheng*, he made this decision in October 1935, when he could not get his employer, the *Yihua* Company, to

¹⁰³ "Mingxing yingpian gongsi wei jingjin kaiying *Konggu lan* qishi 明星影片公司為京津開映空谷蘭啟事," XWB 26 Feb. 1926: A2.

¹⁰⁴ Xu Kuibao 許窺豹, "Zhou Jianyun wei Xuan Jingling huamei: Mingxing sheyingchang zhong zhi yipie 周劍雲為宣景琳畫眉: 明星攝影場中之一瞥," XWB 2 Apr. 1926: "benbu fukan."

¹⁰⁵ "Mingxing gongsi zhaokai quanti dahui 明星公司召開全體大會," DS 5.27 (10 Jul. 1936): 646.

¹⁰⁶ According to *Diansheng*, Ouyang's brother-in-law Tang Youren 唐有壬 was a high-ranking government official, and was to take a leading post at the Jincheng Bank. Tang had agreed to make the loan to Mingxing, but unfortunately he passed away accidentally. See "Tang Youren si: shiwu wan touzi huawei paoying 唐有壬死: 十五萬投資化為泡影," DS 5.3 (17 Jan. 1936): 72.

¹⁰⁷ Ying's biography is mainly based on Zhongguo dianyingjia xiehui dianyingshi yanjiu bu, ed. *Zhongguo dianyingjia liezhuan* I, pp. 102-10. For his successful career in the shipping industry, see Xia Yan, *Lanxun jiumeng lu*, p. 172.

¹⁰⁸ Ying Yunwei, "Wo he Zhengqiu xiansheng 我和正秋先生," MB 6.2 (1 Aug. 1936).

raise his monthly salary from 180 to 240 Yuan.¹⁰⁹ However, Ying served at Mingxing only for a brief period. In early 1937, the Studio II merged with Studio I because of heavy losses. Ying left Mingxing and planned to launch a professional theatrical company with the backing of Zhou Jianyun.¹¹⁰

Summing up, this portrait has made it clear that a combination of the three factors, interpersonal ties, considerations for popularity of or public opinion on particular films, and concerns for the company's reputation, caused Mingxing's executives to employ these *Zuolian* writers and dramatists. As shown in Table 2.3, nineteen members of the *Zuolian* and *Julian* worked for Mingxing during different periods between 1932 and 1937. Besides the figures discussed in detail above, Yang Hansheng contributed three scripts, *Tieban honglie lu* 鐵板紅淚錄 (Iron Plate and Red Tears, 1933), *Shengsi tongxin* (1936) and *Yeben* 夜奔 (Escape at Night, 1937), and served as "special screenwriter" (*teyue bianju* 特約編劇) from July 1936 onwards;¹¹¹ Yuan Muzhi wrote and directed *Malu tianshi* 馬路天使 (Street Angel, 1937); Situ Huimin worked as the sound technician, who once was a member of the shooting crew for the propaganda film on the annihilation campaign against the Communists;¹¹² Ke Ling was a publicist and edited the *Mingxing banyuekan*; and Zhao Dan 趙丹 and five others were performers.

The primary reason for this large number of *Zuolian* and *Julian* members' joining lies in the changing situation of the times. Generally speaking, this younger generation of writers/dramatists gradually became dominant on the literary scene (*wentan*) from the second half of the 1920s on, while the older generation, the popular writers discussed in the previous chapter, was losing hold on the publishing market.¹¹³ A clue to this changing situation is that of thirty regular contributors to the *Mingxing yuebao* launched in May 1933, twelve were affiliated with the *Zuolian* or *Julian* – Xia Yan, A Ying, Zheng Boqi, Tian Han, Situ Huimin, Shen Xiling, Hong Shen, Gao Jilin (Ke Ling), Chen Wu, Lu Si and two less known persons, while only three are recognized popular writers – Zhang Henshui, Yan Duhé, and Zhou Shoujuan.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ "Ying Yunwei tuoli Yihua jin Mingxing 應云衛脫離藝華進明星," *DS* 4.43 (25 Oct. 1935): 919.

¹¹⁰ "Ying Yunwei ban zhiye jutuan, Zhou Jianyun zuo houtai laoban 應云衛辦職業劇團, 周劍雲做後臺老闆," *DS* 6.10 (12 Mar. 1937).

¹¹¹ "Mingxing yingpian gongsi zhongyao zhiyanyuan biao 明星影片公司重要職演員表," *MB* 6.1 (16 Jul. 1936).

¹¹² Wang Qianbai 王乾白, "Ganxing jishi: wei Jiang Wei yuanzhang deng she jiaofei shengpian 贛行紀實——為蔣委員長等攝剿匪聲片" (I), *MY* 1.3 (1 Jul. 1933): 1.

¹¹³ See Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, pp. 14-15. For the rise of the new breed of intellectuals on the printing markets, see Liu Zhen, *Zuoyi wenxue yundong de xingqi yu shanghai xin shuye, 1928-1930*.

¹¹⁴ See the advertisement for the *MY* in *XWB* 10 Mar. 1933: 1.

Essentially, political standing was not Mingxing executives' primary concern in their selection of employees. As shown above, both popular writer Li Hanqiu and *Zuolian* writer Tian Han, as well as many others, were respected by Mingxing's managers as "celebrated writers" (*mingjia* 名家). In other words, *Zuolian* writers were recruited not because of their political and ideological orientation. Rather, the state of "celebrity," as well as accompanied symbolic capital, may be more significant for the company because notable writers would be more likely to bring profits and good name for the company. This can explain why Yao Sufeng and Liu Na'ou, who were not affiliated with the *Zuolian* and *Julian*, rather, had relatively close relationship with the anti-Communist government, also worked for Mingxing in important positions in the 1930s. In the following I will look at the two writers and illustrate that for similar reasons Yao and Liu were enlisted. Further, I will show that both of them displayed multiple personae, much more complex than what has been depicted in conventional histories.

4.4 Yao Sufeng and Liu Na'ou

Yao Sufeng was a major director, screenwriter and publicist at Mingxing in the 1930s. He contributed five screenplays (see Table 2.4). Concerning when and why Yao Sufeng joined Mingxing, information from different sources contradicts. According to Xia Yan's memoirs, in May or June 1933, shortly after the public screenings of *Kuangliu* (Torrent) and *Tieban honglei lu* (Iron Plate and Red Tears), both written by *Zuolian* writers, Zhou Jianyun had a talk with Xia Yan. Zhou told him that the GMD official Pan Gongzhan had threatened Mingxing with cutting their bank loans if Mingxing kept producing such films by *Zuolian* writers.¹¹⁵ Pan was one of the most influential members of the GMD's "CC Xi (CC系)" (CC Clique), one of the largest factions of the party,¹¹⁶ and was responsible for education and propaganda in Shanghai.

According to Xia, upon receiving a bribe, Pan gave his tacit consent to film production by *Zuolian* writers on one condition that he would introduce a person he trusted into

¹¹⁵ Xia Yan, *Lanxun jiumeng lu*, pp. 240-4. *Kuangliu* was premiered on 5 Mar. 1933 (see ad in XWB of the same day), *Tieban honglei lu* on 12 Nov. 1933 (also see XWB ad). Xia Yan might have remembered falsely either the date or the title of the latter film.

¹¹⁶ The CC Clique (CC系) was created in June 1927, coalesced around the brothers Chen Guofu 陳果夫 and Chen Lifu 陳立夫. Using the Organization Department of the GMD as their institutional base, the Chen brothers placed adherents throughout the party and governmental apparatus, particularly in the middle and lower strata of those organizations. In this way, the CC clique became a dominating influence in the civilian branches of the regime, controlling much of the bureaucratic administration, educational agencies, youth organizations and labour unions, as well as various publications. See Eastman, et al., eds, *The Nationalist Era in China*, p. 27.

Mingxing's Script Committee. The person was Yao Sufeng. Knowing that Xia Yan and his associates would be unhappy to work together with a person earmarked by their political opponent, Zhou Jianyun pleaded with them not to resign, otherwise Mingxing would collapse. After discussing with members of the CCP's "film group," Xia Yan and his colleagues agreed to stay at the company as long as their freedom of creation would be guaranteed. Zhou Jianyun agreed and gave them his promise. To their surprise, soon afterwards Yao Sufeng invited Xia Yan over for tea – obviously a gesture of goodwill – and expressed his willingness to cooperate with them.

Shu Yan, a film critic closely associated with these *Zuolian* critics at the time, straightforwardly pointed out that Xia Yan's version "seems to have contradicted the fact (這與事實似有出入)" in his 1994 article.¹¹⁷ He maintained that Mingxing had employed Yao Sufeng prior to Xia Yan, A Ying and Zheng Boqi, and Yao was not recommended by Pan Gongzhan. "Sufeng told me about this himself," Shu Yan stressed, "and it was the fact. (這是蘇鳳親口對我說的，也是客觀事實)"¹¹⁸ Without hard evidence, it is difficult to determine which version is more credible. This is not a matter of trivial significance. The inner logic of Xia Yan's account is that the films they produced brought to Pan Gongzhan's notice and prompted him to arrange Yao into Mingxing to represent the GMD. In other words, Xia's version underscored the "struggle" between the underground CCP and the GMD, an overarching theme running beneath the narratives of conventional histories. If the fact is that Yao entered Mingxing prior to the screening of *Torrent* – the first film by *Zuolian* writer Xia Yan – in March 1933, then the logic loses its historical grounds.

Contemporary sources can throw some light on this controversy. According to a news report in the *Yingxi shenghuo* entitled "Mingxing gongsi zuori juwu huiyi 明星公司昨日劇務會議" (Mingxing held a script meeting yesterday), dated 20 February 1933, Yao Sufeng attended the script meeting together with Hong Shen and Tian Han.¹¹⁹ On the same day, a *Diansheng's* journalist reported that Yao was going to take the post as director of Mingxing's publicity division.¹²⁰ I am inclined to believe that these reports are true and it is highly possible that Yao's recruitment by Mingxing had little to do with political struggles.

¹¹⁷ Shu Yan, "Dianying de 'lunhui'," p. 73.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Lao Yanyuan, "Mingxing gongsi zuori juwu huiyi," *Yingxi shenghuo* 207 (20 Feb. 1933). According to the news report, the meeting was held at 4 p.m. on 19 February.

¹²⁰ *DS* 285 (20 Feb. 1933).

CHAPTER FOUR

With regard to Yao's relation with Pan Gongzhan, while Xia Yan maintained that he was Pan's protégé, Shu Yan stated that Yao was but an ordinary subordinate of Pan.¹²¹ Feng Yidai 冯亦代 (1913 - 2005), a renowned translator and writer who had been a colleague of Yao for a while, also mentioned in his lately published memoirs that Yao Sufeng had "ties" with Pan, but never won Pan's "favour."¹²² In fact, even if without Pan's recommendation, it is not surprising at all that Mingxing recruited him as a publicist, screenwriter and director in view of his varied career background in the fields of journalism and cinema as well as his extended social network.

As a native of Suzhou, Yao developed his personal ties in his youth with a number of popular writers - many Shanghai popular writers were migrants from Suzhou.¹²³ His great-grandfather Yao Mengqi 姚孟起, a distinguished calligrapher, was Bao Tianxiao's calligraphy teacher, and his grandfather was Bao's tutor.¹²⁴ According to Zheng Yimei 鄭逸梅 (1895 - 1992), for this reason Bao was always devoted to nurturing the literary talents of Yao Sufeng when Bao had established himself on the Shanghai literary scene.¹²⁵ In 1922, at sixteen, Yao joined a few veteran writers of Suzhou, such as Fan Yanqiao, Zhao Mianyun 趙眠雲 (1902 - 1948), Zheng Yimei, and Gu Mingdao 顧明道 (1897 - 1944), organizing the literary group *Xingshe* 星社 (the Star Society).¹²⁶ Yao Sufeng often contributed his essays and poems to literary journals of the society.¹²⁷

In February 1928, after working as an architect and then a publicist at the Shanghai Shadowplay Film Company (*Shanghai yingxi gongsi* 上海影戲公司) for a short period, on recommendation of his townsman Guan Ji'an, the prominent editor and popular writer, he joined the editorial staff of the *Minguo ribao* 民國日報 (Republican Daily), a GMD-affiliated newspaper inaugurated in 1916. After the Nanjing regime was founded in April 1927, the newspaper became the official organ of the GMD's Shanghai branch. Its editor-in-chief Chen Dezheng 陳德征 chaired the propaganda committee of the GMD's Shanghai branch and Education Bureau (*Jiaoyu ju* 教育局) of the Shanghai Municipal

¹²¹ Xia Yan, *Lanxun jiumeng lu*, p. 241, Shu Yan, p. 73.

¹²² Feng Yidai, *Wo buneng wangji de ren*, online version, n.p.

¹²³ Link, p. 156.

¹²⁴ Bao Tianxiao, *Chuanyinglou huiyi lu*, pp. 18-20, 43-8.

¹²⁵ Zheng Yimei, *Nanshe cong'an*, p. 107.

¹²⁶ For the ten-year history of the Star Society and a full list of its membership, see Fan Yanqiao, "Xingshe ganjiu lu 星社感舊錄," YHWZ, pp. 197-200; also see Tian Ming 天命, "Xingshe suwang 星社溯往," YHWZ, p. 201. For the study of the group see Link, p. 169.

¹²⁷ Sufeng 蘇鳳, "Touren yinse de haili - wuliao de zizhuan 投入銀色的海裡——無聊的自傳," first published in *MY* 1.2 (1 Jun. 1933), reprinted in ZWD, pp. 1438-40. Unless otherwise noted, the following account of Yao's career is based on the autobiography.

Government.¹²⁸ Yao Sufeng was responsible for editing the newspaper's supplement "*Dianying zhoukan* 電影週刊" (Cinema Weekly) and the feuilleton section "*Xianhua* 閒話" (Idle Talk).

Though his job in itself has tiny relationship with politics, the fact that he worked for the GMD's official organ and associated himself closely with a few foremost GMD officials is important. He joined the party around this time,¹²⁹ and soon gained opportunities to work at government organizations as part-time clerks. He held a low-ranking position, probably secretary, at the Education Bureau of Shanghai when it was headed by Pan Gongzhan. We find that a government document signed by Pan is written by Yao.¹³⁰ In the early 1930s, he served as a censor of the Censorship Board of Shanghai Municipal Government, whose chair was Chen Dezheng.¹³¹ In July 1932, Yao became the editor-in-chief of the film supplement "*Meiri dianying* 每日電影" (Movie Daily) of the newly-launched newspaper *Chenbao* 晨報 (Morning Post), which was headed by Pan Gongzhan and was virtually the official organ of the GMD's CC clique.¹³²

When serving the editorships at these journals, Yao Sufeng grew a wide circle of acquaintances, including prominent writers, dramatists, and film critics. For example, some of the regular contributors to the *Minguo ribao*'s "Cinema Weekly" were members of Tian Han's *Nanguo* Society, such as Zuo Ming 左明 (1902 - 1941), Yan Zhewu 閻折梧, Zhao Mingyi 趙銘彝 (1907 -), and Chen Wanli 陳萬里.¹³³ Zhou Jianyun and Hong Shen often wrote for the newspaper's "Idle Talk."¹³⁴ In February 1930, Hong Shen protested at the Grand Theatre (大光明) against Harold Lloyd's film *Welcome Danger* (Chinese title: *Bupa si* 不怕死), which offended him by its negative portrayals of Chinese characters. He was soon arrested by the police of the Settlement.¹³⁵ According to Yao, it was Zhou Jianyun

¹²⁸ For an introduction about the newspaper's history see Ma Guangren, *Shanghai xinwen shi (1850-1949)*, pp. 607-11.

¹²⁹ His ID number is 4727. See "Shanghai shi jiaoyu ju huitong gong'an ju dui Zhejiang sheng micheng zhong tidao de zuoqing dianying wenti de diaocha deng wanglai wenshu 上海市教育局會同公安局對浙江省密呈中提到的左傾電影問題的調查等往來文書," dated June 1933, SMA, Q235-2-1624, p. 52.

¹³⁰ For Yao as a low-ranking official of the Education Bureau see Shu Yan, "Dianying de 'lunhui'," p. 73; for the document written by him see SMA, Q235-2-1624, p. 5.

¹³¹ SMA, Q235-2-1624, p. 56; also see "Luo Ke *Bupa si* 羅克《不怕死》," *Minguo ribao* 25 Feb. 1930: C1.

¹³² For the newspaper's history, see Zhang Changren, "Shanghai *Chenbao* si'nian shi;" Wang Xinming, *Xinwen quan li sishi nian*, pp. 444-57.

¹³³ Sufeng, "Touyu yinse de haili," p. 1439. Also see the newspaper itself. For example, Zhewu 折梧, "Yinyi zhi mantan 銀藝之漫談," *Minguo ribao* 29 Apr. 1928, "Dianying zhoukan."

¹³⁴ Zhou mentioned this in his article: Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong," *MB* 6.2 (1 Aug. 1936).

¹³⁵ For a detailed account of the affair, see Hong Shen, "*Bupa si!* – *Da guangming* xiyuan huan xibu ju wo ru bufang zhi jingguo 不怕死! ——大光明戲院喚西捕拘我入捕房之經過," first published in *Minguo ribao* 24 Feb. 1930, reprinted in ZWD, pp. 1003-6.

who informed him of the news.¹³⁶ This affair, widely known as "Welcome Danger Affair" (*Bupa si shijian* 不怕死事件), received much coverage in the *Minguo ribao*, especially in the columns Yao edited.¹³⁷ It evoked much nationalistic fervour and public discussions around the time.¹³⁸

In short, as an editor of the respectable newspaper as well as a film censor, Yao Sufeng was in a powerful position to mediate between the areas of journalism, literature and theatre, politics, and film industry. It can be assumed that Mingxing's leaders considered it useful to maintain a friendly relationship with him. In April 1928, when the distribution agency Liuhe Company co-founded by Mingxing and other studios launched the film journal *Dianying yuebao* 電影月報 (Cinema Monthly), Yao Sufeng published an article entitled "Jieshao Dianying yuebao 介紹《電影月報》" (An introduction of *Dianying yuebao*) in the "Cinema Weekly," which can be understood as publicity for both the journal and the Liuhe Company.¹³⁹ Around the same time, another article by Yao buttresses up Mingxing's call on distributors and exhibitors to boycott poor-quality productions.¹⁴⁰ "Cinema Weekly" also carries film reviews. For example, on 29 April 1928, Yao Sufeng published a review on Mingxing's *Baiyun ta* (White Cloud Pagoda) and two other films.¹⁴¹

When Yao Sufeng took up the editorship of the *Chenbao's* "Movie Daily" in mid-1932, as discussed above, the number of popular film journals and film supplements had increased greatly and film criticisms occupied a substantial portion of their contents. The "Movie Daily" became a major site of critical voices.¹⁴² Yao resorted to his personal resources to recruit contributors. Initially, Hong Shen and a few of his old colleagues in the *Minguo ribao* formed a small nucleus of authors.¹⁴³ Later, many *Zuolian* and *Julian* writers joined. Of fifteen frequent contributors who signed their names in an editorial of the "Movie Daily" on 18 June 1933, eleven were affiliated with the *Zuolian* and *Julian*.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁶ Sufeng, "Luoke xin pian de ciji 羅克新片的刺激," *Minguo ribao* 23 Feb. 1930, "xianhua."

¹³⁷ For example, the 19 Mar. 1930 *Minguo ribao* has a special section named "Bupa si an telan '不怕死'案特欄" which published several articles on the affair. Many reports on the affair can be found in the *Minguo ribao* between February and April 1930.

¹³⁸ For a detailed study of the affair see Wang Chaoguang, "Jiancha, kongzhi yu daoxiang," pp. 102-112.

¹³⁹ Gengkui 賡夔 (Yao's hao 号), "Jieshao Dianying yuebao 介紹《電影月報》," *Minguo ribao* 8 Apr. 1928, "Dianying zhoukan".

¹⁴⁰ Gengkui, "Du Mingxing gongsi guanggao hou 讀明星公司廣告後——明星公司警告購片商及同業," *Minguo ribao* 25 Mar. 1928, "Dianying zhoukan."

¹⁴¹ Gengkui, "Zhe jitian suo kan de guochan pian 這幾天所看的國產片," *Minguo ribao* 29 Apr. 1928, "Dianying zhoukan."

¹⁴² For a study of the "Movie Daily" and Yao Sufeng, see Zhang Xinmin, "Meiri dianying yu Yao Sufeng,"

¹⁴³ See Yao Sufeng, "'Meidian' zhi sheng '每電'之聲," *Chenbao* "Meiri dianying," 1 Aug. 1935.

¹⁴⁴ "Women de chensu: jinhou de pipan shi 'jianshe de' 我們的陳訴：今後的批判是'建設的'," *Chenbao* 18 Jun. 1933: 10.

Interestingly, six were involved with Mingxing, namely, Hong Shen, Shen Xiling, Ke Ling, Zheng Boqi, Xia Yan, and A Ying.

Though Yao Sufeng never joined the *Zuolian* and *Julian*, he worked in close liaison with the critics affiliated with these organizations. As the film supplement Yao edited became one of the loci of "ideology/*yishi*-centred criticisms,"¹⁴⁵ Mingxing's executives certainly welcomed Yao's joining. His professional knowledge in cinema and, more important, his powerful position in the world of journalism, were useful to the company. As discussed above, film studios' leaders always put much weight on critical opinions towards their films. If a film studio managed to have some film critics and editors work for it, more positive opinions towards releases of the studio could certainly be anticipated.¹⁴⁶

In December 1934, most *Zuolian* and *Julian* critics withdrew from the "Movie Daily" for reasons not entirely clear to us. Reports in the fan magazine *Yingmi zhoubao* suggest that it was triggered by personal discord between Yao Sufeng and Shi Linghe 石凌鶴 (a member of the *Julian*).¹⁴⁷ Soon afterwards, the "Movie Daily" became the mouthpiece of the promoters of "soft cinema" (*ruanxing dianying* 軟性電影).¹⁴⁸ As introduced in Chapter Two, a debate over the nature of cinema, known as "soft-cinema versus hard-cinema debate" (電影的軟硬之爭), swept over the film press from 1933 onwards. While promoters of "hard cinema," mostly writers of the *Zuolian* and *Julian*, underlined the medium's political and ideological function, their opponents maintained that cinema was primarily a form of entertainment and art. An editor of the fan magazine *Qingqing dianying* observed that, in 1934, hostility between different critical camps sharpened. The "soft/hard debate" (軟硬性爭執) was one of the manifestations.¹⁴⁹ Liu Na'ou was a leading critic of the "soft cinema" side. He joined Mingxing in October 1935, as a member of the Script Committee headed by Ouyang Yuqian.¹⁵⁰ In the following I will examine why this

¹⁴⁵ This is manifest in the pages of the "Movie Daily." For example, in Yao's review of *Zhifen shichang* (Scr. Xia Yan, Dir. Zhang Shichuan), he stated that the film correctly "exposed" the dark side of the society. See Sufeng, "Zhifen shichang ping 《脂粉市場》評," *Chenbao* 15 May 1933, "Meiri dianying." He spoke highly of *Chuncan*, a film adapted from the leading *Zuolian* writer Mao Dun. See Sufeng, "Chuncan ping 《春蠶》評," *Chenbao* 8 Oct. 1933. Moreover, this trend was reported in an official file, see SMA, Q235-2-1624.

¹⁴⁶ For this opinion, see Fei Zhi 飛之, "Liangda ribao dianying fukan de andou 兩大日報電影附刊的暗鬥," DS 151 (28 Sep. 1932).

¹⁴⁷ A special issue of the *Yingmi zhoubao* (Movie Fans Weekly) is devoted to the discussions of the dispute surrounding a film *Luliu qianghua* directed by Yao Sufeng. This dispute was reportedly triggered by the *Zuolian* critic Linghe's fierce criticism on the film, which provoked Yao's strong reaction. See *Yingmi zhoubao* 1.2 (3 Oct. 1934) "Yingping yu chuanguo zhizhan zhuanhao 影評與創作之戰專號".

¹⁴⁸ See Zhang Xinmin, pp. 224-34. Also see the newspaper itself.

¹⁴⁹ Zai Qing 再青, "Suimu xiaoyan 歲暮小言," *Qingqing dianying* 1.10 (16 Dec. 1934).

¹⁵⁰ "Mingxing riji," *MB* 3.2 (1 Nov. 1935).

leading figure of the literary school "new sensationism" (*xin ganjue pai*) was recruited by Mingxing.

Liu Na'ou's contribution to Chinese literature, particularly the development of literary modernism, has been re-evaluated in the recent scholarship.¹⁵¹ Like many of the cultural professionals discussed previously, Liu Na'ou had a varied professional background in the fields of literature, publishing, and cinema. He was born into an illustrious family in Tainan 台南 county of Taiwan and received high school and college education in Taiwan, Japan and Shanghai.¹⁵² He studied English at a private Christian school in Japan and arrived in Shanghai in 1926 to attend a special French program at the French Jesuit Aurora University, where he met his classmates Dai Wangshu 戴望舒 (1905 - 1950) and Shi Zhecun 施蛰存 (1905 - 2003), with whom he would later initiate new sensationism.¹⁵³

Between the late 1920s and mid-1930s, with his own funds and with the help of his classmates, he opened two small publishing houses, the *Diyixian shudian* 第一線書店 (Frontline Bookstore) in 1928 and the *Shuimo shudian* 水沫書店 (Waterfoam Bookstore) in 1929, which published, among others, translated works of new sensationism and Marxism (usually from Japanese) and literary works by New Sensationism writers and *Zuolian* writers. In the meantime, he edited literary journals, such as the *Wugui lieche* 無軌列車 (Trackless Train) and *Xin wenyi* 新文藝 (La Nouvelle Littérature), which feature translations of Western literature and original works predominantly by writers of the New Sensationism School. Besides, he himself was a prolific author, writing novellas, film criticisms and theoretical essays on literature and cinema.¹⁵⁴

Movie-going was one of Liu Na'ou's favourite hobbies.¹⁵⁵ For this reason, some of his early writings were concerned with film and the literary journals he edited included film sections, such as "Yingxi manxiang 影戲漫想" (Idle thoughts on *shadowplay*) in the *Wugui lieche*.¹⁵⁶ In 1932, he had his first try in filmmaking, participating in the production of

¹⁵¹ See Lee, *Shanghai modern*, chapter six "Face, body, and the city", Shih, *The lure of the modern*, chapter ten "Gender, race, and semicolonialism," Xu Qinzhen, *Modeng, Shanghai, Xin ganjue: Liu Na'ou (1905-1940)*.

¹⁵² Liu's biography and career profile are based on Xu Qinzhen, "Liu Na'ou nianbiao 劉訥鷗年表," in Xu Qinzhen, *Modeng, Shanghai, Xin ganjue*, pp. 159-69. It remains the latest and probably most accurate and well-documented chronology of Liu Na'ou. Quite a number of factual mistakes existed in earlier studies by Leo Lee, Shu-mei Shih and others. I am deeply indebted to Xu Qinzhen who sent me a digital version of this chronology as her latest monograph has not been available at our institute library.

¹⁵³ Xu Qinzhen, p. 160.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 162-6.

¹⁵⁵ See Shi Zhecun's memoir: "Women jingying guo sange shudian 我們經營過三個書店," *Shashang de jiaoji*, p. 12. Also see *Liu Na'ou quanji* (Yingxiang ji), p. 165.

¹⁵⁶ Xu Qinzhen, p. 162.

Yaoshan yanshi 瑤山艷史 (A Romance in Yao Mountain) by the short-lived film company Yilian 艺联 (United Art).¹⁵⁷ In March 1933, he launched the film journal *Xiandai dianying* 現代電影 (Modern Screen). Despite its brief existence (with merely seven issues published), it remains one of the best-known film magazines in Chinese film history largely because of the "soft/hard debate" which erupted within the pages of this journal.¹⁵⁸

While the journal has always been supposed to be dominated by promoters of "soft cinema," recent scholarship has pointed to the fact that it was also open to *Zuolian* film critics.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Liu Na'ou's own writings in this journal clearly show that his notion on cinema differs from that of the *Zuolian* film critics. Simply put, Liu tended to perceive cinema as an art form. The uniqueness of this art form is acquired from the "mechanism" of cinematographic techniques.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, he held that the greatest flaw of contemporary home productions was "the over-emphasis on *ism* (*zhuyi*)" while lacking the visual and artistic sophistication.¹⁶¹ He compared the imbalance between content and form to a "shabby hut" stuffed with grandiose "Marxism-flavoured" (*mahua fengwei* 馬化風味) concepts such as "society" (*shehui* 社會), "class" (*jieji* 階級) and "ideology" (*yishi* 意識).¹⁶²

The voices of these promoters of "soft cinema," including Huang Jiamo, Mu Shiyong, and Huang Tianshi, besides Liu, seemed to have become increasingly widely heard since late 1934. As mentioned above, the *Chenbao's* "Movie Daily" turned to be a major organ of these critics from December 1934 onwards. In May 1935, this supplement began to serialize Liu Na'ou's translation of Rudolf Arnheim's *Film als Kunst* (Film as Art, Berlin, 1932). In August of the year, Liu, together with Yao Sufeng, Mu Shiyong, and two others, organized a symposium on the problems that faced Chinese film industry and published a series of articles in the *Furen huabao* 婦人畫報 (Women's Pictorial).¹⁶³ Besides, Liu

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 163.

¹⁵⁸ The seven issues of the magazine are reprinted in the series "Zhongguo zaoqi dianying huakan 中國早期電影畫刊" 5 (北京: 全國圖書館文獻縮微復制中心, 2004).

¹⁵⁹ Pan Jian, "Lun *Xiandai dianying* de wenhua tezheng."

¹⁶⁰ Liu Na'ou formulated his thoughts on cinema mainly in the following articles: "Dianying yishu lun 電影藝術論" (serialized in *Dianying zhoubao*, 1932), "Zhongguo dianying miaoxie de shendu wenti 中國電影描寫的深度問題" (*Xiandai dianying* 3), "Lun qucai: women xuyao chuncui de dianying zuozhe 論取材: 我們需要純粹的電影作者" (*Xiandai dianying* 4), "Dianying jiezou jianlun 電影節奏簡論" (*Xiandai dianying* 6), etc. For an in-depth study of Liu Na'ou's notion of cinema see Pan Jian, "Dianying de dianying de zhuiqiu."

¹⁶¹ Liu Na'ou, "Zhongguo dianying miaoxie de shendu wenti," *Xiandai dianying* 3 (May 1933).

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ See *Furen huabao's* special issue: "Dianying teda hao: Zhongguo dianying dangmian de zhu wenti 電影特大號: 中國電影當面的諸問題," 25 Aug. 1935.

Na'ou cooperated with Yao Sufeng and some others launching a literary journal named *Liuyi* 六藝 (Six Arts) in February 1935.¹⁶⁴

These pieces of evidence suggest that Liu Na'ou and his associates were gaining importance on the literary scene of Shanghai in the mid-1930s. It is not surprising that Mingxing recruited this rising literary star as well as his close friend Huang Tianshi in October 1935. Furthermore, it seems possible that Yao Sufeng might have acted as a bridge in view of his extensive collaboration with Liu. At the same time, it deserves notice that Liu and Huang worked closely with the *Julian* members Ouyang Yuqian and Shen Xiling, supposedly their political opponents. As mentioned before, Ouyang Yuqian was the head of the Script Committee. Shen Xiling usually attended script meetings together with Ouyang, Liu and Huang.¹⁶⁵ According to a report in the *Diansheng*, Huang Tianshi planned to adapt Lu Xun's *Ah Q Zhengzhuan* 阿Q正傳 (The true story of Ah Q) into a film and would cooperate with Shen Xiling, though the plan was not materialized.¹⁶⁶

Liu and Huang were much less productive at Mingxing than their colleagues who were members of the *Zuolian* and *Julian*. Liu Na'ou contributed only one screenplay, *Yongyuan de weixiao* 永遠的微笑 (Forever Smiling), and Huang Tianshi nothing. In June 1936, Liu went to Nanjing and joined the newly founded state-run Central Film Studio (中央電影攝影場) and became a censor of the Central Film Censorship Committee (中央電影檢查委員會).¹⁶⁷ During the Sino-Japanese war, he worked for two Japanese invested film studios in Shanghai.¹⁶⁸ In September 1940, he was assassinated when working for the collaborationist regime of Wang Jingwei, possibly by secret agents of the GMD or by the Green Gang, an underground Mafia. As Shu-mei Shih has suggested, "if anything, the disagreement over the identity of his killer points to Liu's own fundamental ideological ambiguity and instability."¹⁶⁹ There were four different strands of ideologies, as Shih summarizes, with which Liu spent a life time negotiating: the Nationalist Party, the Chinese Communist Party, the Japanese puppet regime of Wang Jingwei, and Euro-American colonial and metropolitan cultures.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ Xu Qinzhen, *Modeng, Shanghai, Xin ganjue*, p. xvii.

¹⁶⁵ "Mingxing riji 明星日記," *MB* 3.3 (16 Nov. 1935).

¹⁶⁶ *DS* 5.47 (27 Nov. 1936): 1249.

¹⁶⁷ For Liu's employment by the Central Studio see Xu Qinzhen, p. 167; also see *DS* 5.25 (29 Jun. 1936). For Liu's joining the CFCC, see *Zhongyang dianying jiancha weiyuanhui gongbao* 3.7 (Jul. 1936): 54.

¹⁶⁸ Xu Qinzhen, "Liu Na'ou yiwun xinian."

¹⁶⁹ Shih, *The lure of the modern*, p. 286.

¹⁷⁰ Shih, p. 232.

Complexities were also displayed in the public persona of Yao Sufeng: a member of literary groups of popular writers such as the *Xingshe* and *Yunshe*, an editor of GMD-affiliated newspapers who, however, provided spaces for film critics of the *Zuolian* and *Julian*, as well as a government clerk and film censor. No matter how complex their characters and political identities may have been, Yao Sufeng and Liu Na'ou shared common features with other members of Mingxing's creative staff, the focus of these two chapters. The most salient common feature is that nearly all the figures examined above, including Yao and Liu, were active participants in the Shanghai literary and theatre fields as well as journalism. They established an interpersonal network, which Mingxing's managers themselves belonged to and at the same time regarded useful to their enterprise. To be sure, on the literary scene (*wentan*), there were many sub-groups, such as literary societies of popular writers, the *Zuolian* and *Julian*, and modernist literary school New Sensationism. In terms of ideological orientation or aesthetic views, members affiliated with different groups or organizations may have differed. But profound ideas and political identities perhaps were not what Mingxing's managers cared about most. As entrepreneurs running a business constantly threatened by financial difficulties, Mingxing executives had their own logic. A caricature published in the *Mingxing banyuekan* provides a clue to this logic of cultural production in this industry (see Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 "Daoyan xiansheng guo wuguan 導演先生過五關" (Five hurdles a director has to take); Source: *Mingxing banyuekan* 1.3 (16 May 1935): 4.

It suggests that there are five hurdles a director has to take: What kind of *screenplay* (劇本 – hurdle 1) to select? How to pass the *censors'* scissors (會, namely, 電影檢查會/Film Censorship Board – hurdle 2)? How to employ appropriate *filming techniques* (技巧 –

hurdle 3)? How to cater to *public opinion* (輿論 – hurdle 4)? How to generate highest *box-office receipts* (營業收入 – hurdle 5)? Any decision on which film to produce and by whom involved a delicate balance of all these elements. The ultimate goal was to make money. The recruitment of the popular writers, *Zuolian* writers, and others, should be seen as the result of such a balance.

The last two hurdles, "public opinion" (輿論) and "box-office receipts" (營業收入) suggest a necessary balance between commercialism and didacticism. While profit-making was naturally the ultimate goal of the commercial enterprise, public opinion was also important. On the one hand, public opinion was presumably connected to box office, though not always; on the other, it affected film companies' public image. The necessity to maintain the balance between money-making and building a positive company image was perhaps one of the reasons why Mingxing executives favoured active figures on the literary scene and journalism. "Celebrated writers" were able to invent appealing stories and could be used to impress the audience in publicity campaigns, while journalists were capable of moulding public opinion. On many occasions, those who were employed by Mingxing assumed both the roles. From the materials I have presented above, I would argue that pragmatic considerations (for commercial profits and positive public opinion), rather than political motives, determined the recruitment of these persons discussed in these two chapters, no matter how they are classified under *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD categories in conventional histories.

Meanwhile, public opinion was closely associated with didacticism, which had been advocated as an important purpose of fiction, theatre, and cinema as well. As cited above, popular writer Bao Tianxiao recognized that "film is a form of social education and can be compared to fiction" (emphasis marks are all mine).¹⁷¹ The CCP film critic Chen Wu promoted the idea that "movies should be the food for the masses."¹⁷² And the GMD's senior official Chen Lifu proposed that a film should be "seventy percent educational and thirty percent entertaining."¹⁷³ In a word, on this aspect, the so-called different groups did not hold conflicting opinions. To cater to *public* opinion, Mingxing's managers certainly encouraged screenwriters and directors to make films that could at once appeal to and educate the audience.

¹⁷¹ Xu Chihen, *Zhongguo yingxi daguan*, Chapter "Zhongguo xiaoshuo jia he dianying jie zhi guanxi 小說家與電影界之關係," n.p.

¹⁷² Chen Wu, "Dadao yiqie miyao he duyao, dianying ying zuo dazhong de shiliang 打倒一切迷藥和毒藥，電影應作大眾的食糧," *Shibao* 1 Jun. 1932: 5.

¹⁷³ "Dianying shiye zhidao weiyuanhui changwu weiyuan Chen Lifu xiansheng yanshuo 電影事業指導委員會常務委員陳立夫先生演說," in *Ji'nian ce*, p. 46.

CHAPTER FOUR

How to educate the people through film, namely, to take what forms and with what ideas? These questions are to be explored in the following three chapters. My intention is twofold. First, I will illustrate that the so-called *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD writers basically followed one formula for film production, "melodrama plus isms," which perfectly reflects the idea of "commercialism plus didacticism/conscience." As a matter of fact, the canonized *Zuoyi* films and marginalized *Yuanhu* and other films, as the official history has defined them, show much resemblance in style. Second, I attempt to map out a wide range of intellectual ideas and social tensions which found expressions in Mingxing films due to the filmmakers' eagerness (or a sense of necessity) to "educate" the people with modern ideas. Through this investigation I would argue that the popular medium cinema played a role in equipping the public mind with ideas which modern Chinese intellectuals were keen to circulate in order to strengthen the nation.

Part III The Products

Chapter Five

Melodrama plus Isms

Mingxing's first public appearance, an announcement published in leading Shanghai newspapers in February 1922 to call for investment (quoted in Chapter 1, 21), suggests its business tenet "commercialism plus conscience" (*Yingye zhuyi jia liangxin* 营业主义加良心). I will show in the first section of this chapter that this tenet was translated into a concrete formula applicable to the production of films. I term this formula "melodrama plus isms." Screenwriters discussed in the previous two chapters, be it so-called *Yuanhu* writers such as Bao Tianxiao, *Zuoyi* writers such as Xia Yan or GMD writers such as Liu Na'ou, principally adhered to this formula to invent stories, which could entertain and enlighten the movie-going public at once.

This chapter looks at the formula "melodrama plus isms" through four case studies. The first case is concerned with the earliest two feature-length films Mingxing released, *Zhang Xinsheng* 张欣生 (1922) and *Gu'er jiuzu ji* 孤儿救祖记 (An Orphan Rescues His Grandfather, 1923, hereafter *Orphan*). A comparison between the two films will reveal how the formula "melodrama plus isms" surfaced as an effective device to ensure both box office and critical acclaim. It is followed by close readings of three films, *Yuli hun* 玉梨魂 (Jade Pear Spirit, 1924, hereafter *Jade*), *Kuangliu* 狂流 (Wild Torrent, 1933, hereafter *Torrent*), and *Yongyuan de weixiao* 永远的微笑 (Forever Smiling, 1937, hereafter *Smiling*), which are classified, respectively, under *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD categories in the official history of Chinese cinema - ZDFZS. *Jade* and *Torrent* are adapted from fictional works respectively by the so-called *Yuanhu* writer Xu Zhenya and the *Zuolian* member Ding Ling 丁玲 (1904 - 1986). *Smiling* is scripted by the New Sensationism writer Liu Na'ou. On the one hand, I will illustrate how cinematic adaptation customized the stories to match the formula "melodrama plus isms." On the other, I will make it clear that how this formula serves as an important agent to translate intellectual ideas to accessible messages through dramatic representations.

5.1 Why "Melodrama plus Isms": *Zhang Xinsheng* 张欣生 and *Gu'er jiuzu ji* 孤儿救祖记 (Orphan)

As discussed in Chapter One (33-5), after producing several short comics and news reels which made only mediocre box offices (see Table 1.1), Mingxing turned out the feature-length films *Zhang Xinsheng* in late 1922 and *Orphan* a year later. The two features have met with hugely different receptions both in contemporary public opinion and from later historians. This section examines why this difference emerged and how this difference brought about the idea of "melodrama plus isms."

Zhang Xinsheng

Zhang Xinsheng is based on an actual court case which had been put on stage by some New Play troupes and received wide popularity. The plot develops around the title character Zhang Xinsheng who, in need of money for gambling and drugs, kills his father, cuts him up to scatter the corpus, and in the end is executed by hanging. In the received account of Chinese film history, the film has a rather negative image. It is claimed to have been banned by the authorities and have brought Mingxing to "the brink of ruin."¹ Based on theatre advertisements for the film, as I have shown in Chapter One (34), the film's box office records were in fact quite good, running for more than a month in Shanghai and might have generated considerable revenues for Mingxing. At the same time, however, its negative image has historical basis.

Soon after the public screening of *Zhang Xinsheng*, the wide popularity of the film, as well as another film entitled *Yan Ruisheng* 閻瑞生 (1921) which also based its plot on a real murder case, drew the attention of a group of educators. The Popular Education Research Society (*Tongsu jiaoyu yanjiu hui* 通俗教育研究會) in Beijing petitioned the Ministry of Education (教育部) to ban the two films in April 1923.² Then the Ministers of Interior (內政部) and Education sent a despatch to the Civil Governor of Jiangsu Province, which reads:³

The films displayed in the cinematograph theatres in various cities – for example, "The Murder of the Singsong Girl Lien Ying by Yen Jui-sheng" (*Yan Ruisheng*) and "The Tragedy of Chang Hsin-sheng's Property" (*Zhang Xinsheng*) even though they represent – as in these two films - recent actual events, they are nevertheless scenes of cruelty and murder. Their strangeness arouses a good deal of curiosity and brings an incessant audience, but they have a

¹ See ZDFZS, p. 59; Leyda, p. 37; Du Yunzhi, p. 32.

² "Tongsu jiaoyu yanjiu hui wei jinzhi shangyan buliang yingju cheng bing jiaoyu bu piling 通俗教育研究會為禁止上演不良影劇呈并教育部批令," dated 23 April 1923, Beiyang Government Archives, reprinted in Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan, ed, *Zhonghua minguo shi dang'an ziliao huibian* (vol. 3 wenhua), p. 176.

³ This letter is quoted in a letter (in English) written by Hsu Yuan (Commissioner for Foreign Affairs) to the Senior Consul of Shanghai, dated 23 May 1923, SMA U1-3-2401, p. 3. English is the original. Names in *pinyin* in the parentheses are mine.

CHAPTER FIVE

continuous and ruinous effect on social education.

The films in question are manufactured in the Shanghai Settlement. It is therefore requested that the Civil Governor of Kiangsu (*Jiangsu*) should direct the Commissioner for Foreign Affairs to approach the Consular Body with a view to having these films seized and destroyed in order to put a stop to this evil and to maintain social morality.

The Commissioner for Foreign Affairs is directed to take the necessary action accordingly.

