

# Remaking Chinese Cinema

Through the Prism of  
Shanghai, Hong Kong,  
and Hollywood

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香港大學出版社

HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

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First published in the United States of America by University of Hawai'i Press

Published for distribution in Australia, Southeast and East Asia by:

Hong Kong University Press

The University of Hong Kong

Pokfulam Road

Hong Kong

[www.hkupress.org](http://www.hkupress.org)

ISBN 978-988-8139-16-3 (*Paperback*)

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Designed by University of Hawai'i Production Department

Printed and bound by Kings Time Printing Press Ltd. in Hong Kong, China

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## *The Goddess*

### Tracking the “Unknown Woman” from Hollywood through Shanghai to Hong Kong

Maternal melodramas featuring self-sacrificial mothers abound in the history of world cinema. From classic Hollywood women’s films to Lars von Trier’s new-millennium musical drama *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), the mother figure works tirelessly for her child only to eventually withdraw herself from the child’s life in order to secure a prosperous future for him or her.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I trace the Shanghai and Hong Kong remaking of an exemplary Hollywood maternal melodrama, *Stella Dallas*, in the 1930s. Instead of rehashing the feminist critique of the mother figure’s marginalization, I explore why the very attempt to present virtuous, self-effacing motherhood in melodrama entails a crisis of representation. I describe the strategies of representation that emerge from the Shanghai and Hong Kong remakes’ negotiation with this crisis of representation and how these strategies of representation allegorize the remakes’ respective historical and geopolitical circumstances while enabling certain utopic visions of a different social structure. Furthermore, this chapter traces the transnational/transregional constitution of local cinema, including Cantonese cinema (*Yueyu dianying* 粤语电影) and southern Chinese cinema (*Hua’nán dianying* 华南电影), before they became what we know as Hong Kong cinema today.

*Stella Dallas* (dir. Henry King, 1925), a melodrama that has been remade several times in America (the most famous being King Vidor’s 1937 sound remake), features a lower-class mother in a small town in post-World War I Massachusetts who gives her daughter up to her former husband—a well-respected man living in New York and now married to a refined upper-class lady. By relinquishing her daughter, the mother hopes to secure the daughter’s marriage into the upper class, which means upward social mobility. At the end of the film, the mother stands outside a well-lit window on a rainy night, watching her daughter’s wedding ceremony. She then turns around and walks toward the audience with an ecstatic smile.

In 1927, the Shanghai film magazine *Yin xing* (The Movie Guide) listed this film, its title translated as *Yanzhi lei* (Rouge Tears), as one of the top ten Hollywood movies of 1926.<sup>2</sup> Over ten years later, in 1938, *Yanzhi lei* appeared again as the title of a film made in Hong Kong by Wu Yonggang (Mandarin Chinese version) and Chen Pi (Cantonese version). This film's resonance with Henry King's *Stella Dallas* and even with King Vidor's 1937 remake was subtle yet undeniable. The ending similarly shows a mother (this time a 1930s Chinese streetwalker recently released from prison) witnessing her child's (this time her son's) engagement party from outside a window on a snowy day before she disappears into the white void.

*Rouge Tears* is also an explicit remake of Wu Yonggang's 1934 directorial debut, *The Goddess* (*Shennü*). Unlike the American mother Stella Dallas, whose stigma has to do with her working-class background, the mother in Wu's two films is not just a worker, but also an illegal sex worker (or *an chang* in Chinese), euphemistically known as a *shennü*, or "goddess." In *The Goddess*, the prostitute-mother's plan is to provide her son with a modern education so that he can have a respectable life. This plan is thwarted by the communal discrimination against her, which leads to the son being expelled from school. Her second plan, to relocate with her son and start from scratch, also fails, when a local thug steals all her savings (her son's education funds) (a narrative twist that is uncannily echoed in *Dancer in the Dark*). In a fit of despair and anger, she confronts the thug and accidentally kills him, for which she is sentenced to twelve years in prison. While imprisoned, she entrusts her son to the righteous male school principal, who promises to provide her son with a good education and to tell him that his biological mother is "dead." Having relinquished her son to a respectable father figure, the mother imagines her son happy and then contentedly closes her eyes to the camera (and the audience), bringing the film to a close.

Wu's self-remake, *Rouge Tears* (1938), shot in Hong Kong four years later, when the Second Sino-Japanese War had recently broken out in China, largely reprises the narrative of *The Goddess*, yet also adds a "sequel" section. Twelve years later, the now-aged mother is released from jail on a snowy day and has the opportunity to witness her son's engagement party through the window of the school principal's house. Reassured of her son's good prospects, the mother leaves contented. Her self-sacrifice for her son's interests embodies traditional gender-sexual politics that privileges male-centered education while also dovetailing with the early-twentieth-century discursive call for a new generation of citizens. This new generation shoulders the task of rejuvenating semicolonial China; its interests are aligned with those of the nation-state. To achieve the nation-strengthening project, it is necessary to produce a new citizenry (often gendered male) through modern education. Thus, a traditional familial-social emphasis

on male-centered education acquires new urgency and justification in modern China's struggle to transcend its economic and political subjugation by the West and Japan.

Despite the narrative similarity between *The Goddess* and *Rouge Tears*, the latter has been largely obscured or occasionally mentioned only to be dismissed as Wu's minor work. The silent predecessor, *The Goddess*, in contrast, has been canonized as a leftist milestone and unanimously praised for its artistic accomplishments. Considered exemplary of Chinese silent cinema that emerged from the early- to mid-1930s golden era, *The Goddess* has been released on DVD with English subtitles and a new score by the San Francisco Silent Film Festival in 2004 and by University of Hong Kong Press in 2005. The film is also available for high-quality streaming at [archive.org](http://archive.org).<sup>3</sup> Together these factors have made *The Goddess* the most popular Chinese silent film with international art house and academic viewers and its leading star, Ruan Lingyu (1915–1935), the best-known silent-era Chinese actress for Western film scholars.

Indeed, Ruan Lingyu's depiction of the tragic mother in this film has been universally celebrated as the soul of the film. Additionally, her suicide on March 8, 1935, in the prime of her life, which uncannily mirrored the fate of many of her screen personae, precipitated heated debate that has since fueled public speculation, nostalgia, and legendification of the 1930s Chinese tragedy queen. Meanwhile, the film has been considered a leftist masterpiece owing to its perceived direct depiction of social oppression. Nevertheless, no attention has been paid to the film's allegorical relationship with its geopolitical context. To recontextualize the film's hypervisible aesthetics and pathos, and to decipher the ways in which it allegorizes its historical, political circumstances, I triangulate *The Goddess* with its Hollywood "before" (i.e., *Stella Dallas*) and its Hong Kong "after" (i.e., *Rouge Tears*), and compare their strategies of representation, especially with regard to their figuration of the gendered experience of urban modernity in post-World War I New England and the pre-World War II Shanghai.

The connections between the three films were historically overdetermined rather than accidental, given China's saturation by Western cinema—a situation caused and reinforced by Western subjugation of China in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> The fundamental connection is the genealogy between the Western genre of melodrama and the Chinese genre commonly known as the family ethics drama (*jiating lunli ju* 家庭伦理剧), which was first developed by Shanghai's Star Film Studio (Mingxing Dianying Gongsi 明星电影公司) in the mid- to late 1920s. Both genres privilege the domestic space associated with a female/mother figure. Yet, contrary to *Stella Dallas*' single-minded focus on the domestic space, Wu's two films show how the mother's domestic space is increasingly threatened and

eventually obliterated by the negative social space occupied by the prostitute (the other side of the “goddess”) and the thug.

The vying spaces (home versus urban street) and the corresponding schizophrenic mother-prostitute figure symbolize China’s semicolonial sociopolitical contradictions. Her abject sexuality contradicts and threatens her maternal virtue, just as the urban street encroaches on the home, foregrounding China’s gender and class inequality. These conditions are further complicated (even aggravated) by China’s semicolonial state and the attendant exploitative relationship in the economic, cultural, and political realms. In other words, the mother-prostitute’s relationship with the diegetic domestic and social space parallels lower-class women’s gendered experience with the urban space on the extradiegetic level; both are circumscribed by gender, class, and subaltern politics inherent in urban modernity, on the one hand, and semicoloniality, on the other.

To unpack exactly how China’s semicolonial circumstances imprint Wu’s remaking of *Stella Dallas* and, conversely, how his remakes envision a more desirable, utopic future, I compare Wu’s different strategies of representing abject female sexuality in *The Goddess* and *Rouge Tears*. These strategies are not just formal devices, but are allegorical of ideological conditions that endured from 1934 Shanghai to 1938 Hong Kong, accompanied by shifting sociopolitics and technologies of film production. French critic Pierre Macherey describes these conditions as the “unconscious of the work,” which precedes and circumscribes the production of the work and is figured into the work through an “effort of expression.”<sup>5</sup> My term, “strategy of representation/figuration,” underscores precisely such an “effort of expression” as an overdetermined process of negotiating the crisis of representing the abject. This negotiation, started in *The Goddess* and rehearsed in its remake, *Rouge Tears*, was undertaken by a male humanist filmmaker whose utopic vision of a better society both foregrounded the gender issue in semicolonial China and left the issue glaringly irresolvable.

In the pages that follow, I argue that *Rouge Tears*, instead of being the inferior remake of *The Goddess*, actually offers a perspective to politicize the aesthetics of *The Goddess* (including Ruan Lingyu’s performance). Furthermore, the fact that *Rouge Tears* was made in Hong Kong in Cantonese as well as Mandarin Chinese calls attention to the locality of southern China, especially its role in constructing a southern Chinese regional cinema vis-à-vis Chinese national cinema. This also has significant ramifications for the interactions between the regional and the national subject positions. On this basis, I suggest that *Rouge Tears* adumbrates southern Chinese regional consciousness despite its reenactment of the Shanghai-centered narrative.<sup>6</sup>

## Beginning with the Ending: An “Unknown Woman’s” Quest for “Feminine Difference”

Western film scholarship on *Stella Dallas* has so far focused on King Vidor’s 1937 sound remake for MGM. Given the close resemblance between the endings of the 1925 silent version and the 1937 sound version, arguments stimulated by the latter largely pertain to the former as well. In my analysis, I emphasize the silent version because it was referenced by the Shanghai film magazine *Yin xing* as one of the top ten Hollywood movies in 1926;<sup>7</sup> thus, it was likely to have contributed to Wu’s conception of *The Goddess* (which predated Vidor’s sound version) as well as *Rouge Tears* (which followed the Chinese title of the silent *Stella Dallas*).

In both versions of *Stella Dallas*, the ending shows the lower-class mother, having witnessed her daughter’s successful marriage into the upper class through a large window of a mansion, turning away from the scene and walking toward the camera (and the audience) with an ecstatic smile on her face. While feminist critics agree on the mother’s self-abnegation, they disagree on how the (female) audience relates to the disappearing (albeit happy-looking) lower-class mother figure. For E. Ann Kaplan, the ending implicates the spectator “in this process of rejection [of Stella as good mother],” thereby clinching “Stella’s position as absent Mother.”<sup>8</sup> Linda Williams, on the contrary, describes the female spectator as being “divided,” capable of experiencing empathy for Stella’s sacrifice, while at the same time recognizing the ideological contradictions that lead to the character’s predicament.<sup>9</sup> Teresa de Lauretis further underscores the “doubled vision” of the feminist critic (a special type of spectator), as both Woman and women, as both female and feminist. The “twofold pull” constitutes their simultaneous pleasure and displeasure at inclusion and exclusion by dominant discourses.<sup>10</sup> All these positions revolve around the feminist critique of the classic Hollywood film apparatus for its inscription of patriarchal ideology. Williams and de Lauretis complicate the critique by acknowledging the spectator’s ambivalent position vis-à-vis the gender-biased film apparatus.

Stanley Cavell, in contrast, disregards the ideological implications of the classic Hollywood film apparatus and reads Stella’s walking away as a self-affirming gesture that suggests “the woman’s demand for a voice, for a language, for attention to, and the power to enforce attention to, her own subjectivity, say to her *difference of existence*.”<sup>11</sup> Cavell forcefully defines Stella’s achievement of individual difference as one that entails self-exclusion from the mainstream community. This reading leads to a reversal of the order; it is the woman that gains freedom and subjectivity by exiling herself from the domestic space, whereas the wealthy family in the mansion remains trapped in an illusion. “In fancying Stella walking away as one continuation of Nora walking out, there is the additional moment to consider of



her *walking toward us*. Again, a house is turned away from, one that for a woman contains (self-)destructive illusion, or a way of illusory perception she had taken as reality, a way allegorized as a perception of the film screen.”<sup>12</sup> Stella’s “pain of individuation” is predicated on loss, or what the American transcendentalists (such as Emerson and Thoreau) describe as the “mourning as grieving.” Just as “mourning as grieving” may become “morning as dawning or ecstasy,”<sup>13</sup> the loss also makes possible the “difference of existence.” Stella’s walking away thus exemplifies the possibility for the “unknown woman” to achieve happiness outside the marriage bond and the maternal role.

Cavell’s reading goes against the feminist critique and affirms Stella’s individual agency. Yet to pursue such a transcendentalist thesis, Cavell needs not only to ignore the ideological implications of the film apparatus (which do exist, even if nontotalizable), but also to disregard the post-World War I American sociopolitical conditions that shape Stella’s working-class origins and limit her options.

For an attempt to empower female characters without complete decontextualization, we can turn to Miriam Hansen. Drawing upon the Habermasian “public sphere,” Hansen’s argument focuses on women’s empowerment by modernity. It applauds the emergence of “vernacular modernism” for offering “a sensory-reflexive horizon for the experience of modernization and modernity.”<sup>14</sup> This new sensory-reflexive horizon in turn gives rise to the female flaneur, or the female figure who derives pleasure and agency from navigating the modern urban space while defying the pathologizing gaze at her as a prostitute.<sup>15</sup> The emphasis on women’s enhanced visibility, mobility, and empowerment in the modern urban space seeks to describe women’s multifaceted vernacular experiences with urban modernity as a new mode of production, consumption, and existence. However, such an understanding of modernity tends to evade colonial and subaltern politics, and thereby risks short-circuiting the entrenched gender, class, and colonial power hierarchies.

*The Goddess* and *Rouge Tears* foreground precisely such power hierarchies that underpinned colonial modernity in 1930s China. Colonial modernity, as Tani Barlow defines it, means that modernity in colonies and the so-called semicolonized Shanghai and China is inextricably bound up with global coloniality.<sup>16</sup> Overlaid upon the preexisting gender and class hierarchies, colonial modernity deepens the difficulty of representing abject female sexuality in the modern urban space. Wu’s films register precisely his negotiation with the crisis of representation as manifested in (1) the films’ “effort of expression” in order to mediate gender, class, and colonial politics in 1930s China into the film space, or the diegetic “scenography” (à la David Bordwell);<sup>17</sup> and (2) the films’ utopic projections of a different future that correspond with their respective strategy of representation.

To address the dialectic relationship between the film and its geopolitical background, I begin with its in-film analogy, that is, the relationship between the figure and the ground within the scenography. Here the figure refers to the mother at home, and the ground refers to the prostitute on the street. The home's invasion and contamination by the street is analogous with the film's imprinting or searing by semicolonial China's geopolitical conditions.

### **Beyond the Limits of Epistemology: Recognizing the "Unknown Woman"**

In 1980, Wu Yonggang recalled that in the 1920s he used to commute daily between the art school he was attending and Unique (Tianyi 天一) Film Production, where he worked as an art designer.<sup>18</sup> From the tram, he caught sight of clusters of young women, with painted faces and forced smiles, roaming the night streets of Shanghai. After repeated encounters with this nightscape, he finally realized that these young women were *an chang*, or illegal prostitutes. Realizing his feebleness as "a weak petty bourgeois intellectual," which prevented him from making a direct social intervention, he decided to express social criticism via an oil painting. This imaginary painting would depict "a dim street lamp, under which stands a woman with her face covered with lipstick, rouge, and misery." She would emblemize "people's miseries" in the "dark society."<sup>19</sup> Although the painting was never realized, Wu eventually translated this imaginary still image into moving images on the screen in *The Goddess* (1934), his directorial debut produced by United China Photoplay and Publishing Service (Lianhua Yingye Yinshua Gongsi 联华影业印刷公司).

Two details of Wu's account demand further examination. The first has to do with the difficulty of recognizing and identifying the illegal streetwalker from the background—Shanghai's night streets. The fact that the women were perceived as hardly distinguishable from the street had to do with Wu's surprise encounter with them through a single glance. The beam of light from the passing tram rendered his glance akin to a long shot, with everything happening in the background. To be able to make the distinction between the women and the street and to comprehend the economic and social positioning of these painted streetside women demanded the filmmaker's persistent inquiry, which pushed beyond his habitual epistemological frame defined by his class and gender role. Aside from his epistemological limits, Wu's account also brings up issues regarding the efficacy of artistic representation (in contrast with social action) and the specificity of the film medium (as compared to oil painting). Writing in 1980, Wu described his selection of artistic representation as an inferior stand-in for the more desirable

social activism, which he was not capable of owing to his status as “a weak petty bourgeois intellectual.”