Besides, the film censors of the Jiangsu Educational Association (*Jiangsu sheng jiaoyu hui* 江蘇省教育會) also voiced serious concerns over the film's "injurious effects." Shortly after the screening of *Zhang Xinsheng* in Shanghai, the Association wrote a letter to Mingxing, in which it expressed the opinion that "it was undesirable that certain parts of the film should be shown to the public" and a revision of certain scenes and of the plot was demanded.⁴ Particularly, descriptions of the causes of Zhang Xinsheng's crime were considered insufficient in the film. Accordingly, Mingxing made alternations. Gambling and drugs as the origin of Zhang Xinsheng's evil deeds were emphasized and the criminal's words of remorse prior to his execution were added to the intertitles.⁵

It is worth noting that both the educators in Beijing and Jiangsu based their criticisms of the film on moral criteria and educational principles. Local notables in Shanghai joined this rallying cry around the same time. In March 1923, the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce (*Shanghai zongshanghui* 上海總商會) petitioned the Jiangsu Provincial Government to take measures against "films that were detrimental to social morality" (有礙風化之影片) for the sake of "popular education" (國民通俗教育) as well as the youth susceptible to harmful influences.⁶

Mingxing's managers were unlikely to remain inattentive to these voices. Though no hard evidence has pointed to the official prohibition of *Zhang Xinsheng*,⁷ there is no doubt that Mingxing's executives regarded the film as an inglorious defeat. According to an investigation conducted by the Municipal Police, a manager of Mingxing stated that "the picture has been a complete failure."⁸ Reasons were not spelled out. We can surmise that this "failure" was not in commercial terms because, as stated above, its box-office records (Table 1.1) were quite good. In the above-quoted letter to the Civil Governor of Jiangsu

⁴ See the Municipal Police's investigation, SMA U1-3-2401, p. 4.

⁵ "Sheng Jiaoyu hui shenyue Mingxing yingpian zhi pingyu 省教育會審閱明星影片之評語," SB 5 Jul. 1923: 18.

⁶ "Guiding qudi yingpian zhi qingqiu 規定取締影片之請求," SB 18 Mar. 1923: 13.

⁷ The Municipal Police, by the command of the Chairman of the Shanghai Municipal Council, conducted an investigation on the two films and reached the conclusion that "from a police point of view, there are no objections to either of the films." See SMA, U1-3-2401, p. 6. In fact, *Zhang Xinsheng* was still showing at Shanghai's movie houses a year after its premiere. See advertisements in XWB 2 Mar. 1924: C4, 7 Mar. 1924: D4, 12 July 1924.

⁸ SMA, U1-3-2401, p. 4.

Province, we have learned that the film brought "an incessant audience."⁹ Therefore it may be speculated that Mingxing's managers deemed it "a complete failure" only because they felt shame for the film which had invited such a great deal of criticism.

This sense of shame is further hinted at by the fact that the company's self-compiled chronology in 1936 only makes indirect reference to the film in a general statement, stressing that early productions were "mere experiment on the subject of comedy and current events."¹⁰ Furthermore, *Zhang Xinsheng* appears neither in a complete list of Mingxing's productions inventoried by the company's Film Unit of the Marketing Division (*Yingye bu Pianwu ke* 營業部片務科)¹¹ nor in a filmography Mingxing submitted to the 1934 Chinese Film Yearbook.¹² Taken together, these pieces of information underpin the speculation that as Mingxing established itself as the "eldest brother" in the industry, its executives felt even more embarrassed to acknowledge this disreputable production to be the company's first feature. In this light, *Zhang Xinsheng* might have taught Mingxing a lesson that the company's public image should never be overlooked when choosing a plot. The first title that appears in the aforementioned inventories is *Orphan*, Mingxing's second feature film. In the following I will analyze how this film became a real success, both in terms of commercial benefits and public opinion.

Gu'er jiuzu ji (Orphan)

Orphan's significance to Mingxing is unquestionable. In addition to its box-office returns that largely consolidated the shaky business (see Chapter 1, 34-5), according to an article published in 1925, *Orphan* which the author deemed to be an "unprecedentedly excellent film" (空前佳作) deserves all the credit for the enhancement of Mingxing's reputation (明星公司之聲譽日隆，亦全賴此片).¹³ In retrospect, Zhou Jianyun stated with a sense of gratitude that "Mingxing established itself due to *Orphan* (明星公司以《孤兒救祖記》一片奠定了基礎)."¹⁴ Indeed, the film has been generally recognized as a landmark in Chinese film history. In 1934, for example, Gu Jianchen stated that *Orphan* had ushered in

⁹ SMA U1-3-2401, p. 3.

¹⁰ MXNB.

¹¹ The inventory entitled "明星影片股份有限公司營業部片務科逐日存片報告單" was appended to a contract Mingxing signed with the Communication Bank of Shanghai for a loan, dated 19 Jun. 1936. See SMA Q55-2-1371, p. 30.

¹² For the filmography see ZWD, pp. 35-42.

¹³ Xizui 昔醉, "Mingxing gongsi sannian lai zhi huigu 明星公司三年來之回顧," SB 1 Jan. 1925: "Yuandan zengkan" 18.

¹⁴ Zhou Jianyun, "Huai Zhengqiu xiong," MB 6.2 (1 Aug. 1936).

"an unprecedented national film movement."¹⁵ What is the secret for this grand success?

Orphan was written by Zheng Zhengqiu, directed by Zhang Shichuan, photographed by Zhang Weitao, and starred Zheng Xiaoqiu, Wang Xianzhai, Wang Hanlun, all emerging stars at the time. It was partly shot in an open-air studio, and partly on location – a private garden in Chinese traditional style.¹⁶ Shooting and postproduction took altogether eight months. Many reviews pointed out that acting skills, sets and production were extraordinary in view of its low budget and poor equipment.¹⁷ But ultimately it was the content that ensured success. While "elaborate" production was vaunted in the advertisements for its earliest exhibitions, later advertisements laid emphasis almost exclusively on the content, highlighting "tragic" (*aiqing* 哀情) and "touching" (*ganren* 感人) qualities, as well as the theme and didactic values, such as "family education" (*jiating jiaoyu* 家庭教育) and the "advancement of moral standards" (*cujin daode* 促進道德).¹⁸ I would argue that *Orphan* helped establish a pattern for Mingxing's further productions, which I term "melodrama plus 'isms'." The film's synopsis can serve as an elaboration of this pattern:

Millionaire Yang Shouchang 楊壽昌's only son is killed while horse-riding, and Yang is left without an heir. Persuaded by his clansman, Yang adopts his nephew Daopei 道培, a scheming character who eyes Yang's riches. Soon afterwards, the son's young widow Yu Weiru 余蔚如 finds out that she is pregnant. Recognizing this to be a grave threat to his future fortune, Daopei conspires with a friend and fabricates an accusation of infidelity. Yang believes them and turns her out of the family. She returns to her father's household and gives birth to a son, Yu Pu 余璞. When her father dies, she raises her son alone. Though living in poverty, she perseveres in educating her son in moral uprightness. In the Yang household meanwhile, Yang is finally infuriated at Daopei, who squanders his money and gets himself in debt. Yang moves to a new house near a charity school that benefits from his donations. His ten-year-old grandson Yu Pu, bright of mind and good at heart, happens to attend the school and wins the old man's favour. Both are unaware of their relationship. One day, when Daopei schemes to murder the grandfather who refuses to give him money, the boy saves his grandfather's life. In the end, the family is reunited after Daopei's death. Yu Weiru inherits Yang Shouchang's wealth and allocates part of the wealth to open a free charity school for the children of the poor.¹⁹

In the following I will analyze two aspects of the film: the style which I will call melodrama, and the ideas which contemporary reviewers and publicists termed "isms"

¹⁵ Gu Jianchen, "Zhongguo dianying fada shi," ZWD, p. 1364.

¹⁶ The open-air "studio" was located on the *Haining* Road (near the *Xijin Gongsuo*), and the private garden is *Nanyuan* (Nan Garden), owned by Jian Zhaonan, the head of the Nanyang Tobacco Company. See Zhang Shichuan, "Zi wo daoyan yilai," ZWD, p. 404.

¹⁷ See Zhou Shixun 周世勛, "Ping *Gu'er jiuzuji* zhong zhi yaojue 評《孤兒救祖記》中之要角," SB 21 Dec. 1923: 17; Chen Peisen, "Ping *Gu'er jiuzuji*," SB 10, 11 Mar. 1924.

¹⁸ See, respectively, XWB 20 Dec. 1923: A1; SB 28 Dec. 1923: 1; later ads often labelled the film as "Zhongguo diyi aiqing jiating jiaoyu yingpian 中國第一哀情家庭教育影片" (The number one Chinese tragic film on family education) see XWB 2 Mar. 1924, XWB 7 Mar. 1924, XWB 13 Mar. 1924.

¹⁹ No print of the film survives. For the synopsis see ZWDJB, p. 47.

(*zhuyi* 主義). I attempt to make it clear that these two aspects are essential to the film's success.

1. Melodrama

The plot of *Orphan* obviously identifies the story as melodrama. I apply the term "melodrama" in this study to identify a genre that was shared by *Orphan* and many other Mingxing productions. Historically speaking, Mingxing's filmmakers were conscious of the genre their films could fall within. Mingxing's director Yao Sufeng once stated that he had applied the techniques of "melodrama" (English in the original text) to make his characters experience more "twists and turns" and to generate greater dramatic effects (使用melodrama的編劇方法, 使故事裡的人物多一些糾纏, 多一些戲劇效果) in order to meet his boss Zhang Shichuan's requirements.²⁰ For this reason, as well as others to be stated below, I consider "melodrama" a suitable analytical tool for my study of Mingxing films.

Deriving from the Greek word *melos* for song or stage play combined with music, the term "melodrama," in its modern usage, signifies "a form of drama characterized by sensationalism, emotional intensity, hyperbole, strong action, violence, rhetorical excesses, moral polarities, brutal villainy and its ultimate elimination, and the triumph of good."²¹ According to Peter Brooks' pioneering study, the genre, emerging in eighteenth-century Europe, coincided with the rise of the new bourgeois class, who sought for the clear moral meaning in a period when older religious and transcendent values no longer gave significance to people's lives in a post-Enlightenment world. Melodrama met the interest of this class through the fixed dramatic types (heroine-villain-hero) and the repetition of the struggle between archetypes of good and evil.²²

Through the last decades, a growing scholarship has addressed "melodrama" and its cultural significance at aesthetic, ideological or political levels, generating an interdisciplinary engagement that comprises literary and film research, gender studies, and other approaches.²³ A term developed in the Western context, "melodrama" has also been extensively employed to examine non-Western cultural artefacts, including Chinese films.²⁴ However, there is no synonym for "melodrama" in Chinese. Stephen Teo identifies

²⁰ Sufeng 蘇鳳, "Luliu qianghua de bianju zhe yan 《路柳牆花》的編劇者言," *Yingmi zhoubao* 1.2 (3 Oct. 1934): 38.

²¹ Dissanayake, "Introduction," in Dissanayake, ed, *Melodrama and Asian cinema*, p. 1.

²² Brooks, *The melodramatic imagination*. For a concise summary of his salient ideas see the book review by Tuttleton, p. 149.

²³ For the state of the art of the melodramatic studies, cf. Kelleter, et al, "The melodramatic mode revisited. An introduction," In Kelleter, et al. eds., *Melodrama!*, pp. 7-17.

²⁴ Dissanayake edited *Melodrama and Asian cinema* represents a pioneering endeavour in addressing the

wenyi pian 文藝片 (literally, "literary and art film") as the Chinese counterpart to conventional melodramas "in terms of a highly sentimental and exaggerated story."²⁵ In recent Chinese scholarly works or translations, "melodrama" is more often rendered as *tongsu ju* 通俗劇 (literally, "popular film"),²⁶ or *qingjie ju* 情節劇 (literally, film with [convoluted] plot).²⁷ No matter how "melodrama" is named in Chinese, China has a tradition of vernacular literature and drama built on a binary structure of good/evil and emotional intensity, characteristics similar to those of melodrama.²⁸ From the last decades of the Qing dynasty onwards, translations of Western romantic literature and popular fiction initiated a trend of literary production Perry Link has termed "bourgeois fiction" or "sentimental novel." The trend boomed in the mid-1910s, with the popular stories growing "more blatantly sentimental" and primarily concerned with "evoking emotion."²⁹

Mindful of the complexities and nuances inherent in the term, I consider the analytical tool "melodrama" useful to my readings of Mingxing films for two reasons. First, without the intention to explore the theoretical or cultural dimensions of "melodrama," I use the term at its "simplest" level, that is, at the level of popular usage. In this limited sense, many key features of "melodrama" coincide with plot, style and structure of *Orphan* and other Mingxing films. Second, I need the term to identify specific genre traits shared by many Mingxing films. These films are conventionally placed in different categories defined by ideological standards, which ignore marked stylistic and narrative similarities and obstruct analysis of meanings conveyed by these. Applying the stylistic rather than content-oriented categorization "melodrama," I view Mingxing productions "as a crucial space in which the cultural, political, and economic exigencies were played out and transformed into public discourses,"³⁰ a space in which various intellectual ideas of modern China were played out and transformed into "popular" discourses accessible to a wider public.

In which respects does *Orphan* match the qualities of "melodrama"? Why and how was

issue. It collects four essays concerning melodrama and Chinese cinema. In addition, there are a number of essays devoted to this subject: Pickowicz, "Melodramatic representation and the 'May Fourth' tradition of Chinese cinema;" Teo, "Chinese Melodrama: the *Wenyi* genre;" Ma, "The textual and critical difference of being radical."

²⁵ Teo, p. 203.

²⁶ For example, Pickowicz's "Melodramatic representation and the 'May Fourth' tradition of Chinese cinema" is translated as "'Tongsu ju,' Wusi chuantong yu zhongguo dianying '通俗劇', 五四傳統與中國電影" (in Zheng Shusen, ed, *Wenhua piping yu huayu dianying*)

²⁷ James L. Smith's *Melodrama* (London: Methuen, 1973) is translated as *Qingjie ju* 情節劇 (by Wu Wen 武文, published by Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1992). The term 'qingjie ju' is widely used in recent scholarly works. For example, see He Chungeng, *Zhongxi qingjie ju dianying yishu bijiao yanjiu* 中西情節劇電影藝術比較研究.

²⁸ For the Chinese storytelling tradition cf. Idema, et al. eds, *A Guide to Chinese Literature*, pp. 191-239.

²⁹ Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, p. 54.

³⁰ Hays, et al., eds, *Melodrama*, p. viii.

this narrative mode established by Mingxing? Though there have been multiple parameters to define the term, three features seem most essential to what has been customarily called "melodrama": (a) allegorical or stereotypical good versus evil forces; (b) exaggeration, or excess; (c) emotional intensity, or emotionalism.³¹ These elements are inseparably interwoven with each other, and at the centre of the nexus is inarguably the "good-versus-evil" structure. Applying these criteria to examine the plot of *Orphan*, we can safely place Yu Weiru/Yu Pu and Daopei respectively at opposite poles of the "good-versus-evil" structure. As a typical melodramatic tale requires, the story does end with the triumph of the good (Yu Weiru and Yu Pu) and the elimination of the villain (Daopei). Similarly, elements of exaggeration are easily discernible in the development of the plot. For example, Yang surprisingly easily believes his nephew's fabricated accusation against his daughter-in-law, and the family reunion in the end is entirely coincidental. Finally, the story is certainly made to evoke intensive emotions of the audience – hatred for the villains, sympathy for the widow, and joy at the family's reunion. In short, the story of *Orphan* perfectly matches Peter Brooks' characterization of melodrama: "mode of high emotionalism and stark ethical conflict."³²

Zheng Zhengqiu's adoption of the melodramatic way of storytelling is unsurprising. On the one hand, as stated above, China has a long tradition of fictional and theatrical creations which centre on good/evil polarization. On the other, a "Griffith craze" sweeping Shanghai from 1922 needs to be taken into consideration as the context of the production of *Orphan*. Between 1922 and 1924, Shanghai movie houses screened altogether ten films directed by D. W. Griffith (1875 - 1948), some of which gained extreme popularity, for example, *Way Down East* (1920, rendered in Chinese as *Laihun* 賴婚).³³ Conventionally, these films are considered representative of the vanguard of Hollywood melodrama.³⁴ Interestingly, a piece of theatre advertisement for *Way Down East* publicized the film with a line which reads "Viewing the film is like reading the Chinese *xiaoshuo*/novel *The Dream of the Red Chamber* – viewing/reading more times, feeling intrigued increasingly (看此劇如看中國小說《紅樓夢》，越看越有味)."³⁵ Clearly, contemporary theatre publicists regarded melodramatic expressions of Griffith's films to be comparable to narrative techniques of traditional Chinese fiction. It is highly probable that domestic film

³¹ Cf. Hill, et al. eds, *The Oxford guide to film studies*, pp. 272ff, Gehring, *Handbook of American film genre*, pp. 285ff.

³² Brooks, *The melodramatic imagination*, p. 12.

³³ Chen Jianhua, "Gelei feisi yu zhongguo zaoqi dianying," p. 113.

³⁴ Linda Williams analyzes *Way Down East* as an exemplary melodrama. See Williams, *Playing the race card*, pp. 26-42.

³⁵ SB 22 Oct. 1922; quoted in Chen Jianhua, "Gelei feisi yu zhongguo zaoqi dianying," p. 118.

producers drew inspiration from both this kind of imported film and Chinese tradition of story-telling, which show certain affinities between each other.

Hence, *Orphan* has to be regarded as a cinematic artefact embedded in Chinese literary and theatrical tradition and in global trends of film culture. When we investigate publicists' opinions, we find confirmation that the melodramatic style constituted the film's major attraction to the audience. The first newspaper advertisement for *Orphan* declared that the film's superior attraction was, first and foremost, "intricacy of the plot" (*qingjie quzhe* 情節曲折), followed by the spectacular set, neatly and concisely composed intertitles, and painstakingly designed lighting.³⁶ Another piece of advertisement cited a journalist's comment that rated the film highly for it was genuinely a "play" (*xi* 戲) and provided a brief outline of the scenario:³⁷

A child that is an orphan, the pity! 兒而曰孤，非苦可知
 A grandfather to be rescued, the danger! 祖而曰救，非險可知
 A child who rescues his grandfather yet an orphan, how strange! 救祖而為孤兒，其奇可知
 The grandson who does not know his grandfather and the grandfather who does not know his grandson, how entangled! 孫不知孫為孫，祖不知祖為祖，其曲折可知
 The orphan's mother, a young widow who has been slandered, the injustice! 孤兒之母，為少年寡婦，遭人陷害，其冤可知

Audiences' positive response to this scenario is proven by the length of the film's run, almost 100 days at Shanghai theatres (see Table 1.1). A writing member of the audience described how and why the movie gripped its spectators.³⁸ The author attended the movie at the *Shenjiang* Theatre in the evening of 21 December 1923. Upon his arrival, the theatre hall had been filled to capacity. The twists and turns in the story – in his words, *beihuan lihe* 悲歡離合 (literally, "grief and joy, separation and union") – caused audiences to laugh and cry uncontrollably, touching them as if it had been reality. He commented, "From this experience I come to know of the taste of the movie-going public."³⁹

This remark on the dominating movie-viewing tastes is consistent with Zheng Zhengqiu's observation. A manager and screenwriter of Mingxing as well as many theatre troupes, he sighed that it was ultimately his clientele's tastes that determined his creation, no matter where he served – old theatre houses, new drama troupes or film companies. The widespread pattern meeting the current audience's needs was "heroes extremely good and villains extremely evil, heroes getting rewarded and villains getting punished (善者極善，

³⁶ XWB 20 Dec. 1923: A1.

³⁷ SB 28 Dec. 1923: 1.

³⁸ Zhi 稚, "Gu'er jiuzu ji zhi pinglun 《孤兒救祖記》之評論," SB 27 Dec. 1923: 17. The author's sex is hard to judge; for the sake of simplification, I use male pronoun below.

³⁹ Ibid.

惡者極惡，善有善報，惡有惡報)。⁴⁰ As a business venture, Zheng admitted, Mingxing could not but yield to market demands.⁴¹

Apart from audiences' recognition, the melodramatic tale also received great critical acclaim. As Gu Kenfu commented, Chinese films lagged far behind their Western counterpart primarily due to their deficiency in "dramatic quality" (*xiju de xingzhi* 戲劇的性質) capable of evoking intense emotions.⁴² Judging by this standard, he praised *Orphan* highly because it was the only Chinese film that strongly appealed to his feelings. As an editor and regular contributor of various film journals, Gu Kenfu represented the group of media elites powerful in moulding public opinion. His favourable comments on the film can be expected to have significantly encouraged Mingxing's producers to continue in the melodramatic pattern.

The melodramatic mode gradually became Zhang Shichuan's unique directing style. His wife described the style in sarcastic tones:⁴³

How miserable his protagonists have to be at the opening of his films! Soft-hearted women in the audience were bound to be moved to tears, getting a couple of handkerchiefs wet. In the end he arranged a dramatic reversal, so that everybody rejoiced at the happy ending.

他導演的片子都是一開頭苦得來！能惹心軟的婦女觀眾哭濕幾條手帕，到後面來一個急轉彎，忽然柳暗花明，皆大歡喜。

She continued that her husband had his own philosophy:

A film that fails to make madams and ladies cry can hardly please them, but a film with extremely poignant plots, ending with separation, death, and dissolved family, will lose me my audiences too. Hence we must make sure to give them a good weep first and a good laugh after. Thus, as soon as our new film turns out, they will head for the cinema immediately.

不讓太太小姐們流點眼淚，她們不會過癮，說電影沒味道；但劇情太慘了，結尾落個生離死別，家破人亡，又叫她們過於傷心，不愛看了。必須做到使她們哭嘛哭得暢快，笑嘛笑得開心。這樣，新片子一出，保管她們就要迫不及待地來買票子了

Apparently, this philosophy which experience had taught Zhang Shichuan effectively ensured box office receipts. In other words, the melodramatic way of representation was a means of realizing "commercialism." Yet Mingxing's leaders learned more from *Orphan* than this lesson. In contrast to *Zhang Xinsheng*, with *Orphan* the company achieved, besides revenue, a good name. This achievement can be primarily attributed to *zhuyi*/ism – lofty ideas – the film contained. In the following I will explore why *zhuyi*/ism had to be an ingredient to a decent film work and which *zhuyi*/isms were expressed in *Orphan*.

⁴⁰ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Wo suo xiwang yu guanzhong zhe 我所希望於觀眾者," ZWD, p. 599.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 600.

⁴² Gu Kenfu, "Guan *Gu'er jiu zu ji* hou zhi taolun 觀《孤兒救祖記》後之討論," SB 19 Dec. 1923: 17.

⁴³ He Xiujun, pp. 118-119.

2. *zhuyi/isms*

As discussed in the introduction (17), the term *zhuyi* 主義, the standard equivalent of the English nominal suffix *ism*, became popular since the late Qing, transcending the academic world and entering everyday lexicon. Film publicists and reviewers appropriated the term to refer to an individual film's "theme" or "central idea." For example, an advertising text for a Mingxing film stated, "the film's *zhuyi* is to expose the crimes committed by the new youth in the name of justice and to awaken those who indulge in the fantasy world of free love (此片主義, 以抉發新青年假正義而行作奸犯科之種種惡習, 並警醒自由戀愛之迷夢)." ⁴⁴ Further, *zhuyi* implies that the theme or central idea must be lofty, meaningful, or beneficial to the audience. As a film critic wrote, "The films we want to see should have *zhuyi*. [...] At best, these should reflect current problems of the society and express criticisms accordingly (看影戲, 要看有主義的影戲[...])最好能切中時弊, 對於社會現狀, 加以切實的批判)." ⁴⁵ In an author's opinion, Zheng Zhengqiu's films had won much acclaim for possessing *zhuyi*. ⁴⁶ Here, *zhuyi* does not simply mean "theme" in its neutral sense, but a theme or central idea that carries "positive" values, values in accordance with prevailing intellectual convictions.

Within this linguistic and historical context, *zhuyi/ism* emerges as a concept essential to our understanding of Mingxing's filmmaking practice. In fact, the issue was Zhang Shichuan and Zheng Zhengqiu's major concern when they were deliberating which kind of film they would produce in the founding period of their enterprise. Zhang Shichuan proposed that early experiments "should only pursue current attractions and tastes in order to evoke merry laughter from the audience, leaving aside *zhuyi*," while Zheng Zhengqiu maintained that films "should not contribute nothing in terms of *zhuyi* to the society." ⁴⁷ To a certain degree, the grand success of *Orphan* was the triumph of Zheng Zhengqiu.

This was manifest first in the favourable assessment of the film given by the Jiangsu Educational Association. Moral correctness and didactic value were foremost among the criteria film censors of the association adopted to evaluate films (see Chapter 1, p. 8). The censorship board of the association examined *Orphan* on 21 December 1923 and published

⁴⁴ Ad for *Aiqing yu huangjin*, XWB 27 Dec. 1926: A1.

⁴⁵ Yan Duhe 嚴獨鶴, "Guan Xuelei bei yingju hou zhi wojian 觀《血淚碑》影劇後之我見," *MT* 27 (1 Nov. 1927).

⁴⁶ Ye Yihe, "Guan Kelian de guinü 觀《可憐的閨女》," *Shibao* 14 Nov. 1926.

⁴⁷ Zhang Shichuan, "Jinggao duzhe 敬告讀者," *Chenxing* 1, 1922, Zheng Zhengqiu, "Mingxing weilai zhi changpian zhengju 明星未來之長片正劇," *Chenxing* 1, 1922.

a report. Their central evaluation reads:⁴⁸

1. Regarding the central idea, the film helps kindle the enthusiasm of the rich to lend more support to the cause of education. 思想方面，可引起富人扶助教育之興味
2. In handling the issue of "retribution for evil doings and reward for good deeds," no superstitious idea is involved. 於善惡果報，不涉迷信
3. The scene in which the widow is teaching her son well serves as an example of family education that deserves to follow. 教子一幕，足為家庭教育之模範
4. The scene in which the widow declares how she intends to divide her property encourages people to sponsor free schools. 寡媳宣布處分財產一幕，能興起社會提倡義務教育之觀感
5. An intention to correct bad customs of the society is perceivable in the intertitle texts. This is worthy of recommendation to other filmmakers. 社會之惡習慣能於說明中糾正，足為制片者法

The following day, Mingxing's publicists immediately added a line into *Orphan's* advertisement: "The film was approved by the Jiangsu Educational Association. It is judged to be in accordance with educational principles and to have a positive impact on our society. It is ranked first-class (本劇已經江蘇省教育會審定，認為確合教育原理，能於社會發生良好之影響，列入第一等)."⁴⁹ Needless to say, the rating of "first-class" was a tremendous relief as well as honour for Mingxing, if we consider the association's negative assessment of *Zhang Xinsheng*. Subsequently, *Orphan* received extensive media exposure.⁵⁰ Most reviewers considered it laudable for its achievement in presenting *zhuyi*. An author "previously with little interest in motion pictures" was impressed by the film's power in moving the audience and then believed the popular saying "Motion pictures can facilitate popular education" (影片可輔助社會教育之言，觀此始信之).⁵¹ Another author ranked *Orphan* as the best Chinese film he had ever seen for being of "benefit to public morals (有益於世道人心也)."⁵²

In some ways, *zhuyi*/isms presented in *Orphan* fit well into the intellectual atmosphere of the time when the impact of the epoch-making May Fourth Movement in 1919 continued to reverberate throughout the intellectual world. A variety of new ideas and ideals, mostly imported from the West, were proliferating. Simultaneously, iconoclastic ideas were gaining momentum as traditional institutions and old ethics were re-examined, such as the extended family, marriage customs, ideals of filial piety and women's chastity.

⁴⁸ "Sheng jiaoyuhui shenyue *Gu'er jiuzuji* yingpian 省教育會審閱《孤兒救祖記》影片," XWB 22 Dec. 1923: D3.

⁴⁹ XWB 22 Dec. 1923.

⁵⁰ There are at least twelve reviews of the film published in *Shenbao* during the period, see *Shenbao suoyin bianji weiyuanhui*, ed. *Shenbao suoyin* 申報索引, vol. 3, pp. 236-7.

⁵¹ Ping Zhi 萍沚, "Guan *Gu'er jiuzuji* hou zhi yijian 觀《孤兒救祖記》后之意見," SB 30 Dec. 1923: 17.

⁵² Liu Henwo 劉恨我, "Yinmu xintan 銀幕新談," XWB 3 Mar. 1924: C3 "Kuaihuo lin".

Reforms in education and other institutions were set in motion.⁵³

Orphan addresses some of the pressing issues of the period. First and foremost, it is a film on the theme of education. Zhou Jianyun, on behalf of the production team, explained that the "orphan" Yu Pu profits from his mother's insistence on education and from the charity school open to children of the poor. In contrast to his uncle's evil machinations, Yu Pu's good deeds are presented as the result of good moral and education. To promote popular education, at both family and school levels, was an intention of *Orphan's* filmmakers.⁵⁴ This statement is suggestive of the filmmakers' conscious effort to echo the real world. The May Fourth period brought about a boom of free charity schools throughout China to educate the masses and poor children. An American correspondent reported in August 1919, "In Shanghai alone, sixteen free schools have been opened for children who cannot afford to pay for their education, and similar action has been taken in every city of the country."⁵⁵ It is clear that this trend found its fictional manifestation in *Orphan*.

While attributing Yu Pu's goodness to the new education he receives, the film ascribes his uncle Daopei's evil character to the old family system, specifically the inheritance system. It is clear that the series of misfortunes starts with Yang's adoption of Daopei, i.e. as the legal inheritor of his property. This patriarchal system and a set of related institutions and customs were one of the main targets of attack of the May Fourth intellectuals.⁵⁶ In Mingxing's productions, the theme is taken up repeatedly (to be elaborated in Chapter Six/6.1). In a sense, Daopei represents the prototype of villain in this kind of film, good-for-nothing, morally degenerate, and most importantly, born into a rich family that leaves him wealth to inherit.

In the light of these facts, the film historian Zheng Junli placed *Orphan* into the category of "*shehui wenti ju* 社會問題劇" (social problem drama), a genre of Spoken Drama/*huaaju* introduced by the May Fourth intellectuals in imitation of the plays in the Western Ibsenesque tradition.⁵⁷ Zheng Junli carefully traced the nexus in which the new drama genre affected the production of *Orphan*: In 1918, Hu Shi 胡適 (1891 - 1962) and his colleagues introduced Henrik Ibsen's plays to the Chinese readership in a special issue of

⁵³ Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, pp. 254-265.

⁵⁴ Zhou Jianyun, "Preface," *Gu'er jiuzuji Tekan*, 1924, quoted in ZWD, p. 1398.

⁵⁵ George E. Sokolsky, "China's Defiance of Japan," *The Independence*, vol. 99, no.3693 (New York, 20 Sep. 1919), p. 390; quoted in Chow, pp. 193-4.

Also cf. Bailey, *Reform the people: changing attitudes towards popular education in early twentieth-century China*.

⁵⁶ Chow, pp. 182ff.

⁵⁷ Zheng Junli, "Xiandai zhongguo dianying shilue," ZWD, pp. 1396-1398.

Xin qingnian 新青年 (*New Youth*).⁵⁸ Following its lead, a wealth of Western plays of this genre was translated and some were put on the stage. The first attempt in the latter direction was a play adapted from George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. It was enacted on stage at a Shanghai theatre in 1920. Many "New Play practitioners" (新劇家), including Zheng Zhengqiu, participated in this "modern drama movement" (*jindaiju yundong* 近代劇運動), as Zheng Junli termed it. Hence, Zheng Junli concluded that "the quintessence of 'social problem drama' was transplanted to domestic films through these New Play practitioners (這些社會問題劇的影響經過了一些進步的新劇家的手里帶到土著電影里去)."⁵⁹ The example he gave is exactly *Orphan* "whose screenwriter is the New Play practitioner Zheng Zhengqiu."⁶⁰

Zheng Junli's interpretation seems reasonable. As introduced in Chapter Three (83), Zheng Zhengqiu, Zhou Jianyun as well as Zheng Zhegu and Zhang Shichuan were all actively involved in the sphere of theatre in the 1910s. We find on the pages of the *Jiefang huabao* (Emancipation Pictorial) that immediately after the premiere of the aforementioned play *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (Chinese title: 華倫夫人的職業) at the *Xin wutai* (New Stage), Zhou Jianyun published two reviews in this journal edited by himself.⁶¹ This further illustrates the close linkage between the theatre and film worlds through these practitioners. Hence it is not surprising that *Orphan* bore the imprint of the May Fourth intellectual ethos and became the vanguard of cinematic representations of current social problems.

At the same time, it is worth noting that "May Fourth" ideas and Chinese traditional values were not mutually exclusive in this film. Film reviewers pointed out that traditional values presented in *Orphan* included filial piety, womanly virtues such as the chastity of widows and the ideal of "Good Wife, Wise Mother" (*xianqi liangmu* 賢妻良母) as the fulfilment of female existence, and "retribution for evil doings and reward for good deeds."⁶² It may look strange at first glance that the film juxtaposes these themes common

⁵⁸ *Xin qingnian*, vol. 4, no. 6, 15 Jun. 1918, "Yibusheng zhuanhao 易卜生專號" (A special issue on Henrik Ibsen).

⁵⁹ Zheng Junli, p. 1397.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ See Zhou Jianyun, "Ping Xin wutai de 'Hua Nainai zhi zhiye' 評新舞臺的'華奶奶之職業'," *Jiefang huabao* 6 (30 Nov. 1920); Zhou Jianyun, "Ping 'Hua Nainai zhi zhiye de yubo': Da Wang Youyou 評'華奶奶之職業'的餘波: 答汪優遊," *Jiefang huabao* 7 (26 Jan. 1921).

⁶² These points were summarized by contemporary critics. For example, Sheyu saw the film centred on four major themes: "advice on filial piety 教孝," "punishment of evil 懲惡," "advice on learning 勸學," "call for establishment of free schools for the poor 提倡貧民小學", in See She Yu 舍予, "Guan Mingxing shezhi *Gu'er jiuzuji* 觀明星攝製《孤兒救祖記》," SB 26 Dec. 1923: 8, "Ziyou tan." Besides these points, another

to traditional literature with the above-discussed new issues. Critical voices in the press in fact gave equal recognition to both the "old" and "new" isms.⁶³ The fact suggests that, compared to the radical intellectuals, the producers of popular cultural artefacts obviously took a milder attitude towards tradition. Their stance was reflective of the attitude shared by the general populace to a large extent. In spite of the traces of the "Old" in the film, it is unquestionable that "New" elements dominated nevertheless.

From the materials I have presented, two conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, during the process of trial and error, the tenet *commercialism plus conscience* (營業主義加良心) crystallized into the concrete formula which I have termed *melodrama plus isms*. Zheng Zhengqiu made it plain in 1925 that he had always been trying "to insert *zhuyi*/isms into the plot of each play, so that to allow audiences to obtain deep instructions through entertainment (把每一本戲的主義，插在大部份情節里面，使得觀眾在娛樂當中，得到很深刻的暗示)." ⁶⁴ On the one hand, "melodrama" was essential to the aim of entertaining the audience and making money. On the other, "zhuyi/isms" at once accomplished the goals of instructing the audience and winning a good name for the company. The different fates of *Zhang Xinsheng* and *Orphan* have revealingly demonstrated that both revenue and reputation were significant to the business.

Secondly, Zheng Junli's analysis has provided a clue to the fact that Zheng Zhengqiu, Zhou Jianyun, as well as many other Mingxing's filmmakers discussed in the previous two chapters, played a crucial role as the bridge between the intellectual world and the film industry. These cultural professionals and entrepreneurs constantly negotiated between the targets of entertainment and enlightenment, between radical intellectual opinions and pragmatic approaches to get elite ideas across to the popular mind. *Orphan* is only the beginning of the story. Many films Mingxing turned out in the years to come would further demonstrate this point. *Yuli hun* (*Jade*), turned out shortly after *Orphan*, is an immediate test case for my argument that intellectual ideas were melodramatized on the screen. *Jade* was adapted from a novel under the same title by Xu Zhenya, a novel that enjoyed great popularity in the early to mid-1910s and is conventionally regarded as the pace-setter of *Yuanhu* fiction in its original meaning of sentimental love story (*aiqing xiaoshuo* 哀情小

author mentioned the virtues of the widow, see Chen Peisen 陳培森, "Ping *Gu'er jiuzuji* 評《孤兒救祖記》," SB 10 Mar. 1924: 8, "Ziyou tan."

⁶³ Ibid. The JEA's assessment also serves as an example of the situation.

⁶⁴ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Jieshi *Zuihou zhi liangxin de sanjian shi* 解釋《最後之良心》的三件事," MT 2 (5 Jun. 1925).

說).⁶⁵ The following section compares the print and screen versions and shows how the original story was tailored to fit the idea of "melodrama plus isms" in film adaptation.

5.2 Test Case I: *Yuli hun* 玉梨魂 (Jade)

From Print to Screen

The novel *Yuli hun* was serialized in the *Minquan bao* 民權報 (People's Right) from August 1912 and was published in book form in September 1913.⁶⁶ It soon became a bestseller and has gone through numerous reprints over decades. By September 1914, for example, it was into its fifth reprint by the *Minquan* Publishing Section (民權出版部). In April 1928, the *Qinghua* Publishing House (清華書局), founded by Xu Zhenya and his brother, brought out the 32nd edition, and in April 1946 the *Dazhong* Publishing House (大眾書局) reprinted it for the fifth time.⁶⁷ While precise figures of reprints are not available, the novel's circulation has been estimated to have reached several hundred thousand.⁶⁸ Xia Yan mentioned in his memoir that he read the novel in 1916 when he was a student of a technical secondary school in Hangzhou. The book was passed around among his fellow students and devoured by these young readers.⁶⁹

The story is set in 1909. A talented young man named He Mengxia 何夢霞 (literally, "dreaming of the glow in the sky") falls in love with the mother of his pupil Penglang 鵬郎, the young widow Bai Liying 白梨影 ("the shadow of pear blossoms", usually referred to as Li Niang 梨娘, Lady Pear Blossom). Their spiritual and poetic affinity is established through a regular exchange of letters and poems. Both are aware that their romantic sentiments cannot be consummated in marriage, because Li Niang must observe the code of widow chastity. To match her determination to remain a widow, Mengxia vows

⁶⁵ Zhou Zuoren regarded the novel as "the founding father of Butterfly fiction," See Zhou Zuoren. "Zhongguo xiaoshuo li de nannü wenti 中國小說裡的男女問題," *Meizhou pinglun* (2 Feb. 1919), quoted in Fan Boqun, *Minguo tongshu xiaoshuo Yuanyang hudie pai*, p. 102. Fan Yanqiao also stated that "in terms of the content and style, *Yuli hun* exemplifies the Butterfly fiction, and Xu Zhenya the Butterfly novelist." See Fan Yanqiao, "Minguo jiapai xiaoshuo shilue 民國舊派小說史略," in YHYZ, p. 277.

⁶⁶ The first instalment of the novel appears in *Minquan bao* 3 Aug. 1912: 11. For the publication of the novel in book form see advertisement in *Minquan bao* 13 Sep. 1913: 1.

⁶⁷ Tarumoto, ed., *Xinbian zengbu qingmo minchu xiaoshuo mulu*, pp. 912-3. The most recent reprint of the book is in 1997.

⁶⁸ The estimated circulation figure is given by Yan Fusun 嚴芙孫 in Xu's brief biography he wrote, see YHYZ, p. 543. Many scholars cited the figure; see e.g. C. T. Hisa (in "Hsü Chen-ya's *Yü-li hun*," p. 201), Fan Boqun (in *Minguo tongshu xiaoshuo Yuanyang hudie pai*, p. 101), and Perry Link (in *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, p. 53). Perry Link added that, based on his interviews with Butterfly authors, "Some have ever estimated a total circulation of over a million, counting continued reprintings in the 1920s and later." (p. 53)

⁶⁹ Xia Yan, *Lanxun jiumeng lu*, pp. 28-9.

perpetual bachelorhood. This decision causes Li Niang so much worry that she falls ill. According to Confucian doctrine, it is a man's responsibility to get married and produce male heirs to carry on the family name (*chuanzong jiedai* 傳宗接代). Li Niang feels guilty if Mengxia becomes "a ghost of romantic love and a transgressor of Confucian doctrine" (情場之怨鬼, 名教之罪人).

Li Niang comes up with the idea to arrange her younger sister-in-law Yunqia 筠倩, a student of a girls' school, to marry Mengxia, a solution she thinks to be best for all concerned. Fearful that rejecting her proposal will do harm to her health, Mengxia agrees, while unable to extinguish his affection for Li Niang. Yunqian, though influenced by the new-style education and ideas of women's emancipation, decides to accept the arranged marriage proposed by her beloved father and sister-in-law. However, once married, both remain unhappy. Recognizing that her solution is a grave mistake, Li Niang's health deteriorates. On her deathbed, she writes a letter to Yunqian in which she reveals the true story. Yunqian is so deeply touched that she, too, dies half a year later. After these blows, Mengxia leaves home for Japan for college study. When the 1911 revolution breaks out, he returns home and dies a patriotic martyr on the front lines, the letters exchanged between himself and Li Niang clutched to his breast.⁷⁰

A plot outline, as C. T. Hsia has pointed out, "does little to suggest its power and fascination."⁷¹ The novel's circulation figures convincingly indicate its enormous appeal to readers, and this popularity perhaps was the primary reason for the screen adaptation. This motivation is reflected in Mingxing's advertisement for *Jade*, which states: "*Yuli hun* is the novel having enjoyed the widest and most lasting popularity since the founding of the Republic. It is the first masterpiece of Mr. Xu Zhenya (光復以來, 流行最廣, 轟動最久之小說, 當推玉梨魂。言為徐枕亞先生第一部大傑作)."⁷² In addition, personal ties also played a role. The author Xu Zhenya was an editor of the *Minquan bao* when *Yuli hun* was serialized in the fiction column of this paper.⁷³ As mentioned above, Zheng Zhengqiu also worked for the newspaper in 1912. We may conjecture that the two men became acquainted then. It would have been natural for Zheng to approach his old colleague for an adaptation of his work for the screen.

Production of *Jade* began in spring 1924, about three months after *Orphan's* premiere.

⁷⁰ The synopsis of the story is based on the recently republished version of the novel: Xu Zhenya, *Yuli hun Xuehong leishi*.

⁷¹ Hsia, "Hsü Chen-ya's *Yü-li hun*," p. 222.

⁷² XWB 9 May 1924: A1.

⁷³ For Xu's early life see Chen Ziping, *Aiqing juzi Yuanyang hudie pai kaishan zu*, p. 250.

The writer of the film script was Zheng Zhengqiu and the director was Zhang Shichuan. The shooting team travelled to the famous *Liuyuan* 留園 Garden in Suzhou for on-location filming.⁷⁴ Two months later, the ten-reeler film was finished. It was premiered at the *Olympic Theatre* on 9 May 1924 and subsequently showed at Ramos' theatre outlets, the *Empire*, *Hongkew*, *Carter*, and *China*, and then at third-run theatres, such as the *Hujiang*, *Gonghe*, and *Fajie*.

Compared to *Orphan's* record of a 100-day run at ten Shanghai theatres, *Jade's* market success appears less remarkable. It ran for about forty days, surpassing *Zhang Xinsheng* by only ten days. Nevertheless, this achievement may have appeared satisfactory to a barely established company. According to a report in the *Dianying zazhi* (Movies Magazine), five release prints of the film were produced, one of which was rented for 3600 Yuan to the *Carlton Theatres* in Beijing and Tianjin, while three sold at altogether 8000 Yuan to theatre managers from the Philippines, Vietnam and Northeast China. The last copy was reserved for Shanghai theatres and had generated box-office revenues of over 8000 Yuan by the time of reporting.⁷⁵ Considering that average production costs for a feature film ranged between 4000 and 6000 Yuan, profits *Jade* created were handsome.⁷⁶ A film critic noted that Shanghai movie goers displayed great enthusiasm for this kind of Chinese-made film. When he/she arrived at the *Empire Theatre* an hour before the screening of *Jade* on 15 May 1924, the theatre hall was already packed.⁷⁷

To adapt the story to the new medium, to update it to the 1920s, and to conform to Mingxing's established rules for production, Zheng Zhengqiu made some substantial changes to the plot. The synopsis of the film is as follows:⁷⁸

Upon the invitation of his friend Qin Shichi 秦石痴 (played by Zheng Zhegu), He Mengxia (Wang Xianzhai) becomes a teacher at the *Shihu Primary School* (石湖小學) founded by Qin. Mengxia's distant relative Cui Yuanli 崔元禮 (Zheng Zhengqiu) lives nearby and invites Mengxia to stay at his house as tutor of his grandson Penglang (Ren Chaojun). Penglang, whose father died recently, is a bright boy and soon wins his teacher's fondness. He often talks with his mother Li Niang (Wang Hanlun) about his teacher. Li Niang feels deep gratitude to Mengxia for his kindness to her son.