If Wu voluntarily performed self-criticism in 1980 (to demonstrate his compliance with the post-1949 ultraleftist revolutionary ideology) in privileging social activism over artistic representation, he simultaneously affirmed artistic representation as an indispensable vehicle for comprehending a street scene that he initially failed to make sense of. Interestingly, his first vision, an oil painting, depicting a solitary woman with a painted face under a dim, solitary street lamp, would be textured, mimetic, yet decontextualized from the messy and befuddling night scene he actually encountered. Both the streetwalker and the street would become visual icons, which would serve to produce an exposé of China's semifeudal, semicolonial condition. When this mental image was ultimately transcoded and remediated into moving images in 1934, Wu deployed the strategy of *xieyi* 写意, or sketch, as a strategy of representing abject female sexuality. In 1938, when Wu remade the film as *Rouge Tears*, *xieyi* was replaced by *gongbi* 工笔, or detailed elaboration. Both strategies of representation stemmed from Wu's negotiation with the problematic of figuring abject female sexuality in combination with specific film technologies in the context of China's colonial modernity.

Having been subjugated by Western forces since 1842 (when China was defeated by the British Empire in the First Opium War), China further suffered Japan's repeated incursions from 1894 on, culminating in the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. When Japan invaded China on September 18, 1931, occupying northeast China, and then bombing Shanghai on January 28, 1932, nationalism came to the fore, triggering leftist participation in filmmaking and criticism, which precipitated the emergence of leftist cinema in the early to mid-1930s. When the full-scale Second Sino-Japanese War broke out on July 7, 1937, followed by another round of Shanghai bombing on August 13, China's film industry was completely reconfigured. Major film studios in Shanghai like Star and United China Photoplay and Publishing Service folded. Large numbers of film and theater workers migrated from Shanghai to Hong Kong and inland China, directly boosting film and theatrical activities in those areas. The massive migration also led to more collaborations between Shanghai and southwest China, on the one hand, and Hong Kong, on the other, as exemplified by *Rouge Tears*.

Meanwhile, on the technological side, Chinese cinema completed the transition from the silent to the talkie era.<sup>20</sup> This transition combined with the governing Nationalist Party's (Guomindang) banning of the use of Cantonese in talkies made within China led to the flourishing of the Cantonese film industry in Hong Kong, the British colony.<sup>21</sup> It was precisely under such tumultuous and constantly shifting sociopolitical and technological circumstances that Wu

made his two film attempts (*The Goddess* and *Rouge Tears*) to deliver a humanist social exposé through the trope of an illegal prostitute roaming Shanghai's night streets.

### Figuring the “Unknown Woman”: Mother in the Sweet Home or Prostitute on the Joyless Street?

In Wu Yonggang's projects, the attempt to embody the illegal prostitute crystallizes the fundamental problematic of representation. The need for a euphemism, *shennü* (goddess), for the low-class, illegal streetwalker suggests her unfigurability. This difficulty is further complicated by Wu's lack of understanding (as a male intellectual-artist) of the reality of low-class prostitution, which is indicated in his initial cryptic image of the “painted woman” (a mute image in the distance), an image that defies his cognitive and epistemological comprehension. In other words, whereas Wu's social conscience leads him to articulate social criticism, he cannot automatically relate or have access to the existential conditions of the subaltern, low-class streetwalker.

In his 1934 essay written shortly after the release of *The Goddess*, Wu reflected on his lack of “living knowledge,” which circumscribed his strategy of representation:

When starting to write the script, I wanted to focus more on [the prostitutes'] actual life experiences. But *my circumstances* made this impossible. To hide this weakness, I *shifted to maternal love while consigning prostitution to the background* by depicting an illegal prostitute struggling between two lives for the sake of her child. I used an exploitative thug to propel the plot. I also put words of justice into the mouth of an upright school headmaster, letting him expose the social cause of prostitution. I did not offer a solution to the problem. *My circumstances* only allowed me to cry out for sympathy and justice. I recognize my cowardice, which led to a humble attempt.<sup>22</sup>

This apologia offers a glimpse into Wu's representational strategy of deflecting from prostitution to motherhood, which creates a melodramatic, Manichean plot structure polarized between virtue and vice—a contradiction that meets no resolution at the end. This strategy is necessitated by the hampering “circumstances” that Wu refers to twice without any clarification. One could speculate that such circumstances had to do with at least two factors: his lack of “living knowledge” and the Nationalist government's censorship of explicit depictions of the sex trade.

By refocusing from prostitution to motherhood, Wu does not so much resolve the representational problem as complicate it, since he now brings into being a schizophrenic female protagonist—the mother-cum-prostitute (as opposed to a one-dimensional character). This schizophrenic figure is manifested in three formats: the verbal text (i.e., intertitles), the still image (i.e., the background image of the title cards), and, most important of all, the moving images (i.e., the film's scenography). In the verbal text, the opening title describes the schizophrenic mother-prostitute in these terms: "The prostitute struggles in the whirlpool of life. In the streets of the night, she is a lowly prostitute. When she holds her child up, she is a saintly mother. Between these two lives, she has shown her formidable character."<sup>23</sup> This is visualized in the still image on which the titles are superimposed. The image is a relief depicting a nude woman with her arms tied behind her back as she struggles to bend down to nurse her baby.<sup>24</sup> If the intertitle, being verbal, bypasses the difficulty of visualization, the relief short-circuits the difficulty of visualizing prostitution by transcoding it to the generic, symbolic image of captivity and enslavement. In both cases, the act of prostitution is distanced (if not totally disavowed) through metaphors ("struggling in the whirlpool of life" and kneeling with her hands tied behind her back), while the mother figure (holding up and nursing the child) is directly visualized up close.

The same bifurcation characterizes the film's scenography, including the narrative, mise-en-scène, and cinematography. As a family ethics drama that shares Western melodrama's emphasis on the sanctified home space, *The Goddess* presents a Manichean structure of the home (with the mother, the son, and the school headmaster as the good father figure), on the one hand, and the night street (the prostitute and the thug as the bad father figure), on the other. Revolving around the Manichean structure, *The Goddess* vacillates between the foreground (i.e., the home and the mother) and the background (i.e., the street, prostitution, and the local thug). Given the importance of the street scenes, I describe the illegal street-walker's experience of the urban space as "street modernity"—a concept partially derived from Patrice Petro's study of Weimar era "street film."<sup>25</sup>

The "street" in *The Goddess* is neon-lit, showcasing modernity and commercial attractions along with their exploitative underbelly. This "street's" real-life model could be Nanjing Road and its vicinity, which could also be where Wu first caught sight of the roaming illegal streetwalkers during his nightly commute. Running westward from the Bund, cutting through the east part of the International Settlement,<sup>26</sup> Nanjing Road emerged as Shanghai's commercial center in the 1930s, lined with international landmarks and three major modern department stores: Sincere (Xianshi), Wing On (Yong'an), and Sun Sun (Xinxin). These stores were launched in Hong Kong by overseas Chinese businessmen and then expanded to Shanghai. The neon lights of the store names writ large in the night sky appear

frequently in 1930s films set in Shanghai, including *The Goddess*. As such, they constitute a major visual spectacle in pre-1949 Shanghai cinema.<sup>27</sup>

However, the spectacularly cosmopolitan Nanjing Road and its vicinity coexisted with low-class prostitution, fueled by an expanding number of urban poor that partially resulted from the influx of rural women escaping the deteriorating economy in the countryside.<sup>28</sup> On the surface, the gendered moral degeneration in the city resembles Petro's exemplary "street film," *The Joyless Street* (1925). However, China's subaltern position and colonial modernity determine that the female characters' urban experiences depicted in Chinese films must be understood as emblematic of the global colonial political economy.

To the extent that Shanghai's social exposé films oftentimes feature the urban street as the site of pedestrian and underclass experiences as well as dramatic twists (especially in the female character's fate),<sup>29</sup> I use "street modernity" to characterize these films' depiction of the impact of colonial modernity on the urban poor who depend on the street for their means of living. The notion of "street modernity" is specifically geared for understanding gender- and class-specific experiences in a Chinese treaty port, which, significantly, echoes what Mary L. Pratt calls the "contact zone." This zone is characterized by "copresence, interactions, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power."<sup>30</sup> Given its concern with and critique of the "asymmetrical relations of power," *The Goddess*, unsurprisingly, portrays the prostitute as a victim and Shanghai's night street as a site of urban commerce traversed by systemic exploitation and violence. Modernity in this context is thus inherently ambivalent, mirroring the schizophrenic character of the mother-prostitute.

As an apt visual embodiment of the ambivalent "street modernity," the schizophrenic mother-prostitute figure also registers the unrepresentability of abject female sexuality in the contact zone of Shanghai. As Wu admits, the mother figure is foregrounded as the positive and unproblematic image precisely in order to circumvent the difficulty of representing prostitution. Furthermore, prostitution, as manifested in the streetwalking sequences, is not depicted directly, but rather suggested through oblique and elliptical camera work. Wu describes this strategy of representation as *xieyi* (sketch), an aesthetic tradition drawn from a style of classical Chinese brush painting. It literally means "expressing the intent," "abstract[ing] the elements of graphic discourse in order to represent a meaning which transcended form."<sup>31</sup> Trained as a set designer, Wu uses *xieyi* to emphasize the suggestive and evocative effect. He sees the setting as being truthful to reality but not mimetic. It should be adapted to "narrative need and aesthetic choice." The principle of *anshi* (suggestiveness) should precede and determine the tone of color and the mise-en-scène.<sup>32</sup> Both *xieyi* and *anshi* seek to "convey a meaning subtly through *simple composition* . . . not embellishments."<sup>33</sup> Wu's conception of

*xieyi* and suggestive evocation characterizes the three highly acclaimed aesthetic moments in *The Goddess*, which all occur in the streetwalking sequences.

The first scene begins with the hustle and bustle of the neon-lit Shanghai street. Then the camera identifies the prostitute walking up from the background, loitering on the street. A man is shown following her. She looks back and down, as the camera tilts down her flashy, close-fitting *qipao* dress (a tell-tale sign of her job), pauses, then cuts to the sunrise of the following morning, when she walks out of a hotel in a long shot, tidying her hair.

The second instance begins with the prostitute leaving home, walking into the background as the gossipy neighbor women point their fingers. The shot of her back is suddenly lit up, then lap-dissolves into a close-up shot of the lower train of her *qipao* (with the lace lining showing at the side slit), her foot tapping on the streetside pavement. The camera holds on this detail, while capturing other feet passing by in the background, until a pair of shining male leather shoes approach to her right, her feet turning toward his and pausing. The camera then tracks the four feet walking screen right in sync, the lace lining revealed in luminous lighting,<sup>34</sup> while gradually dissolving into an interior shot, showing domestic objects including a dresser mirror and laundry on a clothesline (Figure 1.1). When the



**Figure 1.1** A tracking shot showing four feet walking screen right while dissolving into the interior scene in the mother-prostitute's home in *The Goddess*



dissolve ends, we see the prostitute pushing open a door and back in her own home, her image reflected in the dresser mirror right next to the door. The only sign of her nocturnal transaction is a medium shot of the stash of bills she takes out of her purse.

The last instance of streetwalking is even more elliptical. One single overhead shot from an unauthored perspective captures a woman standing under a street lamp, a suited man walking up, she nodding, and both walking out of the frame, fading out.<sup>35</sup>

All three streetwalking sequences privilege the aesthetics of suggestive evocation (or *xieyi*) through unusual camera angles, luminous lighting, and elliptical editing. The focus on the anonymous feet evokes Lotte Eisner's observation that the urban street "cannot be evoked by faces and bodies, only by the movements of legs and feet."<sup>36</sup> The feet-street symbiosis forms the substratum of street life—the pedestrian energy that animates the neon-lit urban nightscape and the vibrant urban display culture. It is also counterpoised to the interior shots that emphasize the mother's face. When the mother appears at home, the camera work largely adopts the style of Hollywood glamor shots, focusing on her luminously lit face, emphasizing the aura effect and her tranced look into the distant space. These glamor shots elevate the mother to saintly ethereality (Figure 1.2).



**Figure 1.2** Close-up of the mother (Ruan Lingyu) looking into the distance in a trance



Whereas both the face shot and the feet shot are enchanting, their ramifications are drastically different. The interior shots aim to identify and glamorize the mother's face, thereby sanctifying the home space. The street shots, in contrast, painstakingly exclude the face by focusing on the feet, the shimmering dress, and the foreshortened body (in the perpendicular overhead shot). Undoubtedly, the enchantment of anonymous quotidian elements (the feet, the train of a dress, the pavement, and the gas light) on the pedestrian street produces unconventional and excessive visual appeal, thus triggering cinephilia. Nevertheless, whereas European cinephilia theory tends to attribute subversive potential to unexpected visual excess,<sup>37</sup> I understand Wu's cinephiliac streetwalking sequences as symptomatic of the difficulty of representing illegal prostitution and abject female sexuality.

To understand why these cinephiliac sequences should be interpreted symptomatically, we need first to examine the authorship of the street shots or from whose perspective(s) the shots originate. To the extent that the street shots exclude the face, rendering the nocturnal business anonymous and subjectless, prostitution becomes both decontextualized and literalized as an act of streetwalking disconnected from an identifiable agent who does the walking. The extreme low angle and extreme high angle framing that produce the truncating effect apparently exist independent of any empirical subject or character. This echoes what Slavoj Žižek describes as an "empty, a priori gaze that cannot be pinpointed as a determinate reality."<sup>38</sup> Drawing on Lacan's argument of the "split between the eye and the gaze,"<sup>39</sup> Žižek sees the a priori gaze as a function of unconscious desire, which preexists and shapes the subjectivity of what is seen. Such an a priori gaze signifies the "primordial address by the Other" and constitutes a "formal 'condition of possibility' of our seeing anything at all."<sup>40</sup> By defining the gaze as the "condition of possibility" for seeing, Žižek points up an underlying structure of the scopic regime.

To extend this argument for the cinephiliac streetwalking scenes in *The Goddess*, I suggest that the overarching "address by the Other" not only enables seeing, but also conditions seeing from certain angles while excluding others. That is, revelation simultaneously entails concealment. Understood in connection with Wu's reference to the hampering circumstances that made direct depiction of existential prostitution impossible, we may argue that the hampering conditions, combined with his lack of living knowledge of low-class prostitution, constituted precisely the "address of the Other" that produced the unconventional framing, the truncating and defamiliarizing effect, and the elliptical editing. Consequently, abject female sexuality and gendered subaltern existence of the urban space become deflected and disavowed.<sup>41</sup> In place of the prostitute on the street, Wu posited the mother at home—symbol of the normal social order—as the central figure of the film. The mother in the foreground thus fulfills two apparently contradictory functions:

(1) surrogating and repressing the prostitute in the (back)ground and (2) mediating and figuring (i.e., pointing *toward*) the unfigurable prostitute by pointing *at* itself as a surrogate (albeit inadequate) image.

Wu's suggestive sketch (*xieyi*) style (manifested in the haloed mother figure and the cinephiliac streetwalking sequences) does not simply circumvent the difficulty of representing abject female sexuality. It also encourages aestheticization and depoliticization, thus releasing the audience from the obligation of critical realism. This compromised politics was detected by some leftist critics, despite the overall praise for the film's aesthetics and the leading actress Ruan Lingyu's superb performance. Wang Chenwu (1911–1938) (aka Chen Wu), a leftist critic, for instance, argued that the focus on depoliticized maternal love “overshadowed, even annulled the film's social message,” which implied Wu's “inability to confront the social structure as the root of all problems.”<sup>42</sup>

Wang Chenwu correctly intuited the representational problem. However, his reductive diagnosis of Wu's ideological limitation foreclosed the opportunity of examining Wu's laborious negotiation with the representational crisis. This negotiation involves two aspects that can be called *Repräsentation* and *Vertretung* (both translate into “representation” in English). The crisis of *Repräsentation* resides in the difficulty of externalizing a mind picture of prostitution in the film medium owing to ideological constraints and the delimited representational scheme of the maternal melodrama or family ethics drama. The crisis of *Vertretung* has to do with the impossibility of speaking on behalf of the subaltern, given Wu's distancing from that social sector. Wu's sketchy and evocative (*xieyi*) representational strategy is symptomatic precisely of these two aspects of representational crisis. Thus, to take the aesthetic street sequences at face value would elide the underlying geopolitical structure of colonial modernity. Through a symptomatic rereading of Wu's *xieyi* strategy of representation, I foreground *The Goddess*' allegorical connection with its geopolitical circumstances, thereby repoliticizing its sketchy, elliptical style.

The repoliticizing approach also enables a new understanding of Wu's sound remake of *The Goddess*, *Rouge Tears*, released in Hong Kong on December 16, 1938—one year after the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in mainland China. *Rouge Tears* has fallen into critical oblivion; both the director, Wu Yonggang, and the leading actress, Hu Die, fail to mention it in their memoirs. The few contemporary commentaries dismiss the film for its political conservatism and artistic “regression.”<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, back in the late 1930s, *Rouge Tears* occupied a more ambiguous position. It was pitched as a moving tragedy and “one of the most successful artworks,”<sup>44</sup> while also being criticized as a representative of the “poisonous,” profit-oriented Hong Kong cinema that “focused on feudal, fantastical, superstitious, and sensuous subjects.”<sup>45</sup> Such contradictory evaluations

are indicative of the gap between the progressive discourses that demanded Hong Kong (cinema)'s allegiance to China's nationalist wartime ideology, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, Hong Kong's heterogeneous film practices in which leftist and nationalist cinema did not monopolize but rather coexisted and competed with genres that were less explicitly nationalist, such as folklore, fantasy, horror, and sensuous drama. Indeed, these reputedly backward and poisonous local productions mushroomed in May 1938 and climaxed in July, which provoked the mainland Nationalist government's renewed film regulation and censorship.<sup>46</sup>

The difficulty of positioning and evaluating *Rouge Tears* was further complicated by the fact that it was not exactly a local Hong Kong production, but more a translocal collaboration that led to Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese versions (similar to early multilanguage talkies made for different markets by Euro-American film companies). It was produced by the Shanghai-based Xinhua Yingye Gongsi 新华影业公司 (New China Film Company), headed by the King of Advertisement, S. K. Chang (Zhang Shankun) 张善琨 (1905–1957),<sup>47</sup> in collaboration with the Hong Kong-based Nanyue Yingpian Gongsi 南粤影片公司 (Nanyue Film Studio), founded by a Shanghai émigré, Zhu Qingxian 竺清贤. Starting out as a sound technician, in 1932 Zhu invented the Qingxian Brand sound recording system, which became Nanyue's house brand. Two directors, Xinhua's Wu Yonggang and Nanyue's Chen Pi, helmed the Mandarin and Cantonese versions respectively, with two casts that shared only the leading actress, Hu Die 胡蝶, and the actor who played her son, Li Keng 黎铿 (who also played the son in *The Goddess*).

The reason that the remake was done in Hong Kong had to do with wartime exigencies (mass migration of film workers from Shanghai to Hong Kong as well as inland) and S. K. Chang's business ambition of harnessing Hong Kong talent and its market.<sup>48</sup> Among the film workers who migrated to Hong Kong with the outbreak of the war were Hu Die, Shanghai's 1933 "Movie Queen," and Li Keng. To cast them as the mother and son in the sound remake necessitated shooting in Hong Kong, which also successfully harnessed Hu's bilingual capacity as a Cantonese native raised in northern China (and thus proficient in both Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese), not to mention cashing in on her residual value as the "Movie Queen."

By remaking the film in Hong Kong at a time when the rest of China was embroiled in the war and after the original leading actress, Ruan Lingyu, had committed suicide in 1935, the production crews faced two main absences, that of the figure (Ruan and her definitive rendition of the mother-prostitute), and that of the (back)ground (the Shanghai street). These absences led to the challenge of *Vorstellung*, or bringing back and imitating what was past and absent.<sup>49</sup> To compensate for the two absences and to take advantage of the sound technology, Wu adopted

a strategy of representation that can be described as elaboration, or *gongbi*. Originating as a traditional painting style that is opposed to *xieyi*, *gongbi*, according to Wu, refers to elaborated lighting, fine delineation, and profuse colors. The strategy of *gongbi* through elaboration and excessive detailing in *Rouge Tears* leads to the reversal of the relationship between the figure (mother-home) and the (back)ground (prostitute-street), which in turn demystifies the cinephiliac moments in *The Goddess* by exposing the underlying representational crisis and geopolitical structure.

Like the *xieyi* strategy that is amply illustrated in the streetwalking scenes in *The Goddess*, the *gongbi* style is also most clearly demonstrated in the corresponding sequences.<sup>50</sup> In *The Goddess*, the night streetscape is conjured with the dancing neon lights of two major department stores (Sincere and Wing On). The two montage sequences of kinesthetic neon lights, one at the beginning of the film and the other toward the end, do not simply signal Shanghai's alluring urban street modernity; more important, they suggest the eruption of the (back)ground (street) into the foreground (home), posing an increasing threat to the mother figure.

To re-create the neon-lit skyline in Hong Kong, the remake mounts full-scale audio-visual elaboration. First, it adds a fast-paced, sometimes jazzy and sometimes comic nondiegetic music score, highlighting the bustling night street crowd and illicit dealings and desires. In addition, it presents an overabundance of neon signs of commodity brands popular with Chinese-speaking communities in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia. These signs embody border-crossing commercial culture, which facilitates a transportable skyline. The neon signs do not directly refer to or reflect the Shanghai night skyline, but rather imply the latter through resemblance and association. Thus, they function as what the semiotician C. S. Peirce would call the icon of Nanjing Road (and commercial Shanghai by extension), contradistinguished from the neon signs in *The Goddess*, which are indexical (in the Peircian sense), that is, directly referring to Shanghai's urban night life.<sup>51</sup>

The third aspect of re-presenting (in the sense of *Vorstellung*) the absent Shanghai urban streetscape is the addition of a new character—a salacious rural man whose perspective focalizes the commercial attractions. Unlike *The Goddess*, in which the street and streetwalking scenes are mostly shot from a distanced and/or contrived perspective, manifesting what Žižek calls the “primordial address of the Other,” *Rouge Tears* presents the street scenes at a much closer range, from the country rube's perspective. His gaze not only interweaves various street attractions, but also occupies an ambiguous position, being simultaneously privileged as a male gazer with moderate purchasing power and discriminated against and exploited as a low-class, vulnerable rube. Thus, even as he is ogling the scantily dressed female mannequin (whose bare legs are planted in the foreground), he is

spotted by the urban thug, who subsequently steals the rube's wallet. His desire for "commodity-experience" (to borrow Anne Friedberg's term)<sup>52</sup> ironically coincides with his being turned into a commodity by the urban gaze that originates from street modernity and the streetwise commercial drive.

These graphic audio-visual insertions and additional peripheral plot conjure Shanghai's night streetscape in excessive detail. By deploying an embodied perspective (from the country rube), the remake reconnects the gaze and the eye, rendering scopophilia (i.e., the desire to see, often associated with voyeurism) explicitly male, possessive, and objectivizing. This is demonstrated in the remake's detailed visualization of the commercial and exploitative trade that animates the night street. In *The Goddess*, the exploitative streetside flesh trade is implied through cinephiliac streetwalking scenes, as discussed earlier. It is also prefigured by the semantic interchangeability that emerges from the juxtaposition of the prostitute, the pawnshop, and the swimsuited female mannequin displayed in a store window. The analogy between these images rests on the audience's interpretation. *Rouge Tears*, on the contrary, parades images that are rendered emphatically exchangeable commodities by the rube's salacious gaze. These fetishized images include the neon lights, the scantily dressed female mannequin, meat being chopped by a butcher, and, finally, the prostitute. The buxom physique of Hu Die, the leading actress in *Rouge Tears*, in contrast to the light build of Ruan Lingyu, makes the pun on the meat/flesh trade all the more pungent, even inappropriately comic.

Along with the night streetscape, the streetwalking scenes are also more elaborated. Contrary to the de-faced, elliptical, and aestheticized streetwalking sequences in *The Goddess*, Hu Die's prostitute puts on her signature single-dimpled smile to all male passers-by who visibly despise and ridicule her. She is also shown accepting money from the thug, then sleeping soundly with him, only to lose the money again when the thug gets up early and takes it back. These details materialize the flesh-for-money business and the prostitute's pathetic failure. They do not suggest the director's better understanding of existential conditions of prostitution but are rather intended to emphasize the prostitute's vulnerability and exploitation. Nevertheless, by making the mother's prostitution disconcertingly unaesthetic and undeniable, these details also inadvertently suggest her incompetence and irredeemability. The excessive elaboration produces what Roland Barthes calls the "reality effect," or "contamination by the real."<sup>53</sup> The "real" here refers to the unmotherly, illegal, and undeniable streetside low-class life, and the economic, geopolitical circumstances that spawn the sex industry.

The "real" also literally taints the son's memory of his mother in *Rouge Tears*. When the thug robs her of her last earnings, she confronts him and accidentally kills him in the presence of her son (the son is absent in the corresponding sequence in *The Goddess*). In the spirit of elaboration, the violence is graphically visualized

for the son and the audience as the camera captures the thug's bloody head in extreme frontal close-up. Twelve years later, the grown-up son is to remember the mother's tearful face in combination with the gory scene of murder. The layering of the abject over the virtuous encapsulates the entire film's "contamination by the real," which undermines the theme of sublime motherhood.

Thus, contrary to Wu's suggestive aesthetics in *The Goddess*, which shifted the spectatorial interest from prostitution to motherhood, *Rouge Tears* breaches the representational convention of the maternal melodrama (and the family ethics drama initiated in Shanghai) by inadvertently drawing the audience attention to the unmotherly figure. The resulting frustration of the audience's expectations may have contributed to the obscurity of *Rouge Tears*, contrary to *The Goddess*' canonization as a landmark leftist film from the silent era. This contrast has also dominated the audience's perception of Hu's acting in *Rouge Tears* vis-à-vis Ruan's acting in *The Goddess*. A 1939 Shanghai review made this clear in comparing the Mandarin version of *Rouge Tears* with *The Goddess*, when both were simultaneously rerun in different theaters. According to the reviewer, *Rouge Tears* demonstrated more sophisticated techniques (possibly resulting from the sound technology), yet Hu's acting paled next to Ruan's.<sup>54</sup>

This comparison reinforces the essentialist discourse of fit between the actor and the role. It privileges Ruan's supposedly natural and innate match with the tragic mother role over Hu's natural mismatch. Yet, as I demonstrate below, just as the unmotherly streetwalker can easily contaminate virtuous motherhood, Hu's "misfit" also works to denaturalize Ruan's "fit." This reversal enables us to reevaluate *The Goddess* vis-à-vis *Rouge Tears* and *Stella Dallas*, thereby politicizing the subaltern remaking of the genre of maternal melodrama in 1930s Shanghai and Hong Kong.

To demystify Ruan's "fit" with her character, I start with Roy Armes' contention that whereas "the star and all the things he or she represents are *not* an *inevitable* part of the cinema," the establishment of a star means that his or her communication with the audience is "direct and total—to be a fan is in a way to be *in love* with the star."<sup>55</sup> In the case of Ruan, the "love" makes the audience forget the initial arbitrary relationship between the star and the role, resulting in reification of the fit. Ruan's presumed genetic link with her muted "goddess"<sup>56</sup> is premised precisely on the audience's participation in constructing the "fit" and then taking the construct for a fact. Overshadowed by Ruan's naturalized rendition of the mother-prostitute character, Hu Die's reenactment becomes what Marvin Carlson would call "ghosting," a form of acting that trails external associations linked with another context.<sup>57</sup> Hu's ghosting is two-layered—as a well-known actress in a new role and as a different actress rehearsing an old role. In both cases, her ghosting involves incongruence between what is presented and what is expected. This leads

the audience to conveniently dismiss Hu's rerendition of the mother-prostitute figure as a misfit.

In addition to Ruan's reified acting style, the negative reception of Hu's reenactment can also be attributed to the audience's anxiety with the sound technology and its potential destruction of the quiescent aesthetics of silent cinema. Armes' description of the impact of sound on the star image is again instructive. He argues that sound brings dreamlike silent-era stars "down to earth," making them "more ordinary and more human."<sup>58</sup> As if to illustrate Armes' description, Barthes contrasts Greta Garbo and Audrey Hepburn in terms of "concept" versus "substance," "Idea" versus "event," the former being distant and transcendental whereas the latter is rooted in materialist, mundane reality.<sup>59</sup> This sound-induced earthy turn parallels the shift from Ruan's "metaphysical" figure, inspired by a noble self-sacrificial spirit, untainted by any base desire," to Hu Die's unapologetically corporeal and contaminated rendition.<sup>60</sup>

As a result of audio-visual elaboration (achieved through the use of sound and detailed overcompensation for the absences of the Shanghai street and the original leading actress), Hu's excessive mimesis of Ruan's mother-prostitute figure ends up both bearing and baring the "contamination by the real." This is manifested in the interpenetration between the figure and the ground, or between the noble mother at home and the base prostitute on the street. Jean Baudrillard describes such dedifferentiation in terms of "the obscenity of the visible," which amounts to a "pornography of information."<sup>61</sup> In *Rouge Tears*, the "pornography of information" redoubles the pornography of prostitution, not in the sense of excessive sexualization but rather in the sense of excessive audio-visualization of abject desires and transactions that animate the street and streetwalking sequences.

On the surface, *Rouge Tears* may be a "failure" (compared to *The Goddess*) in terms of aesthetics and audience's reception. Nevertheless, the failure is productive because it demystifies the quiescent aesthetics of *The Goddess* and contributes to exposing the underlying geopolitics of Wu's remaking. The subversive power of *Rouge Tears* stems from its strategy of elaboration or excessive mimesis (*gongbi*), which is used to remediate the predecessor film and to represent abject female sexuality. As discussed in my introduction, translation produces *Nachleben*, or afterlife, that unfolds and fulfills what is encrypted in *Urgeschichte*, or prehistory, according to Walter Benjamin.<sup>62</sup> In my context, a remake, as a form of translation, develops and brings out what is implicit in its filmic predecessor(s). Such fulfillment does not end in a unified vessel made up of matching pieces of texts and translations, as Benjamin envisions.<sup>63</sup> Rather, it produces what Derrida calls the "dangerous supplement,"<sup>64</sup> which supplements while also replacing the "original." The afterlife's fructification and reorientation of its prehistory challenge us to analyze the ways in which *Rouge Tears* repositions and resignifies *The Goddess*.



We may start by examining how Hu Die's ghosting deconstructs Ruan's quiescent aesthetics and "natural fit" with the muted mother-prostitute character.

To understand Hu's ghosting as Ruan's "dangerous supplement," I refer to John O. Thompson's concept of the "commutation test," which is a method of testing the effects of a particular type of acting by substituting one actor with another.<sup>65</sup> This test allows us to denaturalize the first actor's "fit" and to "grasp units which were previously invisible, submerged in the smooth operation of the sign system in question."<sup>66</sup> In this context, what is made invisible and naturalized through Ruan's transcendental acting is abject female sexuality, which resurfaced through Hu's excessively corporeal reenactment. Hu's "dangerous supplement" derived from her "body too much," which, according to Jean-Louis Comolli, is the "surplus" that thwarts "the apparent naturalness, the familiarity of the body" by becoming "problematic, paradoxical . . . strange to itself."<sup>67</sup> Hu's surplus body (vis-à-vis Ruan and her noble mother figure) thus produces a discomforting position for the audience, forcing the latter to recognize the intractably base and materialist body of the prostitute even when the audience chooses to disavow it.

The Hu-Ruan "commutation test" brings Ruan's reified "fit" into question. That is, Hu's reenactment supplements yet also threatens to replace Ruan's acting. This Derridian "dangerous supplement" can be extended to understand *Rouge Tears*' supplementary power as a remake vis-à-vis *The Goddess*. By replacing the sketchy representation in *The Goddess* with excessive mimesis and elaboration, the street scenography (including the streetwalking scenes) in the remake seems to leap into the foreground as if through rack focus, which renders the background in sharp focus, blurring the foreground. On top of the proliferating commodities, the reconstructed Shanghai street also includes movie posters,<sup>68</sup> signs for the "national goods store" (*guohuo dian*),<sup>69</sup> and the pawnshop boss' passing observation on the cheap artificial silk that Japan is dumping into the Chinese market. By showing the street (background) erupting into the home (foreground) and allowing the prostitute to overshadow (or contaminate) the mother figure, *Rouge Tears* defamiliarizes the cinephiliac aesthetics of *The Goddess*, bringing back the unrepresentable and obscured geopolitics that underpin the predecessor film.

For Fredric Jameson, the reversal of the (back)ground and the figure brings out "something more fundamental in what might otherwise simply seem the background itself."<sup>70</sup> In my case, the "more fundamental thing" is the tension between semicolonialism and escalating nationalism. On the one hand, the street scenography displays prevalent commercialization, which reifies a human relationship into a human-object relationship (as illustrated in the country rube's gaze at urban attractions/commodities and his being turned into yet another commodity by the urban gaze). On the other hand, the "national goods" store, the movie posters, and the pawnshop owner's observation imply a deteriorating economy, the war, and



the nationalist interpellation. Such tension and symbiosis between urban commercial culture and the urban poor, between distracting entertainment and sociopolitical discourses in the semicolonial “contact zone” (Shanghai or the Shanghai look-alike re-created in Hong Kong) produces variegated experiences of urban modernity, which encompass deprivations, desires, and agitation. On the plebian level, this tension characterizes what I am calling urban China’s “street modernity,” which summarizes experiences that are oftentimes gendered female and related to the lower class in film representations.

Even when this tension, or what Jameson calls the “more fundamental thing” is brought out in the remake through the reversal of the figure and the (back)ground, its effect and topicality still depend on the audience’s discernment and sociopolitical sensitivity. For after all, the layered street signs within the scenography are commonplace, scattered, and embedded within the thick texture of the *mise-en-scène*. That is, the elaborated (back)ground does not offer an in-depth revelation of or commentary on existential prostitution or “street modernity” *per se*. Rather, it registers the director’s continued negotiation with the problematic of representing abject female sexuality, this time in the pre-Pearl Harbor Hong Kong. Such negotiation is further manifested in the two films’ utopic vision—in the form of the mother-prostitute’s hope for the future.

### Utopia: What Does an “Unknown Woman” Want?

*Stella Dallas* ends with the mother’s enraptured look after witnessing her daughter’s marriage into a higher class. Her satisfaction can be read in two ways (as laid out in the first section of this chapter): as her vicarious wish fulfillment through her daughter, which would reinscribe the gender hierarchy and patriarchy, or as her freedom to pursue her “difference of existence” independent of the bourgeois, patriarchal system of marriage and family. Whereas Stella walks away with an ecstatic smile, the mother-prostitute in *The Goddess* ends up with twelve years’ imprisonment for accidentally killing the exploitative urban thug. In the concluding sequence, the jailed mother entrusts her son to the righteous school headmaster (the ideal father figure, equivalent to Stella’s former husband) and requests that her son be informed of her “death” and provided with a decent education. After the headmaster’s departure, she is left alone in the cell, framed behind the bars, looking toward frame right, where an image of her son appears, smiling back at her, with his arms contently folded (Figure 1.3).