On a spring day when falling pear blossoms fill the air, Li Niang aimlessly wanders through the garden and suddenly notices a small grave in which withered flowers are buried. Reminded of Lin Daiyu 林黛玉 in *The Dream of the Red Chamber* 紅樓夢, she weeps at her own sad fate, not realizing that Mengxia, who buried the flowers, is standing behind her. Subsequently, Mengxia and Li Niang begin to exchange letters and poems, and gradually develop a close affinity for each other. When Mengxia proposes to her, Li Niang refuses

⁷⁴ Cheng Shuren, et al., eds, *Zhonghua yingye nianjian*.

⁷⁵ K.K.K., "Zhongguo dianyingjie xiaoxi 中國電影界消息," *Dianying zazhi* 2 (June 1924).

⁷⁶ Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*, pp. 30, 45.

⁷⁷ Ming Xin 明新, "Ping Mingxing xinpian *Yuli hun* 評明星新片《玉梨魂》," *Shibao* 16 May 1924, "Xiao shibao."

⁷⁸ It is translated literally from the film's synopsis in ZWDJB, pp. 69-70.

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because she feels bound to observe the code of widow's chastity. Mengxia answers by vowing perpetual bachelorhood. This makes Li Niang feel guilty. She attempts to commit suicide, but is saved by Penglang. Afterwards, Li Niang comes up with the idea to marry her younger sister-in-law Yunqian (Yan Naimei) to Mengxia. Mengxia accepts for fear that she might harm herself again.

Fang Defu 方德福 is the family patriarch of another wealthy household in the village. Obstinate and conservative, he insists that his three sons receive traditional education by an old scholar. His eldest son Dayuan 大元 (Huang Junfu), fat and stupid, dislikes studying, while the two younger sons, Eryuan 二元 and Sanyuan 三元, study hard and dream of attending the new-style *Shihu* Primary School. To attain this goal, they often deliberately tease the old tutor and finally get him so irritated that he quits. Eventually, the three brothers enter the *Shihu* School. The new-style education transforms Dayuan to become a promising young man.

Yunqian returns home from her boarding school when the summer vacation begins. A beautiful girl with a decent family background, she receives many marriage proposals. But she hates the old customs of matchmaking and refuses all the proposals. When matchmaker Zhao proposes another young man, his father decides to interview the "candidate" himself. Upon learning that it is Dayuan, he is greatly disappointed and flatly rejects. At this juncture, Li Niang proposes Mengxia and Cui Yuanli likes the idea. Yunqian agrees because she does not want to disappoint her father and sister-in-law. Soon Li Niang realizes that both parts of the couple are unhappy. She bitterly repents her unwise decision and falls ill.

Soon afterwards, unrest breaks out in Mongolia. Qin Shichi disbands his school and organizes a militia to fight for the country. He delivers a patriotic speech, which mobilizes many fellow villagers and students, including the formerly "stupid" boy Dayuan, to join the march to Mongolia. Mengxia joins, too. Li Niang dies soon later, leaving two letters to Mengxia and Yunqian. Learning the true story, Yunqian is deeply touched. She decides to go to Mongolia to look for Mengxia, taking Penglang with her. After much hardship, they finally find Mengxia wounded in a hospital. He is deeply moved by Yunqian's devotion and determination, while Mengxia's patriotism also changes Yunqian's attitude towards him. Thereafter, the couple lives happily together.

Five major differences exist between the book and the film version. First, in the novel Li Niang falls ill after Mengxia vows bachelorhood, while in the film she attempts to kill herself. Second, the subplot around Dayuan and the Fang household is added by the screenwriter. Third, the episode around matchmaker Zhao is added. Fourth, in the novel Mengxia and Shichi study in Japan when the Wuchang Uprising breaks out, while in the film they take more radical action, disbanding the school and marching to the battlefield. Fifth, the film has a happy ending, while all protagonists tragically die in the novel. These differences can be explained by the formula "melodrama plus 'isms'." Below I will analyze in detail how the story was melodramatized and how isms were updated when it was put on the screen.

Melodramatizing the Story

Clearly, these changes to the original plot have enhanced the story's melodramatic effects. Li Niang's attempt to suicide and Qin Shichi's disbanding of his school and delivery of a patriotic speech certainly can evoke stronger feelings than Li Niang falling ill and Qin

Shichi being a foreign student. While the novel "is conspicuous for its absence of villains,"⁷⁹ three villains (in a narrower sense) appear in the film, namely, Dayuan's conservative father, the old tutor, and the matchmaker Zhao. With regard to the happy ending, it embodies Zhang Shichuan's strategy of giving female audiences "a good weep first and a good laugh after."⁸⁰ The tragic fate of the protagonists and the over-sentimental mood in Xu's novel may have appeared overly sombre for most movie-goers who, in Zheng Zhengqiu's words, "favoured hot excitement rather than cool quietude (歡迎火爆, 不喜冷雋)."⁸¹ A need for slapstick apparently is the reason to add the two minor characters, "stupid" Dayuan and the matchmaker Zhao, an old hag played by a male actor.

Zheng Zhengqiu had reason to make these changes because the novel produces no melodramatic effect. C. T. Hsia has suggested that *Yuli hun* owes its attractiveness to "its astonishing emotional impact upon the educated readers of its time, and its equally astonishing literary virtuosity."⁸² Rereading the book with the background and emotional world of educated readers of the early twentieth century in mind confirms Hsia's evaluation. The novel is impressive even to the modern reader for its ornate classical style *pianti* 駢體 (parallel prose) and elaborate poetic style full of literary allusions.

Moreover, Xu Zhenya himself overtly expressed a sense of contempt for highly dramatic stories. Through a narrator, Xu states repeatedly in the novel that he is primarily concerned with the presentation of *qing* 情, the pure sentiment of love. Since stereotypical "talent-meets-beauty" stories are available in abundance, he announces that he has no intention to waste ink on another such volume.⁸³ Nor are his readers to expect an elaborate plot. Instead, he declares that his fascination is with representing his characters' spiritual world by means of literary expression: letters, poetry, and nature as symbol. In this light, C. T. Hsia argues that *Yuli hun* is "a culminating work" of the "sentimental-erotic tradition in Chinese literature, a long and proud tradition inclusive of such poets as Li Shang-yin 李商隱, Tu Mu 杜牧, Li Hou-chu 李後主, and such works of drama and fiction as *Hsi-hsiang chi* 西廂記, *Mu-tan t'ing* 牡丹亭, *T'ao-hua shan* 桃花扇, *Ch'ang-sheng tien* 長生殿, and

⁷⁹ From the summary of the novel, we can easily detect that no villains exist in the story. C. T. Hsia drew our attention to this point and wrote, "In contrast to both traditional fiction and drama and the new literature of social protest, *Yuli hun* is conspicuous for its absence of villains." See Hsia, "Hsü Chen-ya's *Yü-li hun*," pp. 223-4.

⁸⁰ He Xiujun, "Zhang Shichuan he Mingxing yingpian gongsi," pp. 118-119.

⁸¹ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Wo suo xiwang yu guanzhong zhe 我所希望於觀眾者," ZWD, p. 599 (first published in *MT* 3, 1925).

⁸² Hsia, "Hsü Chen-ya's *Yü-li hun*," p. 201.

⁸³ Xu Zhenya, *Yuli hun*, p. 27

Hung-lou meng 紅樓夢."⁸⁴

In this sense, *Yuli hun* is in fact never a "popular" story oriented toward a lower-class readership. In order to appreciate the finesse of the novel, readers need to be thoroughly educated in classical literature. Perry Link has argued that modern urban fiction in the 1910s was "still a middle- and upper- class phenomenon" and appealed to a readership consisting of "wealthy and powerful men," respectable intellectuals and students of newly founded Westernized schools.⁸⁵ The social composition of the movie-going public in the 1920s, however, was different. As discussed in Chapter One (25-27), enthusiastic patrons of domestic productions presumably mainly came from the middle and lower social strata. Generally, films with engaging plots, larger than human figures and actions would be more welcomed by this audience. The differences between the two versions of *Yuli hun* provide a good example to prove this hypothesis.

Zheng Zhengqiu's strategy to "melodramatize" the original story was well captured in a 1924 review by Bing Xin 冰心 (1900 - 1999), a graduate from the Whesley College and a renowned writer of the period. She wrote: "Material suitable for a novel is not necessarily suitable for a movie. Hence screenwriters usually take recourse to 'adaptation' to turn a novel into a screen script. [...] According to the principles of playwriting, comic subplots (*chuancha* 穿插) are necessary. A tragedy without comic subplots would be too boring. Comic subplots can provide a light relief for the audience and present contrast to the main plot."⁸⁶ At the same time, Zheng Zhengqiu treated some critical issues quite differently from Xu Zhenya. These issues include widow chastity, "new" versus "old" education, free versus arranged marriage, patriotism and nationalism. These were issues fervently discussed in the years when the film was produced and screened. The following analysis concentrates on how Zheng Zhengqiu updated the story's "isms" to the 1920s.

Updating the Isms

With regard to the issue of "widow chastity," some critics and historians have recognized that the novel *Yuli hun* treats this theme and considered it a merit of the novel because this theme reflected a "social problem" of the period.⁸⁷ However, Xu Zhenya's attitude is

⁸⁴ Hsia, "Hsü Chen-ya's *Yü-li hun*," p. 201.

⁸⁵ Link's study is based on his interviews with some Yuanhu writers and publishers, as well as sociological analysis of journal costs, and literate rate. See Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, pp. 189-195.

⁸⁶ Bing Xin, "*Yuli hun* zhi pinglun guan 《玉梨魂》之評論觀," *Dianying zazhi* 2 (June 1924), ZWD, pp. 1100-1101.

⁸⁷ See Zhou Zuoren, "Zhongguo xiaoshuo li de nannü wenti," quoted in Fan Boqun, p. 102; Fan Yanqiao. "Zuijin shiwu nian zhi xiaoshuo," in YHWZ, p. 245, first published in 1927.

conservative. Li Niang and Mengxia have no intention to disobey the moral codes. Their mutual attraction is not driven by "carnal desire" (*rouyu* 肉欲) but by "pure love" (*zhiqing* 至情).⁸⁸ Their romance "starts with emotional love and ends with virtue and Confucian propriety" (發乎情止乎禮義).⁸⁹ In this light, Xu Zhenya was a firm adherent to Confucianism. The film treats the issue slightly differently. In the novel, Mengxia never takes any actual action except delivering letters to express his pure love, *qing*, while in the film Mengxia proposes to Li Niang.⁹⁰ This "Mengxia" is clearly less firmly entrenched in traditional morality. As no copy of the film has survived, the issue cannot be further pursued. Fortunately, however, two essays by contemporary authors provide useful insights.

In Bing Xin's above-quoted essay "*Yuli hun zhi pinglun guan* 《玉梨魂》之評論觀" (Review of *Yuli hun*), she classified *Jade* as a "problem drama" (*wenti ju* 問題劇). The "problem" the film raises is "whether widows can remarry (寡婦可否再嫁)."⁹¹ She continued:⁹²

Though not explicitly declaring that widows can remarry, the film depicts the misery of the widow who is forbidden to remarry and reveals the man-eating cruelty of the old ethics. In this light, the film attacks 'widow chastity' and indirectly promotes 'widow remarriage.' This 'ism' agrees with new ethics, new trends and humanism. Some criticized the film for advocating 'widow chastity.' I hold this to be unfair.

此片雖然沒有直接說出“寡婦再嫁之可能”，但在寡婦不得再醮慘狀的描寫內，及舊禮教的吃人力量的暗示內，已把“寡婦不得再醮”的惡制度攻擊，間接的提倡與鼓吹“寡婦再嫁”的可能了。此種主義，合於新倫理，合於新潮流，合於人道的。有人說它“提倡節婦”，未免近視了吧？

Clearly, according to Bing Xin's understanding, the film embraces the new ideas of the time. As a well-educated female writer, not affiliated with any political parties or organizations, Bing Xin's account may be considered objective. Film historian Zheng Junli examined *Jade* against its social and cultural background in his 1936 essay.⁹³ He categorised it as a "romantic film" (*aiqing pian* 愛情片). According to him, the genre dominated Chinese filmmaking in the early- and mid-1920s, under the impact of the concept of emancipation pervasive during the May Fourth era (inclusive of free love and

⁸⁸ Xu Zhenya, *Yuli hun*, p. 27.

⁸⁹ The narrator's comment on their relation: "無如梨娘固非蕩子婦，夢霞亦非輕薄兒，發乎情不能不止乎禮義" (p. 56). When Mengxia's brother reads the love letters between Mengxia and Li Niang, he admires their pure love: "情皆軌於正" (p. 84). When Yunqian learned the true story, she remarks: "雖涉非分之譏，要異懷春之女，發乎情止乎禮義，感以心不以形跡" (p. 163).

⁹⁰ It is clearly stated in the novel that: "夢霞致書於梨娘，非挑之也，憐其才而悲其命，復自憐而自悲，同是天涯，一般淪落，自有不能已於言者" (p. 27). Mengxia does not attempt to marry Li Niang and to violate the moral codes.

⁹¹ Bing Xin, "*Yuli hun zhi pinglun guan*," p. 1100.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Zheng Junli, "Xiandai zhongguo dianying shilue," ZWD, p. 1398.

free marriage). At the same time, Zheng remarked that Chinese "romantic films" failed to reach the level which May Fourth intellectuals demanded. Modern ideas and traditional ethics often co-existed in the films.

Based on my close readings of the film's plot, I tend to regard these individuals' analyses to be reasonable. The screen version *Jade* does preserve the novel's overall conservative stance on the issue of widow chastity. At the same time, however, several clearly identifiable "new" ideas appear in the comic subplots added by Zheng Zhengqiu. The subplot around Dayuan is concerned with "old versus new-style education." Within the melodramatic structure, Dayuan's father who insists on educating his sons in the traditional way and the old tutor represent the forces of tradition and are characterized as "evil." His younger brothers and the "new-style school" (新式學堂) are symbols of the new and are entirely good. The transformation of Dayuan from a thick boy who "dislikes studying" in his home school (私塾) to a promising and patriotic young man when receiving new-style education demonstrates the screenwriter's sympathy with the "new."

In contrast, "new-style education" (referred to by Xu Zhenya as *xin xuejie* 新學界, the new educational world) is an object of satire and contempt in the novel. For example, in the second chapter, Mengxia is reluctant to teach at the new-style *Shihu* 石湖 School. Only because his mother wishes him to accept the position, out of filial piety he takes the job.⁹⁴ In a letter to Li Niang, Mengxia expresses his aversion to the people in the new educational world, especially girl students.⁹⁵ Clearly, Zheng Zhengqiu's entirely positive attitude toward "new-style education" in the 1920s greatly differed from the feelings of Xu Zhenya over a decade earlier.

The subplot around the matchmaker Zhao is regarding arranged marriage and matchmaking, another hot topic at the time. In the film, matchmaker Zhao is apparently a negative role. A film critic noted that the female character is played by a male actor, whose overacted feminine postures and gestures have a nauseating effect.⁹⁶ Although this observation does not permit the conclusion that this was the director's deliberate arrangement, the negative image of matchmaker was reinforced through this arrangement. Moreover, Zheng Zhengqiu arranged an obvious "mismatch" between Dayuan, a humorous character played by an extremely fat actor Huang Junfu 黃君甫, well-known for playing such characters, and the beautiful and intelligent girl student Yunqian played by Yang

⁹⁴ Xu Zhenya, *Yuli hun*, p. 10.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁹⁶ Ming Xin, "Ping Mingxing xin pian *Yuli hun*," *Shibao* 16 May 1924 "Xiao shibao".

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Naimei 楊耐梅, a graduate of a premier girls' school in Shanghai, as well as a famous "social butterfly" at the time (see Fig. 4).⁹⁷ The pictures below clearly show this comical contrast, which was probably intended to remind the audience how absurd matchmaking is. The "ism" hidden in this subplot is, in Bing Xin's words, "the necessity to abolish the custom of matchmaking."⁹⁸

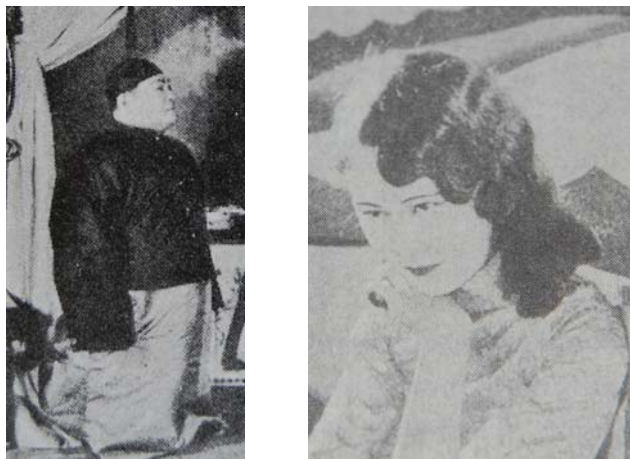


Fig. 4 Left: Huang Junfu (Fang Dayuan); Right: Yang Naimei (Cui Yunqian)
(Note: Pictures of the two characters in *Yuli hun* are unavailable. The picture of Huang Junfu is from a still of *Guaming de fuqi* 掛名的夫妻 produced in 1927; the picture of Yang Naimei is from the cover of *Xin yinxiang* 新銀星 no. 33, 1931)

Both the book and screen versions end with images of the hero's patriotism. At first glance, there is little difference between Mengxia sacrificing his life in the Wuchang Uprising in the novel and his injury in the Mongolia Battle in the film. Upon closer inspection, however, we find that the character's patriotic acts have different motivations. In the novel, Mengxia reveals his motivation to Shichi in a letter:⁹⁹

Since she (Li Niang) died for love, I ought to have reciprocated her by death. A man, however, should die a martyr to his motherland, not to romantic love! When still alive, she advised me to study in Japan for the benefit of my career. [...] I have been enduring the pains and sufferings and stayed here all because I have followed her advice. Waiting for an opportunity to serve our country, I have put off dying. Once there is a chance to die a martyr, her love be returned.

若人因愛余而致死，在義余亦應以一死相報，然男兒七尺軀，當為國效死，烏可輕殉兒女子之痴情！且若人未死之前，固嘗勸余東游，為將來奮飛計。今言猶在耳，夢已成煙。余之忍痛抱恨而來此者，即從其昔日之言，暫緩須臾無死，冀得一當以報國，即以報知己於地下耳。

It is clear that Mengxia's patriotism stems from his love of Li Niang, who has encouraged him to pursue *gongming* 功名 (scholarly honour and official rank) and to serve the country

⁹⁷ For introductions of Huang Junfu and Yang Naimei, see Zhang Shichuan, "Ziwo daoyan yilai," pp. 404, 405.

⁹⁸ Bing Xin, p. 1101.

⁹⁹ Xu Zhenya, pp. 168-9.

according to the Confucian doctrine. In this light, Li Niang and Mengxia exemplify the Confucian ideals of "virtuous woman" (*xianfu* 賢婦) and "gentleman" (*junzi* 君子). Shichi regards Mengxia highly and contrasts him with two fictional figures, Langya 琅琊 who dies for romantic love and Jia Baoyu 賈寶玉 who converts to Buddhism after his failed romance, both giving up the pursuit of worldly honour and rank. Shichi believes that Mengxia should be regarded as a model for young men in that he devotes himself to pure love, without violating Confucian morals.¹⁰⁰

In the film, Mengxia joins the army largely because he is inspired by his friend Qin Shichi. A patriot delivering a passionate speech to his compatriots, Qin Shichi's image is reminiscent of the fervent young students in the May Fourth Movement. The street speech was an important means for the students to rally social support and convey patriotic ideas.¹⁰¹ If Mengxia's patriotism in the novel can be understood as a means of moral fulfilment, on the screen he (as well as Shichi) displays some features of a modern nationalist, a prototype of a character found in many later Mingxing films. From print to screen, Mengxia "grows" from an emotionally vulnerable "talented scholar" (*caizi* 才子) to a strong-minded and patriotic "new youth" (*xin qingnian* 新青年).

To sum up, while Xu Zhenya was preoccupied with the presentation of pure love, Zheng Zhengqiu relied more upon melodramatic elements to cater to the tastes of the middle-lower class audience. Produced in 1924, five years after the May Fourth Movement, the film addresses "widow chastity," "old versus new-style education," "the custom of matchmaking," and "patriotism," topics ranking high on the May Fourth intellectuals' agenda. While the novel was usually criticized by the May Fourth critics, as Perry Link has summarized, as "anti-progressive in content, old-fashioned in style, and oversentimental,"¹⁰² most "old" elements disappear in the film. The film version actually updated the novel so that it popularized ideas of the May Fourth intellectuals. In the following I will study another case, *Kuangliu* (*Torrent*, 1933) which is claimed to be Mingxing's first *Zuoyi* film in ZDFZS.¹⁰³ I will explore whether the film's style is changed (or not) viewed through the lens of "melodrama plus isms."

¹⁰⁰ Qin Shichi's comment reads: "夢霞蓋至情中人，能以身役情，而不為情所役，比之負心薄幸之徒，固判若霄壤。即彼琅琊之情死，寶玉之逃禪，等性命於鴻毛，棄功名如敝屣，雖一往情深，畢竟胸懷太窄，未能將愛情之作用，鑒別其大小，權衡其輕重也。余愛夢霞，余佩夢霞。余於是欲將其歷史，著之於篇，可作青年之鏡……" in Xu Zhenya, *Yuli hun*, p. 169.

¹⁰¹ See Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, pp. 120-132.

¹⁰² The three characters are summarized by Perry Link as the novel's main failings in May Fourth critics' view. See Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, p. 51.

¹⁰³ ZDFZS, p. 203.

5.3 Test Case II: *Kuangliu* 狂流 (Torrent)

Ding Ling's *Shui* 水 (Flood)

According to ZDFZS, *Torrent's* screenplay was written by Xia Yan.¹⁰⁴ However, Jay Leyda points out that the film is an adaptation from a short story by Ding Ling, a renowned Chinese woman writer, a member of the *Zuolian* in the 1930s. His evidence is from a 1933 article in the *International Literature*, a journal published in Moscow:¹⁰⁵

In 1932 Ting Ling (Ding Ling) published a short novel, built around the great Yangtze floods which were caused in part by the fact that money earmarked for the repair of dykes always found its way into the pockets of the officials. Much of her material was used in a motion picture on floods, and she became one of a small nucleus of left writers and artists trying to develop a new social cinema in China.

According to Leyda, ZDFZS's authors completely erased Ding Ling's name primarily for political reasons. In 1957, due to Ding Ling's conflict with current Party policies, she was denounced as a "Rightist" (*youpai* 右派) and her books were banned.¹⁰⁶ In addition, I have found another piece of evidence in a 1934 article in the fan magazine *Yingmi zhoubao*, which also mentions that *Torrent* is based on Ding Ling's *Shui* (Flood).¹⁰⁷ The novella is initially published in the inaugural issue of the *Zuolian's* literary journal *Beidou* 北斗 (The Plough) in September 1931.¹⁰⁸ At the time, five provinces along the Yangtze River suffered disastrous floods.¹⁰⁹ The setting of the 35-page short story is this Yangtze floods. It paints a portrait of some villagers' reaction to a pending flood, building chiefly upon descriptions and dialogues, while lacking a gripping plot and even main characters. These features were applauded by critics and Ding Ling's fellow writers.

The *Zuolian* writer Feng Xuefeng 馮雪峰 (1903 - 1976) praised the novella highly, calling it "the harbinger of 'new fiction' (*xin de xiaoshuo* 新的小說)." He further remarked that three aspects were particularly laudable: the realistic subject matter, the correct interpretation of class struggle, and its shift of focus from "one or two protagonist(s)" to "the masses," from "psychological analyses of individuals (個人的心理的分析)" to "[the

¹⁰⁴ ZDFZS, p. 204.

¹⁰⁵ *International Literature* (Moscow), 1933, no. 3, p. 159. Quoted in Leyda, p. 75.

¹⁰⁶ See "Ding Ling zhuanlue," Yuan Liangjun, ed. *Ding Ling yanjiu ziliao*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁷ "Mingxing gongsi kai daoche 明星公司開倒車," *Yingmi zhoubao* 1.8 (14 Nov. 1934): 132.

¹⁰⁸ *Beidou* 1.1 (Sep. 1931). The story was reprinted in an anthology of Ding Ling's short novels under the same title *Shui* (Shanghai: Xin zhongguo shuju, 1933). The version I read is reprinted in *Ding Ling duanpian xiaoshuo xuan* (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1981, pp. 297-332).

¹⁰⁹ Mingxing's director Cheng Bugao was assigned to shoot news footage of the flooding in Hankou. See *Yingxi shenghuo* 34 (5 Sep. 1931): 31. The news footage was used in *Torrent* later.

depiction] of collective actions (集體的行動的開展)." ¹¹⁰ Further, he compared this novella with Ding Ling's early works and concluded that she was stepping onto a path of "progress" (進步), getting rid of "individualism and nihilism (個人主義的虛無)" while embracing "proletarian-peasant revolution (工農大眾的革命)." ¹¹¹

Mao Dun also regarded the novella as important in that "it marks the breakaway from the tired formula 'revolution plus romance' (革命加戀愛)," which was pervasive in Chinese fiction in the late 1920s and early 1930s. ¹¹² In other words, both Feng Xuefeng and Mao Dun suggested that the novella represents a paradigmatic transformation, a transformation from "individualism" of the May Fourth literature to "collectivism" of the *Zuoyi* literature, from featuring "bourgeois intellectuals" to "the masses," from presenting "revolution plus romance" to discarding "romance" completely, or to quote C. T. Hsia's words, from "Literary Revolution" to "Revolutionary Literature." ¹¹³ However, the film *Torrent* does not reach that far. Most conspicuously, a romance is featured in the film and the story is largely melodramatized. Below I will present the plot of the film and illustrate how it fits into the melodramatic formula.

Melodramatizing the Story

Torrent is set in a flood-stricken village located in the Yangtze Valley. ¹¹⁴ Fu Xiujuan 傅秀娟 is the daughter of the wealthiest household in this village. She is compelled to marry a local official's son Li Heqing 李和卿 arranged by her father Fu Boren 傅伯仁. Her true lover, however, is a primary school teacher named Liu Tiesheng 劉鐵生. On the night that precedes her wedding, Xiujuan plans to escape with Tiesheng. However, Tiesheng rejects her idea because he is working on dike building with the villagers.

When the flood situation grows grave, with Li family's help, Fu family flees to Hankou. On behalf of his villagers, Fu Boren accepts a large sum of relief funds. When Tiesheng and another peasant come to Hankou to ask for the funds for repair of the dike, Fu does not hand out the money by playing a trick. On their way back, Tiesheng saves an orphan girl

¹¹⁰ He Danren 何丹仁 (the penname of Feng Xuefeng 馮雪峰), "Guanyu xin de xiaoshuo de dansheng: Ping Ding Ling de *shui* 關於新的小說的誕生——評丁玲的《水》," first published in *Beidou* 2.1 (20 Jan. 1932), reprinted in Yuan Liangjun, ed, *Ding Ling yanjiu ziliao*, p. 246.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

¹¹² Mao Dun, "Nü zuojia Ding Ling 女作家丁玲," first published in *Wenyi yubao* 2 (15 Jul. 1933), reprinted in Yuan Liangjun, ed, *Ding Ling yanjiu ziliao*, p. 254-55.

¹¹³ Hsia, *A history of modern Chinese fiction, 1917-1957*, p. 17.

For one of the studies on Ding Ling's "left turn" see He Guimei, "Zhishi fenzi, geming yu ziwo gaizao."

¹¹⁴ The outline of the story is based on its "Benshi" (synopsis) and "Juben" (screen script) in ZWDJB, pp. 2373-96.

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named Suzhen 素貞 and takes her home. Heqing witnesses this by chance and produces a rumour that Tiesheng buys a wife in Hankou. Upon hearing the news Xiujuan feels broken-hearted.

Some time later, Fu family returns to the village. Heqing is captivated by Suzhen's beauty and tries to flirt with her one day. Tiesheng stops him opportunely. Meanwhile, Suzhen's affection for Tiesheng grows. When Tiesheng falls ill, she looks after him devotedly. In a state of semi-unconsciousness, Tiesheng mistakes her for Xiujuan and expresses his love to her. Xiujuan happens to witness this scene when she comes to see Tiesheng upon receiving a letter from him. Soon Suzhen realizes that it is a misunderstanding and explains what happened to Xiujuan the next day.

After several days of torrential rain, the river bursts its bank again and the village is under threat. Tiesheng gets up from his sick bed and joins the villagers to combat the flood. He does not know that the police are coming to arrest him because Heqing discovers the letter he wrote to Xiujuan and deploys it as a pretext to accuse him of "seducing a married woman." To prevent flooding, a villager proposes to make use of the timbers in Fu family's yard which were bought with the relief funds. The villagers rush into the Fu residence. The police and the servants of the family disobey Fu's order and join the villagers too. The film ends with a hint of the demise of Fu Boren and Heqing in the flooding and the reunion of Xiujuan and Tiesheng.

Except for the setting, the story shares little with Ding Ling's *Shui*. It is apparent that the film is a typical melodrama marked by the features of "good versus evil," "exaggeration," and "emotional intensity." The story draws a clear-cut line between Good and Evil. "Evil" is embodied by Fu Boren and his son-in-law Heqing who stand for the landlord, gentry and official classes exploiting the farmers (e.g. peculating relief funds). "Good" is personified by Tiesheng and the villagers who represent the lower classes rising to fight against the oppressors (e.g. "robbing" timbers of the Fu family to prevent the flooding).

The dichotomy between Good and Evil is also manifest in the romantic subplot. The marriage between Xiujuan and Heqing arranged by Fu Boren can be seen as a symbol of the coalition between the landlord and official classes, namely, the "evil" forces. Xiujuan tries to escape from this "evil" world by pursuing her "free love" with Tiesheng from a lower social stratum. Though this pursuit is initially unsuccessful because of Tiesheng's devotion to the cause of the masses (building the dike), the story ends with the reunion of the pair in the torrent of flood. This ending symbolizes the reconciliation of "revolution and romance." Furthermore, Tiesheng's ultimate victory over Heqing in this love triangle

also symbolizes the victory of the ordinary people over the privileged classes.

Meanwhile, the story is built upon exaggeration and coincidence. For instance, it is implausible that Xiujuan believes the rumour about her lover easily, and it is much too coincidental that she runs into Suzhen when visiting Tiesheng. It is also unbelievable that Fu Boren manages to peculate the large amount of relief funds with a little trick. The screenwriter's intent is clearly to evoke intensive emotions in the audience. This reminds us of the phrase *beihuan lihe* 悲歡離合 (which denotes twists and turns), a movie-goer's general impression of *Orphan*,¹¹⁵ as well as Zheng Zhengqiu's answer to Bao Tianxiao's question about how to develop a screenplay.¹¹⁶ The so-called *Zuoyi* film *Torrent* appears to be in full compliance with the rule of Mingxing's film production. At the same time, "ideologies/*yishi*" were popularized by this means. Which ideas does the film want to get across? Which role does the melodramatic style play in transmitting the ideas? I try to answer the two questions below.

Popularizing the *zhuyi*/ideologies

As discussed in Chapter Four (109-11), in the early 1930s film critics introduced the term "*yishi* 意識/ideology" as a substitute for "*zhuyi*/ism" to refer to central ideas of a film. Most reviews of *Torrent* discussed the film's "*yishi*/ideologies," for example, in An E 安娥's "*Kuangliu yishi lun* 狂流意識論" (On *Torrent*'s *yishi*/ideologies) and in Yao Sufeng's "*Xin de lianghao de shouhuo* 新的良好的收穫" (New and great achievement) under the subtitle "*Bianju jiqi yishi* 編劇及其意識" (The screen script and the *yishi*/ideologies).¹¹⁷ The *Chenbao*'s reviewers' opinions on the film have been briefly introduced in Chapter Four (115-6). To be specific, according to these reviews, the film's *yishi*/ideologies can be summarized in two aspects. First, the film exposes "the vice of evil tyrants and local gentry" (暴露土豪劣紳的罪惡)¹¹⁸ and suggests "the downfall of feudal forces" (封建勢力的崩潰沒落),¹¹⁹ by pointing out that "the flood is not only a natural catastrophe but also a man-made disaster" (水災不止天災，而是人禍).¹²⁰ Second, the film correctly portrays "struggles of the masses in the countryside" (農村的大眾鬥爭) and "the power of the

¹¹⁵ Zhi 稚, "*Gu'er jiuzu ji zhi pinglun* 《孤兒救祖記》之評論," SB 27 Dec. 1923: 17.

¹¹⁶ Bao Tianxiao, *Chuanying lou huiyi lu*, p. 654.

¹¹⁷ Both are published in the *Chenbao* 6 Mar. 1933: 10.

¹¹⁸ Sufeng 蘇鳳, "*Xin de lianghao de shouhuo*," *Chenbao* 6 Mar. 1933: 10.

¹¹⁹ Shu Yan 舒溼, "*Xiang shi yiban de miaomang* 像詩一般的渺茫," *Chenbao* 6 Mar. 1933: 10.

¹²⁰ An E 安娥, "*Kuangliu yishi lun*," *Chenbao* 6 Mar. 1933: 10.

masses" (群眾的力量).¹²¹ As discussed in Chapter Four (110), such concepts as "feudalism" (封建) and "class struggle" (階級鬥爭) were what the CCP was propagating at the time.

While these aspects were highly praised, many reviewers maintained that the film's focus on the romance constituted its major flaw. Some expressed the regret that the "feudal-style romance" (封建式的羅曼司) still remained in the film.¹²² Another author said that this subplot would divert audiences' attention from the refugee's lives to romantic sentiments and this was extremely unwise (失策). He further pointed out that "the original novella does not include a romantic subplot."¹²³ These regular contributors to the *Chenbao*, mostly members of the *Zuolian* and *Julian*, appeared much too idealistic and radical. Voices from other newspapers are different.

For example, in a review published in the *Shibao*, the author said that his/her heart was gripped by four scenes in *Torrent*.¹²⁴ The first is the scene where Tiesheng meets Xiujuan the night before her wedding, a scene "imbued with poetic mood (詩的情調)." The second scene depicts Tiesheng on his sick-bed suffering from lovesickness. He/She supposed that this scene "must have aroused much sympathy (引起了多少觀眾的心的共鳴)." The remainder describe the villagers working hard at repairing the dike while the officials' families enjoying the scenery of flooding on a boat laughing at the refugees. The author was so impressed by this sharp contrast that he came to realize the "power" (力) of the masses and "the conflicts between the poor and rich classes (我深深地感到了這社會的矛盾)." This review is interesting in two regards. First, it vividly testifies to the appeal of a romantic plot to ordinary movie-goers. The *Chenbao*'s critics who criticized the depiction of the love triangle as "unwise" apparently did not fully understand the importance of this device. If a movie with "correct ideologies" cannot attract a mass audience, "correct ideologies" are futile. Second, this review hints at the function of melodrama. The fact that the author was moved by the scenes that contrast the lives of different classes points to the potential of the popular medium in popularizing and transporting radical ideas.

Paul Pickowicz argues in an essay that since the left-wing filmmaking of the 1930s accepted the melodrama genre, "there would be no place for the complexities and subtleties, and most of the crucial 'middle ground,' of May Fourth socialist thought in

¹²¹ Xi Naifang 席耐芳, "Kuangliu de pingjia 《狂流》的評價," *Chenbao* 7 Mar. 1933: 10.

¹²² Shu Yan, op. cit.

¹²³ Yi Qun 毅群, "You yi ping 又一評," *Chenbao* 7 Mar. 1933: 10.

¹²⁴ Ge Chengxun 葛承勛, "Pianpian de yinxiang: wo de zhijue de fanying 片片的印像：我的直覺的反映," *Shibao* 7 Mar. 1933: 2.

melodramatic representation."¹²⁵ In a word, "the genre dominated the relationship and distorted the 'May Fourth' politics."¹²⁶ I would argue quite the opposite. No matter how complex and subtle "May Fourth socialist thought" was and whether the melodrama genre "distorted the 'May Fourth' politics," elite ideas had a chance to reach a generally less educated movie-going public when radical ideological content found a clear dramatic representation on the screen. To be sure, how contemporary audiences responded to various messages was difficult to gauge exactly. The above quoted *Shibao* article in which the author expressed his/her "capturing" of the ideas of class struggle and the masses' power in melodramatic scenes offers a valuable glimpse. The author's reaction resonates with Zheng Zhengqiu's idea that his principle of screenwriting was "to select materials accessible to ordinary movie-goers so that they can be easily moved (總要選擇大家腦筋裡所有的事情，使他們容易受感動)."¹²⁷ In other words, Zheng was convinced that emotion facilitates didacticism. The melodramatic style is effective in arousing strong emotions and thus getting ideas across. The films discussed above in this chapter all mirror this idea.

Summing up, the "style" of the so-called *Zuoyi* film *Torrent* does not change radically. It develops within a melodramatic framework, the usual pattern for Mingxing's film production. The central idea it seeks to address is concerned with class struggle. Although this message might have been twisted to a certain degree, melodrama helps bring a general idea to the audience. The formula "melodrama plus isms" is also applied to *Yongyuan de weixiao* (*Smiling*), asserted to be a representative of GMD film in ZDFZS.¹²⁸ Its screenwriter is Liu Na'ou, the leading figure of the New Sensationism School (*Xin ganjue pai*). The film's director Wu Cun 吳村 said that it was "a new sensationist screenplay (一個新感覺派的劇本)"¹²⁹ This following section will look at if these claims can be vindicated and how "melodrama plus isms" is manifested in this film.

5.4 Test Case III: *Yongyuan de weixiao* 永遠的微笑 (*Smiling*)

New Sensationism and Experimental filmmaking

The Chinese term *Xin ganjue pai* 新感覺派 (New Sensationism) derives from the name of

¹²⁵ Pickowicz, "Melodramatic representation and the May Fourth tradition of Chinese cinema," p. 304.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 325.

¹²⁷ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Zhongguo yingxi de qucai wenti," MT 2 (Jun. 1925).

¹²⁸ ZDFZS, p. 454.

¹²⁹ Wu Cun 吳村, "Dang wo de yingzi paihuai yu yinwu zhi jie shi 當我的影子徘徊於銀霧之街時," MB 7.5 (16 Dec. 1936); Luoluo 羅羅, "Yongyuan de weixiao 永遠的微笑," MB 7.5 (16 Dec. 1936).

the Japanese literary group, the *shinkankakuha*, usually rendered as the "New Sensationalists." Led by the writer Yokomitsu Riichi (1898 - 1947), the group flourished throughout the 1920s. Influenced by surrealism and Dadaism, the self-appointed task of the group is to portray the "new sensations" of modernity, usually in the context of the cosmopolitan metropolis, with its frenetic pace and jazz rhythms.¹³⁰ In China, as mentioned in the previous chapter (132), Liu Na'ou and his friends, such as Shi Zhecun and Mu Shiying, picked up the banner of the *shinkankakuha* in the late 1920s. They introduced the work of this group and produced their own in the journals *Trackless Train* (Wugui lieche, 1928), *La Nouvelle Littérature* (Xin wenyi, 1929-30), and *Les Contemporains* (Xiandai, 1932-35).

The novellas by the Chinese New Sensationists are normally set in Shanghai and depict the dynamic environment of the metropolis and its urban culture. Through reading Japanese and European literature, these writers had been familiar with the psychological themes of repression, obsession, and the erotic, which allowed them to probe the loneliness, anxiety, and alienation of the metropolis. The impact of cinema and popular music came through in the characterization, pacing, and structure of their works. Authors modelled their depictions of modern women on Hollywood film stars and used jazz to set the tempo for their stories.¹³¹

For example, Liu Na'ou was particularly interested in appropriating cinema techniques to his writing. In her reading of Liu Na'ou's short story "Games" (*Youxi* 遊戲), Shu-mei Shih analyzes that "the narrative angle moves like a film camera."¹³² This is perhaps related to Liu's fascination with avant-garde film theories which explore the new medium's artistic nature through various cinematographic techniques.¹³³ As mentioned before, Liu translated Rudolf Arnheim's *Film Als Kunst* into Chinese and introduced Dziga Vertov's "Kino eye" in an article entitled "Yingpian yishu lun 影片藝術論" (On cinema arts).¹³⁴ He was also a rare practitioner of experimental filmmaking in China. He produced a documentary film, which begins with a line in Japanese, namely, "Film by 'The Man who has a Camera'."¹³⁵ This line is reminiscent of Vertov's famous 1929 documentary film *Man with the Movie*

¹³⁰ Mostow, et al. eds, *The Columbia companion to modern East Asian literature*, p. 14.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 419. Also cf. Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, pp. 194-198; 220-223.

¹³² Shu-mei Shih, p. 286.

¹³³ See Pan Jian, "Dianying de' dianying de zhuiqiu," pp. 66-9.

¹³⁴ Liu Na'ou, "Yingpian yishu lun 影片藝術論," *Dianying zhoubao* 電影週報, 1 Jul. – 8 Oct. 1932.

¹³⁵ Taiwan Film Archive keeps five remnant reels of the documentary film donated by Liu Na'ou's grandson. The titles of the five reels are "Human world" (人間卷, 8 min), "Parade" (遊行卷, 3 min), "Scenery" (風景卷, 4 min), "Guangdong" (廣東卷, 7 min), "Tokyo" (東京卷, 8 min). The first two reels were shown in the Taiwan International Documentary Festival in 1998. For a detailed examination of the documentary and its relationship with Vertov's *Man with the Movie Camera*, see Guo Shiyong, pp. 28-30.

Camera.

In a word, this profile reveals Liu Na'ou's public persona as an enthusiast for modernist literature and avant-garde cinema. As he entered the commercial field of filmmaking in the mid-1930s, however, he accommodated himself to the requirements of commercial film production. *Smiling* is a telling illustration. In the following I will explore how the film was made to fit Mingxing's principle for film production centring on melodrama and isms.

A Mediocre Melodrama and Stale Isms

Smiling begins on a spring day in N city (probably Nanjing because the film was shot in Nanjing).¹³⁶ On their return from a carriage-ride excursion, the sing-song girl Yu Yuhua 虞玉華 and her friend come across an accident. Their driver He Qingrong 何啟榮 saves Yuhua's life and takes her to her apartment. Yuhua is touched by his kind-heartedness. Qirong leaves behind his law textbook of a correspondence school by accident. Yuhua appreciates his ambition and feels a sneaking admiration for him.

Yuhua lives with her uncle Luo Kuang 羅匡, his second wife Xinzhu 新珠 (previously a sing-song girl), his son Shaomei 少梅 (born by his first wife), and his adoptive daughter Xuefang 雪芳 whom Luo plans to train to be a sing-song girl too. A mutual affection between Shaomei and Xuefang grows. Yuhua notices and encourages them tacitly.

One day, Yuhua runs into Qirong on the street. She returns the textbook to him and expresses her willingness to finance his study. Qirong feels gratitude and regards her as a bosom friend. Cheng Zhao 程照, the manager of a pawnshop, is a frequent patron of Yuhua's performances and has been courting her. Regardless of Yuhua's aversion to Cheng, her uncle tries to persuade her accepting Cheng's advances for his own sake.