The last shot shows her turning around to the audience, slowly looking down, closing her eyes, seemingly reconciled with her situation. As she closes her eyes to the camera, to the audience, and to the world, the son’s image in right frame



**Figure 1.3** The mother in prison has an illusion of her cheerful son

vanishes, leaving a dark void that is also pregnant with an undefined hope. Her morphing into a blind-mute statue mirrors Norwegian sculptor Stephan Abel Sinding's *The Captive Mother*—the background image of the title cards.

This image of the happy son is usually seen as a straightforward representation of the mother's vision, which redeems her self-abnegation. Following Cavell's optimistic take, William Rothman argues that in *The Goddess*, the mother's self-denial "gives her a self on film," and that the film ultimately demonstrates "acknowledgement and affirmation of the woman herself."<sup>71</sup> Like Cavell, Rothman emphasizes individual choice while ignoring how an individual's agency is imbricated in and circumscribed by sociopolitical conditions. Consequently, the statement that the film ends with "acknowledgement and affirmation of the woman herself" homogenizes "the woman's" experiences and fails to address a lower-class mother-prostitute's experience with the "street modernity" in semicolonial China.

To emphasize the lower-class unknown woman's experience, we must emphasize her self-exclusion from the utopic image that is apparently attributed to her. Unlike Stella's walking away, the mother-prostitute's incarceration indicates the impossibility of what Cavell calls the "feminine difference." Furthermore, it suggests that she cannot partake in modernity without also falling prey to the

semicolonial urban street. To displace her from the street into the prison not only deprives her of her family, but also blocks her access to commercial and political modernity (barring her from participating in the commercial culture or in nation-state building).

The mother-prostitute's exclusion from the future calls into question her apparent authorship of the vision. Indeed, to the extent that the film originated from director Wu Yonggang's chance sighting and subsequent interest in street-side "painted" women and that the film script was encouraged and revised by leftist critics (according to Wu's 1980 account), we may see the vision and the power of anticipation as ultimately resting with the director and the supportive leftist critics. Whereas Wu and the leftists might have different attitudes toward class conflict, the former being a humanist artist, the latter more or less leaning toward Marxism, they shared a discontent with China's subjugated status. In aspiring for a strong, independent nation-state, they similarly mobilized the victimized "unknown woman" as the vehicle of their social exposé. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the utopic vision of the happy son (embodying the male-centered future of the Chinese nation-state) is ultimately lodged in the male director and his supporters, even though it was framed as the mother's vision.

Yet, to understand the male-authored utopic vision as being exclusively geared to male intellectuals' interests would negate the enduring power of the vision. This power, I would argue, derives from Wu's painstaking negotiation with his subject instead of a mere ventriloquism of her. And it endures owing to its subjunctive and provisionary nature. As Ernst Bloch suggests, utopia or the principle of hope is defined precisely by the "power of anticipation" that operates subjunctively without prescribing the future.<sup>72</sup> This principle is manifested in the mother's look of longing that evokes the son's image, apparition-like, with a responding smile. The mother's content face after seeing the vision suggests a subtle exchange with the son. To that extent, she does indeed have the power of anticipating a happy future within the diegesis.

The very vagueness and ephemerality of the vision do not annul but rather define the utopic thrust. By confronting the audience with an image that does not yield an explicit message, the vision foregrounds its own illegibility, which produces an affective impact. As Peter Brooks argues in his seminal study of novelistic melodrama, the "text of muteness," embodied in a mute character or a tableau at the climax of a melodrama, does not function as a semantic sign to be decoded but rather as a mute gesture pointing toward something beyond. It is an as-if proposition linking up the literal with the envisioned, hinting at "another reality."<sup>73</sup> In this sense, the mother-prostitute's muteness and self-blinding (closing her eyes to the world) literalize Brooks' "text of muteness," and the vision of her happy son can be seen as her as-if proposition that points toward a future beyond her current

incarceration. Such a nonsemantic address to the audience challenges the conventional hermeneutic approach and demands a new understanding of the utopic drive that is not so much based on the vision's meaning and materialization as on its affective virtuality, even near impossibility of materialization. In short, the undefined vision, like Brooks' notion of the as-if proposition, points to "another reality."

In *The Goddess*, the vision necessarily remains subjunctive and virtual owing to its conditions of production, especially the director's sociopolitical positioning vis-à-vis that of his subject. If the mother-prostitute's subaltern position (being deprived of all social resources and of direct representation) and her inability to define her hope clearly serve to overdetermine the vagueness of her vision, then preserving such vagueness could indicate Wu Yonggang's admission of his own lack of understanding of his character and his decision to respect the distance and to present the vision as it appears to her rather than spelling it out by putting thoughts in her mind. We might also go further and argue that the insistence on vagueness was actually necessitated by Wu's own inability to define a clear future caused by two factors: (1) his own marginal position as a novice director with limited experience with lower-class life despite his social conscience and (2) the association of his social conscience with the emerging leftism in the early 1930s, when it operated as what Raymond Williams would call a "structure of feeling" rather than a reified, homogenized ideology. To the extent that a structure of feeling often emerges with the rise of a class, or a contradiction, fracture, or mutation within a class, as Williams suggests, it tends to be inchoate, affective, unformulated, and preideological.<sup>74</sup>

Since Wu made *The Goddess* at a time of political instability and rapid shifts, it is not surprising that the vision remained an embryonic "structure of feeling." In this sense, the male, humanist, intellectual director and his subaltern character share the similar difficulty of imagining a concrete better future, despite their different gender, class, and ideological positions. Their gap transforms into intersection, even affinity. Antonio Gramsci describes this as the "*unwitting reflection* of the most elementary and profound aspirations of even the *lowest subaltern social groups*" by intellectuals who have other preoccupations.<sup>75</sup> What grounds this "unwitting reflection" in *The Goddess* is precisely the director and his subaltern character's shared geopolitical circumstances, that is, colonial modernity experienced as "street modernity."

Moving from *The Goddess* to *Rouge Tears*, the previous vague utopic vision is now materialized with elaborated details, enabled by the strategy of elaboration. In the closing sequence, which closely duplicates the internal-versus-external setup at the end of *Stella Dallas*, the aged mother, released after twelve years of imprisonment, stands outside the school headmaster's house, gazing through the window at her adult son's engagement party (Figures 1.4, 1.5). This window frame

resembles the prison cell bars in that they both separate her from social normality, rendering her the abject “Other” on the wrong side. It also evokes the film screen that is projecting a success drama in which she has no part, and her perspectival shots meet no reverse/response shots from the other side of the window. Having witnessed her son’s “success” silently, she chooses to vanish. With a close-up shot of her face superimposed on the snow-laden tree branches, she raises a finger to her lips, hushing with a smile, while snowflakes dance around her face, which gradually evaporates. The film ends with a theme line: “The greatest of human nature is maternal love.”

At the son’s engagement party, the erstwhile undefined hope for the future now pans out in two ways: his engagement with a well-educated classmate (which promises a respectable domestic life that the mother-prostitute is denied) and the prospects of continued music education overseas on graduating from the music conservatory. In anticipation of the promising yet prescribed future, the former school headmaster, or the surrogate father, urges the son to forget past memories and suffering (associated with his “dead” mother) in order to enjoy his youth and to dedicate himself to improving China’s musical culture. With such a national-international outlook, the success story inscribes a present and a future that both center on male achievement while disavowing the past associated with the pathos of the mother-prostitute-turned-murderer. Consequently, the mother can only enjoy the “show” from the external side of the window/screen/divider, a “show” that promotes intellectual humanism laced with middle-class fantasy of individual and national improvement, completely exceeding her imagination.

Paradoxically, the solidification of undefined, virtual futurity into fait accompli (the future realized here and now with all details) deconstructs the utopic thrust. The future is now revealed as a middle-class, male-centered, male-driven society in which the poorly educated working-class woman has no role to play. In other words, this homogenous ideal society does not come from the elimination of class or gender inequality but rather from disavowal of what is perceived as the abject Other. Contrary to the vague vision in *The Goddess* that keeps alive the utopic thrust and the power of anticipation, the elaborated accomplishment in *Rouge Tears* demystifies the utopic thrust as essentially elitist patriarchal ideology that promotes male subjectivity, upward mobility, and male responsibility for nation building.

In his study of the *Godfather* series, F. Jameson similarly argues that the Utopian impulse that coexists with the ideological impulse in *Godfather I* becomes deconstructed in the sequel where the ideological content becomes undisguised and unmasked through “aesthetic representation and figuration.”<sup>76</sup> That is, the Utopian impulse is invalidated when its ideological content is bared through representation. In *Rouge Tears*, the “aesthetic representation and figuration” that

reveals the ideological premise of the utopic vision in *The Goddess* is precisely the strategy of *gongbi*, or excessive elaboration.

Such excessive elaboration does not make *Rouge Tears* an inferior film but rather a critical and dangerous supplement to *The Goddess*. Like an anamorphic lens that reorients our perception, the remake racks the focus, so to speak, by reversing the figure and the ground, utopia and ideology, thereby exposing the predecessor film's more fundamental ideological premise that has long been glossed over by the much celebrated manifest text (i.e., the theme of noble motherhood and the quiescent, subtle aesthetics). Through a comparative study with *Rouge Tears*, Wu's aesthetic tour-de-force, *The Goddess*, comes to be repositioned and repoliticized as a cultural product that is allegorical of the crisis of representing abject female sexuality and the gendered, lower-class experience of China's colonial modernity. In this sense, the entire remaking process can be viewed as a "commutation test" that alters certain audio-visual and representational aspects, with the result of bearing and baring the political subtext of the predecessor film.

### Conclusion: An "Unknown Woman" from Shanghai Finds an Unexpected Dream in Hong Kong

In this comparative study of *The Goddess* vis-à-vis its Hollywood "before"—*Stella Dallas*—and its Hong Kong "after"—*Rouge Tears*—I have stressed the "critical act"<sup>77</sup> of positioning and politicizing the films. By defamiliarizing and excavating the politics of variant representational strategies, I attempt not simply to rescue the Hong Kong-made *Rouge Tears* from oblivion but rather to deploy it as a critical, anamorphic lens for repositioning and repoliticizing its silent predecessors made in Shanghai as well as Hollywood.

As my study demonstrates, the strategies of figuration and representation in *The Goddess* and *Rouge Tears* (sketch and elaboration respectively) register the director's negotiation with the crisis of representing abject female sexuality, a crisis revolving around the vexed relationship between the humanist, male authorship, the lower-class "unknown woman's" experience with China's colonial modernity, and the genre of melodrama or family ethics drama. By grounding the strategies of figuration in the politics of representation and representability, and in the ideological parameters of the melodrama genre, I stress that the transcendentalist "feminine difference" that Cavell sees in *Stella Dallas* hardly exists in Wu's films. On the contrary, both films underscore the low-class prostitute's experience of deprivation on the urban street, which in turn serves as a trope for addressing China's semicolonization.

Yet a question remains: how do we understand the role of Hong Kong in the making of *Rouge Tears*? To what extent does Hong Kong's colonial situation (in comparison with Shanghai's semicolonization) shape the remake? Can we see the remake as not only Hong Kong-made, but also Hong Kong-related? Finally, how might these questions help us understand filmmaking in pre-Pearl Harbor Hong Kong in relation to Hong Kong's regional collective subject positioning?

I have suggested that the decision to make *Rouge Tears* in Hong Kong in collaboration with the local Nanyue Film Studio had to do with war exigencies. Yet, in terms of narrative and thematic concerns, the remake replicated *The Goddess*, continuing Shanghai's prewar social exposé tradition driven by intellectual humanism.<sup>78</sup> As such, the remake inherits the mainland China orientation and does not exhibit specific interest in Hong Kong's geopolitics. Nevertheless, a different spin becomes noteworthy when we consider the film's publicity materials.

The film's publicity materials in Hong Kong emphasize its southern Chinese quality, which was related to yet not equivalent with Hong Kong's locality. That quality involves the leading actress Hu Die's switch from Mandarin Chinese to Cantonese (her native dialect) in the Cantonese version.<sup>79</sup> Hu Die is reclaimed as a Cantonese native, as a publicity poster affirms: "When a Cantonese hears Cantonese, things become crystal clear" (*Guangdong ren ting Guangdong hua, gewai liaoran*) (Figure 1.6).

**Figure 1.6** A poster of *Rouge Tears* showing Hu Die's mother character cradling her son. The blurb on the left declares, "When a Cantonese speaks Cantonese, things become crystal clear." The description above the image claims *Rouge Tears* as a Cantonese masterpiece, which proves Hu Die to be a full-blooded Cantonese native. (Courtesy of Hong Kong Film Archive)





The publicity also highlights the Qingxian brand sound recording system developed in 1932 in Shanghai by Zhu Qingxian—founder of Nanyue Film Studio in Hong Kong. The Qingxian brand was acclaimed as a locally made sound recording technology that allowed the Hong Kong film industry to offer significant help to the dislocated Shanghai film workers during the war. Such publicity tapped into and boosted the regional pride in southern Chinese culture, which prevailed in Hong Kong.

Contrary to the emphasis on southern Chinese pride and Hong Kong's film resources as industrial support, Hong Kong's colonial geopolitics was hinted at, yet ultimately remained a nonissue. This lack of concern with Hong Kong's specific locality means that Hong Kong was not yet seen as a positive reference point in the filmic interactions. This is reflected in the fact that Cantonese films made in Hong Kong at the time were categorized either on a linguistic basis as "Cantonese cinema" (*Yueyu pian*) or according to their larger regional cultural allegiance as "southern Chinese cinema" (*Hua'nán dianying*).<sup>80</sup>

The historical and geopolitical imbrication between Hong Kong-made Cantonese cinema and southern Chinese lingua-culture requires that we dereify Hong Kong cinema and reassess its intricate interactions with mainland China, Southeast Asia (a major destination for early southern Chinese emigrants), as well as Hollywood. The connection between *The Goddess* and *Rouge Tears*, being one example of such interactions during the silent-to-talkie transitional period, demonstrates the submergence of Hong Kong's locality in the regional matrix of "southern China" (*Hua'nán*). In other words, the Hong Kong-specific collective consciousness was not an a priori, tangible existence or telos to begin with. Rather, when it does gradually emerge into filmic representation and critical discourses, its content, import, and agenda continue to shift with time. Thus, Hong Kong's localized geopolitics and collective consciousness should be examined as an inchoate and fluid "structure of feeling" (à la Raymond Williams). This "structure of feeling" portends a mode of experience and affect that, on the one hand, stems from the lingua-cultural matrix of the larger southern Chinese culture and, on the other hand, registers a new geopolitics and subjectivity.

In the following three chapters, I study the ways in which the Shanghai and Hong Kong remakes increasingly participate in producing and reformulating location-specific collective subject positions. Since the Hong Kong remakes in these chapters are helmed by locally grown Cantonese filmmakers, I specifically focus on delineating Hong Kong's subject positioning through the continuous filmic interactions in the Shanghai–Hong Kong corridor and the Shanghai–Hong Kong–Hollywood triangulation.



# Notes

## Introduction

1. Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, 111.
2. Grossing nearly 110,000,000 Chinese yuan (RMB) (roughly US\$20 million) by July 2, 2008, this film broke the animated films box-office record in China. See “*Kung Fu Panda* Breaks Chinese Box Office Records.”
3. Zhu Jidong, “*Gongfu xionghao weihe mofang Zhongguo gongfu ye rang Zhongguo yingren wangchen moji?*”
4. “Meiguo zhizao de Zhongguo donghuapian Haolaiwu zhong de Zhongguo yuansu.”
5. For an important comprehensive study of contemporary Hollywood’s global success, see Miller et al., *Global Hollywood 2*.
6. Recent examples include Hollywood remakes of *Il Mare* (2000, South Korea), *My Sassy Girl* (2001, North Korea), *Infernal Affairs* (2002, Hong Kong), and *The Eye* (2002, Hong Kong/Singapore).
7. Carolyn L. Cartier, *Globalizing South China* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2001), 26, quoted in Yingjin Zhang, “Transnationalism and Translocality in Chinese Cinema,” 138. Zhang develops the paradigm of translocal and polylocal study of contemporary independent Chinese filmmaking in *Cinema, Space, and Polylocality in a Globalizing China*.
8. Sheldon Lu’s pioneering work on transnational Chinese cinemas has played a key role in reshaping Chinese film studies. My reconsideration of the “national” in relation to other forms of the “collective” is inspired by Lu’s edited volumes such as *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender and Chinese-Language Film: Historiography, Poetics*.
9. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*.
10. Jameson, “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture.”
11. Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*.
12. Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*, 11.

13. Cheng Jihua et al., *Zhongguo dianying fanzhanshi*.

14. See Berry, “Poisonous Weeds or National Treasures?” (1989); Ning Ma, “The Textual and Critical Difference of Being Radical” (1989); Pickowicz, “The Theme of Spiritual Pollution in Chinese Films of the 1930s” (1991).

15. Major works include Li Suyuan, “Sanshi niandai Zhongguo dianying yundong mingcheng chuyi” (2004); Xiao Zhiwei, “Sanshi niandai ‘zuoyi dianying’ de shenhua” (2007); Hu Jubin and Li Suyuan, *Zhongguo wusheng dianying shi* (1996); Harris, “Silent Speech” (1997); Yingjin Zhang, ed., *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922–1943* (1999); Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern* (1999); Dong Xinyu, *Kan yu beikan zhijian: dui Zhongguo wusheng dianying de wenhua yuanjiu* (2000); Stephenson, “The Occupied Screen” (2000); Lai Kwan Pang, *Building a New China in Cinema* (2002); Hu Jubin, *Projecting a Nation* (2003); Vivian Shen, *The Origins of Left-Wing Cinema in China* (2005); and Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen* (2006).

16. “Cosmopolitanism” is elaborated in Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern*; “vernacular modernism” is extended to Chinese cinema in Hansen, “Fallen Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons,” and Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History*.

17. Tani Barlow similarly stresses the importance of colonialism and semicolonialism as analytical categories. According to her, the occlusion of these terms has to do with Cold War politics, and it serves to justify a Western presence in China. See Barlow, “Colonialism’s Career in Postwar China Studies.”

18. See Sun Yat-sen’s *Sanmin zhuyi* for his explication of the Three Principles of the People. Sun’s discussion of “subcolony” appears in the section on the second principle—nationalism (*minzu zhuyi* 民族主义). Shu-mei Shih also discusses Sun’s subcolony in her book *The Lure of the Modern*; see pp. 31–32.

19. See Lu Mengshu, “Xin yingxiong zhuyi.” A year later, in his essay “Geming yu dianying,” Lu further elaborated on the necessity of “neoheroism” in Chinese cinema owing to China’s subcolonial status. In this essay, he quotes Sun Yat-sen’s discussion of subcolonialism at length. See Lu Mengshu, “Geming yu dianying,” 37.

20. Massey, “Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place,” 61–62.

21. de Kock, “Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,” 45; Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

22. I derive this term from F. Jameson’s discussion of “situated consciousness” in Third World cultural production. See Jameson, “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism.” Elizabeth Grosz further elaborates the idea of situated agency by attributing it to the dilemma of Third World intellectuals. Grosz describes these intellectuals’ task as figuring out “how to speak a language of the colonizer which nevertheless represents the interests and positions of the colonized. If the subaltern can speak, what language is able to articulate, to speak or adequately represent the subaltern’s position?” See “Judaism and Exile,” 78. Whereas Grosz is mainly concerned with Third World intellectuals, I argue that the same dilemma applies to those filmmakers who have historically occupied the subaltern position, which does not necessarily overlap with the Third World position, but rather takes on different meanings at

variant historical conjunctures. Because of the commercial imperative of filmmaking and the shifting meanings of the subaltern position, the filmmakers' agency is even more overdetermined and situation-specific.

23. See Wong Wang-chi, *Fouxiang Xianggang*, 25–26. Such Shanghai-centrism finds expression in Yang Yanqi's essay "Half a Year in Hong Kong," written nearly a century ago. Yang writes, "In the past three years, whatever Shanghai has, Hong Kong also desires. Even something as inconsequential as Shanghai's Paramount dancing hall has been duplicated in Hong Kong, although the Hong Kong version can hardly compare with its Shanghai counterpart." Quoted in *ibid.*, 68.

24. Examples of coproductions included Shaw Brothers musicals with Japanese directors and a Hong Kong cast, such as *Xiangjiang huayue ye* (Hong Kong Nocturne) (dir. Inoue Umetsugu, 1967), and vampire films coproduced with Britain's Hammer Studios, such as *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (dir. Roy Ward Baker, Chang Cheh, 1974). For more detailed industrial and textual analysis, see Wong Ain-ling, ed., *Guotai gushi* and *The Shaw Screen*.

25. Rey Chow's polemic is representative of this stance, as illustrated in her 1992 article "Between Colonizers."

26. Beijin Xiangxiang Caucus, "Beijin xiangxiang: Xianggang hou zhimin lunshu zai dingwei."

27. Examples include Stanley Kwan's *Centre Stage* (1992), *Lan Yu* (2001), and *Everlasting Regret* (2005). Ronny Yu's *The Phantom Lover* (1995) is a relatively early example that I examine in depth in this book.

28. The Wachowski Brothers' *The Matrix* trilogy (1999–2003) and Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* I and II (2003–2004) demonstrate the extent to which Hong Kong martial arts genres have inspired visual effects in American filmmaking.

29. See Horton and McDougal, eds., *Play It Again, Sam*; Forrest and Koos, eds., *Dead Ringers*; Durham, *Double Takes*; Mazdon, *Encore Hollywood*; Verevis, *Film Remakes*; Schliesser, "Toward a Cinema of Exhaustion."

30. Patricia Aufderheide's "Made in Hong Kong" offers a rare intervention by studying Hong Kong cinema's imitative tendency. Nevertheless, she fails to examine the historical and ideological circumstances that contribute to this practice. Consequently, she highlights the intertextuality and the hybridity of a film like *Eastern Condors* (dir. Sammo Hung, 1986) without offering a specific and systematic methodology for studying remakes as a theoretical as well as practical category.

31. Mazdon, *Encore Hollywood*, 27.

32. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 37–38.

33. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 220.

34. Benjamin, "A Small History of Photography," 242, 243.

35. Willemen, "Bangalore."

36. Jameson, "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," 71.

37. Xavier, "Historical Allegory," 354.

38. *Ibid.*, 360–361.

39. See Berry, "If China Can Say No, Can China Make Movies?"

40. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 99.

41. Ibid., 99, emphases mine.

42. The terms *Urgeschichte* and *Nachleben* are used by Benjamin in “Re The Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress”—Konvolut N in his *Arcades Project*. Rolf Tiedemann translates them into “prehistory” and “afterlife” respectively. See Smith, ed., *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History*, 51, N 3a.2, and 47, N 2.3.

43. Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*.

44. Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 255, emphasis mine.

45. In this book, I stick to familiar terms such as “Chinese cinema” and “Chinese-language cinema” as a way of engaging in a dialog with the notion of “Sinophone cinema” posited by Shu-mei Shih in her *Visuality and Identity*. Shih excludes mainland Chinese cinema from Sinophone cinema in order to (1) debunk China/Mandarin Chinese-centered nationalism and (2) critique the notion of “diaspora” for implicitly privileging the ancestral home over the adopted land. In my study, I put mainland China and Mandarin Chinese back onto the “Sinophone” map in order to unpack the interactions and tensions between different regions where a spectrum of Chinese languages and dialects are used. My goal is not to reinstate the central position of mainland China or Mandarin Chinese, but rather to highlight the mutual constitution (even if in the form of contention) between the various regions. Such a constellation necessarily entails each region shifting position relative to the entire field, which in turn experiences constant decentering and recentering. To comprehend the unfolding of this interactive terrain, we must start with a broad and heterogeneous conception rather than preclude any of its components.

46. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, 25.

## Chapter 1: *The Goddess*

1. For a foundational study of genre films and motherhood, see Lucy Fischer, *Cinematernity*.

2. See *Yin xing* (The Movie Guide), no. 10 (July 1927): n.p.

3. See <http://www.archive.org/details/thegoddess>.

4. For a useful and innovative study of Chinese cinema in relation to Euro-American cinema in the 1920s Shanghai, see Qin Xiqing, *Oumei dianying yu Zhongguo zaoqi dianying*.

5. See Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, 92.

6. Importantly, the Cantonese-based southern Chinese subject position is not confined to southern China, but is rather fostered through the network of southern China and the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia and beyond. This is evidenced in the fact that the Cantonese version of *Rouge Tears* was elected number four, just above *The Critical Moment* (*Zuihou guantou*) (1938)—the high-profile “national defense film” (*guofang dianying* 国防电影) collaborated on by six Hong Kong film studios—among the ten most popular Cantonese films shown in Singapore in the year from early 1938

to early 1939. The top-ranking film was *Blood-Bathed Baoshan City* (*Xuejian Baoshan cheng*) (dir. Sutu Huimin. 1938), another national defense film made in Hong Kong. See “Shida mingpian xuanju yeyi gongbu,” n.p. For more on “national defense cinema,” see Chapter 2, note 41.

7. See note 2.

8. See Kaplan, “The Case of the Missing Mother,” 83.

9. See Linda Williams, “‘Something Else besides a Mother,’” 320.

10. See de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, 10.

11. See Cavell, “Stella’s Taste,” 220, emphasis mine.

12. *Ibid.*, 219, emphasis mine.

13. *Ibid.*, 219–220.

14. See Hansen, “Fallen Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons,” 10.

15. See Gleber, “Women on the Screens and Streets of Modernity,” 57. Gleber argues that scenes depicting women’s presence in *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (dir. Walter Ruttmann, 1927) “are not (at) all sites of prostitution but are instead comprised of at least four distinct instances of female figures, fashions, and habits in the street.” See page 69.

16. See Barlow, ed., *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*.

17. See Bordwell, “Camera Movement and Cinematic Space,” 229–246.

18. Tianyi, Mingxing (Star Motion Pictures Co.), and Lianhua 联华 (United China Photoplay and Publishing Service) constituted the tripod of the 1930s Shanghai film industry. Tianyi was the first company to establish a distribution network in Southeast Asia, which became the predecessor of Shaw Brothers Ltd., which dominated the Hong Kong film industry from the late 1950s to the early 1980s.

19. See Wu Yonggang, “*Shennü* he wo,” 130.

20. The transition to sound was a prolonged process in China and was not completed until 1938. The use of sound facilitated four developments: more elaborated depiction of the urban setting, more explicit inscription of political messages, more attention to the construction of Chinese cinema (or *guopian* 国片), and, finally, the flourishing of Cantonese cinema. According to Zheng Junli (1911–1969), a prominent Shanghai actor, translator, and critic, sound played a crucial role in promoting modern Chinese nationalism in the struggle against Hollywood incursion. See Zheng Junli, *Xiandai Zhongguo dianying shi lue*.

21. Arguably, the sound transition undermined Shanghai’s position as the center of Chinese cinema owing to the rapid development of Cantonese cinema, buttressed by strong followings in both China and Southeast Asia, especially among diasporic Cantonese populations. A 1936 article titled “Guochan yingpian Nanyang lizu nan: Dianying shichang wei Meiguozhan, guoyu yingpian wei Yueyu pian suo yadao” (China-Made Films Experiencing Setback in Southeast Asia: Film Market Monopolized by Hollywood, Mandarin Films Overwhelmed by Cantonese Films) spelled out the declining market share of Mandarin Chinese films vis-à-vis that of Hollywood and Cantonese productions. See *Diansheng zhoukan* 5.21 (1936): 509. Commenting on such developments, Stephen Teo writes, “Hong Kong gained a film industry as sound

came in circa 1933–34 . . . whereas in the silent years, a film industry based in the colony always seemed a precarious idea. It could only develop as a center of Cantonese film production.” See Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*, 19.

22. See Wu Yonggang, “*Shennü wancheng zhilou*” (1934), reprinted in Wu, *Wo de tansuo he zhuiqiu*, 134, emphases mine.

23. See the film’s English transcript by Yomi Braester.

24. Zhiwei Xiao identifies this relief as the work of Norwegian sculptor Stephan Abel Sinding titled *The Captive Mother*. See Xiao, “Wu Yonggang and the Ambivalence in the Chinese Experience of Modernity.”

25. Petro, *Joyless Street*. Petro’s book title echoes *The Joyless Street* (*Die Freudlose Gasse*) (dir. G. W. Pabst, 1925), a silent German expressionist film dealing with forced prostitution during the post–World War I depression. Based on the textual and artistic inscription of woman in Weimar, Petro seeks to discern “a way to reread early discussions of modernity in the Weimar period so as to *situate woman as an inhabitant of the city* she so frequently serves to represent.” See page 43, emphasis mine.

26. The Bund originated as a muddy road stretching about a mile along the Huangpu River, which flows northward at this bend and eventually empties into the Pacific Ocean. Ceded to Britain in the mid-nineteenth century, the Bund had developed into a financial hub by the 1930s, lined on the west with fifty or so Western buildings of various architectural styles. The International Settlement (1854–1943) was the combination of British and American concessions, lying to the west of the Bund and north of the old walled Shanghai city where most Chinese resided.

27. For neon lights as a Shanghai trademark, see a tip offered to tourists by Rev. C. E. Darwent, the late minister of Union Church, Shanghai. Writing in 1920, shortly after Sincere and Wing On’s Shanghai branches were opened, Rev. Darwent encouraged foreign visitors to “see the Road at night for its illuminations,” which also meant to share “the Chinese delight in brilliant light.” See Darwent, *Shanghai*, 15.

28. Such deterioration had to do with Western and Japanese companies’ predatory dumping in the Chinese market. By dumping merchandise at prices lower than market value, these foreign companies sought to monopolize the Chinese market, resulting in severe damage to the local rural economy.

29. Aside from *The Goddess*, another prominent example is *Street Angel* (*Malu tianshi*) (dir. Yuan Muzhi, 1937).

30. See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 6–7.

31. Hao, “Chinese Visual Representation,” 47–49.

32. Wu Yonggang, “Lun dianying bujing,” 173.

33. *Ibid.*, 173.

34. The close-up tracking shot of the walking feet bears striking resemblance to the opening sequence of *Dirnentragödie* (Tragedy of the Street) (dir. Bruno Rahn, 1927), which illustrates the elliptical editing characteristics of Weimar street film. As Petro describes it, the opening sequence is composed of “a series of abstract and elliptical images: the camera tracks a woman’s legs as they move cautiously across a cobblestone pavement until they meet a man’s legs, at which point both pairs enter

a doorway and disappear out of sight.” See *Joyless Street*, 165. Unsurprisingly, the low angle framing of the meeting of the legs in this Weimar street film also implies urban prostitution.

35. This overhead shot could be referencing a similar shot of prostitution in *Street Angel* (1928), directed by Frank Borzage, who inspired many Shanghai-based filmmakers in the 1930s. A significant difference, however, is that the overhead shot in *The Goddess* is from an anonymous perspective, while the shot in *Street Angel* is authored by Janet Gaynor’s character, who, overseeing the scene of prostitution, winces at the idea that she could also be forced to prostitute herself in order to help her sick mother.

36. See Lotte Eisner’s discussion of *Dirnentragödie* in her *The Haunted Screen*, 264.

37. Paul Willemsen describes cinephilia as “what is seen is in excess of what is being shown.” See Willemsen, *Looks and Frictions*, 237. For Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Thomas Elsaesser, the cinephiliac ability to unsuture the audience enables spectatorial agency, reactivates stymied sensorial, sensuous experiences, and thereby undermines mainstream ideology. For a critical summary of Benjamin’s, Kracauer’s, and Elsaesser’s cinephiliac theories, see Keathley, “The Cinephiliac Moment.”

38. Žižek, “I Hear You with My Eyes; or, The Invisible Master,” 90.

39. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 67.

40. Žižek, “I Hear You with My Eyes,” 90.

41. Yingjin Zhang similarly discusses the film’s concealment of female sexuality and momentary expression of the “narrative desire” embodied by the male intellectual trying “to penetrate the unknown world of urban prostitution.” He concludes that the film ultimately reinscribes the conservative “paternal law.” See Zhang, “Prostitution and Urban Imagination,” 170. If this is indeed the end result, we should not attribute this to Wu Yonggang’s presumed fixed ideological stance but should rather take into account his laborious negotiation with the multiple and multivalent sociopolitical and filmic determinants in carrying out his debut work and its remake.

42. See Chen Wu, “*Shennü* ping yi,” 551–552. Along these lines, Wei Yu argued that Wu’s personification of social evil in the figure of the urban thug might lead the audience to attribute the tragedy to “a bad individual, rather than the entire social system.” See Wei Yu, “Kuyan chao,” 554.

43. Wang Yunman, “Supu yunhan de *Shennü*” (1986), 192. Chen Huiyang, “Wushi nianlai, zongcheng yimeng,” 76. One exception came from Yu Muyun, a veteran Hong Kong film historian, who reclaimed *Rouge Tears* as one of the best among the eight Hong Kong–made Mandarin Chinese films released in 1938 and 1939. See Yu Muyun, *Xianggang dianying bashinian*, 19.

44. See *Nanyue* 6 (May 1938): n.p. The film was also treated as a major Hong Kong production as reflected in the extraordinarily high remuneration for the leading actress, Hu Die. See Huang Sumin and Zhang Zuokang, eds., *Yijiusanba zhi Zhongguo dianying*.

45. See Xuan Ren, “Yinian lai de Zhongguo dianying jie,” 7–8.

46. See “Xu Hao laigang zhengchi yueyupian teji,” 22–25. Xu Hao was the wartime director of the Guomintang-controlled Film Censorship Board.



47. New China Film Company was founded in 1934 and developed into a major film company after the outbreak of the war in 1937, replacing Shanghai's three major film studios (Star, Tianyi, and United China Photoplay and Publishing Service), which either folded or relocated following Japan's bombing in August of 1938.

48. Before *Rouge Tears*, Chang had already successfully finished a period drama titled *Diao Chan* (The Sable Cicada) in Hong Kong. The film was started in Shanghai but was interrupted by the war, then resumed in Hong Kong. Its release in 1938 helped to establish the reputation of Mandarin Chinese cinema in a colony characterized predominantly by Cantonese culture. See Zhou Chengren and Li Yizhuang, *Zaoqi Xiang-gang dianyingshi (1897–1945)*, 251–252.