Luo Kuang's wife Xinzhu maintains a relationship with her old patron Wang Bosheng and elopes with him with a large sum of money she gets from Yuhua by deception. Infuriated and getting drunk, Luo Kuang attempts to rape her adoptive daughter Xuefang. Luo's son Shaomei catches him doing this. Shaomei is so disappointed with his family that he decides to elope with Xuefang. Yuhua fails to prevent them and is again defrauded of money by them.

Qirong passes the judicial examination and is going to attend a judicial college in S city. In urgent need of money to redeem his debt, Qirong asks Yuhua for help. Unfortunately, at this juncture Yuhua has little money left. She has no choice but to turn to Cheng Zhao for

¹³⁶ The summary of the story is based on "Yongyuan de weixiao benshi 《永遠的微笑》本事." *MB* 7.5 (16 Dec. 1936) "Special issue for *Yongyuan de weixiao*."

help. Cheng takes this chance to attempt to rape her. In self defence she kills Cheng with a pair of scissors and takes away all his money.

Years later, Yuhua is captured, while Qirong becomes a judge. Learning the news from a newspaper, Qirong comes to jail to visit his lover. Yuhua says to him: "I helped you because I've wished you to become a brave and responsible man. Don't break the law because of me! 我幫助你原是希望你做一個勇敢的，盡責任的人，不要為我而徇法!" During the trial, Qirong fulfils a judge's duty and makes objective decision. Upon hearing the sentence of death penalty, the poison Yuhua has beforehand taken is taking effect. Qirong holds his dying lover in his arms and cries. Yuhua asks him to be strong and smile forever.

This plot summary suggests that the story does not display any characteristics of "new sensationism" literature. Neither set in a cosmopolitan metropolis nor dealing with psychological themes and with jazz rhythms, the film sets itself apart from Liu Na'ou's literary practice and experimental filmmaking. Rather, it perfectly fits into the formula "melodrama plus isms." It extensively relies on melodramatic devices, grouping its characters along the good/bad line (Yuhua and Qirong "the good," Cheng Zhao and Luo Kuang "the bad"), resorting to unbelievable coincidence and exaggeration (e.g. the murder and trial episodes), and devoted to inciting strong emotions among the audience. With regard to isms/ideologies, the film eulogizes moral uprightness of both the protagonists in their observation of law, selfishness and the spirit of sacrifice.

It is hard to tell whether these ideas of the film by the so-called GMD hack writer agree with GMD's ideology, the Three People's Principles (*Sanmin zhuyi* 三民主義) - Nationalism (*Minzu zhuyi* 民族主義), the People's Power (*Minquan zhuyi* 民權主義), and the People's Welfare (*Minsheng zhuyi* 民生主義).¹³⁷ Moral correctness is a persistent theme of melodrama. Mingxing's executive Zhou Jianyun personally felt that "in terms of *yishi*/ideology I don't see anything extraordinary in the movie (這部片子意識方面，並沒有什麼驚人的地方)."¹³⁸ A reviewer was rather dismissive of the film, saying impolitely that "the 'bastard' screenwriter has decided the film's fate (編劇的混蛋決定了全劇的命運)."¹³⁹ Government censors also held that "the theme of the film is rather stale (本劇題材較陳舊)."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ For an analysis of *Sanmin zhuyi*, cf. Eastman, *The abortive revolution*, p. 169.

¹³⁸ "Zhou Jianyun tan guochan dianying 周劍雲談國產電影," *DS* 6.20 (21 May 1937): 876.

¹³⁹ "Yongyuan de weixiao 永遠的微笑," *DS* 6.4 (22 Jan. 1937): 247.

¹⁴⁰ See "Yongyuan de weixiao shencha yijian 《永遠的微笑》審查意見." The document was signed by the

Why did the New Sensationist write such a hackneyed story with neither refreshing ideas nor novel techniques? Reasons can be found in the mechanism of profit-oriented filmmaking. Liu Na'ou explained that in the first place he was inspired by two literary works and then he employed the psychoanalytical method to structure the story, but ultimately "it was written for the commercial film company and especially for Ms. Hu (Hu Die). 當然是為商業影片公司，尤其是為胡小姐著手編制的"¹⁴¹ Judging from the plot of the film, we have reason to speculate that Liu's reference to "psychoanalytical method" is but a matter of rhetoric. His final remark reveals the truth. His primary concern was to tailor his leading role to the actress, and ultimately, to tailor the story to the tastes of ordinary movie-goers.

Zhou Jianyun offered an insider's insight on the preference of "ordinary movie-goers" in an interview. When speaking of the most popular star Hu Die, he said while "movie-goers with advanced thought (思想略前進的觀眾)" had become weary of her movies, she still kept great appeal to a lot of "laggards" (落後分子), such as madams from wealthy families (少奶奶), old ladies (老太太), and small merchants (小商人). He used *Smiling* as an example. In spite of the mediocrity of the film in his opinion, it proved to be the highest grossing film of that year. Its box-office income reached as high as 50000 Yuan solely in Shanghai, while Ouyang Yuqian's *Xiao Lingzi* (Little Lingzi) grossed only 5000-Yuan in Nanjing, and Shen Xiling's *Shizi jietou* (Crossroads) 30000 Yuan altogether in Nanjing and Shanghai.¹⁴²

According to theatre advertisements, *Smiling* enjoyed a twenty-day run at the first-run theatre *Jincheng*, while the average run of a film was roughly a week at the time.¹⁴³ Zhou Jianyun remarked that this demonstrated that "the number of lagged audiences was larger than that of progressive ones." Given this dominating audience preference, Zhou sighed, "what shall we film workers do? (我們從事影業者有什麼辦法呢)"¹⁴⁴ In the context, the type of film Zhou Jianyun considered particularly suitable for Hu Die to play is melodramatic love story. We are reminded of *Torrent* also starring Hu Die. As analyzed in

Ministry of Propaganda of the central government (*Zhongyang xuanchuan bu*), reprinted in *Liu Na'ou quanji* (dianying ji I), p. 26.

¹⁴¹ Liu Na'ou, "Yongyuan de weixiao kan shipian jilu 《永遠的微笑》看試片記錄——與吳村兄略為商討攝制上諸技術," Reprinted in *Ibid*, pp. 40ff.

¹⁴² "Zhou Jianyun tan guochan dianying," *DS* 6.20 (21 May 1937): 876.

¹⁴³ For its premiere see XWB 15 Jan. 1937: 1. Its last day exhibition at the *Jincheng* was on 4 February, see the ad in the XWB of the day. As for the average running period, the estimation was primarily based on XWB advertisements of Mingxing films at the time. For instance, Ouyang Yuqian's *Qingming shijie* was shown at the *Jincheng* from 23 to 28 December 1936, Yao Sufeng's *Yehui* from 6 to 12 November 1936.

¹⁴⁴ "Zhou Jianyun tan guochan dianying," *DS* 6.20 (21 May 1937): 876.

CHAPTER FIVE

the previous section, it is also a melodramatic romance. It seems that no matter *Zuolian* writers such as Xia Yan, or "new sensationists" such as Liu Na'ou, when they worked for the commercial film enterprise, they followed the same rule.

This chapter has studied four cases through the angle of "melodrama plus isms." This pattern of film production is a balance between popular interests and critical opinions/intellectual convictions. Generally speaking, the melodramatic style remained the favourite with ordinary movie-goers, and isms – elevated ideas – catered to film critics and thus guaranteed a good reputation for the company. This mode perfectly fulfilled Zheng Zhengqiu's ideal to combine entertainment and popular education. Different receptions *Zhang Xinsheng* and *Orphan* had met with were instrumental in crystallizing Zheng Zhengqiu's vague idea into the formula. The other three test cases have verified the effectiveness of this pattern. Furthermore, these cases have revealed a continuum in production pattern throughout Mingxing's history. The artificial divides between the so-called *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi*, and GMD films appear invalid. Meanwhile, the inner dynamic of the formula "melodrama plus isms" cannot be overestimated. The characteristic polarization of melodrama helped get clearer messages across to the movie-going public. These messages principally mirror prevalent intellectual ideas of the day as well as a wide range of social problems. The next two chapters will trace these ideas and explore the question to what extent these ideas agree with the general intellectual background.

These ideas are one of the end results of Mingxing's film production which was made possible by, among others, commercial operations and the efforts of filmmakers discussed in previous chapters. By looking into these ideas I attempt to show how the popular medium, mediated by a variety of cultural professionals and expressed through the formula "melodrama plus isms," played a role in disseminating intellectual ideas at the time when China was eager to reinvigorate itself to be a strong modern nation. In other words, the ideas beneath the films showcase how commercialism had been applied to enlightenment, the salient question of this book.

Chapter Six

Addressing Current Issues: Isms (*zhuyi*) and Ideologies (*yishi*)

In a *Shenbao* article from 1926, the author Yao Sufeng remarked on the different characteristics of several Shanghai film studios. According to him, Mingxing was particularly skilled at depicting current social phenomena and domestic issues in a realistic style (明星則善以寫真的手段，描繪社會家庭中種種現象).¹ This observation is generally correct. Mingxing produced altogether 193 feature-length films. Dramas set in current times occupy the largest portion of this output. Even during the period from 1926 to 1931 in which the trend of "costume drama" (*guzhuang pian* 古裝片) swept Chinese film industry (see Chapter 1, 37-9), "costume drama" never dominated Mingxing's releases in numeric terms. Only 27 out of 93 films produced by Mingxing between 1926 and 1931 are *costume drama* or *martial arts* films (see Table 6.1).²

Since this chapter aims to look at the contemporary issues addressed in Mingxing films, my focus is on the dominating genre, modern-costume dramas, while leaving aside historical dramas, the themes of which principally had tiny relationship with contemporary problems. Differing from the preceding chapter which takes the approach of case studies, this chapter adopts a panoramic view, examining a wide spectrum of ideas and issues reflected in a wide range of Mingxing films. This survey is not intended to be comprehensive, however. My purpose is to map out most favourite ideas and values transported through the popular medium and to see how these were linked to contemporary intellectual thought and how these flowed across the conventional divides between *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD filmmaking. To be sure, ideas and themes to be discussed below as well as in the next chapter are not specific to Mingxing releases. Rather, these are shared by numerous Chinese films of the same period. Within the limited space, I restrict my study only to Mingxing films. I envision Mingxing as a microcosm of early Chinese film industry and attempt to shed some light on a broader picture of early Chinese cinema through this highly focused study.

As mentioned in the introduction, only 25 out of 193 feature films Mingxing produced have survived. Only 9 of the extant prints have been reproduced on VCD or DVD format,

¹ Sufeng 蘇鳳, "Ji Ta de tongku 記《她的痛苦》," SB 8 Oct. 1926: 13 "ziyou tan."

² Identification of these films' genres is based on their scripts, synopses and advertising texts.

while others, mostly partly damaged, are only available at China Film Archive which is normally not accessible to researchers without special permission. For this reason, the major source material I draw upon is film scripts, synopses (*benshi* 本事), intertitles (*zimu* 字幕), advertising texts, and reviews. Scripts and synopses allow us to sort out thematic motifs. Thanks to the melodramatic style, screenwriters' opinions on particular themes are always clearly spelled out. Silent films' intertitles, which are fortunately available in promotional journals, are particularly useful to my purpose. These texts – dialogues and short statements inserted between scenes – provide a significant window to look into the screenwriters' ideas and attitudes. Moreover, intertitles can guide us to imagine the real films because these lines are exactly what contemporary audiences read in front of silver screens. For these reasons, on many occasions I directly cite intertitles of individual films.

In addition, publicity texts and film reviews are a useful supplement. Advertisements contain essential messages of individual films which filmmakers and publicists thought to be most appealing and wanted movie-goers to know. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, it was common practice to introduce a film's scenario and salient theme elaborately in theatre advertisements. Figure 5 presents two random samples, both advertisements published in the *Xinwenbao*, one for *Fendou de hunyin* (1928) and the other for *Yuren yongbie* (1931). As shown in these pictures, in addition to practical information (time, place, price, etc), a theatre advertisement usually features the film's stills (left) or illustrations (right), names of filmmakers and leading stars, film genre (the left one gives the film's genre "romance with patriotic and revolutionary thought"/富有愛國革命思想之愛情片), brief descriptions of the film (at the bottom of both ads), and sometimes film critic's or audience's opinions (the right one includes a letter from film critic Pan Yihua: "潘毅華君來函").



Fig. 5 Theatre Advertisements in XWB (left: 9 Dec. 1928: 1; right: 26 Nov. 1931: 20)

These pieces of information are very useful when films are lost. Certainly, publicity materials should not be expected to be entirely objective. Film reviews present the significant other side of the coin, showcasing how individual films were received, understood and interpreted by the contemporaries. I would argue that in addition to what was projected on the silver screens, what was printed on the pages also constituted part of film discourse. Along with the act of movie-going itself, browsing advertisement sheets to decide on which movies to attend, reading film journals, as well as reading film plot sheets distributed at movie theatres (說明書) are part of movie-attending practices. For this reason, I deem printed material significant in scrutinizing the diffusion of various ideas through film.

Another fact that adds to the importance of these kinds of material is the wide circulation. Theatre advertisements were routinely published in major daily newspapers, such as the *Shenbao* and *Xinwenbao* in Shanghai, as well as many other journals, not limited to Shanghai. Film reviews appeared in major newspapers' film columns and various film journals, such as *Diansheng*, *Yingxi shenghuo*, and numerous others. Leading Shanghai daily newspapers were distributed nationwide. For example, the *Xinwenbao*, which is one of the major source materials of this study, had more than 500 distribution agents (分銷處) in China and its circulation figures reached 150,000 at highest.³ Accurate circulation numbers of film journals are difficult to obtain. A 1936 issue of Mingxing's promotional journal *Mingxing banyuekan* contains a table of "Distribution and Sale Agents of This Journal (本刊全國經銷處)," in which 76 such agents in 39 cities in China are listed (see Fig. 6).

According to an advertisement to be discussed in the conclusion (see Fig. 7, 225), in early 1935, Mingxing films were released to 35 theatres in 25 cities across China.⁴ The cities in these two tables overlap to a large degree, which means that the audience of Mingxing films and the readership of its promotional journals, perhaps as well as other fan magazines, might have overlapped to a large degree too. These pieces of information have confirmed that printed texts with aim to publicize or review films can be a useful supplement to facilitate the understanding of film discourse.

³ *Shanghai xinwen zhi* bianzuan weiyuan hui, *Shanghai xinwen zhi*, Online version, n.p. (<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node4522/node5501/node5503/node63720/userobject1ai8647.html>).

⁴ See "Mingxing yingpian gongsi gebu chunjie yingpian wang 明星影片公司各埠春節映片網," XWB 31 Jan. 1935: 2.

本 刊 全 國 經 銷 處			
上海	南京	鎮江	常州
無錫	蘇州	南通	常熟
杭州	寧波	蕪湖	安慶
南昌	九江	漢口	武昌
長沙	重慶	成都	沙市
開封	濟南	青島	煙台
北平	天津	太原	保定
西安	貴陽	廣西	廣州
香港	雲南 [昆明]	汕頭	福州
廈門	瓊州		

Fig. 6 Distribution and sale agents of the *Mingxing banyuekan* (MB 6.1, 16 Jul. 1936)
 (Note: The 39 cities are 上海, 南京, 下關, 鎮江, 常州, 無錫, 蘇州, 南通, 常熟, 杭州, 寧波, 蕪湖, 安慶, 南昌, 九江, 漢口, 武昌, 長沙, 重慶, 成都, 沙市, 開封, 濟南, 青島, 煙台, 北平, 天津, 太原, 保定, 西安, 貴陽, 廣西, 廣州, 香港, 雲南 [昆明], 汕頭, 福州, 廈門, 瓊州)

Drawing upon these materials and first of all based on a thorough reading of nearly all the available scripts/synopses, I sort out three broad categories, each including a cluster of recurring themes and interrelated topics treated in Mingxing films. One category is concerned with domestic issues and women, one with labour, class and the ills of the society, and the other with revolution and nationalism. These issues generally overlap contemporary intellectual discourse on modernity and national salvation. Part of this discourse has been analyzed in the previous chapter. Below I will provide a summary outline of the major issues discussed in the leading intellectual journal *Xin qingnian* 新青年 (New Youth) prior to 1919. My intention is to compare these elite ideas with their popular expressions in Mingxing films. This overview of *Xin qingnian*'s topics, surveyed by Chow Tse-tung, presents a snapshot of so-called "May Fourth spirit" and the collective aspirations of this generation of Chinese intellectuals:⁵

The magazine in the main opposed old patterns of thought and customs, and advocated new learning. It opposed monarchy and political privileges for the few, and advocated democracy, liberalism, and individualism, and later considered socialism. The magazine opposed the traditional ethics, such as loyalty to officials, filial duty to parents, and a double standard of chastity for men and women, and favored equality of individuals in society. It opposed the

⁵ This survey is listed roughly in order of their appearance. See Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, pp. 58-9.

traditional big family (parents and married children living together as a family unit) and advocated the Western small family system, the equality and independence of women, and freedom of choice in live and marriage instead of marriage arranged by parents. In subsequent issues, the magazine advocated the literary revolution and encouraged language reform, discussed problems of Romanization and the use of Esperanto, and introduced punctuation. The magazine was against old superstitions and religions, upholding science, technology, and agnosticism. To oppose the unquestioned traditional Confucianism, the monthly proposed to re-evaluate all the classics. Authors in the magazine demanded that education should encourage individuality rather than assert the traditional authority of educators. Finally, the magazine attempted to promote unified intellectual leadership against warlordism through social, political, and cultural reforms.

Many of these issues found their way into Mingxing's melodramatic tales, except for those of purely political or academic nature, such as democracy, literary revolution and language reform, which apparently do not fit the popular medium. Hu Shi, one of the foremost leaders of the New Culture Movement, translated these elite ideas into a list of subjects which he deemed suitable for literary writing: "male and female factory workers, rickshaw pullers, inland farmers...domestic tragedies, marital sorrows, the position of women, the unsuitability of [current] educational practices (如工廠之男女工人, 人力車夫, 內地農家...一切家庭慘變, 婚姻苦痛, 女子之位置, 教育之不適宜)."⁶ These themes fit perfectly with Mingxing's film productions. Domestic issues are the most favourite.

6.1 Family, Marriage, and Women

At the very beginning of Zheng Zhengqiu's theatre career, his name was bound up with the genre *jiating xi* 家庭戲 (family drama), which helped establish the fame of the *Xinmin* Society and gradually developed into a trend (see Chapter 3, 82). A decade later, the path-breaking work *Orphan* fell into the category "*Jiating jiaoyu yingpian* 家庭教育影片" (family education film).⁷ It is well known that the significance of family in Chinese culture and Confucianism is beyond doubt. During the May Fourth era, old family system and the related morality were at the core of intellectual criticisms of tradition. Fu Si'nian 傅斯年 (1896 - 1950), a prominent figure of May Fourth intelligentsia, went so far as to declare that the corrupt Chinese family system was one of "the sources of all evils (萬惡之原[源])" in his article of 1919, published in the inaugural issue of the *Xinchao* 新潮 (its own

⁶ Hu Shi, "Jianshe de wenzue geming lun 建設的文學革命論," *Xin qingnian* 新青年 4.4 (15 Apr. 1918), quoted in Hsia, *A history of modern Chinese fiction, 1917-1957*, p. 9.

⁷ See advertisement in XWB 2 Mar. 1924.

English title: *The Renaissance*) edited by Fu himself and Luo Jialun 羅家倫 (1897 - 1969), both students of Peking University then.⁸

In a word, issues concerning family, marriage, and women were at the very junction of intellectual discourse and popular interests. Numerous Mingxing productions address these problems, no matter by the so-called *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* or GMD writers (for ease of reference, in this chapter, I mark each film with "YH" [for *Yuanhu*], "ZY" [for *Zuoyi*], or "GMD" in the parenthesis to indicate how the film is conventionally categorized in standard histories, leaving uncategorized ones unmarked). Both *Zhang Xinsheng* and *Orphan* touch upon the issue of inheritance system, an integral part of the traditional clan system. The theme also appears in Bao Tianxiao's *Xiao pengyou* 小朋友 (Little Friends, 1925, YH), Zheng Zhengqiu's *Taohua hu* 桃花湖 (Peach Blossom Lake, 1930), and Ouyang Yuqian's *Qingming shijie* 清明時節 (Around the Qingming Festival, 1936, ZY).⁹ Hong Shen's *Zaosheng guizi* 早生貴子 (May You Soon Give Birth to a Distinguished Son), set in "a small village - hundred *li* (50 km) distant from Shanghai - where old thought (舊思想), old ethics (舊道德) and old habits (舊習慣) are still pervasive," satirizes an old couple's preoccupation with the idea of producing a son to carry on the family name (生子續香火).¹⁰ Among numerous family melodramas, themes surrounding marriage and women predominate. The following sections will examine, respectively, which marriage customs and concepts are featured in Mingxing films and what attitudes Mingxing's filmmakers held towards women.

Marriage Customs and Concepts

Matchmaking which is treated in *Jade* (YH) has been an example we have discussed in Chapter Five (160). Besides, many other traditions of marriage are featured in Mingxing films. *Zuihou zhi liangxin* 最後之良心 (Last Conscience, 1925) depicts three types of forced marriage, namely, *tongyang xi* 童養媳 (child daughter-in-law) which means a young daughter from a poor family who is sold to a richer family both as a maid and the wife of a male member of the family in the future; *zhaozhui* 招贅 which means that a wealthy family that lacks an heir might take in a boy child, who takes on the last name of his new family and would marry the family's daughter; and *bao paiwei zuoqin* 抱牌位作親

⁸ Meng Zhen 孟真 (Fu Si'nian), "Wan e zhi yuan 萬惡之原 (一)," *Xinchao* 新潮 1.1 (1 Jan. 1919), pp. 124-8.

⁹ For synopses of the three films see ZWDJB, pp. 203ff, 1861ff; ZZDY, pp. 313-4.

¹⁰ See Hong Shen, "Zimu 字幕," ZWDJB, pp. 682.

which refers to a marriage ceremony between a girl and a memorial tablet (*paiwei*) of her fiancé who passed away recently. Both the film's advertisement and screenwriter Zheng Zhengqiu's article declare that "the film's *zhuyi*/ism is to attack bad marriage customs (攻擊不良之婚制, 乃此片之主義)."¹¹ Zheng expressed his conviction in another article that movie-goers touched by his film were likely to get rid of bad marriage customs.¹² Xu Chihen 徐恥痕 recognized this intention in his review of the film published in the *Xinwenbao* and thought of the film as a warning to "the old minded people (頭腦陳舊者)."¹³

Guaming de fuqi 掛名的夫妻 (A Couple in Name, 1927, YH) features another related type of arranged marriage, *zhifu weihun* 指腹為婚 (concluding marriage by pointing to the womb), a custom of promising children into marriage before they are even born. The film was adapted from Bao Tianxiao's short story *Yilü ma* 一縷麻 (A strand of hemp) published in the *Xiaoshuo shibao* (Fiction Times) in 1909. Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳 put the story on stage into a piece that was to become a classic play of Peking Opera. According to Mei, he wanted to "satirize feudal moral doctrines (*fengjian lijiao* 封建禮教)." He related that his performance had deeply moved a spectator in Tianjin and caused him to cancel an unreasonable "*zhifu weihun*" engagement of his daughter.¹⁴ Mingxing advertised the film as a piece exploring "two big problems: true love and chastity."¹⁵

These themes are also common to May Fourth literature. The title character of Shen Congwen 沈從文's novella *Xiaoxiao* 蕭蕭 (1929) has been a classical fictional image of "child daughter-in-law" (*tongyang xi*). Xiaoxiao has lost her mother early and been brought up by an uncle who tilled the land. When she is betrothed, she is only eleven years old and her "husband" is a two-year old baby.¹⁶

Along with these "unreasonable" marriage customs, the concept *mendang hudui* 門當戶對 (marriage between families of the same social standing) was a theme of quite a few Mingxing films. In *Xiao qingren* 小情人 (Little Lovers, 1926), screenwriter Zheng Zhengqiu's opinion on this issue is made explicit in an intertitle: "The concept of *mendang*

¹¹ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Bianju zhe yan 編劇者言," MT 1 (1 May 1925); XWB 2 May 1925: A2.

¹² Zheng Zhengqiu, "Jieshi Zuihou zhi liangxin de sanjian shi 解釋《最後之良心》的三件事," MT 2 (5 Jun. 1925).

¹³ Chihen 恥痕, "Zuihou zhi liangxin shuping 《最後之良心》述評," XWB 2 May 1925: E1.

¹⁴ Mei Shaowu, et al, *Mei Lanfang zishu* (online version, n.p.). Also see Bao Tianxiao, *Chuangying lou huiyi lu*, p. 432.

¹⁵ XWB 30 Apr. 1927.

¹⁶ Shen Congwen 沈從文, "Xiaoxiao 蕭蕭."

hudui has destroyed the happiness of many young men and women" (門當戶對之見解，斷送了不少青年兒女的幸福).¹⁷ The most prominent examples that depict love between different classes in modern Chinese literature are Cao Yu 曹禺's drama *Leiyu* 雷雨 (The Thunderstorm, 1934) and Ba Jin 巴金's novel *Jia* 家 (*Family*, 1933). Interestingly, the plot of *Xiao qingren* resembles that of *Leiyu* in many respects. Both tell of a young man from a rich family falling in love with a girl of much too lowly status to be considered a suitable match – a housemaid in *Leiyu*, and a girl from a poor family in *Xiao qingren*. In both stories, the girl is expelled from the family during her second pregnancy, the first child remaining behind. The later accidental meeting of the pair and their children (one rich, the other poor) leads to complicated entanglements.¹⁸

This mode is shared by a few other Mingxing films. For example, in both Zheng Zhengqiu's *Erba jiaren* 二八佳人 (A Beauty of Sixteen, 1927) and Ouyang Yuqian's *Qingming shijie* (1936, ZY), a housemaid who is pregnant by a son of a rich family is driven out of the family and their child comes back many years later which triggers a series of dramatic stories.¹⁹ *Honglei ying* 紅淚影 (Shadow of Red Tears, 1931) also features a young man's low-born lover. One of the film's intertitles introduce that the girl "cannot be tolerated by the father (of her boyfriend)" (不容于父).²⁰

At the same time, new concepts and values were being promoted, namely, free love and free marriage. As shown in the previous chapter, Xia Yan's *Torrent* (1933, ZY) ends with the reunion of the protagonists who are in love irrespective of the different social strata they belong to. In Liu Na'ou's *Smiling* (1936, GMD), the heroine encourages her cousins to pursue "free love." These plots demonstrate both screenwriters' positive attitude towards new marital values. This theme is more typically developed in tandem with straightforward portrayals of children's revolt against parental ruling. A few lines of dialogues in the 1926 film *Yige xiao gongren* 一個小工人 (A Child Worker) by Zheng Zhengqiu and in the 1934 film *Shidai de ernü* 時代的兒女 (Children of Our Time, ZY) by Xia Yan, A Ying and Zheng Boqi show interesting resonance.

¹⁷ Zhengqiu, "Zimu 字幕 (of the film *Xiao qingren*)," ZWDJB, p. 663. The sentence is also quoted by Xinliu 心劉 in his review published in XWB 7 June 1926 "benbu fukan 本埠附刊." For Zheng's opinion, also see Zheng Zhengqiu, "Juzhi 劇旨," MT 12 (*Xiao qingren hao*, Jun. 1926). The original text reads: "The film aims to attack the concept of *mendang hudui* and to promote the equality of the sexes. 此片之背景在乎攻擊門當戶對之見解，平平兩性間之不平."

¹⁸ For the synopsis of *Xiao qingren*, see ZWDJB, pp. 657-60. The synopsis of *Leiyu* is based on: Cao Yu, *Leiyu* (Thunderstorm). Shanghai: Wenhua shenghuo chubanshe, 1947.

¹⁹ For *Erba jiaren*'s synopsis see ZWDJB, p. 1010; *Qingming shijie*'s synopsis see ZZDY, pp. 313-4.

²⁰ Dake 大可, "Benshi 本事," ZWDJB, p. 1994.

The conversation in *Yige xiao gongren* is between a father and his two daughters. One daughter is named Wan Ruyu 萬如玉, who "only knows of obeying her father, husband and son and does not have her own thought" (但知從父，從夫，從子，此外別無思想), as the film's intertitle introduces.²¹ The other Wan Ruhua 萬如華, "a new woman unfortunately born into an old family, an unlucky woman of the transitional times" (人新家不新，過渡時代之不幸女子也),²² defies her father and wants to marry her fellow student. The conversation goes as follows:²³

Ruyu: You disagree to marry our cousin (arranged by Father). You're unfilial. (你不答應嫁表兄，就是不孝。)

Ruhua: You're filial! You marry him. (你孝！你去嫁給他好了。)

Ruhua (to both Ruyu and her father): The Republic has been established. People are promoting free marriage. (現在光復了，都在提倡自由婚姻哩。)

Guyu 古愚 (the father; his name literally means 'old and foolish'): If you want freedom, get out of here. Don't enter the door of my house again! (你要自由，你就滾蛋，永遠不許上我的門！)

Shidai de ernü has a similar dialogue between the father and his son Shiming 仕銘:²⁴

Father (to his wife): Marriage, the greatest event in life! How can we let him decide by himself! (婚姻大事！豈能由他作主！)

Shiming: Father! Such an (arranged) marriage will be painful! (父親！這樣的婚姻是痛苦的！)

Father: Descendants of our family must obey their parents. If you want freedom, get out of here! Thereafter you are not my son! (要做我家的子孫，就得服從父母；要自由，你替我滾！以後，我沒你這個兒子！)

These conversations tell a typical story of children's protests against the traditional patriarchal system. Though undoubtedly championing new values, many Mingxing films also present the pitfalls of this freedom (to be elaborated in Chapter Seven). Next to marriage issues, an interlocking topic appears, regarding women.

Women

"Emancipation of women" has occupied a central position in modern discourses both in the West and in China.²⁵ As shown in the summary of *Xin qingnian*'s hot topics quoted in the opening of this chapter, advocacy for "the equality and independence of women" is on the

²¹ Zhengqiu, "Zimu 字幕," ZWDJB, pp. 672-3.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ding Junwu 丁君吾, "Sheying taiben *Shidai de ernü* 攝影台本《時代的兒女》," MY 2.2 (1 Dec. 1933): 32-33.

²⁵ Cf. Bartley, *The Changing Role of Women 1815-1914*.

agenda of May Fourth intellectuals.²⁶ Tani Barlow has traced the genealogy of *nüxing/funü*, "Chinese women," in modern Chinese intellectual discourses: A rash of masculinist interest in the universal sign of woman had surfaced as early as the 1830s, when there occurred an efflorescence of "pro-feminine" male writing. Male reformers in the 1860s spoke admiringly of "enlightened" relations between women and men in Western countries. Anti-foot-binding and pro-female academy arguments held key positions in the late 1890s and first decade of the twentieth century, in the work of major male new-style intellectuals. Since the New Culture Movement and May Fourth Movement, *nüxing* played an even more significant role in the larger, masculinist frame of anti-Confucian discourse.²⁷

She further points out that once *nüxing* entered elite *zhishifenzi* discourses, her image appeared simultaneously in popular media. Thus the indigenous representations of *nüxing* entered cultural and economic circulation on its own accord.²⁸ Mingxing's films provide a repository of such indigenous representations. Film's titles alone demonstrate the significance of *nüxing* in the popular consumption of this new medium. About 38 films have *nü* 女 or *fu* 婦 (woman) as key words in their titles, for example, *Kelian de guinü* 可憐的閨女 (A Pitiful Girl, 1925, YH) written by Bao Tianxiao, *Nüxing de nahan* 女性的吶喊 (Cry of Women, 1933, ZY) by Shen Xiling, and *Fudao* 婦道 (Doctrine for Women, 1934, GMD) by Yao Sufeng (cf Appendix I "Filmography").

Generally, calls for the emancipation of women are widespread in these films. For example, *Erba jiaren* (1927) ends with a speech "promoting the new trend of women's emancipation (演說婦女解放的新潮流)," after which the "slavery contracts" (*maishen qi* 賣身契) of the family's maids are destroyed.²⁹ This carries the hint of the liberation of the housemaids. Some of the dialogues in *Xuelei bei* 血淚碑 (Tablet of Blood and Tears, 1927) convey a strong message against the "old" society that has enslaved women:³⁰

Ruyu: Alas! Man-eating moral doctrines are terrible! (哎! 吃人的禮教真可怕!)

...

Ruzhen: The evil society is killing our sisters! (不良的環境, 把我們姊妹兩個殺了!)

...

Wang: My fellow students! The unfree society has killed the two promising young women! Who is the murder of new talents in our new society? We cannot be unaware! (諸君! 不自由的社會, 奪了我們有希望的人物去了! 殺我們新社會里新人才的兇手是誰? 我們不能不明白!)

²⁶ Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, p. 58.

²⁷ Barlow, "Theorizing woman," pp. 262; 265.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 267-8.

²⁹ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Zimu 字幕," ZWDJB, p. 1025.

³⁰ Zhengqiu, "Zimu," ZWDJB, pp. 1155-60.

CHAPTER SIX

Yu: How sad it is! The murder of the sisters is exactly their mother! If the problem of free marriage were solved, how could they have died on the execution ground? (說也傷心! 殺二位的, 就是二位的親娘! 假使他們早解決了自由婚姻, 何至雙死在法場上呢?)

The film ends with a close-up shot of a banner: "Let the tears and blood of the dead nourish the flowers of freedom (以死者之血淚, 澆開人間自由花)."³¹ It has been clear that these films generally show great sympathy towards "enslaved" women. Specifically, female roles in Mingxing films are varied. There are five main categories, which sometimes overlap, but basically remain distinct. Modern Girls (*modeng nülang* 摩登女郎) – fashionable urban young women who revel in consumption and other urban amusements – constitute the category which has the richest supply of illustrations. Contrary to this image is country girls who are usually depicted as pure and innocent. These two types of woman will be explored in next chapter when discussing the tension between city and country, one of the motifs of Mingxing films. The third type of woman is revolutionary, which will also be studied in next chapter when treating the theme of "revolution and romance."

The remainder two categories are professional women and female "entertainers," such as theatre actresses and prostitutes. These roles in Mingxing films share one feature in common. Predominantly they are depicted as men's play thing, oppressed by men in different ways. This message is typically conveyed in the advertising text for *Wei Nüshi de zhiye* 衛女士的職業 (The Profession of Ms. Wei), scripted by Hong Shen:³²

Recently, calls for the emancipation of women, equal rights for both sexes, and women's participation in politics have been prevalent. Consequently, an increasing number of educated women have engaged in professional careers. However, as men are commonly preoccupied with the thought that women are made for play (女子為可玩之念), they tend to wield power in hand to entice or insult career women. This is the primary reason why professional women are not widespread. This film is intended to help break up the bad convention of despising or insulting career women.

晚近女子解放、男女平權、女子參政等之呼聲, 甚囂塵上。以是智識界婦女求生存於社會者亦日多。惟男子每存女子為可玩之念, 故對社會上有職業之女子, 多方利誘, 或藉權勢以戲侮之。此女子職業所以不能發達之一大原因也。此片即欲打破社會上輕視與戲侮有職業女子之惡習。

This declaration can find further illustration in both Xia Yan's *Zhifen shichang* 脂粉市場 (The Cosmetic Store, 1933, ZY) and Yao Sufeng's *Yehui* 夜會 (City of Night, 1936, GMD). *Zhifen shichang* features a saleslady of a department store, Cuifen 翠芬, who is chased

³¹ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Benshi," ZWDJB, p. 1148.

³² XWB 22 Oct. 1927.

after by her superior and the son of the store's manager.³³ The heroine of *Yehui*, Huang Xiu 黃繡, is a waitress of a luxurious hotel and is annoyed by similar troubles, courted by a playboy.³⁴ While *Zhifen shichang* is declared to "enact the sufferings of professional women" (演出職業婦女的痛苦),³⁵ *Yehui* is compared to be an exclamation mark and a question mark that can be used to define the term "women's career" (女子職業的‘驚歎號’和‘疑問號’).³⁶

Compared to these professional women, the fortune of women of lower standing, such as actresses and prostitutes, is even worse in Mingxing films. The heroine in Bao Tianxiao's *Duoqing de nüling* 多情的女伶 (A Romantic Actress, 1926, YH), a Peking Opera actress, is coerced into being a warlord's mistress,³⁷ while Xia Yan's *Qiancheng* 前程 (The Prospect, 1933, ZY) also features a Peking Opera actress who marries a "young and handsome returned student" but soon proves to be only his "play thing" (*wanju* 玩具) and is abandoned later.³⁸ The title character of Ouyang Yuqian's *Haitang Hong* 海棠紅 (Red Begonia, 1936, ZY), a prominent *Pingju* Opera (評劇) actress, becomes her husband's ready source of money (*yaoqian shu* 搖錢樹),³⁹ while in Liu Na'ou's *Smiling* (1936, GMD), the sing-song girl Yuhua is a victim of both his uncle and the pawnshop manager.

In short, the stories presented above perfectly agree with the above-quoted Hu Shi's suggestion to write about "domestic tragedies, marital sorrows, and the position of women."⁴⁰ Along with these topics, Hu Shi proposed to treat issues concerning "male and female factory workers, rickshaw pullers, inland farmers."⁴¹ These issues belong to another major category of Mingxing's film production. As shown in the summary of *Xin qingnian*'s contents quoted in the beginning of this chapter, call for "equality of individuals in society" is also high on the agenda of social reform during the May Fourth era. Against this background, lower social classes and the ills of the society surfaced as hot topics in

³³ For the film's synopsis see ZZDY, pp. 234-6.

³⁴ For its synopsis see "Yehui de gushi 夜會的故事," *MB* 7.2 (1 Nov. 1936).

³⁵ XWB 14 May 1933: 1.

³⁶ Chun Geng 春耕, "Yehui, da dushi de heiying 夜會, 大都市的黑影," *MB* 7.2 (1 Nov. 1936).

³⁷ See ZWDJB, pp. 512ff.

³⁸ See the film's advertisement in XWB 21 May 1933: "benbu fukan 本埠副刊" 7; for the synopsis see ZZDY, pp. 236-7.

³⁹ ZZDY, p. 309.

⁴⁰ Hu Shi, "Jianshe de wenzue geming lun 建設的文學革命論," *Xin qingnian* 4.4 (15 Apr. 1918).

⁴¹ Hu Shi, op. cit.

fictional creation. In the following I trace social discourses surrounding labourer, class and the dark side of the society which appear in Mingxing films.

6.2 Labourer, Class, and the Ills of the Society

Labourer

One of Mingxing's first short films, *Laogong zhi aiqing* 勞工之愛情 (Labourer's love, 1922), can be seen as an interesting prelude to films on the subject of "labourer." The film tells a story of a fruit-peddler and former a carpenter, who falls in love with an old doctor's daughter. In order to help his future father-in-law's business, he "fixes" the steps leading to a Mah-jongg room, so that Mah-jongg players take a fall and require the doctor's services. In the end, the peddler gets the girl.⁴² It was initially entitled "Zhiguo yuan 擲果緣" (literally, "love occasioned by the throwing of fruits"), which draws on a Chinese legend that features a handsome and talented young man named Pan An 潘安, who is admired by many women. These women throw fruits into his carriage to express their affections.⁴³ Eventually, however, its title was changed to "Laogong zhi aiqing." The original film clearly reveals that its first title is "Zhiguo yuan," with "Laogong zhi aiqing" given in the parenthesis. But its advertising texts extensively adopted the latter and totally omitted the former.⁴⁴

The key to this change lies in the word "laogong 勞工" (labourer, or working class), and "aiqing 愛情" (love) as well. These were exactly novel terms invented or particularly favoured by May Fourth writers. Slogans such as "*Laogong shensheng* 勞工神圣" (sanctity of working classes) and "*Gongye jiuguo* 工業救國" (to save the country through industry) are ubiquitous in the pages of various journals during the period. According to the statistics in Jin Guantao's research, the usage frequency of the term *gongye* 工業 (industry) in the *Xin qingnian* was increasing conspicuously from 1919 to the mid-1920s. The term appeared over 500 times in this journal between April 1925 and July 1926.⁴⁵ In this context, the second title *Laogong zhi aiqing* definitely sounded more "stylish," even if

⁴² *Labourer's Love* is the earliest extant Chinese-made film, which has been reproduced as VCD. For the synopsis see ZWDJB, p. 13.

⁴³ The story is titled *Pan An zhiguo* 潘安擲果 (Throwing fruits to Pan An). Pan An (also Pan Yue) is a writer of Eastern Jin 東晉, see *Jinshu* (*Panyue zhuan*) 晉書 潘岳傳. It was among the most popular stories adapted into various Chinese traditional plays, for example, see Zhao Jingshen, ed, *Yuanming bei zaju zongmu kaolue*, p. 49.

⁴⁴ See SB 5 Oct. 1922: 9.

⁴⁵ Jin Guantao, *Guannian shi yanjiu*, p. 355.

a critic raised a question, jokingly, that fruit-peddler (the hero) could hardly be classified as "working class" in a strict sense.⁴⁶ Films featuring "real" working classes are not rare throughout Mingxing's history. One broad category is characterized by the hero's choice to be a worker, and the other depicts miseries that face working classes.

The first category has three examples with a similar structure. Zheng Zhengqiu's *Yige xiao gongren* (1926) features a son of a rich family who is driven out of his family by his father because he wants free marriage. He makes a living as a factory worker thereafter and changes his name to "Shanggong 尚工" (literally, "opt for being a worker"). In the end, his father realizes the truth in his son's insight that only industry can save the nation. Hence he invests a large sum of money founding several factories.⁴⁷ *Shidai de ernü* (1934, ZY), as discussed above, also begins with the hero Shiming's breakaway from his middle-class family in order to pursue his "free love." In the end, however, he breaks up with his lover Xiulin 秀琳, his college fellow student who wishes him to become an engineer living an urban bourgeois life with her. Shiming rather chooses to be a worker. He tells Xiulin, "Now I know what is more important than romance (我現在知道了比戀愛更重大的事情)."⁴⁸

The plot of Yao Sufeng's *Qingchun xian* 青春線 (Youth Line, 1934, GMD) develops in a slightly different way. It is a love triangle story surrounding three home town friends, engineering student Zhao Jin 趙進 who gives up his college study and teaches at a vocational school in their home town to raise his family, Jiang Hong 江宏, a student of commerce from a wealthy family, who obtains a decent job at a bank in Shanghai after graduation, and the girl student Shen Lan 沈蘭. Shen chooses the bank employee Jiang as husband while giving up her home-town lover Zhao. The ending of the story highlights the contrast between their lives. While the couple sinks in depravity in the materialistic city, Zhao Jin lives an upright life as a train driver in spite of the constant threat of unemployment.⁴⁹

These screenwriters clearly held the same positive attitude towards the idea of "Laogong shensheng" (Sanctity of Working Classes). At the same time, the plight of the working-class lives became another favourite subject of cinematic representations. Zheng Zhengqiu's *Mang gunü* 盲孤女 (Blind Orphan Girl, 1925) pioneered the development of

⁴⁶ Dai 呆, "Guan mingxing gongsi yingpian (xia) 觀明星公司影片 (下)," SB 9 Oct. 1922: 18.

⁴⁷ These expressions can be found in Zheng Zhengqiu, "Yige xiao gongren juzhi 《一個小工人》劇旨," MT 17 (*Yige xiao gongren* Issue, Nov. 1926) and the intertitles of the film in ZWDJB, p. 676, p. 679.

⁴⁸ MY 2.3: 29. For the script of the film see MY 2.2 (1 Dec. 1933): 31-8; 2.3: 24-30.

⁴⁹ For its screenplay see MY 2.4 (1 Nov. 1934): 21-7 and 2.5 (1 Dec. 1934): 23-30.

this theme. It features a girl who is driven out of home by her stepmother to become first a child worker and later a sing-song girl.⁵⁰ The journalist and popular writer Bi Yihong 畢倚虹 wrote an applauding review:⁵¹

The Chinese labour system is imperfect and women workers are treated inhumanely. There are countless oppressed women workers who have to swallow every humiliation. Nobody has helped them to articulate their grievances, and no paintings or articles have described their suffering. Mingxing film *Mang gunü* begins with an explicit description of a female worker being abused and humiliated. The performers' acting skills are great and the filmmakers' attitude is upright. On behalf of millions of women labourers weeping in silence, I would like to thank the Mingxing Company.