49. Because of the mass migration of Shanghai film workers to Hong Kong during the war, re-presenting and remaking the Shanghai urban landscape became a common practice in a number of Hong Kong-made films that depict resistance activities in Shanghai. *Orphan Island Paradise* (*Gudao tiantang*) (dir. Cai Chusheng, 1939), produced by the Hong Kong-based Earth (Dadi 大地) Film Studio, for instance, offers an allegorical narrative of the struggle between the evil Gang of Skulls and the revolutionaries in a place called “Orphan Island”—a clear reference to Shanghai between 1937 and 1941, before Japan's occupation of Western settlements in Shanghai following the outbreak of the Pacific War. To visualize “Orphan Island” in a Hong Kong studio, the film opens with a still photograph of one of Shanghai's most recognizable landmarks—the panorama of the Bund. With this image as the background, the male and female protagonists pose in the foreground, singing a duet about people's miseries as a result of various exploitations. As the song goes on, the protagonists are repositioned in the lower right corner of the frame, looking toward the upper left side of the frame, where a cut-out space shows footage of the Shanghai landscape—the suffering masses, the debauched party-goers, and the evil schemers. These moving images are simultaneously indexical and fictional. They are supposed to objectively reflect the landscape and social problems of “Orphan Island.” Yet, they also quote the staple filmic imagery drawn from 1930s films set and made in Shanghai. The framed presentation in the cut-out space conjures the movie-viewing experience, with the protagonists standing in for the actual audience. The re-presentation of Shanghai in this Hong Kong-made film is therefore both immediate and mediated, which aptly corresponds with the shooting circumstances, that is, the simultaneous absence and presence of Shanghai's urban landscape.

50. My analysis below is based on the Mandarin Chinese version held in the China Film Archive. I also use the 1930s publicity materials on the Cantonese version. These materials are drawn from Hong Kong newspapers and magazines, especially Nanyue Studio's 1938 special issue on *Rouge Tears*. *Hong Kong Filmography*, vol. 1, uses the identical synopsis, film still, and release date (December 16, 1938) for both versions, which suggests their close proximity.

51. For Peirce's semiotic theory that divides the sign into three levels: firstness—the icon, secondness—the index, and thirdness—the symbol, see his “Division of Signs.”

52. Friedberg, *Window Shopping*.



53. Barthes, "The Reality Effect," 11, 15.
54. This review was partially quoted in "Xianggang chuanshuo" n.p.
55. Armes, "The Stars," 138, emphasizes mine.
56. Wu Yonggang's metaphor of Ruan being the most sensitive film stock that instantly registered the most appropriate emotions effectively reinforced the myth of her natural fit. See *Wo de tansuo he zhuiqiu*, 132, 133.
57. Carlson, *The Haunted Stage*.
58. Armes, "The Stars," 139.
59. Barthes, "The Face of Garbo," 57.
60. The term "metaphysical prostitute" is borrowed from Hong Kong critic Chen Huiyang's discussion of *The Goddess*. See "Wushi nianlai, zongcheng yimeng," 19–20. Chen further argues that Ruan's character is more transcendental than lifelike.
61. Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," 130.
62. See Introduction, note 42.
63. Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator."
64. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 145.
65. Thompson, "Screen Acting and the Commutation Test," 58.
66. *Ibid.*, 59.
67. Comolli, "Historical Fiction: A Body Too Much," 49.
68. One of the movie posters included in the background is *The New Peach Blossom Fan* (*Xin taohua shan*) (dir. Ouyang Yuqian, 1935). Produced by New China Film Company, which also funded *Rouge Tears*, the film adapts a classic drama by resetting it in the 1920s warlord period, thereby delivering an allegory of war and resistance.
69. This was related to the "national goods campaigns" (*guohuo yundong*) that escalated in the mid- to late 1930s in response to the Japanese invasion of the Chinese market.
70. See Jameson, "Class and Allegory in Contemporary Mass Culture," 44.
71. Rothman, "The Goddess," 69, emphasis in original.
72. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 1, 157.
73. Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, ch. 3.
74. See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 132–135.
75. Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, 238, emphasizes mine.
76. Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," 33.
77. According to Tony Bennett, the positioning of a work is not an abstract theory, but a praxis, a "political advance." The position is neither fixed nor natural to texts, but "a product of a historically particular organization of the field of cultural relations and of the particular ways in which the texts concerned are produced for consumption within that field." See Bennett, *Formalism and Marxism*, 166, 167.
78. The Hong Kong director, Chen Pi, only played a complementary role by directing the Cantonese cast to reenact a Shanghai-based narrative.
79. These publicity materials are gathered from 1938 Hong Kong newspaper advertisements and the *Rouge Tears* special issue of *Nanyue* (South China Film Magazine), no. 6.

80. Yanli Han emphasizes the absence of “Hong Kong” in the labeling and argues that Hong Kong cinema was not an a priori concept automatically derived from Hong Kong’s geographical existence. Rather, to understand the formation of Hong Kong cinema requires that we examine its eclecticism, instability, and border-crossing processes. See Yanli Han, “Cong guofang pian de zhizuo kan zaoqi yueyu dianying he Zhongguo dalu de guanxi,” 56–67. Yingjin Zhang makes a similar argument in “Beyond Binary Imagination,” 83–84.

## Chapter 2: Family Resemblance, Class Conflicts

1. I translate the Chinese title literally into “Sister Flowers” (instead of adopting the conventional translation, “Twin Sisters”) in order to emphasize two things: (1) the audience appeal held by a narrative centering on a pair of beautiful young women compared to flowers, which led to (2) the increasing use of the term *zimei hua* in popular discourses that went beyond literal twinship to indicate the doubling of female youth and beauty as a new social trend. The replacement of literal twinship with metaphorical sisterhood also lent itself to politicization and expansion of the sisterhood community, as I shall argue in relation to the 1964 Shanghai film *Stage Sisters*.

2. The film instantly triggered three literary-media texts in the same year. They were a radio drama by Li Changjian, a ten-chapter screen fiction by Chen Mutao, and a sequel by He Ke’ren.

3. Between the 1940s and 1950s, four films titled *Zimei hua* appeared in Hong Kong, in addition to a dozen other films with *zimei hua* as part of the title. The closest remake was the 1940 *Sister Flowers* (dir. Yang Hongguan), which has an identical plot, reenacted by an all-Cantonese cast, with the twin sisters played by a top Hong Kong star, Bai Yan 白燕 (1920–1987). It simultaneously revived and competed with its Shanghai predecessor by inviting the audience to compare Hu and Bai, and by confirming the Hong Kong remake’s enhanced appeal through the use of Cantonese. This is evidenced by a Hong Kong poster dated September 11, 1940, in the Hong Kong Film Archive. Another close remake was shot in the Amoy dialect by Chen Huanwen in 1958. These proliferating Hong Kong “sister flowers” films, shot in various dialects during a relatively short time span, speak to the vitality and malleability of the image and the subject.

4. According to Leitch’s taxonomy, a remake may adopt four stances toward the “original” film: readaptation, update, homage, and true remake. See “Twice-Told Tales,” 47.

5. Hollander, “Versions, Interpretations, Performances,” 220.

6. Such linkage between the sisterhood scenario and the musical genre is also prevalent in Hollywood backstage musicals that parade singing and dancing sisters. *White Christmas* (dir. Irving Berlin, 1954) is a case in point. Between the 1950s and 1960s, Hong Kong’s two major film companies, Shaw Brothers and Motion Pictures and General Investment (later renamed Cathay), also produced a spate of films centered on

singing-dancing sisters. These song-and-dance films tended to result from Hong Kong's importation of Japanese filmmakers, composers, and choreographers, who in turn drew heavily on Hollywood musicals. Two prominent examples are Motion Pictures and General Investment's *Our Sister Hedy* (*Si qianjin*) (dir. Tao Qin, 1957) and Shaw Brothers' *Hong Kong Nocturne* (*Xiangjiang huayue ye*) (dir. Inoue Umetsugu, 1967).

7. Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia," 184.

8. Zheng Zhengqiu, "*Zimei hua de ziwo pipan*," 40.

9. The "civilized play" was a hybrid dramatic form that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century in Shanghai, partially inspired by modern Western drama. Zheng Zhengqiu started out as a playwright of "civilized plays" with a humanist bent, specifically concerned with women's subordinate position in feudal and patriarchal China. Early Chinese cinema was heavily influenced by the "civilized play" in terms of acting and narrative. For a historical account of the transition from the civilized play to early silent film, see Zhong Dafeng, Zhang Zhen, and Yingjin Zhang, "From Wenmingxi (Civilized Play) to Yingxi (Shadowplay)."

10. In Zheng Zhengqiu's original plan, the father is driven to weapon trafficking by Chinese comprador capitalists—a special social sector that emerged to mediate China's encounter and negotiation with Western economic, cultural, and political penetration. Zheng also intended to tackle the dire effect of weapon trafficking on Chinese society in general. He ultimately abandoned these ideas because of difficulties of production. However, he stressed the importance of understanding each film and filmmaker in relation to their sociopolitical circumstances. See Zheng, "*Zimei hua de ziwo pipan*," 40.

11. In her analysis of the gender relationship in this film, Vivian Shen similarly discusses how the four characters are reconfigured spatially through framing. However, she pays closer attention to how the characters' *dialogs* register their shifting stances. See Vivian Shen, *The Origins of Left-Wing Cinema in China*, 97–99.

12. *Ibid.*, 99.

13. See Zheng Zhengqiu, "Ruhe zoushang qianjin zhi lu."

14. The film contest was conducted by a Chinese Film Selection Committee formed by the Guomindang's Central Executive Committee, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education, and China Educational Film Association.

15. See Ya Fu's and Han Cun's reviews of the film, originally published in the newspaper column titled "Everyday Cinema" (*Meiri dianying*), in *Chen bao* (Morning Newspaper), Feb. 24, 1934. Reprinted in Chen Bo, ed., *Sanshi niandai Zhongguo dianying pinglun wenxuan*, 34–36.

16. See Tang Na's "Muqian Zhongguo dianying de jige qingxiang," reprinted in Cheng Jihua et al., *Zhongguo dianying fazhan shi*. 239.

17. Lu Xun, "Yunming," 29–31.

18. Luo Yunwen, "Youlun *Zimeihua* ji jinhou dianying wenhua zhi lu," 476–478. Also see "A Glimpse of Film": "The success of *Sister Flowers* has to do with the fact that it allows lower-middle-class urban viewers to release their pent-up frustration under a progressive cover that seemingly presents a social critique. Its techniques are

far from superb. The director and actors also erroneously slip back to the model of the civilized play.”

19. See Marchetti, “Two Stage Sisters,” 72–75.

20. Barthes, “Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein,” 73.

21. Poshek Fu, “Between Nationalism and Colonialism,” 218–219.

22. Ibid., 219.

23. Ibid., 218–219. For a critique of Fu’s reading of the film, see Yingjin Zhang, “Fandui xiuzheng,” 104–114.

24. When the war broke out in 1937, severely damaging the film industry (among other things), both Star (which produced *Sister Flowers*) and United China Photo-play and Publishing Service (which produced *The Goddess*) were closed, while Tianyi moved to Hong Kong completely and was renamed Nanyang Film Company (Nanyang Yingpian Gongsi).

25. An advertisement for the film appeared in Shaw Brothers’ house magazine in Singapore, *Dianying quan* 电影圈 (Screen Voice Semimonthly), 48 (July 1, 1939): n.p. This advertisement bills the film as a “funny and romantic singsong Cantonese masterpiece.”

26. Lanfen’s fiancé seems more like a placeholder, and his relationship with Lanfen is far less important than the sisters’.

27. The use of a latex mask recurs in *Romance of a Teenage Girl* (*Shaonü xin*) (dir. Chen Yun, 1966), starring the 1960s youth idol Josephine Siao. This youth film features Siao playing three roles and performing eighteen songs and dances—an extreme development of what He Lan, the leading actress in *The Happy Reunion*, pioneered in the early 1960s.

28. See chart 3 of Ye Fuqiang, “The Cantonese Cinema in the 1960s Hong Kong and Social Change,” 19.

29. See “*Xin zimei hua*, huahua xuxu.” The publicity photo shows He Lan posing in a male suit next to the director Hu Peng and the producer Huang Tao.

30. It was reported that the film attracted intense overseas interest and that overseas Chinese, especially those from Southeast Asia, frequently visited the shooting set. See *ibid.*

31. Hu’s other mother roles in postwar Hong Kong films include *Back Door* (*Houmen*) (dir. Li Hanxiang, 1960), shot in Mandarin Chinese, and *Maternal Love* (*Mu ai*) (dir. Zhu Ji, 1961), shot in Cantonese.

32. A similar use of singing could be found at the formative stage of the Hollywood musical. According to Rick Altman, the late 1920s inclusion of singsong sequences prefigured the Hollywood musical, which solidified as a genre in the late 1930s. *Broadway Melody* (1929), for instance, was billed by MGM as an “all talking, all singing, all dancing dramatic sensation.” Its music was treated simply as a way to present the narrative, with the purpose of cashing in on the audience’s curiosity about the novelty of talkies. See Altman, *Film/Genre*, 31–34.

33. The film was sold to the Philippines for 18,000 yuan and to Indonesia for 16,000 yuan, which was eight or nine times more than the highest price of a silent film.

See Cheng Jihua et al., *Zhongguo dianying fazhan shi*, 163, note 1. Documents suggest that Southeast Asian film distributors would sometimes specify the rate they would pay for each song number. This economic incentive unsurprisingly encouraged film producers to emphasize singing sequences and sound recording quality.

34. Gong Jianong, *Gong Jiannong congying huiyi lu*, vol. 2, 296.

35. The film's box-office record was considered by a contemporary reviewer to be a big victory for Chinese cinema. This reviewer attributed the success to director Zheng Zhengqiu's successful tapping into the Chinese audience's psychology and viewing habits. He further warned against the self-indulgent pursuit of "artsy" and "trendy" film styles that "leave the audience behind." See Xu Xu, "Dui Zimei hua maizuo dapo jilu de ganxiang," 12.

36. See Hu Die, *Hu Die huiyilu*, 163.

37. *Diansheng zhoukan* 4, no. 22 (May 24, 1935): 436. The reason for the protest was not specified. In the previous issue, however, it was reported that *Sister Flowers*, *Spring Silkworms*, and another Mingxing (Star) Motion Pictures Co. production were all sold to Chinese in Germany for the price of 10,000 yuan. See *Diansheng zhoukan* 4, no. 21 (May 24, 1935): 418.

38. *Mingxing yuekan* 2, no. 4 (Nov. 1934): 20.

39. In recognition of her performance in Honolulu for overseas Chinese, Hu was conferred a golden medal with the engraving "A beautiful lady from the south" (*nanguo jia ren*)—an apt anticipation of her 1939 film discussed here. See Huang Sumin and Zhang Zuokang, eds., *Yijiusanba zhi Zhongguo dianying*, 40. Hu's first talkie, *Romance of the Songsters*, was billed as "a huge production completely made in America, with Cantonese dialogue and songs, titillating, romantic and didactic" (*quanbu zai Meiguo shezhi zhi yueyu duibai gechang xiangyan langman aiqing jingshi jupian* 全部在美国摄制之粤语对白歌唱香艳浪漫爱情警世巨片).

40. Cantonese opera was integrated into Cantonese cinema from the very beginning. Stephen Teo pinpoints 1939, the year this film was made, as the peak of Cantonese opera film production. See Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*, 40.

41. Unlike the Shanghai-centered leftist cinema from the early to mid-1930s, "national defense cinema" spread to Hong Kong with the wartime migration of leftist filmmakers. Owing to the spread of war and nationalist discourses, both diasporic mainland Chinese filmmakers and Hong Kong film workers participated and sometimes collaborated in producing national defense films. In Hong Kong, national defense cinema was only one "genre" that coexisted and vied with films that carried no apparent political message. For the wartime collaboration between mainland Chinese and Hong Kong filmmakers, see Law and Bren, *Hong Kong Cinema*, 129–141. A major film project that indicated Hong Kong film workers' investment in national defense cinema was six local studios' collective work on *The Critical Moment* (*Zuihou guantou*) (1938). The profits of the film were donated for war relief.

42. For coverage of Hong Kong film workers' fund-raising activities, see *Xiang-gang zaoqi dianying guiji*, 42–43.

43. Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment."

44. Television was introduced into Hong Kong on May 29, 1957, but was confined to only a tiny number of families owing to its exorbitant rental fees. By 1966, the only TV station, Rediffusion cable TV, had only 67,000 subscribers. See Law Kar, “Xinxing yu jingguan,” 48–50. Also see note 55 in Chapter 3 for a brief history of Rediffusion.

45. See “Guan Meiguo Yingxi ji.” I have made slight modifications to Jay Leyda’s translation in his *Dianying: An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China*, 2.

46. According to Paul S. N. Lee, the TV shows provided by the RTV cable system were mostly imported from United Kingdom and America. See Lee, “The Absorption and Indigenization of Foreign Media Cultures,” 81.

47. Poshek Fu, “The 1960s,” 82.

48. The 1961 official census showed that half of the total Hong Kong population was under the age of twenty-one. See *Hong Kong Annual Report*, in *ibid*.

49. Cheuk, “The Characteristics of Sixties Youth Movies,” 73–79.

50. Poshek Fu, “The 1960s,” 72.

51. For a detailed account of how the music of the film was composed, see Huang Zhun, “Tantan *Wutai jiemei* de yinyue chuanguo,” 285–291.

52. In her performance of the revolutionary version of *The White-Haired Girl*, for instance, Chunhua plays the lead without singing a single line. The performance ends with the chorus singing: “The old society turned me from a human into a ghost; the new society brings me back into the human world.” This line then instigates the diegetic audience’s collective shouting, “Avenge the white-haired girl!”

53. Dyer, “Entertainment and Utopia,” 184.

54. For a detailed account of the One Hundred Flowers Campaign, see MacFarquhar, *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals*.

55. See Xie Jin et al., “*Wutai jiemei*,” 147.

56. The “Gang of Four” (Siren Bang), headed by Madame Mao (aka Jiang Qing), was an ultraleftist political clique with highly concentrated power. After the Cultural Revolution, it has been conventionally and conveniently held responsible for perpetrating violence during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Its dissolution in October of 1976 brought the Cultural Revolution to an end.

57. For Western critics’ comments on the film, see McCarthy, “Two Stage Sisters,” 23, 24; and Tony Rayns and Scott Meek, “Two Stage Sisters,” n.p. To help Western audiences understand the Chinese film (and, implicitly, to overcome the Cold War divide that made post-1949 Chinese films barely accessible in the West), Rayns and Meek specifically note the film’s Ophulsian precision and sensuousness as well as the noir lighting and composition in the backstage confrontation sequences in the film’s Shanghai part.

58. This building is featured in Josephine Siao’s *Young Lovers* (*Qingchun zhi lian*) (dir. Chen Yun, 1967).

59. Law and Bren, *Hong Kong Cinema*, 178.

60. Eric Kit-wai Ma calls this “desinicization,” which enabled “a distinctive local identity” and encouraged mass media depiction of mainlanders as “uncivilized”

outsiders as opposed to modern, cosmopolitan Hongkongers. See *Culture, Politics, and Television in Hong Kong*, 1.

61. Jameson, “The Politics of Utopia,” 46, emphasis mine.

### Chapter 3: *The Love Parade Goes On*

1. Quoted in Braudy, “The Double Detachment of Ernst Lubitsch,” 1084, note 11.

2. Mai Xiaoxia “Guangdong xiju shilue,”

3. Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, 25.

4. “Xizhuang ju” refers to a set of Cantonese operas and films that derived from the encounter between Western cinema and Cantonese opera in the early twentieth century, which triggered the reform of Cantonese opera. One major trait of the reformed Cantonese opera was the adoption of Western costumes (*xizhuang*), hence the term, “xizhuang ju.”

5. See film advertisement in *Shen bao*, Oct. 29, 1930. Three months later, Star Theater previewed China’s first Vitaphone film, *Singsong Girl Red Peony* (*Genü Hong Mudan*) (dir. Zhang Shichuang, 1931), produced by Star Motion Pictures Co. and starring Hu Die.

6. See *Guangzhou nianjian* (Guangzhou Almanac), vol. 8, 88, quoted in Zhang Fangwei, “Sanshi niandai Guangzhou yueju shengshuai ji.”

7. Liyuan Huangsou, “Xue Juexian dashiji.” Although Liyuan Huangsou does not explicitly describe Xue’s cross-dressing performance in *Xuangong yanshi*, he does mention that Xue’s opera troupe experienced a period when the leading actor who specialized in female roles left the troupe, and Xue ended up filling the female roles with great success. This period coincided with the time when Xue’s *Xuangong yanshi*, along with other programs, was staged.

8. The title *Baijin long* was originally a cigarette brand manufactured by Nanyang Xiongdi Yanco Gongsu (Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Company). The company asked Xue to name his opera’s male protagonist after the brand name in order to boost the cigarette’s competitive ability vis-à-vis Western brands in the Chinese market. Packs of Baijin Long cigarettes were offered to the audience, while newspaper advertisements encouraged viewers to “watch the famous opera *Baijin long* and enjoy Baijin Long cigarettes.” The tie-in strategy successfully boosted the popularity of both the opera and the cigarettes in China and Southeast Asia. See Lee Pui-tak, “Jin yu fanjin,” 29.

9. When asked about the message of the film, Xue cryptically responded, “My goal in making the film is to encourage the Chinese to expand overseas business in order to achieve victory in the war of business at a time of global depression.” See Liu Feng, “Fangwen,” 13.

10. Mai Xiaoxia, “Guangdong xiju shilue” 792. *Xieyi* also characterizes *The Goddess*, directed by Wu Yonggang, as discussed in Chapter 1.

11. Ouyang’s critique originally appeared in *Xiju* 戏剧 (Theater), 1 (1929), quoted in Xie Binzhou 谢彬筹, “Dui Yueju yanjiu de cuqian ganzhi” 对粤剧研究的粗浅感知



(A Preliminary Study of Cantonese Opera), unpublished manuscript, cited in Luo Li, “Yueju yanjiu yu Yueju yanjiu shi chuyi (shang),” 28.

12. Ma Shizeng, “Wo de xinju tan,” n.p.

13. Ma Shizeng, “Wo daile yiqiang biange Yueju de recheng huilai,” 171–173.

14. Ma Shizeng, “Wo you mei yanju zhi zongzhi,” n.p.

15. Xue Juexian, “Nanyou zhiqu.”

16. Xue Juexian, *Yilin* 艺林 (Artland) (1938), quoted in Luo Li, “Yiling yixing yu yingju hudong,” 44.

17. Mai Xiaoxia, “Guangdong xiju shilue.”

18. Mai Xiaoxia, “Wanjiu Zhongguo xiju zhi weiwang,” 183–198.

19. Ibid.

20. Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparison*, 229.

21. Ibid.

22. In a 1925 publicity essay, Lubitsch’s style was described as “detached and nuanced” (*lengjun youwei* 冷峻幽微) as opposed to D. W. Griffith’s stimulating entertainment (*ciji* 刺激) style. Lubitsch’s *The Marriage Circle* (1924) and *Three Women* (1924), shown in Shanghai and praised for expressive visuality, inspired Chinese urban marriage films. See Star Motion Pictures Co.’s house magazine, *Mingxing tekan* (1925).

23. Brady, “The Double Detachment of Ernst Lubitsch,” 1073.

24. Ibid., 1073–1074.

25. Xiang Lin, “Dianying de chulu: yifeng gongkai xin,” n.p.

26. Ibid.

27. Zhao Zhongyu, “Zhongguo dianying shiye de mianmian guan,” 11.

28. Ibid.

29. Wei Nan, “Dianying de wenyi hua,” 10–11.

30. Sang Hu, “Hanxu.”

31. Brady, “The Double Detachment of Ernst Lubitsch,” 1075.

32. Ibid., 1078.

33. Weinberg, *The Lubitsch Touch: A Critical Study*.

34. Brady, “The Double Detachment of Ernst Lubitsch,” 1078, 1080, emphasis mine.

35. Ibid., 1080.

36. Harvey, *Romantic Comedy in Hollywood, from Lubitsch to Sturges*, 17. Harvey argues that MacDonald’s self-mocking, laconic comedian persona was very much invented by Lubitsch, who instantly signed her up as the queen in *The Love Parade* after seeing her in a screen test and a stage performance.

37. Brady, “The Double Detachment of Ernst Lubitsch,” 1083.

38. Willemen, “The National Revisited,” 36, 40, my emphasis.

39. Farquhar and Berry, *China on Screen*, 15.

40. Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, 25.

41. This company was founded in 1956 in Hong Kong by Lu Yuntao 陆运涛 (Lok Wan Tho in Cantonese), a Britain-educated business tycoon from a Malaysian/Singaporean Chinese family. It was a major rival of Shaw Brothers (which was derived



from Tianyi) in Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s. For a comprehensive study of the two companies' histories, see Ain-ling Wong, ed., *Guotai gushi* and *The Shaw Screen* (2003).

42. For a historical account of the Shanghai and Hong Kong genealogy initiated by *The Love Parade*, see Yung Sai-shing, "Cong *Xuangong yanshi* dao *Xuangong yanshi*," 190–289.

43. The term *yanshi* 艳史 (passionate romance) also appears in the Chinese translation of the titles of many later musicals starring Maurice Chevalier and Jeanette MacDonald, either together or separately. *The Vagabond King* (dir. Ludwig Berger, 1930), starring MacDonald, was translated into *Fagong yanshi* 法宫艳史 (The Passionate Romance in the French Palace). *One Hour with You* (dir. Ernest Lubitsch, 1932), starring MacDonald and Chevalier, was translated into *Honglou yanshi* 红楼艳史 (The Passionate Romance in the Red Chamber).

44. According to Mai Xiaoxia, opera critic and publicity director for Xue Juexian's theater troupe, the southern Chinese *kunqu* opera in the early twentieth century used twelve instruments, the northern Peking opera used fifteen instruments, whereas the Cantonese opera used forty instruments, and Western instruments were used only in Cantonese opera. See Mai Xiaoxia, "Guangdong xiju shilue," 813–814.

45. Wu Tingzhang, *Yueju dashi Xue Juexian*, 55–56.

46. Excerpts of the script appear in Ma Shizeng, *Qianli zhuangyou ji*.

47. Yung Sai-shing, "Cong *Xuangong yanshi* dao *Xuangong yanshi*," 192. *Xuangong yanshi* was not the first Western-costume Cantonese opera to depend heavily on Western props. *Baijin long* had already paraded eye-catching props including cigars, chocolate, a telephone, Western-style costuming, furnishings, and an exotic-looking barbarian tent. See Gong Bohong, "Lingnan feng,"

48. The advertisement is included in the Loke Wan Tho Collection held at the National Archives of Singapore.

49. For a chronological account of the competition between Motion Pictures and General Investment and Shaw Brothers, see Zhao Weifang, "Wuliushi niandai jingzheng geju zhong de Xianggang guoyu dianying gongye." For Loke Wan Tho's film enterprise, see Chung, "A Chinese Movie Mogul and the Transformation of His Movie Empire."

50. The *Snow Country* is translated as "Non-Such" in the English synopsis included in the film's publicity materials for its screening at the World Theatre in San Francisco.

51. Lee Cheuk-to, "Zuo Ji liushi niandai zuopin de chubu yanjiu," 59–60.

52. See "Xuangong yanshi yu liangfei."

53. Ibid.

54. Miao Jieke, "Zhang Ying Luo Yanqing de tianmi jingtou."

55. Rediffusion is a radio and TV broadcasting company originally formed in Britain. Branches were set up after World War II in British colonies. In Hong Kong, Rediffusion was founded in 1949 as Li de Husheng (丽的呼声, transliterated from Rediffusion; literally, "Beautiful Sounds"). In 1957, Rediffusion launched a subscription

cable television service known as Li de Yingsheng (丽的映声, literally, “Beautiful Images”), which was renamed Rediffusion Television Limited, or RTV, in 1973. For the publicity stunts for this film, see “Tou Hou-fun,” 285. The film made over HK\$400,000 and became one of the highest grossing films at the time. It ran for two weeks at two major Hong Kong theaters (*Da shijie* 大世界 and New York), breaking the box office record. Less than ten days later, it was brought back into the theater, with Zhang Ying, Luo Yanqing, and Liang Xingbo in attendance and performing their song numbers. See “Yingju xinwen,” n.p.

56. Chen Shibai, “Huisu qishi nianqian Xianggang.”

57. Chen Guanzhong, “Zazhong xiucheng zhengguo.”

58. Farquhar and Berry, *China on Screen*, 15.

59. Prominent examples include *Manbo nülang* (Mambo Girl) (dir. Yi Wen, 1957) and *Longxiang fengwu* (Calendar Girl) (dir. Tao Qin, 1959).

60. See Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and Identity*, 16.

61. I draw the notion of “espacement” from Aiten and Zonn, eds., *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle*, 211.

62. Kwai-cheung Lo, *Chinese Face/off*, 123. Whereas Lo’s analysis focuses on post-1990s Hong Kong cinema, which undoubtedly demonstrates more conspicuous transnational transactions, I argue that the simultaneously contradictory yet complementary relationship between the local and the foreign also played an important role in earlier Hong Kong filmmaking.

63. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 253.

64. Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, 25.

65. Jameson, “Globalization and Hybridization,” 316.

66. *Ibid.*, 316.

#### Chapter 4: Mr. Phantom Goes to the East

1. In the first version directed by Rupert Julian, previewed on January 1925 in Los Angeles, Christine kisses the phantom, which makes him shudder like “an injured animal,” but also “redeems his soul.” He releases Christine’s fiancé, plays the wedding march for them at his piano, then dies as the vengeful mob approaches him. After a poor reception, the film was transferred to Edward Sedgewick, who reedited it and inserted new footage of the chase sequence that replaced the original death in the catacomb. This chase sequence was retained in the third cut, done by Lois Weber, which had a successful premiere in New York. This last cut defines the silent version we see today. See Birchard, *Early Universal City*, 111.

2. This ending resembles not only that of *The Phantom of the Opera*, but also that of *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), directed by James Whales. In the sequel, *Song at Midnight II* (dir. Maxu Weibang, 1941), the phantom is saved by a mad doctor, who then performs surgery on him. He emerges from the surgery more hideous than ever. This perpetuates his haunting presence as alienation incarnate.

3. See Birchard, *Early Universal City*, 111. This publicity stunt was required by Lon Chaney in his contract with Universal, which stipulated that Chaney's phantom makeup should not be revealed until well after the film's release.

4. Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 28.

5. *Ibid.*, 23, 24.

6. Rutsky, "The Mediation of Technology and Gender," 16.

7. Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 24.

8. Lon Chaney's effective portrayal of the inaudible phantom with his nimble fingers owes a lot to his real-life experiences living with his deaf-mute parents.

9. Doane, "The Voice in the Cinema," 363. When the film was reedited and reissued with dialogue and sound effects in 1929, using the Western Electric sound-on-disk technology, all of the main cast members dubbed their roles except Lon Chaney, whose voice was not available for use owing to his contract with MGM, which was producing his upcoming first and only talkie, *The Unholy Three* (dir. Jack Conway). Consequently, the shadow of Chaney's phantom was "ventriloquized" by an uncredited voice actor. In other words, despite the publicity emphasis that the new sound version allows the audience to "hear as well as see" (according to the 1929 reissue trailer), Chaney's phantom remains inordinately silent. To add another twist, shortly after the release of *The Unholy Three*, Chaney died of throat cancer, which wiped out his voice physically and symbolically. All of these factors seem to reinforce the phantom of the opera as a categorically silent shadow, whose voice is as forbidden to his film audience as it is "angelic" to Christine. See also Robert Spadoni's in-depth study of the gap between the sound and the image, and the ways in which this gap is foregrounded and thematized in early horror talkies. Spadoni, *Uncanny Bodies*.

10. Giles, "Conditions of Pleasure in Horror Cinema," 47.

11. See Mordaunt Hall's movie review in *New York Times*, Sept. 7, 1925: 15.

12. Linda Williams, "When the Woman Looks," 86–87.

13. Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 28, 29.

14. Maxu originally intended to play this role himself, but it eventually went to Jin Shan, a popular film and spoken drama actor, owing to the intervention of S. K. Chang, producer of the film.

15. See Guiqu Shanzhuang's blog, "Wo de yeye MaXu Weibang (4)."

16. Yomi Braester summarizes the film's multiple appeals in terms of revolution and revulsion, which are at odds with each other. He argues that the phantom's scar entails a revolutionary message that tends to be overshadowed or undermined by the film's emphasis on "a repugnant monstrosity" as "a fascinating object of consumption." See Braester, *Witness against History*, 90. In my analysis below, I take a different perspective and examine the ways in which entertainment (derived from the romantic twists) and politicization (necessitated by the national crisis) are dialectically and allegorically intertwined (the former being the proxy figure of the latter) and that they both revolve around the sentiment of emergency and liminal presence.

17. The transition to talkie was a prolonged process in China, lasting from 1930 to 1938, according to the consensus of Chinese film historians. The fact that silent

films were produced as late as 1938 can be partially attributed to the impact of the Second Sino-Japanese War, which not only drastically reduced the resources for film-making, but also decentralized filmmaking to areas including the hinterlands, where basic filmmaking infrastructure was not available.

18. Tang Yu, *Erliutang jishi*, 125–127.

19. See Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*, 318. Departing from Zhang's technology-oriented interpretation, I focus on teasing out the layers of acoustic doubling, splitting, and relaying within and without the diegesis. On this basis, I analyze the intersubjective and intergenerational power structure and the ways it shapes the relationship between the past and the present, between the Other and the Self, and also between the predecessor film and the remake.

20. For a useful discussion of the aesthetic of disgust in horror film, see Roth, "Twice Two."

21. Similar criticism was also targeted at the sequel, *Song at Midnight II* (1941). See Xin Xie, "Ping Yeban gesheng xuji." Cheng Jihua et al. also criticize this film for slavishly imitating the Hollywood horror genre as represented by *The Phantom of the Opera*. See Cheng Jihua, Li Shaobai, Xing Zuwen, *Zhongguo dianying fazhan shi* (1998), vol. 1, 490–491.