中國工廠制度之不良，待遇女工之不近人道，憔悴於惡制度之下，飲泣吞聲之女勞工，不知凡幾，從未有一人，為伊等呼冤，從未有一種圖畫文字，為伊等寫苦痛。明星盲孤女開幕之始，用明白顯豁之表演，大聲疾呼之態度，將絲廠女工，受廠員蹂躪侮辱之狀，完全做出。我為數千萬有淚無聲之女勞工，感謝明星公司。

Portrayals of labour abuses and miseries of factory workers recurred in later films especially in the 1930s. There is an episode in *Nüxing de nahan* (1933, ZY) that takes place in an organization named *Baofan zuo* 包飯作, which provides accommodations to poor women workers while exploiting their labour. The episode describes the *Baofan zuo*'s head hitting a woman worker who has been recently fired by a factory.⁵² Unemployment facing the urban working class is also a frequent theme of Mingxing films, taken up, for example, in *Xiangcao meiren* 香草美人 (Tobacco Beauty, 1933, ZY) set in a cigarette factory,⁵³ and *Yapo* 壓迫 (Oppression, 1933, ZY) taking place in a spinning mill.⁵⁴

Shen Xiling's *Shanghai ershisi xiaoshi* 上海二十四小時 (24 Hours in Shanghai, 1933, ZY) develops along two parallel lines: one revolves around a poor urban working-class family, a member of which is injured at work and his family are busy with raising money to pay for his medical bills, the other around the injured boy's boss and his wife, both of whom spend the whole night in urban fashionable resorts, going to the cinema, dancing, and gambling.⁵⁵ This story leads up to a related issue – class. The following section explores how the theme concerning class differences and conflicts was played out in Mingxing films, throughout the 1920s and 1930s

Class

⁵⁰ Chiping, "Benshi," Zhengqiu and Jianyun, "Zimu," in ZWDJB, pp. 182-191.

⁵¹ Bi Yihong 畢倚虹, "Mang gunü de wo gan" 《盲孤女》的我感," first published in *Shanghai hubao*, quoted in *Mang gunü*'s advertisement, see XWB 2 Oct. 1925: A2.

⁵² ZWDJB, pp. 2400-2402.

⁵³ For the synopsis of the film, see ZZDY, pp. 241-2.

⁵⁴ ZWDJB, pp. 2452-4.

⁵⁵ For its script see MY 2.3 (1 Jan. 1934): 15-23.

The political concept of "class" had found its dramatic representations in Mingxing films since the early years of the company. For example, a film reviewer summarized in his article published in the *Dianying zazhi* that one of the "isms" of *Hao gege* 好哥哥 (Good Brother, 1924) is "to eliminate class differences between the poor and the rich" (是片所含之主義，...為破除貧富階級).⁵⁶ Explaining the underlying messages of *Zuihou zhi liangxin* (1925), Zheng Zhengqiu said, "Through the comparison between the rich and the poor, the concept of 'class' is played out. This point may be of some value (一窮一富，兩相比較，很深的階級觀念，借此表現出來，似乎還有點價值)."⁵⁷ Coincidentally (or not), two greatest hits, *Konggu lan* 空谷蘭 (Orchid in the Empty Valley, 1926, YH) and *Zimei hua* 姊妹花 (Twin Sisters, 1934, ZY), present this issue both through featuring two women, one poor and one rich.

Konggu lan revolves around a rivalry between Renzhu 纫珠, a lower-born country girl with many feminine virtues, and Rouyun 柔云, a vicious and crafty upper-class woman. Renzhu marries Rouyun's cousin Ji Lansun 紀蘭蓀, a high-born returned student, while Rouyun has hoped to become Lansun's wife too. After many twists and turns, Rouyun manages to marry Lansun. But finally it is Renzhu who attains the ultimate triumph.⁵⁸ Apparently, this plot challenges the old rule *mendang hudui* (marriage between same social classes) discussed above. It mirrors shifts in social classes since the collapse of the dynasty in 1911, with the old elites sinking in status while formerly ordinary people (*pingmin* 平民) rising.

Zimei hua which was turned out eight years later treats the issue in a more dramatic way. The heroines of the film, a pair of twin sisters separated at birth, are reunited when the one raised in poverty becomes a servant in the household of her sister, now the pampered wife of a warlord general.⁵⁹ But the two films are not unique. Such representations of conflicting relationships between the poor and the rich are pervasive in Mingxing films. *Liangxin fuhuo* 良心復活 (A Resurrection of Conscience, 1926, YH), Bao Tianxiao's creative adaptation from Leo Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, also features a love story between

⁵⁶ Yin Shi 隱士, "Hao gege zhong zhi er Zheng 《好哥哥》中之二鄭," *Dianying zazhi* 10 (Feb. 1925).

⁵⁷ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Jieshi Zuihou zhi liangxin de sanjian shi 解釋《最後之良心》的三件事," MT 2 (5 Jun. 1925).

⁵⁸ For the synopsis (by Chiping) and the text of intertitles (by Zhengqiu) of *Konggu lan* see Zheng, pp. 558-580.

⁵⁹ For its synopsis see ZZDY, p. 244. The film is available in form of VCD.

people of different social strata and is claimed to aim to promote the idea of "bridging the gap between the rich and the poor classes (革除貧富階級之障礙)."⁶⁰

In this light, the extreme popularity of *Konggu lan* and *Zimei hua* may be not merely coincidental. These fictional depictions of class conflicts mirrored the historical condition of the day. Moreover, the two films' grand success at box offices suggests that this kind of scenario favoured the interests of the contemporary audience. In the 1930s, as the general intellectual atmosphere grew increasingly radical, class differences and conflicts gradually evolved into "class struggle." Films on this theme are usually set in the countryside and feature a kind of person commonly termed as "local tyrant and evil gentry" (*tuhao lieshen* 土豪劣紳), the landlord and gentry classes of the traditional patriarchal society.⁶¹

The patriarch of the wealthy household Fu Boren in *Torrent* is a typical example of the image of *tuhao lieshen*. This image can find more illustrations, such as Sun Tuanzong 孫團總 in *Tieban honglei lu* 鐵板紅淚錄 (Iron Plate and Red Tears, 1933, ZY) – a local tyrant in a village of Sichuan Province, who extorts money from farmers and is killed in a peasant revolt in the end;⁶² Li Dahu 李大戶 and Hu Xinwu 胡心吾 in *Yanchao* 鹽潮 (Salt Tide, 1933, ZY) – a country gentleman in a coastal village and his nephew from a Shanghai wealthy family, who attempt to occupy vacant land in the village and are interrupted by the villagers;⁶³ and a landlord in *Dao xibei qu* 到西北去 (Go Northwest, 1934, ZY), who conspires with a real estate entrepreneur to try to purchase peasant's land at an incommensurately low price.⁶⁴

Besides, as the GMD official Chen Lifu saw it, the notion of "class struggle" is demonstrated by the depictions of "riots and revolts of the masses (暴动)."⁶⁵ The final demise of the above landlords and local tyrants in popular uprisings has demonstrated Chen's observation. In Zhang Shichuan's film *Shilian* 失戀 (Love Failure, 1933), the hero, a young official, is forced to resign office after a peasant uprising. The GMD official Lu Diping interpreted that the purpose of this depiction was to agitate for seizing power

⁶⁰ XWB 22 Dec. 1926: A1.

⁶¹ For example, Chen Wu suggested six kinds of materials suitable for screen, one of which was concerned with "opposing landlords and usurers," namely, the "feudal forces" in the countryside. See Chen Wu, "Zhongguo dianying zhi lu," ZZDY, p. 71.

⁶² For the film's synopsis see ZZDY, p. 241.

⁶³ For the film's synopsis see MY 2.3 (1 Jan. 1934): 32-3.

⁶⁴ For the film's synopsis see MY 2.4 (1 Nov. 1934): 35-7.

⁶⁵ "Chen Lifu xiansheng tan dianying: yao yi minzu zhuyi wei yishu zhongxin 陳立夫先生談電影：要以民族主義為藝術中心," *Chenbao* 9 Feb. 1934: 10.

through mass riots (鼓動鄉民暴動奪取政權).⁶⁶ Yang Hansheng's *Yeben* 夜奔 (Escape at Night, 1937, ZY) also ends with the victory of the mobilized masses.⁶⁷ Films centring on the conflicts between different classes often simultaneously present the ills of the society and social injustice. The following section briefly examines this theme in Mingxing films and asks how stories projected on the silver screens related to the real world.

Ills of the society

Many films discussed above portray the awful poverty in the countryside, urban unemployment, and hardship and unfairness facing the poor. Interestingly, these aspects even became the highlights in publicity texts. For example, the advertisement for *Chuncan* 春蠶 (Spring Silkworms, 1933, ZY) declares that the film is "a sketch of the economic depression in the countryside, a miniature of the shaky social structure, an exposé of the influx of foreign commodities, and a hint to the cause of the miserable fate of domestic agricultural products" (农村经济破产的素描, 社会组织动摇的缩影, 暴露洋货猖獗的狂流, 暗示土产衰落的病根).⁶⁸

Yapo's advertising text reads:⁶⁹

Oppression, oppression! The powerful oppresses the powerless, and the rich oppresses the poor. Therefore the powerful grows more powerful and the rich richer, while the poor is oppressed almost to death. In the film *Yapo* (Oppression), we invite you to see how unfair the world is and how unjust our society is!

壓迫，壓迫！強者壓迫弱者，富者壓迫貧者，強的更強，富的更富，窮人卻被迫得奄奄一息了！在《壓迫》裏，大家請來看看，這世界是多麼的不平，這社會是多麼的沒有公理！

These problems, however, were not the filmmakers' imagination. Many did exist in the real world. China in the 1920s and 1930s was by no means in a stable and promising state. In the countryside, the farmers lived in appalling poverty, primarily due to the unequal distribution of land (which means "a small number of landlords owned a disproportionate number of the farms, and rented these to tenants at extortionate rates") and the unfavourable ratio between population and food production.⁷⁰ A combination of economic

⁶⁶ See Lu Diping's confidential letter, No. 2 Historical Archives, Nanjing, 2 (2)-271/16J1505, dated April 5, 1933.

⁶⁷ For *Yeben*'s synopsis see ZZDY, p. 330.

⁶⁸ XWB 7 Oct. 1933: "benbu fukan" 11.

⁶⁹ XWB 14 Aug. 1933: "benbu fukan" 4.

⁷⁰ As for the rural destitution which is not easily measured, Eastman used the statistics: in 1930 China's death rate was about the highest in the world, two and a half times higher than that of the United States and markedly higher even than that of India. See Eastman, et al., eds., *The Nationalist Era in China, 1927-1949*, p. 36. As for the two primary reasons, it is what many contemporary observers (both Chinese and Westerners) contended. For example, as the League of Nations' leading agricultural specialist in China, Ludwig Rajchman,

and climatic factors, moreover, plunged China's farmers into even more straitened circumstances during the years 1932-5.⁷¹ The Nationalists' rural policies which should have targeted to remedy the situation proved ineffective, for the reason, among others, that the regime feared to tamper with the social-economic relations in the villages, and might even have had, as Arthur Young suggests, an empathy for the landlord class.⁷² Even worse, they had in many cases exacerbated the peasants' plight by imposing new burdens, such as taxes, labour, supplies and land.⁷³

Meanwhile, the urban unemployment rate was high partly due to the global depression of the time. In Shanghai during the early 1930s, approximately a third of a million out of a total population of about 3.5 million were recorded as unemployed.⁷⁴ The lives of the urban working class were no better than their compatriots' in the countryside. Seen in this light, what was presented on the screen could be real-life stories that happened throughout the country. Apart from domestic problems, China had suffered humiliations of foreign invasion for decades. One of the most flagrant was from Japan, whose record of aggression against China, especially since they seized Manchuria in 1931, was blatant.⁷⁵ Moreover, the nation had long been plunging into the turmoil of warlord struggles. Even since the Nanjing regime seized power in 1927, civil wars and conflicts had never ceased. Under the circumstances, calls for promoting "martial spirit" (*shangwu jingshen* 尚武精神) and revolution in the service of national salvation were incessant. The film industry was certainly not isolated from the outside world. In the following I look at another cluster of themes concerning martial spirit, revolution and national salvation.

6.3 Martial Spirit, Revolution, and National Salvation

In 1925, Zheng Zhengqiu wrote: "Considering the situation that China was experiencing multiple oppressions, we should produce some films that present national humiliations and promote people's rights. (論中國的形勢，處於數重壓迫之下，我們應當要有幾個表演

remarked in 1934, "Of the economic and social factors [contributing to the rural crisis], perhaps the system of tenancy is the most disquieting." See Eastman, p. 36-7.

⁷¹ The economic factor was a deflationary trend that hit China in the wake of the world economic depression. During the same period, large parts of the country suffered the worst weather within memory: drought, floods, winds and hail which wreaked widespread devastation. See *Ibid*, p. 38.

⁷² Arthur N. Young, *China's nation-building effort, 1927-1937: the financial and economic record*, p. 389

⁷³ The reason was that the Nationalists endeavoured to extend their control down to the villages, the size of the bureaucracy grew; these new local authorities had to be paid, the rural tax burden thus increased. The latter three forms of burdens were largely caused by the demand of the army. See *Ibid*, p. 39.

⁷⁴ See Elvin, *Chinese city between two worlds*, p. 10.

⁷⁵ Eastman, et al., eds., *The Nationalist Era in China, 1927-1949*, p. 116.

國恥和提倡民權的影戲)"⁷⁶ At the same time, he pointed out the tremendous difficulty of dealing with these issues because political consciousness of the Chinese people was extremely weak. Nevertheless, themes respecting patriotism and revolution are commonplace in the 1920s. As mentioned above, it was common practice throughout the 1920s to describe films in advertisements with certain labels, such as *aiqing pian* 哀情片 (tragic love film), *beiju* 悲劇 (tragedy), and *shehui pian* 社會片 (social film). *Aiguo pian* 愛國片 (patriotic film), or *geming pian* 革命片 (revolutionary film), emerged as a distinctive genre.

Fendou de hunyin 奮鬥的婚姻 (A Struggle in Marriage, 1928) is labelled as a "revolutionary romance" (革命愛情名片), *Zhandi xiao tongbao* 戰地小同胞 (A Child on the Battlefield, 1929) a "military, romantic and ethical film" (戰爭愛情倫理電影), and *Sange fuqin* 三個父親 (Three Fathers, 1930) a "revolutionary film" (革命片).⁷⁷ Bao Tianxiao's *Hao nan'er* 好男兒 (A Good Guy, 1926, YH), which depicts "the hardships a young man suffers after he forsakes his family for the sake of his country," is classified as a "patriotic film" (愛國片).⁷⁸ Meanwhile, images of fighters and revolutionaries are abundant in Mingxing's 1920s films. For example, *Jade* ends with the transformation of its hero Mengxia from a talented scholar to a brave warrior fighting on the battlefield of Mongolia.

These cinematic representations of revolution and military spirit generally agree with the historical background. Between 1926 and 1928, the National Revolutionary Army (國民革命軍) led by Chiang Kaishek launched a military campaign against local warlords, known as *Beifa* 北伐 (Northern Expedition). The outcome of the Northern Expedition was the establishment of the Nanjing government by the GMD in 1927. China was nominally reunified under a central government. Generally, the Northern Expedition was viewed favourably by the contemporary Chinese people because it ended a period of disorder.⁷⁹ Mingxing's *aiguo pian* and *geming pian* films can be seen as an echo to the ethos of this period. In the early 1930s, Japanese invasions of Manchuria and Shanghai spurred strong feelings of national crisis. As briefly discussed in Chapter Four (105), a number of films on

⁷⁶ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Jieshi Zuihou zhi liangxin de sanjian shi 解釋《最後之良心》的三件事," MT 2 (5 Jun. 1925).

⁷⁷ See the advertisements in XWB on 26 Jan. 1929; "benbu fukan" 25; 21 Nov. 1929; and 25 Jan. 1930.

⁷⁸ See the advertisement for *Hao nan'er* in XWB 18 May 1926: A1.

⁷⁹ Cf. Fairbank, et al, eds, *The Cambridge History of China* (vol. 12), chapter 11 "The Nationalist Revolution," pp. 527ff.

patriotic and military subjects were turned out, which tended to depict patriotism in a more radical way.

Tiexue qingnian 鐵血青年 (The Youth of Iron, 1931) was declared to be a film with intent to "stimulate patriotism among the masses (激發群眾愛國思想)" and "to advance the spirit of the youth of iron (發揚鐵血青年的精神)."⁸⁰ It has three main characters, a "brave and determined woman party member," a "warlord's son who loves his compatriots while his father abuses his people," and a girl in love with the hero while willing to sacrifice her own interests out of patriotism. When introducing the heroine played by Hu Die, a metaphor is used in its advertisement: "Pear blossoms and roses are equally adorable. In this film, however, Ms. Hu gets rid of those temperaments analogous with pear blossoms and turns to be a rose hard to be plucked."⁸¹ The metaphor is reminiscent of the heroine of *Jade*, Li Niang (Lady Pear Blossom), who is portrayed as a typical Chinese traditional talented woman (*cainü* 才女), sentimental, vulnerable, and skilled in poetry. From a "good guy" to a "youth of iron," from a pear-blossom-like vulnerable *cainü* to a rose-like brave "woman party member," this transformation is meaningful. It is understandable if seen against the historical background of national crisis.

Guohun de fuhuo 國魂的復活 (The resurrection of the national spirit, 1932, YH), written by the detective fiction writer Cheng Xiaoqing, was labelled "a patriotic and military film congruent with the current situation" (應時而起之愛國軍事電影).⁸² It features the contrast between "the young men who are indulging in wine and women" and "the boy students who are organizing the militia and fighting at the front lines," between "the young women who are indulging in singing and dancing" and "the girl students who are serving the country at the home front."⁸³ In a word, it contrasts past and present, degenerate urban life and heroic military action. Moreover, it depicts the "transformation" of a dancing hostess who repents for her past and devotes herself instead to saving the nation. This suggests that in tough times the cause of national salvation overrode other concerns even in the area of the popular medium.

From then on, expressions of anti-imperialism and anti-Japanese became increasingly widespread on the screen. Though explicit portrayals concerning anti-Japanese were

⁸⁰ See the advertisement for *Tiexue qingnian* in XWB 31 Dec. 1931: 20. It was premiered at Zhongyang Theatre, together with a newsreel also on the patriotic theme: *Fudan daxue yiyongjun jianyue dianli* 復旦大學義勇軍檢閱典 (Ceremonial parades of the militia of Fudan University).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² See advertisement in XWB 22 Sep. 1932: 22.

⁸³ XWB 22 Sep. 1932: 22.

forbidden by the Municipal Police of Shanghai,⁸⁴ several films produced in the mid-1930s are set in the background of foreign invasion, which alludes to Japanese invasion. *Tongchou* 同仇 (The Common Enemy, 1934, ZY) ends with a scene where a large crowd is taking leave of a group of soldiers marching towards the battlefield "to fight against imperialist invaders," when "Beiping and Tianjin are in danger."⁸⁵ Shen Xiling's film *Xiangchou* 鄉愁 (Nostalgia for My Hometown, 1935, ZY) takes place at a time when a village is invaded by foreign troops. A conversation between a father and his son who is going to join the army reads:⁸⁶

Father: Xiong'er! Now you are a soldier. You should bear in mind the glory of our ancestors! However, our ancestors fought only for the imperial rulers, while you now fight for the Chinese nation...(雄兒！你現在是一個軍人了，你應當記住我們祖上楊家將的威風！雄兒，況且我們的祖先上是只爲了皇家，而你現在是爲了全中國的整個民族.....)
 Son: Father, I've learned a great lesson today. [I will fight] for the Chinese people and our oppressed nation. (爸爸，我今天聽到了好的教訓了，爲了中國的民眾和被壓迫的民族。)

Soon later, the father is killed in the bombing. The daughter of the family Yang Ying 楊瑛 takes her mother fleeing to Shanghai. At the end of the film, the war situation is escalated. The daughter speaks to her mother:⁸⁷

Mom, if our Chinese people still don't awake and don't roar out, any place will [fall to the enemy's hand] just like our home village. (媽媽，中國人再不自覺、怒吼，任何的地方，都會和我們家鄉一樣的。)

Her boyfriend responds:

Our entire country is caught in the storm. Where are the youth of China? Where are the youth of China? (整個的中國，已經在這狂風暴雨中了，我們的中國青年呢？我們的中國青年在哪裡？)

These intertitles may easily remind the audience of China's contemporary situation under Japanese threat. Similar messages are also conveyed in *Rexue zhonghun* 熱血忠魂 (Hot Blood and Loyal Spirit, 1935), *Shizi jietou* 十字街頭 (Crossroads, 1937, ZY), and *Yeben* 夜奔 (Escape at Night, 1937, ZY).⁸⁸ This topic will be further examined in next chapter when discussing the tension between romance and revolution.

⁸⁴ See Fengwu, "Lun Zhongguo dianying wenhua yundong," ZZDY, p. 64.

⁸⁵ See its synopsis published in *MY* 2.3 (1 Jan. 1934): 38.

⁸⁶ See the film's script in ZWDJB, p. 2707.

⁸⁷ ZWDJB, pp. 2705, 2714-5.

⁸⁸ For the synopses of these films, see ZZDY, pp. 289, 325, 330.

In a review of Mingxing's film *Hao gege* (1924), the author remarked that all the ideas addressed in the film "are congruent with the ideals of today's Chinese intellectuals (符合今日知識階級的理想)."⁸⁹ A decade later, an article entitled "An Overview of Chinese Film Industry" published originally in a Japanese magazine and translated into Chinese provides an impressionistic description: "Most Chinese films are devoted to expose the [old] family system, evils of warlords, and harmful deeds such as opium smoking, bribery, and robbery as a warning to the people." (中國的影片，大都是暴露家族制度，軍閥橫暴的罪惡，并處處表演吃鴉片賄賂盜匪等不良舉動以警惕人民。)⁹⁰ These accounts, not necessarily entirely accurate, shed some light on the contemporaries' view on Chinese cinema. It can be certain that one facet of this popular form of entertainment appears to be socially engaged, throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

The above survey has testified to this point. Mingxing's films take up a list of contemporary pressing issues, including the traditional family system, marriage customs, the emancipation of women, class differences, class struggle, exposé of the dark side of the society, national salvation, and anti-imperialism. Further, it has been clear that these issues are not limited to a certain "category" of film production, so-called *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi*, and GMD. Rather, most of these ideas and values were indeed shared by a wide range of contemporary Chinese intellectuals – the *Xin qingnian*'s authors, writers of New Literature, popular fiction, and modernist literature, as well as filmmakers. Various ideas included in these films were circulated, consciously or unconsciously, driven by forces of commercialism – physically, Mingxing's distribution networks (to be introduced in the conclusion) through which films were released across the nation and beyond in order to make a profit. Apart from acting as a vehicle to transport ideas, the popular medium held up a mirror to the inner tensions of the times. Tensions between city and countryside, and between love and revolution are most widespread themes in Mingxing films. To a degree, these themes also belong to the nationalistic discourse and can be counted as material to enlighten or educate the people. The two themes will be explored in the next chapter.

⁸⁹ Yin Shi 隱士, "Hao gege zhong zhi er zheng 《好哥哥》中之二鄭," *Dianying zazhi* 10 (Feb. 1925).

⁹⁰ This article is translated into Chinese and published under the title "Zhongguo yinhua jie zongping 中國映畫界總評" in MB 7.2 (1 Nov. 1936). The original article is written by Goto Tomio 後籐富男 and published in *世界画報* (edited by 國際情報社), no. 6, 1936. I'd like to thank Zhu Yanhua for checking out this source in the Japanese National Diet Library.

Chapter Seven

Addressing the Modern Tension: Motifs

This chapter examines two motifs concerning the relationship between city and country and between romance and revolution which underlie a wide range of Mingxing films. How are these relationships represented, staged and dramatized on the silver screen by different filmmakers? What is the dynamic behind the common obsession with these motifs? How do these themes relate to other forms of artistic creation and broader intellectual discourse? By exploring these questions, I attempt to show that these themes join, sometimes overlap, the variety of ideas discussed in the previous chapter and constitute the important messages which filmmakers wanted to bring to the audience as a form of didacticism.

I first look at the motif of city and countryside by analyzing three clusters of films: six 1920s films of *shehui pian* 社會片 (social film) genre by Bao Tianxiao and Hong Shen, five so-called *Zuoyi* films, and five films by Yao Sufeng (see Table 7.1). Table 7.1 lists all the samples I will analyze below and has two additional columns which respectively list heroes/heroines (positive characters) and villains of each film, with short descriptions. I intend to reveal that the negative image of city and positive image of countryside always have incarnations in different roles in a melodramatic framework. Reasons for selecting the three clusters of films are twofold. The first and obvious reason is that the city/countryside motif appears in all these films, in one way or another. Second, as discussed in Chapter Two, Bao Tianxiao is conventionally labelled as *Yuanhu*, and Yao Sufeng as a GMD hack writer. It will be interesting to compare their works with the five so-called *Zuoyi* films, films falling conventionally within three different categories but treating the same theme. Hong Shen's three *shehui pian* films are also included because these were produced during the same period when Bao Tianxiao's films were released. It is also interesting to compare the works by the so-called *Yuanhu* writer and the Harvard-educated dramatist – a so-called "new" intellectual. The following examination will demonstrate that films with different conventional labels do not differ in treating the theme of polarizing city and country.

7.1 Dichotomizing Country and City

Shehui pian 社會片, social film

As stated above, films of the 1920s were usually labelled as particular genres in theatre advertisements. *Shehui pian*/social film, or its variations (*shehui beiju* 社會悲劇/social tragedy, *shehui xieshi dianying* 社會寫實電影/social realistic film, was a major genre. Of fourteen films written or directed by Bao Tianxiao and Hong Shen between 1925 and 1927, six fall within this category, according to their advertisements. No one spelled out why these films were classified as such. Upon analyzing the film scripts, one may conclude that this genre is characterized by a setting in Shanghai. The city is constantly portrayed as a locus of evil and a breeding ground for corrupt urban youth. The advertising text for Bao Tianxiao's *Kelian de guiniu* 可憐的閨女 (A Pitiful Girl, 1925), for example, reveals this theme: "Shanghai is the centre of trade and commerce in our country. Factories and shops abound. Its prosperity and bustle is equal to Paris, New York, and London. A city of wealth and luxury, however, always harbours depravity and crime (上海為我國通商巨埠，工廠林立，市肆櫛比，繁華熱鬧，不亞法之巴黎，美之紐約，英之倫敦。但奢靡之市，淫亂必盛)。"¹ In the following I will examine six films by Bao and Hong, with a focus on analyzing how hero(in)es and villains are related to certain qualities deemed inherent in city or countryside.

The villain in *Kelian de guiniu* (1925) is Wang Xiaolian 汪小蓮.² He is a member of the "*chaibai dang* 拆白黨" (*chaibai* party), a secret society that operated in Shanghai during the 1920s and 1940s. Members of the society were mainly flamboyantly dressed young men frequenting the city's entertainment quarters in order to commit frauds, particularly targeting young ladies and wealthy women. *Chaibai* party was habitually viewed as a symbol of the vice of Shanghai. Figures of this "party" became stereotypical villains in modern Chinese literature and drama. For example, playwright Chen Dabei 陳大悲 (1887 - 1944), one of the pioneer practitioners of Spoken Drama/*huaju*, published a one-act play also featuring a *chaibai* party young man in the *Xiju* 戲劇 (Theatre) and staged it in 1922.³ Liu Bannong 劉半農 (1891 - 1934), one of the main contributors to the leading academic journal *Xin qingnian* during the May Fourth era, also made references to *chaibai* party in his essay "Shili zhuyi yu zhiye jiaoyu 實利主義與職業教育" (Pragmatism and Vocational

¹ See the advertisement for *Kelian de guiniu* by Bao Tianxiao in XWB 26 Nov. 1925.

² See ZWDJB, pp. 167-181; XWB 26 Nov. 1925.

³ Chen Dabei 陳大悲, "Aiguo zei 愛國賊," *Xiju* 2.1 (Jan. 1922).

Education).⁴ However, villains in Bao Tianxiao's films are not confined to this kind of male character.

In *Furen zhi nü* 富人之女 (Daughter of a Wealthy Family, 1926), the heroine Kang Fengzhu 康鳳珠 (literally, "phoenix and pearl") fits in the role of villain. A daughter of a well-to-do family, Kang Fengzhu quits school in her teens and squanders time and money in movie theatres, dance halls and coffee shops. After marrying the college student Shen Chaoran 沈超然, she keeps indulging in this frivolous life. Influenced by his wife, Chaoran also begins leading a dissipated life. In the end, Fengzhu bitterly repents her past, but it is too late.⁵ The central idea of the film proclaimed in its advertisement is as follows: "Today is a time of extreme extravagance and depravity. Cultivated young women from good families (*dajia guixiu* 大家閨秀) are deluded into believing in superficial ideas of freedom and equality and come to ignore Confucian ethics. They are self-indulgent, taking extravagance as generosity and licentiousness as socialising. They can always be found in the entertainment places. In the end, none escapes total ruin. (社會奢靡，於今為極。大家閨秀，惑於自由平權之泛說，睨視禮教，恣意放縱，以揮霍為豪爽，視放浪為社交，歌場舞榭，恆見若輩之芳蹤。習而久之，未有不身敗名裂也)"⁶

Bao Tianxiao's other film of 1926, *Ta de tongku* 她的痛苦 (Her Sorrows) features a pair of young lovers, the girl You Lingsu 尤菱素 from a middle-class family who "is intoxicated by the idea of freedom (醉心自由)"⁷ and the boy Qiu Shaofu 裘少甫 from a high-class family who "is also a firm advocate of free marriage (亦主張婚姻絕對自由者)".⁸ They defy their parents and get married. Without their families' financial support, the couple finds itself in a difficult situation. The woman, "accustomed to luxurious lifestyle and weak-minded (習於奢華，復意志不堅定),"⁹ yields to the seduction of a rich playboy named Cheng Yancheng 程彥丞 and leaves her husband to marry Cheng. After marriage the playboy keeps chasing after other girls. In the end, Lingsu remarries her former husband with the help of a lawyer, and then the couple moves to the countryside. The film ends with the following conversation:¹⁰

⁴ Liu Bannong 劉半農, "Shili zhuyi yu zhiye jiaoyu 實利主義與職業教育," Liu Fu (Liu Bannong), *Bannong zawan* 半農雜文, Beijing: Beiping Xingyun tang 北平星雲堂, 1934, p. 120.

⁵ See Chiping, "Benshi" and Tianxiao, "Zimu" of *Furen zhi nü* in ZWDJB, pp. 530-45.

⁶ See the advertisement for *Furen zhi nü* in XWB 9 Aug. 1926: A1.

⁷ Chiping, "Benshi," ZWDJB, p. 623.

⁸ Zhengqiu, "Zimu," ZWDJB, p. 625.

⁹ Chiping, "Benshi," ZWDJB, p. 624.

¹⁰ Zhengqiu, "Zimu," ZWDJB, p. 635.

Shaofu: Oh, the life here is too hard after all. Let's go back to Shanghai. (哎！這種生活，究竟太苦，我們還是到上海去吧。)

Lingsu: You want to go to Shanghai again? OK! I would divorce you again once we were back to Shanghai. (哼！你倒又想到上海去了；好！到了上海，我就再同你離一回婚。)

Shaofu: I'm just kidding. (噯，我是說說玩的。)

Lingsu: Don't say this again... (以後你不許再說這種話...)

It is quite telling that the city of Shanghai is pictured as the mire of iniquity in contrast to the peaceful countryside in Bao Tianxiao's films. Hong Shen shared a similar attitude towards the city and countryside, though as a Harvard graduate of playwriting, he tended to employ techniques of realism rather than of melodrama. His first film, *Feng da shaoye* 馮大少爺 (Young Master Feng, 1925), presents a colourful portrayal of a good-for-nothing son named Feng Jiayao 馮家耀 (literally, "glory of the family") who squanders his father's property and lives a dissipated life in Shanghai. His native place is Suzhou, where his father through industriousness and frugality has risen to become a prominent entrepreneur.¹¹ *Siyue li de qiangwei chuchu kai* 四月裡的薔薇處處開 (Roses in April, hereafter *Siyue*, 1926) is a "realistic film that portrays the society of Shanghai" (上海社會寫實電影).¹² It features the bank manager Yu Zhaotang 余兆棠 who is extremely fond of women.

Aiqing yu huangjin 愛情與黃金 (Love and Gold, 1926) tells a story that resembles *Ta de tongku* in many respects. To pursue "free love," Huang Zhijun 黃志鈞 and Chen Lianzhen 陳連珍 live together in Shanghai as an unmarried couple. Soon, however, Huang abandons Lianzhen to marry a more alluring woman, his boss' daughter Chu Sujuan 儲素娟. Differing from *Ta de tongku*, the film ends with suicides of both the hero and heroine. The first intertitle of the film reads: "Love! Gold! How much crime and sorrow in this world are brought by you! (愛情呀，黃金呀，世界上幾許罪惡，幾許痛苦，皆是由汝而生。)"¹³ The advertisement for the film declares, "The 'ism' of this film is to expose diverse misbehaviours of the new youth with the excuse of doing the right thing and to awaken the youth to the fact that free love is but a dream. Hence, the film can be seen as a warning to the new youth (此片主義，以抉發新青年假正義而行作奸犯科之種種惡習，並警醒自由戀愛之迷夢。可作維新青年之當頭棒喝)."¹⁴ Clearly, free love and

¹¹ See Chiping, "Benshi," and Hong Shen, "Zimu" of *Feng da shaoye*, in ZWDJB, pp. 159-166.

¹² XWB 30 Jun. 1926: A1.

¹³ See "Zimu" of *Aiqing yu huangjin*, in ZWDJB, p. 502.

¹⁴ See the advertisement for *Aiqing yu huangjin* in XWB 27 Dec. 1926: A1.

consumerism ("gold"), both by-products of "Westernized" metropolis and urban life-style, were interpreted as the root of crime.

In sum, the "villains" in these *shehui pian* films are fashionably-dressed *chaibai* party young men or playboys, modern girls or good-for-nothing sons from wealthy families, and depraved urban bourgeois men. Those who are susceptible to the sexual and material allure are naïve new-style school students or graduates who blindly embrace new ideas and pursue modern urban lifestyles. Their corruption is caused by "urban entertainments" or urban evils ("beauties" and "money/gold"), or the modern/Westernized city in general. The modern city is pictured in diametric contrast to the countryside or traditional Chinese cities, such as Suzhou. This theme is not unique to the 1920s Mingxing *shehui pian* films. Five so-called *Zuoyi* films also foreground the contrast between the country and the city. These stories all revolve around love triangles, which fall into two patterns: "upright country boy - virtuous country girl - vicious city boy" and "virtuous country girl - reputable city boy - corrupt city girl."

Zuoyi Texts

Yanchao 鹽潮 (Salt Tide, 1933) has three leading characters that perfectly fit into the "upright country boy - virtuous country girl - vicious city boy" formula. A Feng 阿鳳 is a farmer's daughter, as lovely as "an adorable little peony."¹⁵ Her boyfriend Chen Bingsheng 陳炳生 is a "robust young man," growing up in the same village. Hu Xinwu 胡心吾, a good-for-nothing boy from a Shanghai rich family, is captivated by "the purity, smartness and natural beauty (純樸的伶俐的不事修飾的天然的鮮艷)" of A Feng when he meets her during his visit to his uncle living in the village.¹⁶ Xinwu's arrival sows a note of discord between A Feng and Bingshen. A misunderstanding between them arises because of the rumours Xinwu deliberately spreads. In the end, Bingsheng triumphs over Xinwu and retrieves his lost love from A Feng. After Xinwu returns to Shanghai, their lives in the small village are restored to serenity.

Shen Xiling's film *Chuanjia nü* 船家女 (The Boatman's Daughter, 1935) features three characters parallel to those in *Yanchao*.¹⁷ A Ling 阿玲 is a good-looking and kind-hearted girl who lives with her boatman father near the scenic Xi Hu (West Lake) in Hangzhou. Her lover Tie'er 铁儿 is an honest and diligent young man working at a spinning mill. Sun

¹⁵ See the film's synopsis see *MY* 2.3 (1 Jan. 1934): 32.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ For the synopsis see Shen Xiling, "Chuanjia nü gushi 《船家女》故事," *MB* 3.4 (1 Dec. 1935) "A special issue for *Chuanjia nü*."

Yizhou 孙一舟, an artist from a Shanghai wealthy family, feels an immediate attraction to A Ling when he goes on a tour of the West Lake. "Urban evil" is presented in this film in a more radical way. It ends with the heroine's miserable experience after being brought to Shanghai. She works as a model for three Shanghai painters and photographers first and later becomes a prostitute. As Pang Laikwan aptly points out, the city/country antithesis is integrated into the nationalist discourse when the West Lake, A Ling, and Tie'er, symbols of uncontaminated agricultural China, are dichotomized with Shanghai and the Westernized Chinese artists, symbols of foreign decadent forces.¹⁸

A similar triangular relationship is depicted in *Xiao Lingzi* 小玲子 (Little Lingzi, 1936) scripted by Ouyang Yuqian. The title character Xiao Lingzi is a tenant's daughter. The landlord's son Jia Youqing 贾佑清 takes her to Shanghai. Initially she is a maid of the Jia household and soon becomes Jia Youqing's mistress. After being deserted, she has to earn her livelihood as a sing-song girl. Later, her former boyfriend, young peasant A Mao 阿毛, redeems her from the cabaret she works for and takes her back to the village where nothing has been changed.¹⁹ Interestingly enough, the film later labelled as *Zuoyi* won first prize in the annual film competition held by the Nationalist government in 1937. It was praised for its portrayals of "the evils of the modern city (近代都市黑暗)" and "the contrast between the city and the country (都市與鄉村生活之懸殊)" while without focusing on "hatred and struggle (仇視與鬥爭)."²⁰

The remaining two films follow the "virtuous country girl - reputable city boy - corrupt city girl" pattern. *Dao Xibei qu* 到西北去 (Go Northwest, 1934) has three main characters: a young engineer named Gu Ce 顧策 who volunteers to work for an irrigation project in the interior of China, his fiancée Manli 曼麗 ("tender and beautiful"), a city girl whose father runs a real estate firm, and a country girl Xiao Laohu 小老虎 ("little tiger") who cares for the engineer devotedly. When the irrigation project is completed, Manli and her father want to buy a plot of land near the canal to expect a high profit. Coincidentally, the land belongs to Xiao Laohu's family. Gu Ce sides firmly with Xiao Laohu to protect her family's interests, while despising his girlfriend and her father's mercenary act. In the end,

¹⁸ Pang, p 178.

¹⁹ For the synopsis see ZZDY, pp. 310-1.

²⁰ "Pingxuan weiyuan zhi gaojian: Guopian pingxuan shou liuming neirong pouxi jiqi huosheng yuanyin 評選委員之高見：國片評選首六名內容剖解及其獲勝原因," *DS* 6.29 (23 Jul. 1937): 1238.

Xiao Laohu's family achieves final victory. Meanwhile Gu Ce makes his decision to remain at the remote village to fulfil his responsibilities.²¹

In *Tongchou* 同仇 (The Common Enemy, 1934), the triangle relationship develops between the young military man Zhichao 志超, a station agent's daughter Xiaofen 小芬, and the "social butterfly" (*jiaoji hua* 交際花) Manlin 曼琳. Zhichao and Xiaofen meet and soon fall in love when Zhichao is hurt in horse riding and is saved by Xiaofen's father. After marriage, Xiaofen comes together with Zhichao to Qingdao where he works. In the Westernized treaty port city, Zhichao frequents dancing halls and soon succumbs to the carnal charms of "social butterfly" Manlin. When Xiaofen discovers her husband's infidelity, she leaves the city for her hometown which has been ravaged by foreign invasions. In the end, Zhichao leaves his mistress and chooses to fight for the nation's integrity in atonement for his earlier sins. The ending scene of the film implies that Xiaofen forgives her husband.²²

These love-triangle scenarios of *Zuoyi* films have clearly revealed that countryside's peace and innocence always have their incarnation in positive characters and city's evil and depravity find their representation in villain-characters. This way of interpretation of city/countryside relationship does not differ fundamentally from what is presented in the 1920s *shehui pian* films by Bao Tianxiao and Hong Shen. Yao Sufeng's films of the 1930s take up similar themes. Yao Sufeng had written five screenplays for Mingxing. Exposé of urban evils is the single recurring theme throughout his works. Three focus on the depiction of city life and the remainder on the comparison between city and country.

Yao Sufeng's films

Canchun 殘春 (Late Spring, 1933) features a "modern"/fashionable college girl from a well-to-do family who marries a soccer athlete but later is seduced by a *chaibai* party playboy she meets at a night club.²³ *Fudao* 婦道 (Doctrine for Women, 1934) depicts a college student indulging in a dissipated life in the city while his wife is working hard to earn money for him.²⁴ *Yehui* 夜會 (City of Night, 1936) tells a story between a naïve urban girl and a good-for-nothing rich boy who abandons her later for her sister-in-law, a waitress of a luxurious hotel.²⁵

²¹ For the synopsis see *MY* 2.4 (1 Nov. 1934): 35-7.

²² For the synopsis see *MY* 2.3 (1 Jan. 1934): 37-8.

²³ For its synopsis see *MY* 1.4 (1 Aug. 1933): 35-6, reprinted in ZWDJB, pp. 2334-6.

²⁴ For its synopsis see ZWDJB, pp. 2688-9.

²⁵ For its synopsis see "Yehui de gushi 《夜會》的故事," *Ibid.*

The usual settings of these stories are night clubs, dancing halls, and luxurious hotel, all symbolizing the "corrupt" side of the Westernized metropolis. As an author of *Mingxing banyuekan* saw it, *Yehui* exposed "the dark and ugly side of the glittering city (寫著金碧輝煌的都市之陰暗猙獰的一面)."²⁶ The advertisement for *Canchun* describes the film as "a mirror for rich young ladies, a record of modern society's evils, a koan to awaken [those who are indulging in] the life of sensuous pleasures, and confessions of depraved ladies. (千金小姐的風月寶鑒，摩登社會的醜惡史，愛欲生活的當頭棒，失足女性的懺悔錄)"²⁷

The other two films deal with the familiar theme of city/country antithesis. *Luliu qianghua* 路柳牆花 (Willows alongside the Road and Flowers on the Wall, 1934) consists of five interrelated short stories surrounding five country women who flee from their impoverished village to Shanghai and go through different experiences. One suffers unemployment, one becomes a secret mistress of a rich boy, one is forced to be a dancing hostess, one is abducted by a bandit, and the other works as a maid. After going through these "twists and turns," they decide to return to their village, reaching a conclusion that "it is difficult to make a living in Shanghai; we'd better off living as farmers in the countryside. (在上海，謀生是不容易的，還是回到鄉下種田的好)"²⁸

This theme of country/city contrast is also developed in Yao's another film, *Qingchun xian* 青春线 (Youth Line). As mentioned in Chapter Six (187), it is a love triangle story surrounding three home town friends Zhao Jin, Jiang Hong and Shen Lan. While Zhao Jin teaches at a vocational school in their home town, Jiang Hong works in Shanghai as a bank employee. Shen Lan initially teaches at a primary school in their home town and later comes to Shanghai to work at the same bank on Jiang Hong's recommendation. The theme of "city/country antithesis" is played out when Shen chooses the urbanized young man Jiang as husband while giving up her home-town lover Zhao. After marriage, so typically, Jiang falls in love with another woman he meets at entertainment venues and then abandons Shen. After this blow, Shen Lan also steps onto a path of depravity in the materialistic city.²⁹

There seems to be nothing extraordinary in Yao Sufeng's film works. He inherited much legacy from his *Yuanhu* predecessors and shared some common features with his *Zuoyi*

²⁶ Chungeng 春耕, "Yehui, da dushi de heiying 夜會，大都市的黑影," *MB* 7.2 (1 Nov. 1936).