22. Any reference to Japan (Ribei) in films had to be replaced by the vague term *diren* (enemy) or written as "xx" (a placeholder sign indicating censorship) in silent film intertitles. Such coded and oblique references can be found in Sun Yu's left-leaning films such as *Small Toys* (*Xiao wanyi*) (1933, starring Ruan Lingyu) and *The Big Road* (*Da lu*) (1934). Whereas readily understood by the contemporaneous audience, this coded presentation makes the films inevitably allegorical.

23. Braester, *Witness against History*, 90.

24. In addition to revising Maxu's script for *Song at Midnight* and writing song lyrics for the film, Tian Han also wrote the script and theme-song lyrics for *Children of Troubled Times* (*Fengyun ernü*) (dir. Xu Xingzhi, 1935) as well as song lyrics for *Street Angel* (*Malu tianshi*) (dir. Yuan Muzhi, 1937). Tian Han's "March of the Volunteers" (*Yiyongjun jinxing qu* 义勇军进行曲), the theme song of *Children of Troubled Times*, was selected in 1949 as the national anthem for the newly founded People's Republic of China. This song calls on the Chinese people to rise above slavery and to brave "the enemy's battle fire." The call for collective resistance of the allegorical "enemy" who enslaves China is repeated in "Love on the Yellow River" in *Song at Midnight*. Xian Xinghai, the composer of the three songs in this film, was born into a poor family in Macao and then converted to Christianity and was educated in France. Upon graduation in 1930, he joined the Pathé Record Company in Shanghai. He later became the head of the music department of Xinhua Film Company. See Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China*, 40–69. Two years after composing for *Song at Midnight*, Xian Xinghai wrote the "Yellow River Cantata" (*Huanghe da hechang* 黄河大合唱), which develops the Yellow River theme originated in "Love on the Yellow River."

25. For an important study of modernism in 1980s China, see Xudong Zhang, *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms*. For a study of the femininity and monstrosity

in Maxu's and Yang's phantom remakes, see Yiman Wang, "Here, Again, Comes the Bride-to-Be."

26. See Stokes and Hoover, *City on Fire*, 346, note 19.

27. The director, Ronny Yu, was to make the American comedy/horror film *Bride of Chucky* (1998). The cinematographer, Peter Pau, later shot Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* (2000), which won him the Academy Award for Best Cinematographer. The film's score was composed by Hong Kong–Filipino musician Chris Babida, the "Godfather of Pop and Cross-Over Music," who shuttles between Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China, and has produced major projects for the Chinese government. For example, he served as the music director of the 1997 Hong Kong handover ceremony and wrote the theme song for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Finally, costuming was done by Hong Kong production designer and film editor William Chang, who has collaborated with various Hong Kong New Wave directors including Stanley Kwan and Wong Kar-wai.

28. See Abbas, *Hong Kong*; Chow, "A Souvenir of Love"; and Lim, "Spectral Times."

29. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, 15–16.

30. See Bhabha's discussion of "sly" tactics in *The Location of Culture*, 93–101.

31. In an interview, director Ronny Yu indicated his original plan to make Cheung's face more gruesome but was unable to do so owing to the tight schedule and inadequate digital technology at the time. Meanwhile, he also admitted that even the modest disfiguration in the film already provoked some female viewers to protest against Cheung's "uglification." Yu's interview appears in the bonus materials included in the film DVD released by Tai Seng Video.

32. The disfiguration of the male actor as a punishment is a recurring theme in films and literature set in pre-1949 China. Cheung's fear of disfiguration places him squarely in the discursive tradition of male actors' suffering and mutilation. Cheung's interview appears in the bonus materials included in the film DVD released by Tai Seng Video.

33. Roth, "Twice Two," 106.

34. Before filming *The Phantom Lover*, Leslie Cheung had already undergone intensive Mandarin Chinese drilling for his role in *Farewell My Concubine* (dir. Chen Kaige, 1993), a China–Hong Kong coproduction adapted from a novel by a Hong Kong writer, Lillian Lee (Li Bihua). Cheung plays the character of a famous Peking Opera actor who specializes in playing female roles. Until recently, it had been commonly believed that this was Cheung's first film in which he spoke Mandarin Chinese in his own voice. However, in actuality, his voice was mostly dubbed by Yang Lixin, a Chinese spoken drama actor who agreed to relinquish credit in order to avoid jeopardizing the film's eligibility for competition at international film festivals. Chen Kaige did retain Cheung's original voice in two scenes where Cheung's character's voice is supposed to be "distorted" (*shi zhen*) by physical and mental distress. The dubbing went unnoticed because Yang "pretended so well" (as Cheung's phantom accuses Huang's student). By bending his neck backward, Yang was able to preserve Cheung's slightly husky voice quality. See Ju Jianfu, "Bawang bieji de miwen." Yang's dubbing of Cheung interestingly

parallels the multiple layers of dubbing and ventriloquism in *The Phantom Lover*. In all these cases, the location of credit, authorship, and authority becomes ambiguous and subjected to intricate power play.

35. Statistics show that over 90 percent of films screened in 1930s China were imported from America.

36. Lianhua's campaign may sound overly essentialist to contemporary scholars. Nevertheless, understood within its context, the efforts to wrest the indigenous market from Hollywood's hegemony registered a decolonizing impulse in urban cultural production. Furthermore, the emphasis on *guopian* (Chinese national cinema or China-made films) indicates precisely an attempt to construct and define a category that is not yet materialized and, therefore, not given.

37. Chow, "Between Colonizers," 151. Chow's observation was already anticipated in the 1965 memoir of Sir Alexander Grantham, the twenty-second British governor of Hong Kong. Grantham describes Hong Kong's fundamental political problem as its relationship with China rather than self-governance or independence. See Grantham, *Via Ports*. The theme of "decolonization without independence" becomes a major argument regarding Hong Kong's political development. See Lau Siu-kai, *Decolonization without Independence*.

38. For an important study of cultural production in postsocialist China, see McGrath, *Postsocialist Modernity*.

39. See Beijin Xiangxiang Caucus, "Beijin xiangxiang."

40. Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy"; see 325.

41. See Ying Hong and He Mei, "Gongzao hou hepai shidai de Huayu dianying," 31–32.

42. Ada Shen, "Tom Buys 35% of Huayi Brothers."

## Conclusion

1. For a detailed account of Hollywood's efforts to increase its market share in mainland China in the 1990s, see Ting Wang, "Hollywood's Pre-WTO Crusade in China." For a nuanced discussion of the impact of globalization on the Hollywood and East Asian film industries, see Klein, "Martial Arts and the Globalization of US and Asian Film Industries." One specific instance of Hollywoodization of Asian cinema industries, according to Klein, is achieved through Hollywood's production of local-content films via companies such as Sony's Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia. The similarity with Hollywood's early-twentieth-century attempt to make quasi-Chinese films (decried by Ma Shizeng) is hard to miss. The difference, however, is also obvious. Hollywood since the late twentieth century is no longer geographically confined but rather seeps into other conglomerates, thus becoming apparently de-Hollywoodized, as exemplified by Japan-based Sony's acquisition of Columbia Pictures Entertainment, Inc. from the Coca-Cola Company in 1989.

2. For a study of the socialist government's campaign to cleanse the Chinese market of Hollywood films, see Rao Shuguang and Shao Qi, "Xin Zhongguo dianying de diyige yundong."

3. See "*Gongfu meng*." This film, released in the United States and mainland China on June 11 and June 22, 2010, respectively, topped box office revenues in the opening week in both markets. Although criticized in China for its negative portrayal of Chinese kung fu kids, who viciously beat up the African American "stranger in a new world" (a line from the trailer that eerily evokes *Alice in Wonderland*) and also for its conclusion that shows the African American kung fu kid defeating his Chinese enemies in the latter's game, the film is generally viewed as an entertaining China-US coproduction that spotlights China's cultural traditions—kung fu, Mt. Wudang (the origin of Shaolin kung fu), old Beijing *hutong* residential areas, the Great Wall—while also showcasing Beijing's new architectural marvels including the Bird's Nest (Beijing National Stadium) and the new CCTV (Central China TV) headquarters.

4. Hollywood's olive branch to China becomes even more pronounced in the film's DVD and Blu-ray versions released in October 2010, which include interactive Chinese language lessons and a map of China. *Washington Post* commentator Howard Schneider sensationalizes the Sino-US courtship and power play in his film review titled "Lessons from 'The Karate Kid'—Japan Out, America Down, China on the Rise." For Schneider, the film amounts to "a two-hour-plus advertisement for the country [China], featuring stunning landscapes, smog-free skies and a Forbidden City void of police," to which China contributed US\$5 million and granted permission to shoot on the Great Wall and in the Forbidden City.

5. See Sisci, "From Hollywood to Chollywood."

6. Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*, 19.

7. Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," 325.

8. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*.

9. I follow Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, who usefully maintain the dual perspective of globalization and localization. Thus, they describe a "new world-space of cultural production and national representation which is simultaneously becoming more *globalized* (unified around dynamics of capital logic moving across borders) and more *localized* (fragmented into contestatory enclaves of difference, coalition, and resistance) in everyday texture and composition" (original emphasis). Consequently, the nation-state is undone by the "imploding heteroglossic interface of the global with the local," or the "*global/local* nexus" (original emphasis). See Wilson and Dissanayake, "Introduction," 1, 3. Building on this argument, I further stress the shuttling position in the global/local nexus, in between the globalization of the local and the localization of the global. This shuttling position is characterized by tension, suspension, indeterminable possibilities, and openness. It therefore defies the telos of both globalization and localization, and instead dwells in the tension-ridden uncertainty of the zone of "trans," as theorized in Chapter 3.

10. Friend, "The Remake Man."



11. Klein, “Martial Arts and the Globalization of US and Asian Film Industries.” 367.

12. For East Asian filmmakers being lured to produce remakable films, see Gary G. Xu, “Remaking East Asia, Outsourcing Hollywood.” In this essay, Xu also discusses Scorsese’s remake of *Infernal Affairs*. He concludes that the remake deracinates the Hong Kong gangster trilogy, while sneaking Cold War politics back into the film by privileging Western technological and moral superiority over China’s dark power. See pages 198–200. Xu’s critique of Hollywood’s (and, by extension, Western) hegemony in global media and of Hollywood’s remaking of East Asian genre films as a form of outsourcing is well taken. However, as I argue below, Scorsese’s remake also invites us to explore ways of provincializing Hollywood. This move does not negate Hollywood’s continued hegemony, but seeks to reposition it in the dynamic and shifting power geometry of contemporary global flow of film and media.

13. Roy Lee, for instance, privileges horror and high-concept films (over films with more local and national specificity) as the basis of American remaking. See Herbert, “Remaking Transnational Hollywood.”

14. For further development of Tarantino as a gatekeeper and Asiaphiliac, see Hunt, “Asiaphilia, Asianization and the Gatekeeper Auteur.”

15. Speaking of his preparation for shooting *Kill Bill* (2003/2004), Tarantino stresses his act of mimicry: “[T]he reason I was [watching up to three Shaw Brothers movies every day] is that I wanted to immerse myself so much in that style of filmmaking so that the things that they did would be second nature to me.” See “Interview with Quentin Tarantino,” in *Screenwriter’s Monthly*. Tarantino’s comments closely resemble the voice of the phantom’s student, who reverse ventriloquizes the phantom’s letter, as I have discussed with regard to Ronny Yu’s *The Phantom Lover* in Chapter 4.

16. Chan, *Remade in Hollywood*, 146.

17. *Ibid.*, 150.

18. *Ibid.*, 159.

19. Friend, “The Remake Man.”

20. See Woo’s interview in Stokes and Hoover, *City on Fire*, 309.

21. This martial arts film is based on a script adapted from a Chinese novel that was first rewritten in English by James Shamus, then translated into Chinese by Wong Hui-ling—Lee’s longtime collaborator—and eventually retranslated into English dialog. The convoluted back-and-forth translation connotes the cautious management and strategizing of cultural and aesthetic discrepancies in order to best address Western as well as Chinese audiences. In other words, Lee’s reinvention of the Chinese martial arts genre is enabled by his negotiation and collaboration with global film cultures.

22. See Hajari, “Erasing the Boundaries,” emphasis mine.

23. Donovan, *Asian Influence on Hollywood Action Films*, 4–5. Wen Yiduo (1899–1946), a Chinese poet who studied Western fine arts in the United States in the 1920s, deployed a similar trope of the original versus the copy in comparing Caucasian and Chinese facial features: “A Caucasian (white) face [is] an original print, with clearly defined sense organs, contrary to a Mongolian (yellow) face that has become blurred



due to frequent photocopying.” See Liang Shiqiu, *Tan Wen Yiduo*, 30. The difference is that Donovan sees John Woo’s Hong Kong work as the authentic action film that is compromised by formulaic Hollywood, whereas Wen Yiduo, in his self-racialization, saw the Caucasian face as the standard that makes the Mongolian face derivative. Nevertheless, both Donovan and Wen reference technologies of mechanical reproduction (i.e., photography and photocopy) that actually minimize the difference between the original and the copy, rendering them veritable simulacra of each other. The hierarchical differences they set up are therefore more ideological than factual.

24. Hajari, “Erasing the Boundaries,” 79.

25. Michael Cronin describes “globalization-as-homogenization” as “a McWorld bereft of difference because under colonialism everything turns out to be a replica, a simulacrum, a copy of a limited set of economically and culturally powerful originals.” See *Translation and Globalization*, 129.

26. Bauman, *Light Modernity*, 13.

27. Among the Westward flow were John Woo and Chow Yun-fat, who went on to become key contributors to Hong Kong/Chinese diasporic cinema and who have respectively directed and starred in major Chinese productions.

28. The two Hong Kong box office hits between 1997 and 2003 were *Shaolin Soccer* (dir. Stephen Chow, 2001) and *Infernal Affairs I*. Whereas *Shaolin Soccer* led box office records until 2004, when they were broken by Chow’s *Kungfu Hustle*, coproduced by Hong Kong, China, and the United States, the success of *Infernal Affairs I* triggered a string of remakes and parodies, and revived the gangster genre in Hong Kong.

29. “Yuanban Wujian dao daoyan Liu Weiqiang.”

30. In a press conference, Scorsese observed that the film evinced “a sense of paranoia and betrayal—one person never knowing who the other person is or what the other person is doing, or if you can believe anybody. It reflects the world now, the America that we know now, post September 11th.” He further explains that the tragic deaths at the end reflect the “moral Ground Zero,” “a sadness and a sense of despair” since 9/11. See Balfour, “Meeting with Martin and *The Departed*.” Also see Sarris, “Scorsese Takes Boston, and Electrifies with *Departed*.” The metaphoric “rat” or mole becomes literalized at the end of the film: after Damon’s gangster mole is shot in his apartment, a rat appears, gnawing on croissants, just below the golden dome of the State House in the background. Scorsese sees this image as a metacinematic moment that comments on the film from a detached distance, which evokes similar endings of classic gangster movies such as *Scarface* (dir. Brian De Palma, 1983) and *White Heat* (dir. Raoul Walsh, 1949). See Balfour, “Meeting with Martin and *The Departed*.”

31. This stylistic distinction is made by a Chinese blogger, whose commentaries are representative of the Chinese netizens’ overall sentiments. See Mei Jianchi, “Dang lang-man bei canku dianfu.” For more Chinese internet reviews, see <http://www.mtime.com/movie/22657/>.

32. Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, 50.

33. Herbert, “Trading Spaces,” 160.

34. *Ibid.*, 158.

35. French, “Where to Shoot an Epic about Afghanistan?”
36. “Chengdu Elements Stand Out in *Kung Fu Panda 2*”; Jonathan Landreth, “*Kung Fu Panda 2* Returns to Its Chinese Home.”
37. See “Meiguo zhizao de Zhongguo donghuapian.”
38. Zhu Jidong summarized the Chinese filmmakers’ discomfort by asking, “How does *Kung Fu Panda*’s imitation of Chinese kung fu outperform Chinese productions?” Zheng Hu, the deputy manager of the Shanghai Animation Studio, reasoned that Hollywood had outstanding merchants, whereas China only had outstanding artists. Thus, the Chinese film industry must undergo full-scale marketization, follow Hollywood’s commercial strategy, and produce animations such as *Kung Fu Monkey King* and *The Happy Pig Monk*. See Zhu Jidong “*Gongfu xionghmao weihe mofang Zhangguo gongfu ye rang Zhongguo yingren wangchen moji?*”
39. Higson, “The Concept of National Cinema,” 41.
40. Yang Yuanying and Ding Ning, “Xianggang dianying de beijin xiangxiang.”
41. Lim, “Generic Ghosts,” 118.
42. Higson, “The Concept of National Cinema,” 41.
43. Lim, “Generic Ghosts,” 124.
44. See Jameson, “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism”; see also note 22 in the Introduction.
45. For elaboration of the notion of “inflexible noncitizenship” in Chinese diasporic cinema (counterpoised with Aihwa Ong’s “flexible citizen”), see Yiman Wang, “Alter-centering Chinese Cinema.”
46. Shi-zheng Chen, “Director’s Statement.”
47. Liu Xiaozhuo, “Zhuanfang Chen Shi-zheng.”
48. The Ox Demon (*niu mowang*) is an obstacle that blocks the Tang dynasty monk’s journey to the West in the classic novel. It can be metaphorically reread as any obstacle en route to a more equitable interactive global structure or other desired goals.
49. See the autobiography of Xia Yan, a leftist scriptwriter and critic, *Lanxun jiumeng lu*, 245.

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