²⁷ XWB 1 Oct. 1933: "benbu fukkan" 4.

²⁸ See its synopsis in ZWDJB, p. 2694.

²⁹ For its screenplay see *MY* 2.4 (1 Nov. 1934): 21-7 and 2.5 (1 Dec. 1934): 23-30.

contemporaries. In this regard, there was more a continuum than a distinction between the 1920s and 1930s films, between the so-called *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD films. Idle playboys, empty-minded fashionable city modern girls, morally corrupt urban bourgeois classes, innocent country girls, and hard-working and frugal elders of small towns, among others, are stereotypical images pervasive in these films. Politically charged labels have veiled this dimension for a long time. Then why was this way of depiction of city and country so popular? Answers can be found in the historical and intellectual background as well as a large repository of contemporary Chinese literary work. By contextualizing the Mingxing films analyzed above, in the next section, I attempt to illustrate that melodramatic representations of city/countryside conflicts in Mingxing films belonged to the intellectual discourse of the day. Mingxing's screenwriters translated and popularized this theme on the screen.

Why dichotomizing city and country?

The city/country antithesis is neither a novel nor a distinctively Chinese subject of fictional artefacts. It is generally held that the concept derives from the industrial revolution and the urbanization in the West. As F. S. Schwarzbach puts it, by the 1820s, the experience of the nineteenth century city as "a threatening and undomesticated otherness" had become formalized into a literary device.³⁰ In his study of the relationship between melodrama and modernity, Ben Singer examines the wave of urbanization at the turn of the twentieth-century in the West (particularly US), during which "the city sets up a deep contrast with small town and rural life with reference to the sensory foundations of psychic life."³¹ He further points out the interconnection between the social backdrop as well as psychic foundations and the blooming of sensational melodrama on the US stage and screen. In a word, as Raymond Williams concisely has it, "Powerful hostile associations (between city and country) have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation."³² This sense of hostility had become a motif, though taking various forms, in Western literature and film over a long time.

³⁰ Schwarzbach, *Dickens and the city*, p. 220, quoted in Yingjin Zhang, *The city in modern Chinese literature and film*, p. 271.

³¹ Singer, *Melodrama and modernity*. The quotation is from Georg Simmel's 1903 essay "The metropolis and mental life" (reprinted in *The sociology of Georg Simmel*, Ill.: Free Press, 1950, p. 410), quoted by Singer on the page 61.

³² Williams, *The country and the city*, p. 1.

In the Chinese context, as F. W. Mote observes, a cultural continuum of country and city is discernible in traditional China.³³ It was not until the mid-nineteenth century when a number of treaty port cities emerged following the model of Western metropolis that the concept of city/country antithesis was gradually taking shape. Treaty ports acted as a favourable breeding-ground for the spread of new/Western ideas, technologies as well as life styles. At the same time, the city aligned with Western "imperialism" and "colonialism" acquired a number of predominantly negative qualities, as sentiments of nationalism prevailed in modern China. In a rich repository of literature and film of the Republican period, as Zhang Yingjin summarizes, the city is repeatedly represented "as a source of contamination and depravation, as a place of sexual promiscuity and moral corruption, as a dangerous trap for the young and innocent."³⁴

For example, in Shen Congwen's novella *Xiaoxiao* 蕭蕭 (1929), "girl students" (*nü xuesheng* 女學生) studying in the city is a most favoured topic of country folk because they are completely astonished by girl students' "peculiarity." Xiaoxiao's granddad has a villager's notions of the life of girl students in cities as such:³⁵

They wore the same clothes winter and summer alike, ate no matter whether they were hungry or not, kept late hours and wasted their time on singing, playing ball or reading foreign books. All were so extravagant, the money they spent in one year could buy sixteen buffaloes. In town, if they wanted to go anywhere, instead of having to walk they climbed into a box-like contraption which took them there. There were many such contraptions of different shapes and sizes in town, all of them run by machine. In school, these girls did their lessons with boys, and if they made friends with one they could sleep with him - no need for a go-between or betrothal gifts. They called this "freedom". [...] In a word, they were altogether peculiar, unlike country folk. And some of their behavior was outrageous.

In Mao Dun's novel *Ziye* 子夜 (Midnight, 1933), an old village man's first encounter with the "oriental metropolis" (東方大都市) Shanghai in a running 1930-model Citroën is depicted as follows:³⁶

The lights changed to green, and the car moved forward in a motley sea of traffic and humanity. On and on they went, while the din of the traffic, the stench of petro-fumes, the women's perfume and the glare of neon signs pressed down like a nightmare on his frail spirit until his eyes blurred, his ears sang and his head swam; until his over-wrought nerves ached as if they would snap and his pounding heart could beat so faster.

Clearly, these fictional texts suggest that Westernized cities as well as its by-products (such as girl students) had a monstrous and alienated appearance in public mind at the time. The

³³ Mote, "The city in traditional Chinese civilization," pp. 42-9, quoted in Zhang, *The city in modern Chinese literature and film*, p. 4.

³⁴ Zhang, *The city in modern Chinese literature and film*, p. 11.

³⁵ Shen Congwen, "Xiaoxiao," pp. 106-7.

³⁶ Mao Dun, *Ziye* (Midnight), pp. 17-8.

negative side of this popular portrait is confirmed by contemporary observations. For example, in 1934, a Shanghai magazine named *Xin Zhonghua* 新中華 (New China) called for essays under the topic "Shanghai's future" (上海的將來).³⁷ A majority of the essays selected into a collection published later expressed the opinion that Shanghai was a Westernized evil world and the breeding ground for imperialism. Some even compared the city to "a prodigal son" and "a licentious woman" of China (中國的浪子, 中國的蕩婦) and considered it a site of "darkness, ugliness, foulness, misery, intensity, disappointment, tears, blood, and corpses (黑暗、醜惡、污濁、悲慘、緊張、失望、眼淚、鮮血、屍體)." ³⁸

Therefore, it has become clear that what was projected on the silver screen generally agrees with this portrait in both fictional and real terms. Based on a close reading of six Chinese films of the 1930s that are commonly considered examples of *Zuoyi* cinema, Paul Pickowicz finds a pervasive "conflict between city and countryside" and "a simple dichotomy of Chinese purity and Western moral degradation."³⁹ He maintains that while "in the realm of elite culture, including modern fiction, liberal and antitraditional currents still ran deep," in the world of popular and commercial culture "antiliberalism and neotraditionism fell on fertile soil." He identifies a 1931 film entitled *Taohua qixue ji* 桃花泣血記 (A Tale of Peach Blossom and Tears of Blood) as "a prototypical work" and points out that "almost all the films of the 1930s that address the issue of spiritual pollution, including those made by the left and the right, are only variations of the basic but spectacular approach adopted by Bu Wancang in his early work."

These insightful observations notwithstanding, his interpretation is inadequate in two respects. On the one hand, the previous chapter has demonstrated that May Fourth currents are addressed in a variety of Mingxing films throughout the 1920s and 1930s. On the other, the above investigation in this chapter has illustrated that the so-called "antiliberal" theme of "city-versus-countryside/West-versus-China" is not confined to the cinema of the 1930s. *Taohua qixue ji* was not a first. The seemingly conflicting trends, which Pickowicz terms antitraditionism and neotraditionism, were in fact interwoven in the commercial cinematic culture throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The recurring scenario to dichotomize city and countryside is neither unique to cinema, nor to literature, neither special to the so-called *Yuanhu* filmmaking, nor to *Zuoyi* and GMD. I tend to believe it betrays the tension

³⁷ See Xiong Yuezhi, "Minguo shiqi guanyu Shanghai chengshi xingxiang de yilun," pp. 150-1.

³⁸ *Shanghai de jianglai*, quoted in *ibid*, p. 153.

³⁹ Pickowicz, "The Theme of Spiritual Pollution in Chinese Films of the 1930s," pp. 38-75.

between "old" and "new," "Chineseness" and "Westness," and "nationalism" and "cosmopolitanism," widely felt by the contemporaries when facing social changes and national humiliation in the process of China's modern transformation. In turn, the filmmakers spread the idea of city/country conflicts through the popular medium. Along with this theme, the tension between love and revolution is another persistent undercurrent beneath the variety of cinematic texts. The following section will explore how and why this tension was filmed on the screen.

7.2 Juxtaposing Love and Revolution

Filming "Revolution plus Love"

A combination of love and revolution appears to be an appealing point for a film, judging from the fact that this element became film advertisements' highlights. For example, it was declared that *Tieban honglei lu* 鐵板紅淚錄 (Iron Plate and Red Tears, 1933) tells "an exciting story about 'revolutionary romance' (革命的羅曼絲)."⁴⁰ *Shidai de ernü* 時代的兒女 (Children of Our Time, 1933), according to its advertisement, features three types of character who, respectively, adhere to the principles of "revolution without giving up romance (革命不忘戀愛)," "preoccupation with romance only (人生只有戀愛)," and "revolution without romance (只有革命, 沒有戀愛)"⁴¹ Since the "revolution plus love" mode is conventionally supposed to be unique to *Zuoyi* culture in the 1930s,⁴² my analysis below will centre on so-called *Zuoyi* films but not limited to this category. My intent is to compare *Zuoyi* and non-*Zuoyi* texts and to illustrate that this formula reflects the time spirit, rather than the distinctive *Zuoyi* ideology. As most examples to be analyzed below do not make clear which "historical" revolution (the 1911 Revolution, Nationalist Revolution/*beifa*, Communist Revolution, or else) the particular film is set, I use the term "revolution" conceptually, rather than historically.

Based on a thorough reading of all available scripts, I find that five so-called *Zuoyi* films feature "revolution plus love" as main plot or as one tread of multiple plot lines. Three patterns can be sorted out, which I term *remedy* mode, *conflict* mode and *transformation* mode. The first is that "revolution" serves as the *remedy* for heroes/heroines' disillusionment with romance or heart-breaks in romantic relationships. The second is a

⁴⁰ XWB 12 Nov. 1933: "benbu fukan" 3.

⁴¹ See its ad in *MY* 1.2 (1 Jun. 1933).

⁴² Cf. Liu, "Shanghai variations on 'revolution plus love'," p. 51.

conflict mode, focusing on the collision between the revolutionary cause and the romantic drive and concluding with the triumph of revolution over romance. The third pattern is characterized by the protagonist's *transformation* from a non-revolutionary to a devotee or proponent of revolution. Several non-*Zuoyi* films also fit into these modes. Table 7.2 is a synthesis of these comparisons. In what follows I will elaborate on how revolution and romance interact within these three patterns in different films.

The *remedy* mode is demonstrated in Shen Xiling's film *Nüxing de nahan* 女性的吶喊 (Cry of Women, 1933), which features three female characters who are classmates of a rural high school.⁴³ Shaoying 少英 goes to Wuhan after graduation and becomes a career revolutionary. Both Aina 愛娜 and Ye Lian 葉蓮 flee their war-ravaged home village to Shanghai. While Aina strives to adapt herself to the role of "Shanghai-style modern girl" whose top priority is to seduce men, Ye Lian makes every effort to live independently, seeking true love and struggling against the "corrupt society." However, life returns Ye Lian a series of misfortunes. She is cheated by her employer, deserted by her boyfriend, and coerced into marrying a playboy as concubine. In the end, she is "awakened." She decides to follow in Shaoying's footsteps, committing herself to a greater cause, namely, revolution. Noticeably, the screenwriter arranged "revolution" as the cure for the heroine's disillusionment with love (as well as other blows).

This pattern can find another two examples falling outside the *Zuoyi* category. One is a 1933 film entitled *Xiandai yi nüxing* 現代一女性 (A modern woman), scripted by Ai Xia 艾霞, an actress of Mingxing.⁴⁴ The film's heroine Taotao 萄萄 is a typical "Shanghai-style modern girl," beautiful and intelligent. She is a career woman working at a real estate agency. Meanwhile, as the film's synopsis put it, she is unable to immune to "the epidemic of the age" (時代的流行病) which means "an obsession with seeking stimulus from romance to fill an empty soul."⁴⁵ She maintains a relationship with a married man - a poor journalist, and meanwhile is chased by her boss. In need of money to sustain an urban hedonistic life with her lover, she steals her boss's check and is later put into jail. In the jail, she encounters her old friend Anlin 安琳, a revolutionary, who tries to coax Taotao out of her dissipated life style. Taotao eventually realizes "the meaninglessness of romance" (愛

⁴³ For the film's synopsis see ZWDJB, pp. 2400-2. All the quotations in this paragraph are from this source.

⁴⁴ Ai Xia committed suicide in early 1934. Based on this event, Lianhua produced a film named *Xin Nüxing* 新女性 (New Women, Scr. Sun Shiyi, Dir. Cai Chusheng), starring the celebrated actress Ruan Lingyu 阮玲玉, who also committed suicide shortly after the film's release. For studies of Ai Xia and the film, see Zhang, *The city in modern Chinese literature and film*, pp. 206-7, Pang, pp. 121-9.

⁴⁵ For the film's synopsis see *MY* 1.2 (1 Jun. 1933).

的空虛). After being set free, she is determined to transform herself into a revolutionary, stepping onto "a path to a brighter future" (光明的路).

The two stories share a remarkable resemblance in terms of the heroines' choice of "revolution" as the cure for the pains brought about by romantic love and depraved city life. In fact, the so-called *Yuanhu* film *Jade* (*Yuli hun*) released a decade earlier foreshadows this way in which revolution and romance is associated. As discussed in Chapter Five (161-2), when the hero Mengxia is heart-broken in his desperate love with the widow and his woeful marriage with the girl student, the remedy he chooses is to fight against the enemy for the country. "Revolution," or more precisely, a sublime devotion to love for the nation, is designed to be the medicine for the hero's emotional suffering. In this sense, Mengxiang is the archetype of the heroes/heroines of later "revolution plus romance" stories.

The second pattern, the *conflict* mode, has two examples in the *Zuoyi* category, *Tongchou* (1934) and *Shidai de ernü* (1933). As mentioned previously, *Tongchou* ends with a scene in which military officer Zhichao leaves his mistress, who wishes him to stay with her, and marches for the front.⁴⁶ *Shidai de ernü* ends with the hero Shiming's break-up with his fiancée Xiulin, who wishes him to live a decent bourgeois life as an engineer. But Shiming chooses to be a worker and to engage in revolutionary work.⁴⁷ It is obvious that both the heroes in these films forsake their lovers for the sake of the nation and revolution.

This pattern is also revealed in non-*Zuoyi* films. For instance, Zheng Zhengqiu's film *Yuren yongbie* 玉人永別 (A Farewell to the Beauty, 1931) tells a story surrounding a love triangle between a sing-song girl and two suitors. It ends with one suitor's withdrawal from the bitter romantic relationship by leaving Shanghai for the revolutionary bastion Guangzhou to pursue his career as a revolutionary. "Revolution" prevails against romantic love in this case.⁴⁸ Bao Tianxiao's 1926 film *Hao nan'er* 好男兒 (A Good Guy) features a pair of lovers: party member Zhongmou 仲謀 engaging in revolutionary work and his lover Huizhu 慧珠, the daughter of a government official responsible for suppressing political revolts.⁴⁹ The film's dramatic clash reaches its peak when Zhongmou assassinates the official without knowing that he is Huizhu's father. When Huizhu learns the truth, she

⁴⁶ See *MY* 2.3 (1 Jan. 1934): 37-8.

⁴⁷ *MY* 2.3: 29. For the script of the film see *MY* 2.2 (1 Dec. 1933): 31-8; 2.3: 24-30.

⁴⁸ For the synopsis see ZWDJB, pp. 2055-7.

⁴⁹ The film had its premiere on 19 May 1926 at the *Zhongyang* Theatre, and its ad labeled it as "Aiguo pian," see XWB 18 May 1926: A1. For its synopsis and "intertitles" see ZWDJB, pp. 546-57.

forgives her boyfriend because his action is driven by patriotism "for the sake of the nation and the Party (為國為黨)." She also hates the autocratic regime her father used to serve. Slightly differing from the above-discussed films which end with the victory of "revolution" over "romance," the film ends with the reconciliation of revolution and romance.

The third pattern, the *transformation* mode, is assumed by *Huashan yanshi* 華山豔史 (Romance on the Hua Mountain, 1934) and *Shengsi tongxin* 生死同心 (Unchanged Heart in Life and Death, 1936), both so-called *Zuoyi* films. *Huashan yanshi* follows four college graduates. Huang Zhensheng 黃振聲 enters the Huangpu (Whampoa) Military Academy after graduation from college, aspiring to be a revolutionary. The rest three form a love triangle. Jiachen 家辰 (a student of law) manages to defeat his rival Beifeng 北峰 (a poet) because he is more capable of pleasing the girl student Yu Lan 余蘭 with gifts and invitations for entertainment. While Jiachen and Yu Lan get married and settle down in Shanghai, Beifeng responds to Zhensheng's call and joins the army. Two years later, the couple grows weary of their materially comfortable but spiritually empty life in the city. When they learn that Zhensheng is killed in a battle and Beifeng also sacrifices his life later, they are shocked and make their decision to fight for the nation.⁵⁰

Shengsi tongxin also ends with this kind of transformation: a high school teacher and his fiancée decide to devote themselves to the revolutionary cause under the influence of a revolutionary.⁵¹ Indeed, this *transformation* pattern had emerged in the genre of patriotic and military film flourishing in the wake of the 1931 and 1932 Japanese invasions. As discussed in the previous chapter (193-4), some characters in these films, such as "a brave woman party member" comparable to a prickly rose rather than a delicate pear blossom (*Tiexue qingnian*), or "a dancing hostess who repents for her past and devotes herself instead to saving the nation" (*Guohun de fuhuo*), indeed heralded this *transformation*.

Summing up, the three patterns, the *remedy* mode, *conflict* mode and *transformation* mode, share one feature in common, that is, an underlying message that "romance" could be sacrificed for the sake of "revolution." *Zuoyi* or not, this belief is shared by all the films discussed and beyond. The following section will briefly inquire into the literary scene of the day and contemporary intellectual discourse in order to answer why "revolution plus love" proliferated?

⁵⁰ For its synopsis see ZZDY, p. 250-1.

⁵¹ For its synopsis and detailed information about its production see MB 7.4 (1 Dec. 1936), "Special issue for *Shengsi tongxin*." For an analysis of the film, see Pang, p. 82-5.

Why "Revolution plus Love"?

"Revolution and romance," to quote David Der-wei Wang, "constitute major phenomena in the literary etiology of the First Chinese Communist Revolution of 1927."⁵² It is generally held that the wave is part of the emerging "revolutionary literature" which was given rise to in part due to the 1927 Nationalists' coup against the Communists.⁵³ Jiang Guangci 蔣光慈 (1901 - 1931), a member of the *Zuolian*, was a major contributor to the phenomenon. Following his successful "revolution plus romance" novel *Yeji* 野祭 (A Sacrifice in the wild, 1927), a lot of *Zuolian* writers created different variations on the theme, such as Ding Ling's *Weihu* 韋護 (Weihu) and Yang Hansheng's *Liangge nüxing* 兩個女性 (Two women).

However, this phenomenon was not confined to the *Zuoyi* literary scene. For example, a Nationalist cultural critic published a book under the title "Geming yu lian'ai 革命與戀愛" (Revolution and romance), in which the author's opinion on this issue sounded "uncannily similar to that of Communist critics."⁵⁴ A few writers of the New Sensationism School (*Xin ganjue pai*) also contributed an abundance of texts addressing this issue.⁵⁵ It is more reasonable to consider the topic a reflection of the times of national crisis rather than a unique invention of *Zuoyi* writers. Hence it is not astounding that the theme appears in quite a number of Mingxing films.

Basically, literary and cinematic creations on the theme share a good deal in common. A typical piece of "revolution plus romance" fictional work features a more or less impossible romantic situation that is resolved or sublimated by revolutionary activism. Mao Dun summarized three sub-genres of the formula in a 1935 essay: a *conflict* mode that focuses on the clash between revolution and romance and concludes with a call to relinquish love for the sake of revolution, a *reciprocation* mode in which revolution serves to bring forth the true romantic feelings between the revolutionaries, and a *nurturing* mode which sees love emanating from the comradeship and compassion of revolutionaries.⁵⁶ These patterns bear much resemblance to those of Mingxing films discussed above.

⁵² Wang, *The monster that is history*, p. 79.

⁵³ For a comprehensive research on the phenomenon see Liu, *Revolution plus love*. Also see Ibid. Chapter 3 "An undesired revolution," pp. 77-116.

⁵⁴ Wang, op. cit., p. 90.

⁵⁵ Liu, "Shanghai variations on 'revolution plus love'." Also see her monograph (chapter 4).

⁵⁶ Mao Dun, "Geming yu lian'ai de gongshi" 革命與戀愛的公式, *Mao Dun quanji* 20: 337-353. I quoted this from Wang, op. cit., p. 89.

With regard to why this formula surfaced at this time, both Der-wei Wang and Liu Jianmei have suggested that the failure of the 1927 Communist Revolution provided the main thrust. Liu Jianmei argues that "the 'revolution plus love' formula ingeniously juxtaposed the vestiges of the eros-and-love craze inherited from the May Fourth generation and the new zeal of revolution, which was still fuzzy in the minds of enlightened youth. ... [This mode] catered to individual interests and social interests at the same time."⁵⁷ By and large, this judgement is true. But it is worth noting that "revolution" had been central to intellectual discourse since the late Qing and the tension between revolution, supposedly for the sake of the nation, and romance, only fulfilling one's personal desire, had coexisted for a long time. To quote Jin Guantao, "The most spectacular phenomenon in the twentieth-century Chinese intellectual sphere has been the emergence and proliferation of discourses of revolution. Since the publication of Zou Rong 鄒容's *Geming jun* 革命軍 (The Revolutionary Army) in 1903, the circulation of the term 'geming' (revolution) has been like the spread of flames. Virtually no single realm of social life can defend against the penetration of 'revolution.'"⁵⁸

According to Jin's genealogical study, the term *geming* 革命 as the translation for "revolution" came into common usage in the late nineteenth century. From 1921 on, the term's usage frequency in intellectual journals increased rapidly, reaching the peak in 1926 (prior to 1930, the end of the time frame of his study).⁵⁹ Interestingly, this trajectory is generally congruent with what we have learned from Mingxing's films. Revolution as an element of plot first appeared in *Jade* (1924), and the genre *geming pian* 革命片 (revolutionary film) emerged in the mid-1920s when the Northern Expedition (*beifa*) was launched (see Chapter 6, 193). Hence I tend to hold that the failed Communist Revolution in 1927 is not the only factor that brought about "revolution plus love" film and fiction. Rather, this theme echoed a tension beneath the contemporary Chinese society which can be dated back to an earlier time.

To conclude, the proliferation of films featuring the city/countryside contrast and revolution plus love scenario, across the boundaries between the so-called *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD, were rooted in intellectual discourse and commercial practice. On the one hand, the negative image of "Westernized" city and positive image of revolution can be seen as a

⁵⁷ Liu, "Engaging with revolution and love," p. 72. For similar argument see Wang, op. cit., p. 79.

⁵⁸ Jin Guantao, "Geming guannian zai zhongguo de qiyuan he yanbian 革命觀念在中國的起源和演變," in Jin Guantao. *Guannian shi yanjiu*, p. 357.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 558-560. Also cf. Chen Jianhua, "*Geming*" de xiandai xing: *Zhongguo geming huayu kaolun*.

melodramatic manifestation of nationalistic discourse. Treaty port cities were closely associated with "imperialism" and "colonialism," and revolution had long been envisioned as a means to strengthen the weak and humiliated nation. This historical background is the reality basis for these cinematic representations. On the other, as it has been demonstrated in Chapter Five that moral conflicts and romance were among key elements to grip the audience.⁶⁰ Hence it is not surprising at all that the motifs centring on the conflicts between city and countryside, romance and revolution recurred. In other words, if these themes were not popular with the audience, they would not have recurred on the screen, in view of the principle of commercialism essential to the business. In short, motifs of city/countryside and romance/revolution were squarely at the junction of popular interests and intellectual discourse, of commercialism and didacticism.

In 1934, the New Sensationism writer Mu Shiyong published a novella named *Pierrot* (its original title in French), which also blends the elements of city versus countryside, love plus revolution.⁶¹ The story can be an interesting epilogue to this chapter. Its protagonist named Pan Heling 潘鶴齡 is a writer living in Shanghai. His exotic love, a Japanese girl, has returned to Japan recently. Thus he spends all day long strolling around in the city and talking with his friends in their literary salon on topics ranging from Shakespeare to Greta Garbo, from American culture to October Revolution. As he grows weary of this bourgeois lifestyle, his inner voice conjures up love as an antidote to his spiritual ruins. But after he goes to Tokyo and discovers his lover's affair with a Filipino, Pan is disillusioned with love and romance. He suddenly thinks of his old family home and the pure countryside. He buries his exotic fantasy and returns to his hometown. But his utopian dream is quickly shattered too. Discovering that his parents regard him as little more than a source of money, he is disillusioned with nature, countryside, and family either. Now revolution becomes his last spiritual sanctuary. He soon plunges himself into revolutionary movements and the masses. Till this point, the story principally fits the usual plot of a Mingxing film. But the New Sensationist novella diverges greatly from Mingxing's melodramatic tales in the way the story ends. Pan is arrested for his engagement in revolutionary actions. Half a year later, as he comes out of jail crippled, his old "comrades" are surprised by his reappearance and doubt him as a traitor. When he turns to "the masses" for consolation, no one remembers

⁶⁰ See, for example, the *Shibao* author's review on *Torrent*: Ge Chengxun 葛承勛, "Pianpian de yinxiang: wo de zhijue de fanying 片片的印象: 我的直覺的反映," *Shibao* 7 Mar. 1933: 2.

⁶¹ Mu Shiyong, "Pierrot," in a collection of his novellas, *Baijin de nüti suxiang* 白金的女體塑像. For a close reading of the novella see Liu, "Shanghai variations on 'revolution plus love'," pp. 69-75.

him. At the end of the story, Pan has lost all his beliefs and can only smile like an idiot, *pierrot*.

Literary scholars have said a lot about the novella's modernist overtones through the development of the theme on alienation, hollowness, and materialism of modern urban society.⁶² What interests me here, however, is the fascinating ways the urban modernist novella and Mingxing's commercial films are interwoven and at the same time depart from each other.

This novella resonates with Mingxing's melodramas in terms of the centrality of the tensions between city and countryside, between love and revolution. This again illustrates the prevalence of these modern tensions at the time, in both fictional and, perhaps, real worlds. However, the ways in which these tensions are addressed differ conspicuously between *Pierrot* and Mingxing films discussed in this chapter. While Mingxing films almost invariably end with the triumph of their heroes/heroines over villains – material symbols of countryside/revolution over those of city/romance, Mu Shiyong ended his novella with ambiguity and disillusionment. Neither "city" nor "countryside," neither "revolution" nor "romance" claims final victory; the hero Pan Heling lost all.

I am reminded of Zhang Shichuan's philosophy which has been quoted in Chapter Five:⁶³

A film that fails to make madams and ladies cry can hardly please them, but a film with extremely poignant plots, ending with separation, death, and dissolved family, will lose me my audiences either. Hence we must tread a fine line and make sure to give them both a good weep and a good laugh. Thus, as soon as our new film turns out, they will head for the cinema immediately.

Zheng Zhengqiu expressed a similar idea that the widespread pattern satisfying ordinary movie-goers was "heroes extremely good and villains extremely evil, heroes getting rewarded and villains getting punished (善者極善，惡者極惡，善有善報，惡有惡報)."⁶⁴ Apparently, for a movie fan of Zhang Shichuan or Zheng Zhengqiu, the ending of *Pierrot* perhaps sounded much too poignant and the message the novella addresses much too ambiguous. Surely, from the perspective of literary criticism, ambiguity leaves room for interpretation and remains to be a middle ground for multiple meanings to reside in. Viewing through this lens, T. A. Hsia maintains that "it was a pity that for modern Chinese writers only a very narrow middle ground seemed to be left between subservience to

⁶² For example, *ibid*; Hu Xidong, "Guji zhi hun: Mu Shiyong xiaoshuo zhong dui xiandai ren shengcun kunjing de jieshi," *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao* 23.10 (2003).

⁶³ He Xiujun, pp. 118-119.

⁶⁴ Zheng Zhengqiu, "Wo suo xiwang yu guanzhong zhe 我所希望於觀眾者," ZWD, p. 599.

political power and an assertion of the 'romantic' self, with all its lawlessness and hollowness."⁶⁵

From a sociological point of view, however, melodrama is a more powerful device to transmit clearer messages to recipients. Let us take *Pierrot* and above-discussed Bao Tianxiao's *Ta de tongku* (see p. 199) and Shen Xiling's *Nüxing de nahan* (209) as examples for a comparison. By reading the line (intertitle) "You want to go to Shanghai again? OK! I would divorce you again once we were back to Shanghai (哼! 你倒又想到上海去了; 好! 到了上海, 我就再同你離一回婚)" in *Ta de tongku*,⁶⁶ the viewer could certainly receive the clear message that the protagonist does not want to go back to the city which has brought to her much pain. In *Nüxing de nahan*, as its heroine Shaoying chooses to leave Shanghai for Wuhan to pursue a revolutionary career, this ending strongly implies that revolution can be a remedy for all the pain and torture Shaoying has suffered in Shanghai. In contrast, after reading *Pierrot*, the reader might have been totally confused whether city or countryside, revolution or romance can be a good choice. Of course, without substantial data, we cannot climb back to historical viewer/reader's head to know how she/he thought about a film/novel and in which ways she/he was (or not) affected. As stated in the introduction, this study does not deal with the dimension of audience reception. From the analyses of the wide range of materials regarding Mingxing's products, there should be little doubt that through a melodramatic way of presentation, Mingxing films brought a lot of ideas and values, mostly mainstream and dominant, to an audience.

Media scholar Elihu Katz has asked, following his discussions on media effects, "What is the text? Where do values inhere? Who is the viewer addressed by the text? Who is the viewer in fact? What role is he or she playing? What is the immediate viewing context? What is the nature of the society within which the viewer is decoding the message?"⁶⁷ The last three chapters of this study has explored his first two questions of what is the text and where do values inhere. My conclusion is that Mingxing's filmmakers incorporated a wide variety of dominant values in their texts. As for the remainder of Katz's questions, concerning the viewer, these remain to be the questions for further studies.

⁶⁵ Hsia, *The gate of darkness*, p. 61.

⁶⁶ Zhengqiu, "Zimu," ZWDJB, p. 635.

⁶⁷ Katz, "On conceptualizing media effects," p. 367.

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Conclusion

Most people who study film still don't recognize the centrality of money.

David Bordwell, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

With regard to popular education, we have an easy approach, namely, electric *Shadowplay* (film). (關於通俗教育，尚有一輕而易舉之法，則電光影戲是也。)

Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, 1916

In an overview of Mingxing's recent developments, published in the *Mingxing banyuekan* of December 1934, the author Lu Xiaoluo 陸小洛, Mingxing's publicist, explained the company's tenet of film production:¹

[...] we have always put much weight on film's educational mission, the novelty of theme and material, and of course box-office records. Concerns for the last aspect have often been satirized as being "mercenary." However, we do not feel ashamed. Rather we consider it quite normal because Mingxing is fundamentally a commercial organization ...

總處處顧到電影教育的使命，劇本題材的新鮮，自然也盡可能的顧到賣座的記錄。就是被譏為“生意經”的一點。縱然有人對這點加以譏諷，但我們非但不認為可恥，而且是認為非常正當的，因為明星究竟是一種商業的組織...

This statement, in a sense, is the core of the entire story presented in this study. An ingenious balance between a mercenary motive and educational mission, i.e. between commercialism and didacticism as well as between melodrama and isms, is central to the mechanisms of cultural production at Mingxing. Film scholar David Bordwell is correct to call attention to the centrality of money in the first aphorism I quote. But the second aphorism, from a speech of 1916 addressed by Cai Yuanpei, the first Minister of Education of the new Republic,² reminds us of a dimension that is equally significant to an understanding of early Chinese cinema, namely, the educational mission assigned to the medium.

Business leaders of Mingxing were clearly sensitive to the necessary balance between profit-making and didacticism. Based on this sensitivity, they chose "correct" persons to

¹ Lu Xiaoluo 陸小洛, "Mingxing gongsi jinkuang lueshu 明星公司近況略述," *MY* 2.5 (1 Dec. 1934): 38.

² Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, "Zai Beijing tongshu jiaoyu yanjiu hui yanshuo ci 在北京通俗教育研究會演說詞 (1916.12.27)," *Dongfang zazhi* 14.4 (Apr. 1917), reprinted in Gao Pingshu, *Cai Yuanpei jiaoyu wenxuan*, p. 21.

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create "correct" stories with "correct" ideas. By this means, prevalent ideas found melodramatic utterance on the screen and reached the public, through the intermediary of various filmmakers. This story has been presented in this study in three sectors, the institutional context, producers, and products. Below I provide a summary of these aspects. Some conclusions can be drawn and a few points should be raised for further inquiry. These points link up with a broader history of Chinese cinema and popular culture during the Republican era.

The Studio: Progressing with Ceaseless Troubles

In the course of its seventeen-year existence, Mingxing developed from a small business that operated with very limited capital, rented equipment and studio to a virtually vertically-integrated film corporation, owning a large business complex (14,666.7 m²), two studios, 500 staff, and an extended distribution and exhibition network all over China and overseas Chinese communities.³ It turned out a total of 193 feature-length films, as well as numerous short films including newsreels, cartoons, comic shorts, and scenic films. These are a rich legacy to Chinese cinema culture.

As the "eldest brother" in the pre-war Shanghai film world, Mingxing can be seen as an epitome of early Chinese film industry in many respects. Some institutional features of Mingxing which have been revealed in this study were indeed common to the industry. One prominent feature is the very weak economic basis. As quoted in Chapter One, Zhou Jianyun complained that Chinese capitalists, who generally took a dismissive attitude towards the entertainment industry, were unwilling to invest in the doubtful venture of filmmaking.⁴ Between 1922 and 1928, running newspaper advertisements to call for investment through *zhaogu* 招股 (the sale of membership interests) was the only means of raising capital Mingxing's managers resorted to. Only in the 1930s when Mingxing grew to be a medium-scale enterprise and fostered a good relationship with the government, bank loans became a source of capital. Nevertheless, as shown above, financial problems remained a constant threat to Mingxing throughout seventeen years. Other Shanghai major studios, such as Lianhua and Tianyi, were confronted with similar difficulties to a varying degree.⁵

³ For a list of Mingxing's equipment, all its assets and the number of its staff in 1937, see SMA, Q55-2-1371.

⁴ Zhou Jianyun, "Zhongguo yingpian zhi qiantu," first published in *Dianying yuebao*, 1928. ZWD, p. 725.

⁵ For financial situations of other film studios cf. *Shanghai Shangye Chuxu Yinhang youguan yingpianye diaocha ziliao* 上海商業儲蓄銀行有關影片業調查資料, SMA, Q275-1-1949.

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Besides, this study has looked at the company's economic conduct in the three sectors: production, distribution and exhibition. Mingxing registered as a limited liability company and followed the operational formalities of this type of modern business organization. It was managed nominally by an elected board of directors (*Dongshi hui* 董事會), shareholders' meetings were held on a regular basis, and operating reports were presented to shareholders annually.⁶ Further, substantial efforts were made in the direction of vertical integration, the classical operational pattern of American movie industry. Both the joint distribution agency *Liuhe* 六合 (formed in 1926) and *Huawei* 華威 (in 1929) served as Mingxing's distributors, virtually Mingxing's own distribution division (see Chapter 1, 39-40). In terms of exhibition, Mingxing was in practical control of the *Zhongyang* 中央 theatrical chain founded in 1926. Many movie theatres in provincial cities were financed by Mingxing. In a word, we learn from the "economic history" of Mingxing that the company, as well as the early Chinese film industry in general, had gone through considerable progress over less than two decades, though constantly riddled with economic threats.

However, this investigation of Mingxing's industrial history is far from adequate. Two paramount problems have constantly vexed me in the process of conducting this research. First, historical data are scarce and unsystematic. As mentioned in the introduction, only one-tenth of the films Mingxing produced have survived and only a paucity of the company's business records is extant in the archives. This entails an inherent weakness of this historical study. Second, much groundwork has yet to be laid in this field of research. We lack systematic reference work and in-depth research on film distribution and exhibition, individual film studios, as well as many other fundamental aspects of the industry in the Republican era. My study has unearthed some historical data, such as Mingxing's business records and a large number of theatre advertisements, which I believe to be important to the understanding of early Chinese cinema. Furthermore, I want to point out that a historical excavation of knowledge is urgently required in this field which has long been dominated by analyses of "classic" films and inquiries in theoretical questions.

The Staff: Engaging in a Transboundary Mediasphere

⁶ See *Mingxing gufen youxian gongsi zhangcheng* 明星股份有限公司章程, SMA, Y9-1-457. Some of its annual reports presented to shareholders were kept in Shanghai Municipal Archives, see SMA, Y9-1-459 (the Fifth Annual Report, 1927.3.1-1928.8.31); Y9-1-460 (seventh, 1929.9.1-1930.8.31); Y9-1-461 (eighth, 1930.9.1-1931.8.31).

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The second layer of my inquiry has concerned the question of who made films and why. To answer the question involves a revisionist approach to look at the intellectual history of Republican China. My study challenges the master narratives by pointing to more complexities of cultural production that cut across the conventional categories of *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD filmmaking. As I state in the introduction, I use these terms *only in the* sense in which they have been used in conventional histories. I discard these terms in my own narrative based on the realization that a term has always been *more than* a lexical item. In historical writing, terms are always accompanied by particular ways of narrative. In the conventional historiography of Chinese cinema, the standard narrative is fraught with politically biased judgements and ingrained prejudices. *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi* and GMD, these received terms have been inherent to this standard narrative and simultaneously obscured many other aspects of this history. To reveal the "other" aspects and to find out alternative ways of interpretation are one of the focal concerns of this study.

Following the simple question of who made films and why, my study has explored the social composition of Mingxing's founder-members and creative staff, interpersonal connections between them, their motivations to found and join the company, and the rationale behind Mingxing managers' decision-making. Two general conclusions can be drawn, which may suggest certain characteristics, tendencies and aspirations shared by a large number of urban intellectuals in the Republican period.

First, almost all of the participants in Mingxing were actively engaged in the fields of publishing and journalism as well as theatre. Mingxing's founders, such as Zheng Zhengqiu and Zhou Jianyun, were theatre critics, journal editors, and managers of theatre troupes and publishing houses. The so-called *Yuanhu* screenwriters and publicists, such as Bao Tianxiao, Zhu Dake and Fan Yanqiao, too, were novelists, essayists, and editors of various newspapers and popular journals. The members of *Zuolian* and *Julian*, such as Xia Yan, A Ying and Zheng Boqi, again, were translators, editors, and playwrights. Those habitually called GMD hack writers, such as Yao Sufeng and Liu Na'ou, finally were, editors, essayists and managers of publishing houses and bookstores.

I have used the politically neutral term "cultural professionals" to refer to these persons. The term opens up a new possibility to understand the phenomena that intellectual activities cut across different cultural spheres. I contend that what may be called *transboundariness* is a remarkable characteristic of the intellectual scene of Republican Shanghai and its cultural meaning and historical resonance deserve more serious attention. My conclusion resonates with a few recent studies. Alexander Des Forges has proposed the

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conception "mediasphere," which he explains as "a form of cultural production consisting of (1) a visual and textual field characterized by the drive to expand without limit; (2) the simultaneous and regular appearance of the wide range of cultural products that make up this field... and (3) frequent connections and references between these cultural products across boundaries between different texts, genres, and media."⁷

This "transboundary mediasphere" is perhaps partly an outcome of social networks and interpersonal connections, the centrality of which in Chinese life, sometimes referred to as *Guanxi* 關係 in Chinese, have long been noted and studied from a sociological approach.⁸ A recent edited volume, *At the Crossroads of Empires: Middlemen, Social Networks, and State-building in Republican Shanghai* (2008), has brought the issue of social networking and its role as powerful cement in state-building to the fore.⁹ My study of the cultural professionals at Mingxing has provided a microcosm of this sphere, which warrants further study.

My second finding is that, generally speaking, these cultural professionals shared what C. T. Hsia has called "a moral burden" which tends to overhang the entire corpus of literary creation in the first half of the twentieth century, "an obsessive concern with China as a nation afflicted with a spiritual disease," or simply, a "patriotic passion."¹⁰ Both Leo Ou-fan Lee and Pang Laikwan have noticed the similar preoccupation in so-called *Zuoyi* filmmaking.¹¹ But they have ignored the fact that such a sense of social consciousness is not unique to the so-called *Zuoyi* filmmakers, but also shared by others habitually categorized as *Yuanhu* or GMD, and uncategorized ones as well. This "moral burden" made these filmmakers, as well as their works, similar to a large extent, well beyond the paradigmatic ideologies ascribed to them.

For example, in an interview in 1934, Mingxing's director Cheng Bugao, neither *Yuanhu*, nor *Zuoyi* or GMD in conventional histories, said that he used to be "a petty bourgeois and an epicurean (小資產階級和享樂主義者)," but the bombing of the Shanghai War on 28 January 1933 woke him up.¹² When he was working on the battlefield shooting a newsreel, he witnessed the cruelty of the war and the suffering of the urban underclass having no way to seek refuge in the foreign settlements. He said, "it has been a huge stimulus to my tedious and decadent life. I have a new feeling and a firm conviction. I hate the imperialists

⁷ Des Forges, *Mediasphere Shanghai*, p. 16.

⁸ Gold, et al, eds, *Social Connections in China: Institutions, Culture, and the Changing Nature of Guanxi*.

⁹ Dillon, et al. eds, *At the Crossroads of Empires*.

¹⁰ Hsia, "Obsession With China: The Moral Burden of Modern Chinese Literature," Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, pp. 533-6.

¹¹ Lee, "The tradition of modern Chinese cinema," p. 7. Pang, p. 5.

¹² ZWD, p. 1265, first published in the SB (Oct. 1934).

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and I feel great sympathy for the people of lower classes. (我那疲倦而頹廢的人生受著了大的刺激。我有了新的感覺，我有了堅定的自信。我痛恨帝國主義的殘暴，我對貧苦階級抱著絕大的同情。)"¹³

Li Pingqian, the director of *Fengnian* (A Year of Good Harvest, 1934), explained that he decided to make the film because he observed that despite a good harvest, farmers failed to get rid of poverty and famine. He thought that imperialist economic aggression, natural disasters, civil wars, heavy and miscellaneous taxes, and high ground rent had contributed to this situation. He felt obliged to make a film to "make it clear to everybody why recession is spreading throughout the countryside and why a year of good harvest turns to be a year of disaster."¹⁴ What Li described and analyzed largely agrees with what Eastman has revealed in his scholarly research.¹⁵ Though never being identified as a *Zuoyi* filmmaker (nor *Yuanhu* and GMD) Li Pingqian was well conscious of the social problems of his day and committed himself to the cause of exposing the ills of contemporary society.

While Leo Lee has compared modern Chinese writers to "radical spokesmen of Chinese society," and modern literature "a vehicle through which to voice social discontent,"¹⁶ I argue that less elitist cultural professionals, such as Mingxing's unknown directors, as well as popular cultural products, such as Mingxing's films, joined this intellectual project marked by an "obsession with China." My analyses of film works have shed further light on this point.

The Films: No Need for Such a Canon

When discussing the "New Literature" in the 1920s and 1930s which later becomes canonized in the history of modern Chinese literature, Michel Hockx suggests:¹⁷

There is no need for this canon, or these styles, to occupy such a central position, neither as a positive value, nor as a negative example. A much richer understanding of the literary practice of this period can be obtained if it is perceived in relational terms and various styles are taken into account simultaneously.

The same holds true for the field of cinema. *Zuoyi* cinema which has been canonized in the history of Chinese cinema is required to be re-examined and many other film works having suffered decade-long scholarly oblivion deserve rediscovery. After examining the

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Li Pingqian 李萍倩, "Shezhi *Fengnian* de dongji ji kaishi 攝製《豐年》的動機及開始," *MY* 2.2 (1 Dec. 1933): 21-2.

¹⁵ Eastman, et al., eds., *The Nationalist Era in China, 1927-1949*, pp. 36-8.

¹⁶ Lee, "Literary Trends I: The quest for modernity, 1895-1927," Fairbank, et al. eds, *The Cambridge History of China: Republican China 1912 - 1949*, (vols. 12), p. 452.

¹⁷ Hockx, *Questions of style*, p. 253.

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narratives and themes of a large number of Mingxing films, one could easily raise a similar point about Chinese cinema: there is no need for this canon (i.e. *Zuoyi* cinema) to occupy such a central position in Chinese film history too. The canonized *Zuoyi* films do not distinguish themselves from the bulk of commercial cinema produced in the 1920s and 1930s. Rather, filmmaking at Mingxing followed a consistent pattern, namely, "melodrama plus isms." This pattern reflects the "spirit leader" Zheng Zhengqiu's ideal to combine "commercialism" and "conscience." While profit-seeking is an obvious goal for a commercial film company, to use the medium in the service of moral didacticism and spreading modern ideas had always been considered indispensable at the same time. This conviction reflects both the Confucian tradition of *wen yi zai dao* 文以載道 (literature as a vehicle of moral instruction) and a rallying call of modern Chinese intellectuals to enlighten their compatriots through popular media, such as fiction and theatre.

Melodrama has proven to be the most enduring favourite with contemporary Chinese film audiences. Moral polarization, extravagant emotions and elaborate plots are features shared by the majority of Mingxing releases, no matter by which "group" of screenwriters. Running beneath these melodramatic tales are a variety of what are usually referred to as "isms" (*zhuyi*) or "ideologies" (*yishi*) in contemporary sources, both denoting elevated ideas and themes of particular films. Generally speaking, ideas conveyed by these films are almost always congruent with prevailing views and widespread concepts of particular times. The usual distinction between 1920s cinema as popular urban entertainment untouched by intellectual ideas and 1930s cinema as a medium of spreading "serious" messages has proved to be a deep-seated prejudice and "misunderstanding." Canonized *Zuoyi* cinema is neither innovative in form, nor completely new in theme. It should be better understood as part of the early Chinese film culture. The standard narrative of Chinese film history has obscured many intriguing aspects of the history and ruled out other possibilities of understanding. From a different perspective, we find that the combination of melodramatic narratives and elevated ideas may be a powerful device to produce meaning.

Media sociologist John Fiske has argued that the world views of readers are formed largely on the basis of their experience with "discourses" that help them make sense of their social experiences.¹⁸ A discourse is a way of thinking about a particular subject, shared by a social group, including fields in which meaning is culturally organized. The

¹⁸ Fiske, "Popularity and ideology." For an introduction of this essay see Crane, *The production of culture*, p. 94.

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reader's consciousness is influenced by the discourses that are available to him or her in a particular social situation. Popular culture is created from areas of discourses where consensus is high enough to be taken for granted. A text becomes popular if its discourses fit into the ways in which people are interpreting their social experiences at a particular time. Fiske further states, "Popular narratives prove in their own closed world the adequacy of discourses as explanatory, sense-making mechanisms."¹⁹

It is not the intention of this study to discuss the sense-making mechanisms of Mingxing films from a sociological angle. Nevertheless, Fiske's argument provides a useful and interesting insight into the possible ways in which popular narratives, coupled with discourses, influenced the consciousness of historical audiences. Historically speaking, then, how far did the influence of Mingxing films reach?

The Power of Moving Images: How Far Did Ideas Reach?

In a short essay in the May 1935 issue of the *Mingxing banyuekan*, the author Teng Shugu 滕樹穀 talks about Zheng Zhengqiu:²⁰

In his essay "Since I Became a Director," Zheng Zhengqiu says he likes to add into his stories some ingredients to exhort his audience to good deeds. I think it is fairly reasonable. Mr. Zheng has a large audience. His power of educating the masses is strong. 鄭正秋先生在《自我導演以來》一文中，表示他喜歡在他那生動的故事中，無形的滲上一點勸善的意味。我想這倒有相當的理由。鄭先生擁有廣大的觀眾，教育大眾的力量不能說是小的。

This remark invites us to consider how powerful moving images and popular stories on the silver screens can be in terms of disseminating the ideas hidden behind. To gauge the audience's reception to Mingxing films is beyond the scope of my current study. Nevertheless, I want to provide a brief outline of China's film markets of the day. This helps us to conjecture how far various ideas Mingxing's filmmakers endeavoured to circulate reached.

Two cinema programming schedules provide a useful glimpse of Mingxing's distribution networks. One is published in the *Xinwenbao* on 27 May 1933. This schedule shows that Mingxing's latest films were to be screened at ten Shanghai theatres and sixteen theatres in twelve cities and towns out of Shanghai.²¹ Another is in 31 January 1935 *Xinwenbao*, which shows that, during this year's Spring Festival (春節), movie-goers were

¹⁹ Fiske, *ibid*, p. 170.

²⁰ Teng Shugu 滕樹穀, "Xinkou kaihe ji 信口開河集," MB 1.3 (16 May 1935): 8.

²¹ "Jinri qi quanguo gongying Mingxing gongsi zuixin chupin yilan 今日起全國公映明星公司最新出品一覽," XWB 27 May 1933: Benbu zengkan 11.

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able to watch Mingxing films at ten theatres in Shanghai and 35 theaters in 25 cities across China (Fig 7).²²



Fig. 7 Mingxing's distribution networks (Left: XWB 27 May 1933: Benbu zengkan 11, Right: XWB 31 Jan. 1935: 2)

It can be certain that the actual number of theatres at which Mingxing films were screened should have exceeded these numbers. According to contemporary reports, in 1927, there were in China about 106 movie theatres with a total seating capacity of about 68,000. These are divided between 18 large cities, such as Shanghai (which had 26 movie theatres), Hong Kong (9), Tianjin (9), Guangzhou (8), Beijing (5), and so on.²³ At the beginning of 1935 there were not more than 276 cinemas in the whole of China (including Manchuria) which were distributed over less than 70 towns and cities. A large portion of these cinemas was concentrated in a few centres. The seven places of Shanghai, Tianjin, Nanjing, Guangdong, Beijing, Hankou and Qingdao disposed of 106 theatres or more than 44% of the total number. Roughly estimated there might be a total seating capacity of 150,000 to 200,000 throughout the country of which the seven above-mentioned cities held approximately 100,000 or about two-thirds. Accordingly, the daily number of film visitors would scarcely exceed 200,000 to 250,000. Chinese films were screened abroad in a hundred or two hundred cinemas to the overseas Chinese who lived in the Philippines, French Indo-China, Siam, the Straits Settlements, the Malay States, Java, Australia, Panama and America.²⁴

Both Mingxing's programming schedules and contemporary reports tell us that film was principally an urban phenomenon in China during the period. Moreover, domestic production occupied only a very small portion of the Chinese film market. In 1934, for

²² See "Mingxing yingpian gongsi gebu chunjie yingpian wang 明星影片公司各埠春節映片網," XWB 31 Jan. 1935: 2.

²³ C. J. North, ed, *The Chinese motion picture market* (Trade Information Bulletin No. 467), pp. 13, 26.

²⁴ Löwenthal, "The present status of the film in China," pp. 83-5.

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example, while 8.5% of the films were produced by Chinese companies, the bulk of 91.5% had to be imported from abroad.²⁵ To overestimate the power of the Chinese-made moving images may be inappropriate. However, box-office records of a few most popular films suggest strong potential for the medium's powerfulness. For example, the record-setter of silent era *Konggu lan* 空谷蘭, premiered in early 1926, generated returns of 132,337.17 Yuan.²⁶ Since the average admission fee was unlikely to have exceeded 0.5 Yuan, we can estimate that over 260,000 persons saw the film.²⁷ Eight years later, another box-office hit *Zimei hua* 姊妹花 attracted 220,000 audiences within sixty days at a single theatre in Shanghai, the *Xinguang* 新光 Theatre,²⁸ while in 1934, Shanghai's population was 3,572,792.²⁹ It means that one in sixteen Shanghai residents attended the movie at this first-run theatre. Considering the movie was soon to show at second-run and third-run theatres at lower rates, it should have reached a much larger number of audiences. According to Mingxing's chronology, *Zimei hua* showed altogether in 53 Chinese cities (in eighteen provinces) and ten foreign cities (in six countries).³⁰ Seen in this light, the power of moving images cannot be overestimated.

Based on the recognition that modernization and social reform are not only an elitist project, but also involve the changing of attitudes and outlooks of the common people, I would suggest that in this particular Chinese historical context, cinema played a role in instilling modern ideas into the public mind through the image-based universal language and sentimental melodramatic narratives. The combination of commercial and intellectual forces via the mass medium made an impact, no matter how small, on China's modern transition. By studying the successful Shanghai entrepreneur Huang Chujiu 黃楚九 (1872 - 1931), Sherman Cochran has suggested that with the relentless push of their merchandising operations (marketing medicine), private entrepreneurs contributed significantly to the transformation of the visual culture at a popular level that reached well beyond Shanghai's urban boundaries.³¹ When discussing the Nationalist rule during the Nanjing decade (1927

²⁵ Ibid, p. 85.

²⁶ MXNB.

²⁷ The *Zhongyang* Theatre charged an admission fee ranging from 0.6 to 1.4 Yuan, see the advertisement in XWB 8 Feb. 1026: A1. Ticket prices at other theatres should be lower than the first-run theatre *Zhongyang*. An average of 0.5 Yuan, perhaps even lower, is a rough estimate. Moreover, theatres' total box-office incomes should have exceeded 132337.17 Yuan because some theatres rented a print at a fixed price much lower than box-office incomes. In a word, 260,000 is a very conservative estimate.

²⁸ See the theatre advertisement in XWB 13 Apr. 1934.

²⁹ *Shanghai quanshu* bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Shanghai quanshu*, p. 11.

³⁰ MXNB.

³¹ Yeh, *Becoming Chinese*, p. 7. Cochran, "Marketing medicine and advertising dreams in China, 1900-1950," in Yeh, pp. 62-97.

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- 1937), Lloyd Eastman wrote, "Radio and newspapers were also making inroads into the hinterlands, conveying information about alternative modes of existence. 'Nothing,' Samuel Huntington has observed, 'is more revolutionary than this awareness.'"³²

Cinema certainly joined these "merchandising operations" and the mass media of "radio and newspapers," conveying modern ideas, conceptions as well as a primarily Shanghai-based visual culture and making inroads into Chinese communities beyond Shanghai. In this light, cultural production within the particular film studio, the Mingxing Motion Picture Company, participated by Bao Tianxiao, Zheng Boqi, Liu Na'ou and their colleagues made its contribution to the social change in Republican China. The conventional categories, *Yuanhu*, *Zuoyi*, and GMD, are invalid in illuminating the concerted efforts of the filmmakers burdened with "an obsession with China." Commercialism working in tandem with conscience/didacticism helped transport a variety of modern ideas, values, beliefs, among others, into a world of make-believe. This is the story I have presented. To be sure, any cultural institution is intrinsically multifaceted and ways of interpretation are manifold. I have looked at Mingxing from one perspective, a perspective with a focus on commercialization/melodramatization of ideologies. Other perspectives, certainly, are open to further inquiries.

³² Eastman, *The Nationalist Era in China, 1927-1949*, p. 52. For the origin of his quotation see Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, p. 298.

Appendix I Filmography

This Filmography includes all the feature films (including shorts) Mingxing produced, listed in alphabetical order. Titles are given in *pinyin*, Chinese characters and English translations (mostly my own). Names of crew and cast members are given in Chinese characters. The major source of this filmography includes *Mingxing yingpian gufen youxian gongsi yingyebu pianwu ke zhuri cunpian baogao dan* 明星影片股份有限公司營業部片務科逐日存片報告單 (An inventory of film releases kept by the Film Unit of the Marketing Division of the Mingxing Motion Picture Company, SMA, Q55-2-1371, p. 31) and ZDFZS. Places and Dates of films' premieres are based on theatre advertisements in the XWB and SB. Films only available at the China Film Archive (中國電影資料館) are marked with *; films available as publicly released VCDs or DVDs are marked with **. Sound films are noted as "sound;" otherwise are silent. Abbreviations and theatres' Chinese names and their own English names as well as addresses are given below:

Ass. Dir = assistant director

Dir = director

Ph = photographer

r = reel

Scr = Screenwriter

Apollo Theatre 愛普廬影戲院: North Sichuan Road 北四川路 52

Athena Theatre 申江大戲院: Yunnan Road 雲南路 Beihai Road 北海路

Carlton Theatre 卡爾登影戲院: Park Road 派克路 Bubbling Well Road 靜安寺路

Capital Theatre 光陸大戲院: Museum Road 博物院路 Soochow Road 蘇州路

Lyric Theatre 金城: Beijing Road 北京路 Guizhou Road 貴州路

Lyceum Theatre 蘭心大戲院: Rue Bourgeat 蒲石路 Route Cardinal Mercier 邁而西愛路

Nanking Theatre 南京大戲院: Avenue Aduard VII 愛多亞路 523

Olympic Theatre 夏令配克 (Embassy after Oct. 1926): Bubbling Well Road 靜安寺路

Carter Road 卡德路

Palace Theatre 中央大戲院: Yunnan Road 雲南路 Beihai Road 北海路

Paris Garden Open-air Theatre 巴黎花園露天電影場: Jessfield Park 兆豐公園

Star Theatre 明星大戲院: Park Road 派克路 Qingdao Road 青島路

Strand Theatre 新光大戲院: Rue de Ningpoo 寧波路 276

Ai yu si 愛與死 (Love and Death), 9 r

Dir: 程步高

Scr: 于定勳

Ph: 王士珍

Cast: 高倩蘋, 朱秋痕, 鄭小秋

Premiere: Paris Garden, 13 Aug. 1932

Aiqing yu huangjin 愛情與黃金 (Love and Gold), 9 r

Dir: 張石川, 洪深

Ass. Dir: 程樹仁, 馬徐維邦

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Scr: 洪深

Ph: 程樹仁

Cast: 張織雲, 丁子明, 肖英, 李時苑, 肖養素, 馬徐維邦, 鄭正秋, 洪深, 王夢石, 周履安

Premiere: Palace, 28 Dec. 1926

Airen de xue 愛人的血 (Lover's Blood), 10 r

Dir: 程步高

Scr: 夏赤鳳

Ph: 周克

Cast: 鄭小秋, 胡蝶, 龔稼農, 黃君甫, 譚志遠

Premiere: Palace, 19 Oct. 1929

Baba ai mama 爸爸愛媽媽 (Dad Loves Mom), 10 r

Dir: 程步高

Scr: 洪深

Ph: 周克

Cast: 胡蝶, 龔稼農, 夏佩珍, 高占非

Premiere: Palace, 27 Dec. 1929

Baiyun ta 白雲塔 (White Cloud Pagoda), 20 r (2 episodes)

Dir: 張石川, 鄭正秋

Scr: 鄭正秋

Original: *Baiyun ta* by Chen Lengxue 陳冷血

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 胡蝶, 阮玲玉, 朱飛, 鄭小秋, 湯傑, 王夢石, 黃君甫, 王吉亭, 趙靜霞

Premiere: Palace, 11 Apr. 1928

Beijing Yang Guifei 北京楊貴妃 (Imperial Concubine Yang in Beijing), aka. *Yang Xiaozhen* 楊小真, 9 r

Dir: 鄭正秋

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: Zhou Ke 周克

Cast: 楊耐梅, 阮玲玉, 朱飛, 鄭小秋, 湯傑, 王夢石

Premiere: Palace, 1 Jan. 1928

Buxing shengwei nüer shen 不幸生為女兒身 (Unfortunate to Be Born a Woman), 9 r

Dir: 程步高

Ass. Dir: 湯傑, 高梨痕

Ph: 王士珍

Cast: 高倩蘋, 王夢石, 黃君甫

Premiere: Palace, 17 Dec. 1931

Canchun 殘春 (Late Spring), 10 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 姚蘇鳳

Ph: 董克毅

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Cast: 龔稼農, 鄭小秋, 徐來, 孫敏

Premiere: Strand, 1 Oct. 1933

Changmen xianmu 倡門賢母 (Wise Mother from a Brothel), 10 r

Dir: 程步高

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 周克

Cast: 宣景琳, 夏佩珍

Premiere: Palace, 8 Nov. 1930

Chanhui 懺悔 (Confession), 10 r

Dir: 張石川

Ph: 周克

Cast: 鄭小秋, 夏佩珍, 龔稼農, 朱飛, 韓雲珍

Premiere: Palace, 24 Apr. 1929

Chechi guo 車遲國 (*Chechi Kingdom*), 11 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 湯傑, 嚴仲英, 肖英, 龔稼農, 黃君甫, 王吉亭, 鄭小秋

Premiere: Palace, 23 Jan. 1928

Chonghun 重婚 (Bigamy), 9 r

Dir: 吳村

Scr: 王平陵

Ph: 周詩穆

Cast: 高占非, 高倩蘋, 嚴月嫻, 肖英, 謝雲卿

Premiere: Strand, 20 Dec. 1934

Chuangshang renying 窗上人影 (Shadow on the Window), 10 r

Dir: 程步高

Scr: 程小青

Ph: 王士珍

Cast: 王徵信, 肖英, 龔稼農, 宣景琳

Premiere: Palace, 11 Jun. 1931

* *Chuanjia nü* 船家女 (The Boatman's Daughter), 10 r, sound

Dir: 沈西苓

Scr: 沈西苓

Ph: 周詩穆

Cast: 高占非, 徐來, 孫敏, 王吉亭, 譚志遠, 朱孤雁, 胡笳

Premiere: Lyric, 29 Nov. 1935

Chun zhi hua 春之花 (Spring Flowers), 10 r, sound

Dir: 吳村

Scr: 吳村

Ph: 周詩穆
 Cast: 高占非, 孫敏, 嚴月嫻, 朱秋痕, 黃耐霜
 Premiere: Lyric, 19 Mar. 1936

** *Chuncan* 春蠶 (Spring Silkworms), 11 r, sound

Dir: 程步高
 Scr: 夏衍
 Original: *Chuncan* by Mao Dun 茅盾
 Ph: 王士珍
 Cast: 龔稼農, 鄭小秋, 徐來, 孫敏
 Premiere: Strand, 8 Oct. 1933

Chunshui qingbo 春水情波 (Spring River and Waves of Sentiment), 10 r

Dir: 鄭正秋
 Scr: 鄭正秋
 Ph: 顏鶴鳴
 Cast: 孫敏, 胡蝶, 嚴月嫻, 王獻齋, 胡萍
 Premiere: Strand, 28 May 1933

Cimu 慈母 (Kindly Mother), 9 r

Dir: 張石川
 Scr: 程小青
 Ph: 周詩穆
 Cast: 嚴月嫻, 王獻齋, 顧梅君
 Premiere: Palace, 6 Jul. 1932

Da jiating 大家庭 (An Extended Family), 10 r, sound

Dir: 張石川
 Scr: 張石川
 Ph: 王士珍
 Cast: 高占非, 龔稼農, 王獻齋, 鄭小秋, 趙丹, 孫敏, 王吉亭, 王徵信, 徐莘園, 譚志遠
 Premiere: Strand, 5 Sep. 1935

Danao guai xichang 大鬧怪戲場 (Disturbance at a Peculiar Theatre), 3 r

Dir: 張石川
 Scr: 鄭正秋
 Ph: Carl Gregory
 Cast: 嚴仲英, 鄭鷓鴣
 Pr: Olympic, 26 Jan. 1923

Dao xibei qu 到西北去 (Go Northwest), 10 r

Dir: 程步高
 Scr: 鄭伯奇
 Ph: 王士珍
 Cast: 徐來, 龔稼農, 趙丹

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Premiere: Strand, 1 Oct. 1934

Daode baojian 道德宝鉴 (The Book of Morality), aka. *Rendao zhizei* 人道之賊 (Humane Thief), 9 r

Dir: 王獻齋, 高梨痕

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 鄭小秋, 徐莘園, 嚴月嫻, 朱秋痕

Premiere: Palace, 2 May 1933

Daoxia meiren 刀下美人 (Beauty Under the Blade), 10 r

Dir: 鄭正秋

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 顏鶴鳴, 孫靜海

Cast: 韓雲珍, 朱飛, 王吉亭, 湯傑, 肖英

Premiere: Palace, 16 Sep. 1929

Daxia Fuchou ji 大俠復仇記 (Revenge of a Knight errant), 20 r (2 episodes)

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 肖英, 胡蝶, 王夢石, 鄭小秋, 譚志遠, 王吉亭, 胡珊

Premiere: Palace, 19 Aug. 1928

Duoqing de nüling 多情的女伶 (A Romantic Actress), 10 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 包天笑

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 宣景琳, 趙琛, 王獻齋, 宋懋紅, 趙靜霞, 黃君甫, 張敏吾

Premiere: Palace, 12 Apr. 1926

* *Er dui yi* 二對一 (Two Versus One), 8 r, sound

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 王乾白

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 龔稼農, 宣景琳, 高倩蘋, 艾霞, 趙丹

Premiere: Strand, 18 May 1934

Erba jiaren 二八佳人 (A Beauty of Sixteen), 12 r

Dir: 鄭正秋

Ass. Dir: 朱飛, 高梨痕

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 石仲衡

Cast: 丁子明, 朱飛, 肖英, 黃君甫, 龔稼農, 鄭逸生

Premiere: Palace, 22 May 1927

Feicui ma 翡翠馬 (Jade Horse), 10 r, sound

Dir: 徐欣夫

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Scr: 徐欣夫
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 王徵信, 嚴月嫻, 龔稼農, 顧蘭君, 孫敏, 趙丹, 徐莘園, 王吉亭
Premiere: Lyric, 8 Nov. 1935

Fendou de hunyin 奮鬥的婚姻 (Struggle in Marriage), 10 r

Dir: 程步高
Cast: 鄭小秋, 胡姍, 王獻齋
Premiere: Palace, 9 Dec. 1928

Feng da shaoye 馮大少爺 (Young Master Feng), aka. *Wanku zi* 紈袴子 (The Dandy), 9 r

Dir: 洪深
Scr: 洪深
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 趙琛, 宋懌紅 (宋癡萍), 舒芸, 傅綠痕, 高梨痕, 鄭小秋, 馬徐維邦
Premiere: Palace, 23 Sep. 1925

Fudao 婦道 (Doctrine for Women), 9 r

Dir: 陳鏗然
Scr: 姚蘇鳳
Ph: 嚴秉衡
Cast: 徐琴芳, 宣景琳, 胡藝星, 朱秋痕
Premiere: Strand, 11 Nov. 1934

Furen de shenghuo 富人的生活 (The Life of the Rich), 10 r

Dir: 程步高
Scr: 張石川
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 朱飛, 胡蝶, 譚志遠, 黃君甫, 肖英, 夏佩珍
Premiere: Palace, 12 May 1929

Furen zhi nü 富人之女 (Daughter of a Wealthy Family), 12 r

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 包天笑
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 宣景琳, 朱飛, 譚志遠, 趙靜霞, 王獻齋, 傅綠痕, 嚴仲英, 王吉亭
Premiere: Palace, 13 Aug. 1926

Genü Hong mudan 歌女紅牡丹 (Sing-song Girl Red Peony), 9 r, sound

Dir: 張石川
Ass. Dir: 程步高
Scr: 洪深
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 胡蝶, 夏佩珍, 王獻齋, 龔稼農, 王吉亭, 湯傑, 譚志遠, 肖英
Premiere: Strand, 15 Mar. 1931

Guaming de fuqi 挂名的夫妻 (A Couple in Name), 10 r

APPENDIX I

Dir: 卜萬蒼
Scr: 鄭正秋
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 阮玲玉, 黃君甫, 龔稼農, 王夢石, 高梨痕, 湯傑, 趙靜霞
Premiere: Palace, 30 Apr. 1927

Gu'er jiuzu ji 孤兒救祖記 (An Orphan Rescues His Grandpa), 10 r

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 鄭正秋
Ph: 張偉濤
Cast: 王漢倫, 鄭小秋, 鄭鷓鴣, 王獻齋, 周文珠, 任潮軍, 邵莊林
Pr: Athena, 21 Dec. 1923

Guohun de fuhuo 國魂的復活 (The Resurrection of the National Spirit), 9 r

Dir: 張石川
Ass.Dir: 高梨痕
Scr: 程小青
Ph: 周詩穆
Cast: 鄭小秋, 梁賽珍, 龔稼農, 胡萍
Premiere: Palace, 22 Sep. 1932

Guta qi'an 古塔奇案 (A Strange Case in the Old Pagoda), 11 r, sound

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 王銘勳
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 龔稼農, 王獻齋, 王徵信, 龔秋霞, 謝雲卿
Premiere: Lyric, 12 Feb. 1938

Haitang hong 海棠紅 (Red Begonia), 10 r, sound

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 歐陽予倩
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 白玉霜, 王獻齋, 徐莘園, 舒繡文, 王吉亭
Premiere: Lyric, 5 Sep. 1936

Hao Gege 好哥哥 (Good Brother), 9 r

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 鄭正秋
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 楊耐梅, 鄭小秋, 鄭正秋, 王獻齋, 黃君甫
Premiere: Apollo, 7 Jan. 1925

Hao nan'er 好男儿 (A Good Guy), 9 r

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 包天笑
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 宣景琳, 王獻齋, 宋懌紅, 趙靜霞, 黃君甫, 朱飛, 譚志遠

APPENDIX I

Premiere: Palace, 19 May 1926

Heiyi nüxia 黑衣女俠 (A Female Knight errant in Black), 10 r

Dir: 鄭正秋, 程步高

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 周克

Cast: 王夢石, 龔稼農, 丁子明, 鄭小秋, 趙靜霞, 黃君甫

Premiere: Palace, 16 Sep. 1928

Henhai 恨海 (Sea of Hatred), 10 r

Dir: 譚志遠, 高梨痕

Scr: 鄭正秋

Original: *Henhai* by Wu Jianren 吳趸人

Ph: 吳蔚雲

Cast: 鄭小秋, 高倩蘋

Premiere: 30. May 1931

Honglei ying 紅淚影 (Shadow of Red Tears), 20 r

Dir: 鄭正秋

Ass. Dir: 蔡楚生

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 胡蝶, 龔稼農, 夏佩珍, 鄭小秋, 高倩蘋

Premiere: Palace, 9 Oct. 1931

Huaji dawang youhu ji 滑稽大王游滬記 (The King of Comedy Visits China), 3 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: Goodall

Cast: Richard Bell, 鄭正秋, 王獻齋

Pr: Olympic, 5 Oct. 1922

Huang Lu zhi ai 黃陸之愛 (Love between Huang and Lu), aka. *Xuelei huanghua* 血淚黃花前集 (Yellow Flowers in Blood and Tears, Episode I), 10 r

Dir: 鄭正秋, 程步高

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 周克, 董克毅

Cast: 胡蝶, 龔稼農, 王吉亭, 譚志遠, 王獻齋, 夏佩珍

Premiere: Palace, 27 Jan. 1929

Huangjin gu 黃金谷 (A Valley of Gold), aka. *Fengnian* 豐年 (A Year of Harvest), 9 r

Dir: 李萍倩

Scr: 阿英

Ph: 嚴秉衡

Cast: 艾霞, 高倩蘋, 梅熹, 徐莘園, 肖英

Premiere: Strand, 3 Jun. 1934

APPENDIX I

Huangjin zhilu 黃金之路 (Golden Road), 10 r

Dir: 程步高

Scr: 張石川

Ph: 周克

Cast: 周文珠, 朱飛, 王徵信, 王獻齋, 謝雲卿

Premiere: Palace, 7 Mar. 1930

Huashan yanshi 華山豔史 (Romance on the Hua Mountain), 8 r

Dir: 程步高

Scr: 程步高

Ph: 王士珍

Cast: 徐來, 陳凝秋, 龔稼農, 白璐, 王默秋

Premiere: Strand, 14 Apr. 1934

Hubian chunmeng 湖邊春夢 (A Spring Dream by the Lake), 9 r

Dir: 卜萬蒼

Scr: 田漢

Ph: 董克毅, 石世馨

Cast: 楊耐梅, 龔稼農, 毛劍佩

Premiere: Palace, 9 Oct. 1927

Huoshao Hongliansi 火燒紅蓮寺 (The Burning of the Red Lotus Temple), 18 episodes

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 鄭正秋

Original: *Jianghu qixia zhuan* 江湖奇俠傳 (by Xiang Kairan 向愷然)

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 鄭小秋, 趙靜霞, 夏佩珍, 譚志遠, 肖英, 鄭超凡, 高梨痕

Premiere: Palace, 13 May 1928

Jianmei zhi lu 健美之路 (A road to fitness and beauty), 10 r

Dir: 陳鏗然

Scr: 王乾白

Ph: 嚴秉衡

Cast: 徐琴芳, 鄭小秋, 嚴工上, 謝雲卿, 徐莘園

Premiere: Strand, 21 Jun. 1933

Jiehou taohua 劫後桃花 (Peach Blossoms After the Misfortune), 11 r, sound

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 洪深

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 高占非, 胡蝶, 肖英, 舒繡文, 孫敏, 龔稼農, 王獻齋, 徐莘園, 譚志遠

Premiere: Lyric, 23 Jan. 1936

Jingang zuan 金剛鑽 (Diamond), 10 r, sound

Dir: 徐欣夫

Scr: 徐欣夫

Ph: 王士珍

APPENDIX I

Cast: 顧蘭君, 王徵信, 孫敏, 謝雲卿, 李清, 黃耐霜
Premiere: Lyric, 20 Jun. 1936

Jiuhou xinchou 舊恨新愁 (Old Hatred and New Worries), 9 r

Dir: 李萍倩
Scr: 李萍倩
Ph: 王士珍
Cast: 龔稼農, 艾霞, 孫敏
Premiere: Palace, 8 Dec. 1932

Jiushi Jinghua 舊時京華 (Old Times in Beijing), 12 r, sound

Dir: 張石川
Ass. Dir.: 程步高
Scr: 洪深
Ph: 董克毅, Jack Smith, James Williamson
Cast: 王獻齋, 朱秋痕, 鄭小秋, 譚志遠, 肖英, 洪深, 梁賽珍
Premiere: Palace, Star, 12 May 1932

Ke'ai de choudi 可愛的仇敵 (Lovely Enemy), 9 r

Dir: 程步高
Scr: 程小青
Ph: 周詩穆
Cast: 鄭小秋, 梁賽珍, 龔稼農, 王徵信, 顧梅君
Premiere: Palace, 30 Oct. 1932

Kelian de guiniu 可憐的閨女 (A Pitiful Girl), 12 r

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 包天笑
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 張織雲, 宣景琳, 趙琛, 王獻齋, 王吉亭, 宋懌紅, 朱飛, 黃筠貞
Premiere: Palace, 23 Nov. 1925

Kongbu zhi ye 恐怖之夜 (A Horrible Night), sound

Dir: 吳村
Scr: 徐卓呆
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 龔秋霞, 顧夢鶴, 嚴工上, 譚志遠, 尤光照, 葛福榮
Premiere: Lyric, 1 Jun. 1938

Konggu lan 空谷蘭 (Orchid in the Empty Valley), 20 r

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 包天笑
Original: *Konggu lan* (by Bao Tianxiao)
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 張織雲, 楊耐梅, 朱飛, 趙琛, 王獻齋, 宋懌紅, 馬徐維邦, 鄭小秋, 任潮軍, 王吉亭
Premiere: Palace, 13 Feb. 1926

APPENDIX I

* *Konggu lan* 空谷蘭 (Orchid in the Empty Valley), 12 r, sound

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 張石川

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 胡蝶, 高占非, 宣景琳, 嚴月嫻, 鄭小秋

Premiere: Strand, 3 Feb. 1935

Kuangliu 狂流 (Wild Torrent), 8 r

Dir: 程步高

Scr: 夏衍

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 胡蝶, 龔稼農, 夏佩珍, 王獻齋, 譚志遠, 朱孤雁

Premiere: Palace, 5 Mar. 1933

Ku'er ruonü 苦兒弱女 (The Poor Children), 10 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 汪煦昌

Cast: 王漢倫, 鄭正秋, 楊耐梅, 王獻齋

Premiere: Olympic, 21 Jul. 1924

Langman nüzi 浪漫女子 (A Romantic Girl), 10 r

Dir: 程步高

Ph: 周克

Cast: 宣景琳, 龔稼農, 趙靜霞

Premiere: Palace, 6 Sep. 1930

** *Laogong zhi aiqing* 勞工之愛情 (Labourer's Love), aka. *Zhiguo yuan* 擲果緣 (Romance of a Fruit-Peddler), 3 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 張偉濤

Cast: 鄭鷓鴣, 余瑛, 鄭正秋

Pr: Olympic, 5 Oct. 1922

Lian'ai yu shengming 戀愛與生命 (Love and Life), 9 r

Dir: 湯傑, 王吉亭

Scr: 薛子厚

Ph: 周詩穆

Cast: 龔稼農, 黃君甫, 胡萍

Premiere: Palace, 15 Oct. 1932

Lihun 離婚 (Divorce), 10 r

Dir: 程步高

Scr: 張石川

Original: *Lihun* by Lao She 老舍

APPENDIX I

Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 胡蝶, 龔稼農, 鄭小秋
Premiere: Palace, 7 Apr. 1929

Liangxin fuhuo 良心復活 (A Resurrection of Conscience), aka. *Chanhui* 懺悔 (Regret), 12 r

Dir: 卜萬蒼
Scr: 包天笑
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 楊耐梅, 朱飛, 馬徐維邦, 龔稼農, 譚志遠, 李麗娜
Premiere: Palace, 22 Dec. 1926

Luliu qianghua 路柳牆花 (Willows alongside the Road and Flowers on the Wall), 8 r

Dir: 徐欣夫
Scr: 姚蘇鳳
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 胡蝶, 嚴月嫻, 宣景琳, 孫敏, 徐來, 王獻齋, 夏佩珍, 謝雲卿
Premiere: Strand, 15 Sep. 1934

Luohua shijie 落花時節 (A Time of Falling Blossoms), 9 r

Dir: 吳村
Scr: 吳村
Ph: 周詩穆
Cast: 徐來, 趙丹, 龔稼農, 顧蘭君, 梅熹
Premiere: Strand, 27 Apr. 1935

Luoxia guwu 落霞孤鶩 (Sunset Glow and Lonely Bird), 11 r

Dir: 程步高
Scr: 張堅
Original: *Luoxia guwu* by Zhang Henshui 張恨水
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 黃君甫, 夏佩珍, 龔稼農, 王吉亭, 王獻齋, 黃君甫
Premiere: Palace, 22 Apr. 1932

Luoyang qiao 洛陽橋 (Luoyang Bridge), 9 r

Dir: 張石川
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 朱飛, 阮玲玉, 龔稼農, 王吉亭, 肖英
Premiere: Palace, 5 Feb. 1928

* *Mai furen* 麥夫人 (Madam Mai), 9 r, sound

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 王乾白
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 胡蝶, 梁賽珠, 梁賽珍, 梁賽珊, 胡藝星
Premiere: Strand, 28 Nov. 1934

APPENDIX I

** *Malu tianshi* 馬路天使 (Street Angel), 10 r, sound

Dir: 袁牧之

Scr: 袁牧之

Ph: 吳印咸

Cast: 趙丹, 周璇, 魏鶴齡, 趙慧深, 王吉亭, 錢千里, 袁紹梅, 柳金玉

Premiere: Lyric, 24 Jul. 1937

Mang gunü 盲孤女 (Blind Orphan Girl), 10 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 宣景琳, 鄭小秋, 趙琛, 王獻齋, 王吉亭, 黃君甫, 舒芸

Premiere: Palace, 1 Oct. 1925

Manjiang hong 滿江紅 (Azolla), 12 r, sound

Dir: 程步高

Scr: 王乾白

Original: *Manjiang hong* by Zhang Henshui

Ph: 王士珍, 董克毅

Cast: 胡蝶, 嚴月嫻, 高倩蘋, 龔稼農, 王獻齋, 朱秋痕

Premiere: Strand, 14 Sep. 1933

Meihua luo 梅花落 (Fallen Plum Blossoms), 30 r

Dir: 張石川, 鄭正秋

Scr: 張石川

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 張織雲, 朱飛, 宣景琳, 張慧沖, 肖英, 高梨痕, 龔稼農, 王吉亭, 譚志遠, 黃君甫, 王獻齋

Premiere: Palace, 20 Mar. 1927

Meiren guan 美人關 (Gate of Beauty), 9 r

Dir: 卜萬蒼

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 胡壽山

Cast: 肖英, 黃君甫, 趙靜霞, 高梨痕, 李時敏, 楊耐梅

Premiere: Palace, 19 Feb. 1928

Meiren xin 美人心 (The Heart of A Beauty), 9 r

Dir: 徐欣夫

Scr: 徐欣夫, 趙華

Ph: 嚴秉衡

Cast: 胡蝶, 王徵信, 顧梅君, 徐莘園, 謝雲卿

Premiere: Strand, 21 Mar. 1935

* *Mengli qiankun* 夢里乾坤 (Heaven and Land in the Dream), 9 r, sound

Dir: 程步高

Scr: 洪深

APPENDIX I

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 應茵, 舒繡文, 孫敏, 王獻齋, 謝俊, 李麗蓮, 黃耐霜

Premiere: Lyric, 3 Jul. 1937

Mu yu zi 母與子 (Mother and Son), 9 r

Dir: 湯傑

Scr: 于定勳

Ph: 王士珍

Cast: 宣景琳, 鄭小秋

Premiere: Palace, 26 Aug. 1933

Muqin de mimi 母親的秘密 (Mother's Secret), sound

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 徐卓呆

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 孫敏, 龔稼農, 袁紹梅, 陸露明, 謝俊

Premiere: Lyric, 14 Jul. 1938

Nü shuji 女書記 (A Female Secretary), aka. *Wei nüshi de zhiye* 衛女士的職業 (The Profession of Ms. Wei), 9 r

Dir: 張石川, 洪深

Scr: 洪深

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 丁子明, 龔稼農, 趙靜霞, 鄭逸生, 洪深

Premiere: Palace, 23 Oct. 1927

* *Nü zhentan* 女偵探 (A Female Detective), 10 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 鄭正秋

Cast: 胡蝶, 鄭超凡, 王吉亭, 黃君甫

Premiere: Palace, 14 Nov. 1928

** *Nü'er jing* 女兒經 (A Bible for Daughters), 16 r, sound

Dir: 程步高, 張石川, 沈西苓, 姚蘇鳳, 鄭正秋, 徐欣夫, 李萍倩, 陳鏗然, 吳村

Scr: 夏衍, 鄭正秋, 洪深, 阿英, 鄭伯奇, 沈西苓

Ph: 王士珍, 董克毅, 嚴秉衡, 周詩穆, 陳晨

Cast: 胡蝶, 高占非, 宣景琳, 鄭小秋, 王獻齋, 高倩蘋, 徐莘園, 徐琴芳, 肖英, 嚴工上, 袁紹梅, 顧梅君, 夏佩珍, 趙丹, 龔稼農, 黃耐霜, 孫敏, 徐來, 王徵信

Premiere: Strand, 9 Oct. 1934

Nüquan 女權 (Women's Right), 10 r, sound

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 洪深

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 胡蝶, 趙丹, 龔稼農, 嚴月嫻, 梅熹, 王徵信

Premiere: Lyric, 23 Sep. 1936

APPENDIX I

* *Nüxing de choudi* 女性的仇敵 (The Enemy of Women), 9 r

Dir: 陳鏗然

Scr: 陳鏗然

Ph: 周詩穆

Cast: 徐琴芳, 高倩蘋, 趙丹, 尤光照, 孫敏

Premiere: Strand, 10 Jun. 1934

Nüxing de nahan 女性的吶喊 (Cry of Women), 8 r

Dir: 沈西苓

Scr: 沈西苓

Ph: 王士珍

Cast: 王瑩, 龔稼農, 顧梅君, 朱孤雁, 王吉亭, 譚志遠

Premiere: Palace, 13 Apr. 1933

Pipa chunyuán 琵琶春怨 (Lute and Resentment in Spring), 8 r

Dir: 李萍倩

Scr: 李萍倩

Ph: 嚴秉衡

Cast: 高倩蘋, 鄭小秋, 趙丹

Premiere: Palace, 16 Mar. 1933

Qiancheng 前程 (The Prospect), 9 r

Dir: 張石川, 程步高

Scr: 夏衍

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 孫敏, 宣景琳, 朱秋痕, 顧梅君, 胡萍, 肖英

Premiere: Palace, 21 May 1933

Qiangdao xiaozi 強盜孝子 (Bandit and Filial Son), 10 r

Dir: 張石川

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 王元龍, 夏佩珍, 趙靜霞

Premiere: Palace, 1 Jan. 1931

Qingchun xian 青春線 (Youth Line), 9 r

Dir: 姚蘇鳳

Scr: 姚蘇鳳

Ph: 周詩穆

Cast: 陳波兒, 姜克尼, 趙丹, 徐莘園, 王夢石

Premiere: Strand, 12 Dec. 1934

Qingming shijie 清明時節 (Around the Qingming Festival), 10 r, sound

Dir: 歐陽予倩

Scr: 歐陽予倩

Ph: 嚴秉衡

Cast: 應茵, 黎明暉, 趙丹, 吳茵, 舒繡文, 謝俊

Premiere: Lyric, 22 Dec. 1936

APPENDIX I

Renlun 人倫 (Human Ethics), aka. *Wujia kegui* 無家可歸 (No Home to Return), 9 r

Dir: 李萍倩

Scr: 李萍倩

Ph: 陳晨

Cast: 朱秋痕, 龔稼農, 鄭小秋, 徐莘園, 謝雲卿

Premiere: Strand, 14 Apr. 1935

* *Rexue zhonghun* 熱血忠魂 (Hot Blood and Loyal Spirit), aka. *Minzu hun* 民族魂 (National Spirit), 12 r, sound

Dir: 張石川, 徐欣夫, 鄭正秋, 吳村, 程步高, 沈西苓, 李萍倩,

Scr: 明星電影公司編劇科

Ph: 周詩穆, 王士珍, 董克毅, 嚴秉衡

Cast: 高占非, 鄭小秋, 龔稼農, 趙丹, 王獻齋, 孫敏, 王徵信, 嚴工上, 王吉亭, 肖英, 梅熹, 嚴月嫻, 高倩蘋, 舒繡文

Premiere: Strand, 5 Jun. 1935

Ruci tiantang 如此天堂 (So This is Paradise), 29 r. (2 episodes), sound

Dir: 張石川

Ass. Dir: 程步高

Scr: 洪深

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 胡蝶, 龔稼農, 王獻齋, 夏佩珍, 王吉亭, 高倩蘋, 嚴月嫻

Premiere: Strand, 10 Sep. 1931

San zimei 三姊妹 (Three Sisters), 9 r

Dir: 李萍倩

Scr: 阿英, 李萍倩

Original: *Shinju Fujin* by Hiroshi Kikuchi

Ph: 陳晨

Cast: 胡蝶, 嚴月嫻, 林莉, 孫敏, 趙丹

Premiere: Strand, 16 Jun. 1934

Sange fuqin 三個父親 (Three Fathers), 9 r

Dir: 湯傑, 王吉亭

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 高倩蘋, 龔稼農, 王徵信, 王夢石

Premiere: Palace, 25 Jan. 1931

Sanjian zhiai 三箭之愛 (Love of Three Swords), 9 r

Dir: 徐欣夫

Scr: 王以工

Ph: 王士珍, 裘逸葦

Cast: 王徵信, 胡蝶, 梁賽珍

Premiere: Palace, 18 Apr. 1931

Shandong Ma Yongzhen 山東馬永貞 (Ma Yongzhen from Shandong), 9 r

APPENDIX I

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 鄭正秋
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 張慧沖, 鄭小秋, 王吉亭, 湯傑, 趙靜霞, 肖英, 李時苑
Premiere: Palace, 4 Dec. 1927

Shanghai ershisi xiaoshi 上海二十四小時 (24 Hours in Shanghai), 9 r

Dir: 沈西苓
Scr: 夏衍
Ph: 周詩穆
Cast: 趙丹, 顧蘭君, 顧梅君, 朱秋痕, 周伯勳, 陳凝秋
Premiere: Strand, 15 Dec. 1934

Shanghai yi furen 上海一婦人 (A Shanghai Woman), 9 r

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 鄭正秋
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 宣景琳, 馬徐維邦, 黃筠貞, 王獻齋, 王吉亭, 邵莊林
Premiere: Palace, 28 Jul. 1925

Shanghai zhizhan 上海之戰 (Shanghai War), 10 r, sound

Premiere: Paris Garden, 3 Aug. 1932

Shao nainai de shanzi 少奶奶的扇子 (The Young Mistress's Fan), 9 r

Dir: 張石川, 洪深
Scr: 洪深
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 楊耐梅, 宣景琳, 肖英, 龔稼農, 高梨痕, 趙靜霞, 鄭逸生
Premiere: Palace, 18 Mar. 1928

Sharen de xiaojie 杀人的小姐 (A Young Female Killer), 10 r

Dir: 譚志遠, 高梨痕
Ph: 吳蔚雲
Cast: 梁賽珍, 嚴月嫻, 蔡楚生, 肖英
Premiere: Palace, 11 Jul. 1931

* *Shehui zhi hua* 社會之花 (Flowers of the Society), aka. *Hei xuanfeng* 黑旋風 (Black Hurricane), 10 r, sound

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 洪深
Cast: 白楊, 謝雲卿, 龔稼農, 王獻齋, 謝俊, 應茵, 陸露明, 姚萍, 李麗蓮
Premiere: Lyric, 10 Jun. 1937

Shenglong huohu 生龍活虎 (Dragon and Tiger), 9 r, sound

Dir: 徐欣夫
Scr: 徐欣夫
Ph: 嚴秉衡

APPENDIX I

Cast: 顧蘭君, 王徵信, 顧梅君, 龔稼農, 尤光照
Premiere: Lyric, 14 May 1937

Shengsi fuqi 生死夫妻 (Life and Death Couple), 10 r

Dir: 張石川
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 宣景琳, 王獻齋, 龔稼農
Premiere: Palace, 27 Oct. 1931

* *Shengsi tongxin* 生死同心 (Unchanged Heart in Life and Death), 9 r, sound

Dir: 應云衛
Scr: 陽翰笙
Ph: 吳印咸
Cast: 袁牧之, 陳波兒, 李清, 劉莉影, 應茵
Premiere: Lyric, 29 Nov. 1936

Shidai de ernü 時代的兒女 (Children of Our Time), 8 r

Dir: 李萍倩
Scr: 夏衍, 鄭伯奇, 阿英
Ph: 嚴秉衡
Cast: 艾霞, 高倩蘋, 趙丹, 肖英
Premiere: Strand, 22 Apr. 1934

Shilian 失戀 (Love Failure), 10 r, sound

Dir: 張石川
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 唐槐秋, 張織雲, 嚴月嫻, 王徵信, 龔稼農
Premiere: Capital, Lanxin, 21 Feb. 1933

** *Shizi jietou* 十字街頭 (Crossroads), 11 r, sound

Dir: 沈西苓
Scr: 沈西苓
Ph: 王玉如
Cast: 白楊, 趙丹, 沙蒙, 應茵, 呂班, 錢千里, 伊明
Premiere: Lyric, 15 Apr. 1937

Shuishi yingxiong 谁是英雄 (Who is the Hero), 10 r

Dir: 徐欣夫
Ph: 裘逸葦
Cast: 梁賽珍, 王徵信, 黃君甫, 湯傑, 謝雲卿, 趙靜霞
Premiere: Palace, 23 Jan. 1932

Si qianjin 四千金 (Four Daughters), 9 r, sound

Dir: 吳村
Scr: 洪深
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 白楊, 龔秋霞, 舒繡文, 黃耐霜, 龔稼農, 謝雲卿, 孫敏, 謝俊

APPENDIX I

Premiere: Lyric, 10 Mar. 1938

Siyue li di qiangwei chuchu kai 四月裡底薔薇處處開 (Roses in April), 10 r

Dir: 洪深

Ass. Dir: 王獻齋

Scr: 張石川

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 楊耐梅, 王吉亭, 趙靜霞, 嚴仲英, 王獻齋, 王謝燕, 宋懌紅

Premiere: Palace, 1 Jul. 1926

Suiqin lou 碎琴樓 (The Chamber of Broken Zither), 10 r

Dir: 鄭正秋

Ass. Dir: 蔡楚生

Scr: 章炎

Ph: 顏鶴鳴

Cast: 胡蝶, 夏佩珍, 鄭小秋, 黃君甫, 王獻齋

Premiere: Palace, 22 Mar. 1930

Ta de tongku 她的痛苦 (Her Sorrows), 11 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 包天笑, 張石川

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 楊耐梅, 朱飛, 王吉亭, 黃君甫, 宋懌紅, 肖英, 譚志遠

Premiere: Palace, 7 Oct. 1926

Taishan hongmao 泰山鴻毛 (Feather on the Tai Mountain), 8 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 秦彰

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 徐來, 龔稼農

Premiere: Palace, 14 Feb. 1934

Taohua hu 桃花湖 (Peach Blossom Lake), 20 r (2 episodes)

Dir: 鄭正秋

Ass. Dir: 蔡楚生

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 顏鶴鳴

Cast: 胡蝶, 夏佩珍, 鄭小秋, 黃君甫, 王獻齋, 趙靜霞, 蔡楚生

Premiere: Palace, 14 Nov. 1930

Taoli zhengyan 桃李爭艷 (Competition between Peach and Plum), 10 r, sound

Dir: 李萍倩

Scr: 李萍倩

Ph: 王士珍

Cast: 孫敏, 葉秋心, 王徵信, 顧蘭君, 尤光照, 徐莘園

Premiere: Lyric, 16 Apr. 1936

APPENDIX I

Tian qilang 田七郎 (Tian Qilang), 10 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 殷民遺

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 張慧沖, 肖英, 朱飛, 肖養素, 王獻齋, 黃君甫, 趙靜霞, 李麗娜

Premiere: Palace, 26 Jun. 1927

Tieban honglei lu 鐵板紅淚錄 (Iron Plate and Red Tears), 8 r

Dir: 洪深

Ass. Dir: 沈西苓, 高梨痕

Scr: 陽翰笙

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 王瑩, 陳凝秋, 王徵信, 謝雲卿, 朱孤雁

Premiere: Strand, 12 Nov. 1933

Tiexue qingnian 鐵血青年 (The Youth of Iron), 10 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 朱染塵

Ph: 王士珍, 董克毅

Cast: 夏佩珍, 鄭小秋, 胡蝶

Premiere: Palace, 31 Dec. 1931

* *Tixiao yinyuan* 啼笑因緣 (Fate in Tears and Laughter), 6 episodes, sound

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 嚴獨鶴

Original: *Tixiao yinyuan* by Zhang Henshui 張恨水

Ph: 董克毅, 王士珍, James Williamson

Cast: 鄭小秋, 胡蝶, 夏佩珍, 肖英, 王獻齋, 嚴月嫻, 龔稼農

Premiere: Nanking, 26 Jun. 1932

Tongchou 同仇 (The Common Enemy), 8 r

Dir: 程步高

Scr: 夏衍

Ph: 王士珍

Cast: 王瑩, 陳凝秋, 謝雲卿, 嚴月嫻, 王獻齋

Premiere: Strand, 27 Apr. 1934

Tongxue zhiai 同學之愛 (A Love Story between the Classmates), aka. *Yijiao ti chuqu* 一腳踢出去 (Kick him out), 11 r

Dir: 張石川, 洪深

Scr: 洪深

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 龔稼農, 丁子明, 黃君甫

Premiere: Palace, 21 Jun. 1928

Weihun qi 未婚妻 (Fiancee), 9 r

Dir: 卜萬蒼

APPENDIX I

Scr: 卜萬蒼
Ph: 湯傑, 胡壽山
Cast: 張織雲, 龔稼農, 王獻齋, 黃君甫, 宋懌紅
Premiere: Palace, 4 Sep. 1926

Weiqi congjun 為妻從軍 (Join the Army for my Wife), 9 r
Dir: 湯傑, 王吉亭
Cast: 龔稼農, 梁賽珍
Premiere: 6. May 1931

Weiqin xisheng 為親犧牲 (Sacrifice for the Family), 9 r
Dir: 張石川
Scr: 殷民遺
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 張織雲, 朱飛, 湯傑, 黃君甫, 王獻齋, 肖英, 周履安
Premiere: Palace, 20 Feb. 1927

Wuming yingxiong 無名英雄 (The Unknown Hero), 10 r
Dir: 張石川
Scr: 滄海後人
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 張慧沖, 宣景琳, 肖英, 徐素娥, 譚志遠, 湯傑, 王吉亭
Premiere: Palace, 5 Feb. 1927

Xiafeng qiyuan 俠鳳奇緣 (Knight-errant Phoenix), 12 r
Dir: 張石川
Scr: 鄭正秋
Original: *Xiafeng qiyuan* (by Li Hanqiu 李涵秋)
Ph: 石世磬
Cast: 楊耐梅, 毛劍佩, 鄭小秋, 朱飛, 黃君甫, 趙靜霞, 王獻齋
Premiere: Palace, 2 Nov. 1927

Xiandai yi nüxing 現代一女性 (A Modern Girl), 9 r
Dir: 李萍倩
Scr: 艾霞
Ph: 周詩穆
Cast: 孫敏, 艾霞, 徐莘園, 唐月倩
Premiere: Palace, 16 Jun. 1933

* *Xiangchou* 鄉愁 (Nostalgia for My Hometown), 11 r, sound
Dir: 沈西苓
Scr: 沈西苓
Ph: 周詩穆
Cast: 高倩蘋, 宣景琳, 趙丹, 孫敏, 梅熹
Premiere: Strand, 19 Jun. 1935

Xiangcao meiren 香草美人 (Tobacco Beauty), 9 r

APPENDIX I

Dir: 陳鏗然
Scr: 馬文源, 洪深
Ph: 周詩穆
Cast: 夏佩珍, 王徵信, 謝雲卿
Premiere: Strand, 26 Nov. 1933

Xianü jiu furen 俠女救夫人 (A Female Knight Errant Rescues A Madam), 10 r

Dir: 鄭正秋
Scr: 鄭正秋
Ph: 周克
Cast: 胡蝶, 丁子明, 龔稼農, 黃君甫, 王吉亭
Premiere: Palace, 19 Dec. 1928

Xiao Lingzi 小玲子 (Little Lingzi), 10 r, sound

Dir: 程步高
Scr: 歐陽予倩
Ph: 王士珍
Cast: 談瑛, 王獻齋, 趙丹, 舒繡文, 龔稼農
Premiere: Lyric, 21 Oct. 1936

Xiao pengyou 小朋友 (Little Friends), 11 r

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 鄭正秋
Original: *Ku'er liulang ji* 苦兒流浪記 (by 包天笑)
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 宣景琳, 鄭小秋, 黃君甫, 王獻齋, 文少如, 傅綠痕, 邵莊林, 王吉亭
Premiere: Palace, 30 Jun. 1925

Xiao qingren 小情人 (Little Lovers), 11 r

Dir: 鄭正秋
Ass. Dir: 高梨痕, 譚志遠
Scr: 鄭正秋
Ph: 胡壽山
Cast: 鄭小秋, 倪紅雁, 傅綠痕, 王獻齋, 黃君甫, 趙琛, 張敏吾
Premiere: Palace, 13 Jun. 1926

Xiao yingxiong Liu Jin 小英雄劉進 (Little Hero Liu Jin), 9 r

Dir: 程步高
Ph: 周詩穆
Cast: 鄭小秋, 王吉亭, 夏佩珍
Premiere: Palace, 7 Sep. 1929

Xin xiyou ji 新西遊記 (New Journey to the West), 10 r

Dir: 張石川
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 鄭小秋, 王吉亭, 夏佩珍, 黃君甫, 譚志遠
Premiere: Palace, 28 Sep. 1929

APPENDIX I

Xin xiyouji 新西遊記 2 (New Journey to the West, Episode II), 10 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 張石川

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 鄭小秋, 王吉亭, 夏佩珍, 譚志遠, 高倩蘋, 謝雲卿

Premiere: Palace, 2 Jan. 1930

Xin xiyouji 新西遊記 3 (New Journey to the West, Episode III), 10 r

Dir: 張石川, 程步高

Scr: 張石川

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 鄭小秋, 王吉亭, 夏佩珍, 譚志遠

Premiere: Palace, 6 Apr. 1930

** *Xinjiu Shanghai* 新舊上海 (Old and New Shanghai), 9 r, sound

Dir: 程步高

Scr: 洪深

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 舒繡文, 王獻齋, 黃耐霜, 朱秋痕, 顧梅君, 袁紹梅

Premiere: Lyric, 1 May 1936

* *Xinren de jiating* 新人的家庭 (The Family of a New Couple), 11 r

Dir: 任矜蘋

Scr: 顧肯夫

Ph: 卜萬蒼

Cast: 張織雲, 楊耐梅, 汪福慶, 王元龍, 張慧沖 張慧沖, 王獻齋, 邵莊林, 黎明暉, 宣景琳

Premiere: Carlton, 4 Jan. 1926

* *Xiongdì xing* 兄弟行 (Brother's Tour), 10 r, sound

Dir: 程步高

Scr: 徐卓呆

Ph: 王士珍

Cast: 高占非, 胡蝶, 朱秋痕, 肖英, 舒繡文, 嚴工上

Premiere: Lyric, 10 Jan. 1936

Xuelei bei 血淚碑 (Tablet of Blood and Tears), 11 r

Dir: 鄭正秋

Ass. Dir: 高梨痕, 龔稼農

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 石仲衡

Cast: 丁子明, 阮玲玉, 王獻齋, 鄭逸生, 肖英

Premiere: Palace, 11 Sep. 1927

Xuelei huanghua 血淚黃花後集 (Yellow Flowers in Blood and Tears, Episode II), 10 r

Dir: 鄭正秋, 程步高

APPENDIX I

Scr: 鄭正秋
Ph: 周克, 董克毅
Cast: 胡蝶, 龔稼農, 王吉亭, 譚志遠, 王獻齋, 夏佩珍
Premiere: Palace, 9 Jun. 1929

Yanchao 鹽潮 (Salt Tide), 9 r

Dir: 徐欣夫
Scr: 鄭伯奇, 阿英
Original: by 樓適夷
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 胡蝶, 王徵信, 孫敏, 王獻齋, 王夢石, 顧梅君, 唐巢父
Premiere: Strand, 5 Jan. 1934

Yapo 壓迫 (Oppression), 9 r

Dir: 高梨痕
Scr: 洪深
Ph: 王士珍
Cast: 龔稼農, 夏佩珍, 嚴月嫻, 孫敏, 徐莘園
Premiere: Palace, 16 Aug. 1933

** *Yasui qian* 壓歲錢 (A New Year Coin), 9 r, sound

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 夏衍
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 龔秋霞, 胡蓉蓉, 黎明暉, 李麗蓮, 龔稼農, 舒繡文, 王獻齋, 應茵, 王吉亭, 嚴工上, 孫敏
Premiere: Lyric, 10 Feb. 1937

Yeben 夜奔 (Escape at Night), 9 r, sound

Dir: 程步高
Scr: 陽翰笙
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 梅熹, 談瑛, 徐莘園, 夏霞, 孫敏
Premiere: Lyric, 27 Apr. 1938

Yehui 夜會 (City of Night), 9 r, sound

Dir: 李萍倩
Scr: 姚蘇鳳
Ph: 王士珍
Cast: 龔稼農, 顧蘭君, 黃耐霜, 謝俊
Premiere: Lyric, 6 Nov. 1936

Yelai xiang 夜來香 (Tuberose), 12 r, sound

Dir: 程步高
Scr: 程步高
Ph: 王士珍
Cast: 趙丹, 胡蝶, 孫敏, 舒繡文, 尤光照, 王夢石, 顧蘭君

APPENDIX I

Premiere: Strand, 3 Oct. 1935

Yige hongdan 一個紅蛋 (A Red Egg), 9 r

Dir: 程步高

Ph: 周克

Cast: 高倩蘋, 周文珠, 龔稼農, 高占非, 譚志遠

Premiere: Palace, 5 Jun. 1930

Yige Shanghai xiaojie 一個上海小姐 (A Shanghai Lady), 9 r

Dir: 程步高

Ass. Dir: 葉良德

Ph: 王士珍

Cast: 趙靜霞, 王吉亭

Premiere: Palace, 20 Nov. 1931

Yige xiao gongren 一个小工人 (A Child Worker), 10 r

Dir: 鄭正秋

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 王漢倫, 鄭小秋, 龔稼農, 肖英, 倪紅雁

Premiere: Palace, 10 Nov. 1926

* *Yinmu yanshi* 銀幕艷史 (An Amorous History of the Silver Screen), 18 r (2 episodes)

Dir: 程步高

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 宣景琳, 譚志遠, 王徵信, 肖英, 高倩蘋, 梁賽珍

Premiere: Palace, 17 Feb. 1931

Yinxing xingyun 银星幸运 (Lucky Silver Stars), 10 r, sound

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 朱石麟

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 鄭小秋, 胡蝶

Premiere: Star, 21 May 1932

Yongshi jiumei ji 勇士救美記 (A Brave Men Rescues a Beauty), 9 r

Dir: 湯傑, 王吉亭

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 高倩蘋, 龔稼農, 王徵信, 王夢石

Premiere: Palace, 1 Jan. 1931

Yongyuan de weixiao 永遠的微笑 (Forever Smiling), 9 r, sound

Dir: 吳村

Scr: 劉吶鷗

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 胡蝶, 龔稼農, 龔秋霞, 徐莘園

Premiere: Lyric, 15 Jan. 1937

APPENDIX I

Youhun 誘婚 (Coercive Marriage), aka. *Aiqing yu xurong* 愛情與虛榮 (Love and Vanity), 12 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 周劍雲

Ph: 汪煦昌, 董克毅

Cast: 楊耐梅, 鄭鷓鴣, 馬徐維邦, 鄭正秋, 黃君甫, 王獻齋

Premiere: Olympic, 31 Oct. 1924

Yuli hun 玉梨魂 (Jade Pear Spirit), 10 r

Dir: 張石川, 徐琥

Scr: 鄭正秋

Original: *Yuli hun* (by 徐枕亞)

Ph: 汪煦昌

Cast: 王漢倫, 王獻齋, 楊耐梅, 鄭鷓鴣, 黃君甫, 任潮军

Premiere: Olympic, 9 May 1924

Yuren yongbie 玉人永別 (Farewell to the Beauty), 10 r

Dir: 鄭正秋

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 王士珍, 吳蔚雲

Cast: 龔稼農, 鄭小秋, 肖英, 王徵信, 宣景琳

Premiere: Palace, 26 Nov. 1931

Zaisheng hua 再生花 (Rebirth of the Flowers), 11 r, sound

Dir: 鄭正秋

Ass. Dir: 鄭小秋

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 胡蝶, 高占非, 宣景琳, 嚴月嫻, 鄭小秋

Premiere: Strand, 25 Dec. 1934

Zaosheng guizi 早生貴子 (May You Soon Give Birth to a Distinguished Son), aka. *Lao kangli* 老伉儷 (The Old Couple), 9 r

Dir: 洪深

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 宣景琳, 張敏吾, 趙琛, 王獻齋, 宋懌紅, 趙靜霞, 黃君甫

Premiere: Palace, 27 Feb. 1926

Zhandi lixian ji 戰地歷險記 (Adventure on the Battlefield), 8 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 陶耐忍

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 龔稼農, 胡蝶, 鄭小秋, 胡萍, 王徵信, 徐莘園, 艾霞

Premiere: Palace, 14 Jan. 1933

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Zhandi xiao tongbao 戰地小同胞 (Child on the Battlefield), 10 r

Dir: 鄭正秋

Ass. Dir: 蔡楚生

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 顏鶴鳴

Cast: 鄭小秋, 高倩蘋, 謝雲卿, 趙靜霞, 譚志遠

Premiere: Palace, 21 Nov. 1929

Zhang Xinsheng 張欣生, aka. *Baoying zhaozhang* 報應昭彰 (Retribution), 12 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 鄭正秋

Ph: 張偉濤

Cast: 鄭鷓鴣, 王獻齋

Pr: Olympic, 16 Feb. 1923 (Chinese New Year's Day)

Zhanlan hui 展覽會 (Exposition), 9 r

Dir: 陳鏗然

Scr: 王乾白

Original: *Linjia puzi* 林家鋪子 (The Lin Family's Shop) by Mao Dun

Ph: 陳晨

Cast: 夏佩珍, 王徵信, 謝雲卿, 孫敏

Premiere: Strand, 21 Jan. 1934

Zhenjia qianjin 真假千金 (Real and Fake Daughters), 9 r

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 殷民遺

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 宣景琳, 鄭小秋, 朱飛, 黃君甫, 王獻齋, 王吉亭

Premiere: Palace, 24 Aug. 1927

** *Zhifen shichang* 脂粉市場 (The Cosmetic Store), 9 r, sound

Dir: 張石川

Scr: 夏衍

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 孫敏, 胡蝶, 龔稼農, 嚴月嫻, 王獻齋, 胡萍, 艾霞

Premiere: Strand, 14 May 1933

** *Zimei hua* 姊妹花 (Twin Sisters), 11 r, sound

Dir: 鄭正秋

Ass. Dir: 沈西苓

Scr: 鄭正秋

Original: *Guiren yu fanren* 贵人与犯人 (The noble and the criminal) by 鄭正秋

Ph: 董克毅

Cast: 胡蝶, 鄭小秋, 宣景琳, 譚志遠, 顧梅君

Premiere: Strand, 14 Feb. 1934

Ziyou zhihua 自由之花 (Flower of Freedom), 11 r, sound

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Dir: 鄭正秋
Ass.Dir: 高梨痕
Scr: 鄭正秋
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 龔稼農, 胡蝶, 鄭小秋, 夏佩珍, 肖英
Premiere: Nanking, 22 Dec. 1932

Zizi de beiju 姊姊的悲劇 (A Tragic Tale of My Sister), 9 r

Dir: 高梨痕, 王吉亭
Scr: 胡萍
Cast: 鄭小秋, 胡萍, 龔稼農, 王獻齋, 王夢石, 王徵信, 朱秋痕
Premiere: Palace, 15 Sep. 1933

Zuihou zhi liangxin 最後之良心 (Last Conscience), 10 r

Dir: 張石川
Scr: 鄭正秋
Ph: 董克毅
Cast: 宣景琳, 王獻齋, 肖養素, 黃君甫, 林雪懷, 王吉亭, 嚴仲英
Premiere: Palace, 2 May 1925

Appendix II Tables

Only *pinyin* is given for film titles in the tables below. For Chinese characters and English translations, refer to Filmography (228-55).

Table 1.1 Exhibition of Mingxing's early films

title	theatre	running period	length of consecutive runs	admission fee (Yuan)
<i>Huaji dawang youhu ji Laogong zhi aiqing</i>	Olympic (夏令配克)	1922/10/5-8	4	R* 0.6, 0.9, 1.2 Y 0.8, 1.2, 1.5
<i>Danao guai xichang Wantong</i> three newsreels	Olympic	1923/1/26-28	12	0.7, 1.2, 1.5
	Empire (恩派亞)	1923/1/28-31		0.2, 0.4, 0.6
	Hongkew (虹口)	1923/2/1-2		0.1, 0.2, 0.3
	China (萬國)	1923/2/3-4		
	Carter (卡德)	1923/2.5-6		
<i>Zhang Xinsheng</i>	Olympic	1923/2/16-19	27	1, 1.2, 1.5
	Empire	1923/2/22-25		0.3, 0.5, 0.8
		2/26-27		0.3, 0.5
	Carter	1923/2/28, 3/1-3		0.2, 0.4
		3/4		
	Hongkew	1923/3/4-7		0.3, 0.4
	China	1923/3/8-11		0.3, 0.5
	Gonghe (共和)	1923/3/12-15		
	Carter	1924/1/9-10		0.2, 0.3
	Carter	1924/2/27-3/3		R 0.2, 0.4 Y 0.3, 0.5
	Hongkew	1924/3/5-11		R 0.2, 0.3 Y 0.3, 0.5
	Zhabei (閘北)	1924/7/12		
	Fajie (法界)	1924/7/18		
<i>Gu'er jiuzu ji</i>	Shenjiang (申江)	1923/12/21-25	97	R 0.3, 0.5, 0.7, 1 Y 0.4, 0.7, 0.9, 1.2
		1923/12/26-27		
	Empire	1923/12/28-1924/1/3		R 0.2, 0.4, 0.6 Y 0.3, 0.5, 0.7

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	Carter	1924/1/4-8		0.2, 0.4, 0.6
	Hujiang (滬江)	1924/1/9-13		R 0.2, 0.3, 0.5 Y 0.3, 0.4, 0.6
	Gonghe	1924/1/14-17		
	Zhongguo (中國)	1924/1/19-20		
	Zhabei	1924/2/5-10		0.2, 0.3
	Zhongguo	1924/2/9-11		R 0.2, 0.4 Y 0.24, 0.48
	Hujiang	1924/2/12-14		
	Empire	1924/2/19-26		0.2, 0.3, 0.7 R 0.2, 0.4, 0.6 Y 0.3, 0.5, 0.7
	Carter	1924/2/27-3/4		R 0.2, 0.4 Y 0.3, 0.5
	Hongkew	1924/3/5-11		R 0.3, 0.4 Y 0.4, 0.6
	Nanshi (南市)	1924/3/13-16		
	Zhabei	1924/3/20-23		0.2, 0.3
	Zhongguo	1924/3/24-27		0.2, 0.3

* R – *Richang* 日场 (day sessions); Y – *Yechang* 夜场 (night sessions)

Source: advertisements in SB and XWB.

Table 1.2 A Balance Report of Mingxing (明星歷年營業統計)

year	income (Yuan)	expenditure	profit	deficit	remarks
1926	212,396.91	155,001.92	57,394.99		1924.11 - 1926.2
1927	245,930.33	264,958.74		19,028.41	
1928	431,144.62	383,751.03	41,393.58		1927.3 - 1928.8
1929	356,562.58	331,056.79	25,505.78		
1930	551,810.97	526,305.03	25,505.93		
1931	708,357.37	688,370.54	19,986.83		
1932	559,313.57	606,634.29		47,320.62	
1933	829,149.74	914,837.13		85,687.39	
1934	687,837.58	680,809.77	7,027.81		
1935	727,097.60	669,553.45	57,544.15		

Source: *Mingxing banyuekan*, vol. 7, no. 1, 16 Oct. 1935.

Table 2.1 Mingxing's *Yuanhu* writers and films

The asterisked names are those who provided their novels for screen adaptations but did not join Mingxing's regular staff.

person	position	working period	films
Xu Zhenya	-	-	<i>Yuli hun</i> (1924)

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徐枕亞*			
Bao Tianxiao 包天笑	screenwriter	1925-1927	<i>Kelian de guiniu</i> (1925) <i>Konggu lan</i> (1925) <i>Xiao pengyou</i> (1925) <i>Duoqing de nüling</i> (1926) <i>Hao nan'er</i> (1926) <i>Furen zhi nü</i> (1926) <i>Liangxin fuhuo</i> (1926) <i>Ta de tongku</i> (1926) <i>Guaming de fuqi</i> (1927) <i>Meihua luo</i> (1927)
Song Chiping 宋癡萍	publicist	1925-1929	
Yan Duhe 嚴獨鶴	temporary employee		
Li Hanqiu 李涵秋*	-	-	<i>Xiafeng qi yuan</i> (1927)
Pingjiang Buxiao sheng 平江不肖生 (向愷然)*	-	-	<i>Daxia fuchou ji</i> (1928) <i>Huoshao Honglian si</i> (1928-1931)
Chen Lengxue 陳冷血*	-	-	<i>Baiyun ta</i> (1928)
Cheng Xiaoqing 程小青*	-	-	<i>Chuangshang renying</i> (1931) <i>Cimu</i> (1932) <i>Guohun de fuhuo</i> (1932) <i>Ke'ai de choudi</i> (1932)
Zhang Henshui 張恨水*	-	-	<i>Tixiao yinyuan</i> (1932) <i>Luoxia guwu</i> (1932) <i>Manjiang hong</i> (1933)
Yao Sufeng 姚蘇鳳	screenwriter director	1933-1937	<i>Canchuan</i> (1933) <i>Luliu qianghua</i> (1934) <i>Qingchun xian</i> (1934) <i>Fudao</i> (1934) <i>Yehui</i> (1936)
Xu Zhuodai 徐卓呆*	-	-	<i>Xiongdi xing</i> (1935) <i>Muqin de mimi</i> (1937)
Zhu Dake 朱大可	publicist	1930-?	
Fan Yanqiao 范煙橋	publicist	1935 - 1937	

Table 2.2 Mingxing's Zuoyi films

- a) The table is arranged in chronological order of these films' screenings.
b) ZDFZS: *Zhongguo dianying fazhanshi*
ZZDY: *Zhongguo zuoyi dianying yundong*
Du: Du Yunzhi, *Zhongguo dianyingshi*
CD: contemporary documents (see Chapter Two, note 44, p. 66)

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Y: The film is identified as *Zuoyi* in this source.

Y?: uncertainty because of ambiguous wording the author uses.

	title	screenwriter	ZDFZS	ZZDY	Du	CD
1	<i>Shilian</i> (1933)					Y
2	<i>Kuangliu</i> (1933)	Xia Yan	Y	Y	Y	Y
3	<i>Nüxing de nahan</i> (1933)	Shen Xiling	Y	Y	Y	Y
4	<i>Zhifen shichang</i> (1933)	Xia Yan	Y	Y	Y	
5	<i>Qiancheng</i> (1933)	Xia Yan	Y	Y	Y	
6	<i>Yapo</i> (1933)	Hong Shen	Y	Y		Y
7	<i>Chuncan</i> (1933)	Xia Yan	Y	Y	Y	Y
8	<i>Tieban honglei lu</i> (1933)	Yang Hansheng	Y	Y	Y	
9	<i>Xiangcao meiren</i> (1933)	Ma Wenyuan Hong Shen	Y	Y		Y
10	<i>Yanchao</i> (1934)	Zheng Boqi A Ying	Y	Y	Y	Y
11	<i>Zimei hua</i> (1934)	Zheng Zhengqiu	Y	Y		
12	<i>Fengnian</i> (1934)	A Ying	Y	Y	Y	Y
13	<i>Tongchou</i> (1934)	Xia Yan	Y	Y	Y	
14	<i>Shidai de ernü</i> (1934)	Xia Yan A Ying Zheng Boqi	Y	Y	Y	
15	<i>Shanghai ershisi xiaoshi</i> (1934)	Xia Yan	Y	Y	Y	Y
16	<i>Huashan yanshi</i> (1934)	Script Committee	Y	Y	Y	
17	<i>Dao xibei qu</i> (1934)	Zheng Boqi	Y	Y	Y	
18	<i>Nüer jing</i> (1934)	Xia Yan, et al.	Y	Y	Y	
19	<i>Xiangchou</i> (1935)	Shen Xiling	Y?	Y		
20	<i>Rexue zhonghun</i> (1935)	Script Committee		Y		
21	<i>Yelai xiang</i> (1935)	Cheng Bugao			Y	
22	<i>Chuanjia nü</i> (1935)	Shen Xiling	Y	Y	Y	
23	<i>Jiehou taohua</i> (1936)	Hong Shen	Y	Y	Y	
24	<i>Xinjiu shanghai</i> (1936)	Hong Shen	Y?	Y		
25	<i>Haitang hong</i> (1936)	Ouyang Yuqian	Y?	Y		
26	<i>Xiao lingzi</i> (1936)	Ouyang Yuqian	Y?	Y		
27	<i>Shengsi tongxin</i> (1936)	Yang Hansheng	Y	Y	Y	
28	<i>Qingming shijie</i> (1936)	Yao Shennong	Y?	Y		
29	<i>Yasui qian</i> (1937)	Xia Yan	Y	Y	Y	
30	<i>Shizi jietou</i> (1937)	Shen Xiling	Y	Y	Y	
31	<i>Shehui zhihua</i> (1937)	Hong Shen	Y?	Y		

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32	<i>Malu tianshi</i> (1937)	Yuan Muzhi	Y	Y	Y	
33	<i>Yeben</i> (1938)	Yang Hansheng	Y	Y	Y	

Table 2.3 Zuolian and Julian writers at Mingxing

The table is arranged in chronological order (i.e. the time when these figures joined Mingxing).

name	post at Mingxing	working period	affiliation with the CCP, <i>Zuolian</i> (ZL), or <i>Julian</i> (JL)
Hong Shen 洪深	script consultant screenwriter director	1925-9.1933 (contributed scripts till 1937)	ZL, JL
Tian Han 田漢	screenwriter		ZL, JL, CCP (since 1932)
Xia Yan 夏衍	script consultant screenwriter	5.1932-10.1934	CCP, ZL, JL
A Ying 阿英	script consultant screenwriter	5.1932-10.1934	CCP, ZL
Zheng Boqi 鄭伯奇	script consultant screenwriter	5.1932-10.1934	ZL, JL
Yang Hansheng 陽翰笙	special screenwriter (特約編劇)		CCP, ZL, JL
Shen Xiling 沈西苓	director screenwriter	1932-late 1935, 7.1936 -1937	JL, CCP?
Ouyang Yuqian 歐陽予倩	head of the Script Committee director screenwriter	10.1935-1937	JL
Yuan Muzhi 袁牧之	director screenwriter actor	1936-1937	JL
Ying Yunwei 應云衛	executive of the Studio II (二廠廠務主任) director	10.1935-3.1937	JL
Ke Ling 柯靈	head of the publicity division (宣傳科長) chief editor of <i>Mingxing banyuekan</i>	autumn 1932-2.1936, 7.1936-2.1937	JL
Tang Na 唐納	member of the Script Committee	10.1935-	JL (Film Critic Group)
Situ Huimin 司徒慧敏	sound technician		JL
Zhao Dan 趙丹	actor	1933-1937	JL
Wang Ying 王瑩	actress	11.1932-1934	JL

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Hu Ping 胡萍	actress	autumn 1932 -	JL
Chen Bo'er 陳波兒	actress	1934, 1936-1937	JL, CCP (since 1937)
Shu Xiuwen 舒繡文	actress	1935-1937	JL
Ye Luqian 葉露茜	actress	1936-	JL

Source: "Mingxing yingpian gongsi zhongyao zhiyanyuan biao 明星影片公司重要職演員表" (*Mingxing banyuekan* 6.1, 16 July 1936), "Zhongguo zuoyi xijujia lianmeng mengyuan mingdan 中國左翼戲劇家聯盟盟員名單" (*Zhongguo zuoyi xijujia lianmeng shiliao ji*, pp. 446-53), ZDFZS, *Diansheng*, *Zuolian cidian*.

Table 2.4 "GMD writers" at Mingxing

name	position	working period	works
Yao Sufeng 姚蘇鳳	screenwriter	2?.1933-	<i>Canchun</i> (1933)
			<i>Lulu qianghua</i> (1934)
			<i>Fudao</i> (1934)
			<i>Qingchun xian</i> (1934)
			<i>Yehui</i> (1936)
Wang Pingling 王平陵			<i>Chonghun</i> (1934)
Liu Na'ou 劉訥鷗	Script Committee member	10.1935-6.1936	<i>Yongyuan de weixiao</i> (1937)
Huang Tianshi 黃天始	Script Committee member	10.1935-?	

Source: ZDFZS, MB, XWB

Table 6.1 Costume drama/martial arts films produced by Mingxing, 1926-1931

	Mingxing's total output	costume drama/ martial arts films	title
1926	11	1	<i>Wuming yingxiong</i>
1927	13	4	<i>Tianqi lang</i> <i>Chechi guo</i> <i>Xiafeng qi yuan</i> <i>Shandong Ma Yongzhen</i>
1928	15	5	<i>Cai zhuangyuan jianzao Luoyang qiao</i> <i>Daxia fuchou ji</i> three episodes of <i>Burning</i>
1929	16	7	six episodes of <i>Burning</i> <i>Xiao yingxiong Liu Jin</i>
1930	17	8	seven episodes of <i>Burning</i> <i>Qiangdao xiaozi</i>
1931	21	2	two episodes of <i>Burning</i>

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total	93	27	
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(Source: MXNB)

Table 7.1 City/Countryside in *Shehui pian*, *Zuoyi* and Yao Sufeng's films

	Title	screenwriter	Heroes/Heroines (positive characters)	Villains (negative characters)
<i>Shehui pian</i>	<i>Kelian de guinii</i> (1925)	Bao Tianxiao		Wang Xiaolian 汪小蓮 (a Chaibai party member in Shanghai)
	<i>Furen zhi nü</i> (1926)	Bao Tianxiao		Kang Fengzhu 康鳳珠 (a Shanghai lady indulged in urban entertainment)
	<i>Ta de tongku</i> (1926)	Bao Tianxiao		Cheng Yancheng 程彥丞 (a rich playboy in Shanghai)
	<i>Feng da shaoye</i> (1925)	Hong Shen		Feng Jiayao 馮家耀 (Suzhou-born young man living a dissipated life in Shanghai)
	<i>Siyue li de qiangwei chuchu kai</i> (1926)	Hong Shen		Yu Zhaotang 余兆棠 (a bank manager who is extremely fond of women)
	<i>Aiqing yu huangjin</i> (1926)	Hong Shen		Huang Zhijun 黃志鈞 (a young educated man in Shanghai who abandons his fiancée for his boss' daughter)
<i>Zuoyi</i>	<i>Yanchao</i> (1933)	Zheng Boqi and A Ying	Chen Bingsheng 陳炳生 (a young peasant)	Hu Xinwu 胡心吾 (a good-for-nothing boy from a Shanghai rich family)
	<i>Chuanjia nü</i> (1935)	Shen Xiling	Tie'er 铁儿 (an honest and diligent young man who works at a spinning mill in Hangzhou)	Sun Yizhou 孙一舟 (an artist from a Shanghai wealthy family)
	<i>Xiao Lingzi</i> (1936)	Ouyang Yuqian	A Mao 阿毛 (a young peasant who redeems	Jia Youqing 贾佑清 (landlord's son who

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			her girl friend from a cabaret in Shanghai)	lives in Shanghai)
	<i>Dao Xibei qu</i> (1934)	Zheng Boqi	Xiao Laohu 小老虎 (a country girl)	Manli 曼麗 (a city girl whose father runs a real estate firm)
	<i>Tongchou</i> (1934)	Xia Yan	Xiaofen 小芬 (a station agent's daughter)	Manlin 曼琳 ("social butterfly"/ <i>jiaoji hua</i> 交際花)
GMD	<i>Canchun</i> (1933)	Yao Sufeng		Jin Meili 金梅麗 (a "modern" college girl from a well-to-do family who marries a soccer athlete but later is seduced by a <i>chaibai</i> party playboy she meets at a night club)
	<i>Fudao</i> (1934)	Yao Sufeng	Ruizhi 瑞之 (the hero's wife who is working hard to earn money for him)	Baosheng 保生 (a college student indulging in a dissipated life in the city)
	<i>Yehui</i> (1936)	Yao Sufeng		a good-for-nothing rich boy
	<i>Luliu qianghua</i> (1934)	Yao Sufeng	"city" in general	"countryside" in general
	<i>Qingchun xian</i> (1934)	Yao Sufeng	Zhao Jin 趙進 (teacher of a vocational school in his home town; later a train driver)	Jiang Hong 江宏 (a bank employee in Shanghai, moral corrupted)

Table 7.2 Three patterns of "Love and Revolution" in *Zuoyi* and non-*Zuoyi* films

	<i>remedy mode</i>	<i>conflict mode</i>	<i>transformation mode</i>
<i>Zuoyi</i>	<i>Nüxing de nahan</i> (1933)	<i>Tongchou</i> (1934)	<i>Huashan yanshi</i> (1934)
		<i>Shidai de ernü</i> (1933)	<i>Shengsi tongxin</i> (1936)
non- <i>Zuoyi</i>	<i>Xiandai yi nüxing</i> (1933)	<i>Yuren yongbie</i> (1931)	<i>Guohun de fuhuo</i> (1932)
	<i>Yuli hun</i> (1924)	<i>Hao nan'er</i> (1926)	

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Lists of Primary Source Materials

I list (I) most newspapers and periodicals which I have consulted for this research; (II) online databases and digital libraries from which some of my primary research data are obtained; (III) archival documents mainly from *Shanghai dang'an guan* 上海檔案館 (Shanghai Municipal Archives, SMA); (IV) a full list of cited journal articles and books. The entries in the first three sections are arranged alphabetically by title/name. In section IV, anonymous articles are arranged alphabetically by title; followed by articles arranged alphabetically by author.

I. Newspapers and Periodicals

Beiyang huabao 北洋畫報 (Pei-yang Pictorial)
Chenbao 晨報 (Morning Post)
Chunsheng ribao 春聲日報 (Spring Voice Daily)
Damei wanbao 大美晚報 (Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury)
Diansheng 電聲 (Movietone)
Dianying 電影 (Movie Monthly)
Dianying yuebao 電影月報 (Cinema Monthly)
Dianying zazhi 電影雜誌 (Movies Magazine)
Minguo ribao 民國日報 (Republican Daily)
Mingxing banyuekan 明星半月刊 (Mingxing Semimonthly)
Mingxing tekan 明星特刊 (Mingxing Special Issue)
Mingxing yuebao 明星月報 (Mingxing Monthly)
Minli bao 民立報 (People's Rise)
Minquan bao 民權報 (People's Right)
Qingqing dianying 青青電影 (Qingqing Film)
Shenbao 申報 (Shanghai Daily)
Shibao 時報 (Eastern Times)
Wanxiang 萬象 (Panorama)
Xiandai dianying 現代電影 (Modern Screen)
Xinju zazhi 新劇雜誌 (New Play Magazine)
Xin Shijie ribao 新世界日報 (New World Daily)
Xinwenbao 新聞報 (Daily News)
Yingmi zhoubao 影迷週報 (Movie Fans Weekly)
Yingxi zazhi 影戲雜誌 (Motion Picture Review)
Yingxi shenghuo 影戲生活 (Movie Weekly)
Zhongguo yingxun 中國影訊 (China Cinema News)
Zhongyang dianying jiancha weiyuan hui gongbao 中央電影檢查委員會公報 (News Bulletin of CFCC)
Zhongyang ribao 中央日報 (Central Daily News)

II. Online Databases and Digital Libraries

CADAL (高等學校中英文圖書數字化國際合作計畫, China-America Digital Academic Library): <http://www.cadal.zju.edu.cn/Index.action>

NDLOC (中國國家數字圖書館, National Digital Library of China):
http://res4.nlc.gov.cn/index_mg.jsp?channelid=75011
 ZDQQS ("Zhongguo xiandai dianying qikan quanmu shuzhi 中國現代電影期刊全目書志", Complete Bibliography of Contemporary Chinese Film Periodicals):
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III. Archival Documents

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- Mingxing gufen youxian gongsi zhangcheng* 明星股份有限公司章程 (The Statutes of the Mingxing Motion Picture Co. Ltd.), SMA, Y9-1-457.
- Mingxing yingpian gufen youxian gongsi diwu jie juesuan baogao* 明星影片股份有限公司第五屆決算報告 (1927.3.1-1928.8.31) (The Fifth Annual Report of the Mingxing Motion Picture Co. Ltd.), SMA, Y9-1-459.
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