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Beyond New Waves: Gender and Sexuality in Sinophone Women's Cinema from the 1980s to the 2000s

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

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My dissertation bridges Chinese film studies, Sinophone studies, transnational feminism, and gender and sexuality studies through a comparative study of women's cinema in post-1976 China, post-1984 Hong Kong, and post-1987 Taiwan.

In my dissertation, I examine five Sinophone women's films—Huang Shuqin's *Woman, Demon, Human* (1987), Li Yu's *Fish and Elephant* (2001), Zero Chou's *Spider Lilies* (2007), Ann Hui's *Song of the Exile* (1990), and Mabel Cheung's *The Soong Sisters* (1997). I investigate socio-political influences on the filmmaking practices of Sinophone women directors and the receptions of these films in the global market. I argue that these films' innovative use of melodrama, re-excavation of repressed family stories, and representations of entanglements among gender, nation-state, modernization, and identity enact negotiations by these women directors of the forces of Confucianism, colonialism, socialism, patriarchal nationalisms, and heterosexual norms in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong at the turn of the century.

This project fills a lacuna in current scholarship on Sinophone women's cinema and intervenes in current debates on nationalism, gender, and sexuality in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the U.S.A.

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Note to the Reader

This dissertation uses the Hanyu Pinyin system of Romanization for Chinese words, names, and phrases, except when a different conventional or preferred spelling exists, such as Hong Kong and Taiwanese personal names, place names, and other proper names.

The ordering of Chinese personal names follows their conventional forms, with the surname first and then is followed by the given name. In cases where a person is known by his/her Anglicized name, the Pinyin name will follow the Anglicized name in bracket, for example, Ann Hui [Xu Anhua].

Introduction: Experience, Scholarship, and Border-Crossing

My dissertation project on gender and sexualities in Sinophone Women's cinema from the 1980s to the 2000s reflects my personal negotiations with the dominant gender and sexuality discourse in contemporary China, and my intellectual endeavor to bridge the areas of Sinophone studies, Chinese cinema studies, gender and sexuality studies, and trauma studies. Growing up in post-Mao China, I have witnessed the changing socio-political conditions in China, which are characterized by a curious mixture of a political authoritarianism, a market economy dominated by the state-owned enterprises, the increased interactions between China and other countries, and the clash between collectivism and individualism. Also as a female, I have witnessed and experienced gender discrimination from my childhood to adulthood. When I was little, I was unhappy that a girl had to follow more restrictions than a boy in many areas. Later in my high school years, I felt shock and indignation about some male teachers' sexist remark that most girls chose humanities because they could not master the "abstract" science. I also felt sorry for one of my good friends, who came from a five-daughter family that she had to abandon her dream for higher education because she needed to work and support the family as the eldest daughter.

Though I have been aware of the gender discrimination against women since my childhood, it was not until my graduate years I began to examine this issue in theoretical frameworks. My experience at The International Conference on Women and Chinese-Language Cinemas in 2008 marked the beginning of my intellectual pursuit of the study of women's issue, feminism, and Sinophone women's cinema. At that time, I was a

second-year graduate student in the Master Program of British and American Literatures in the English Department at Nanjing University in China. One day, I learned from a friend from the Department of Drama and Film that their department needed some literature graduate students who had good spoken English to serve as assistants for The International Conference on Gender and Chinese Cinema. Having been interested in women studies and film studies, I seized the opportunity to apply for the position and became an assistant for English-speaking presenters and attendees during the two-day conference (June 27 to June 28) in the Eastern China Hotel in Nanjing.

The conference was co-hosted by The Department of Drama and Film at Nanjing University, The Department of East Asian Languages, and The Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women at Brown University. More than 130 Chinese, American, Australian, British, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong film scholars, feminists, writers, directors, and screen-writers attended the conference. It covered many important topics relating to women and Chinese cinema, such as the female auteur in Chinese cinema, gender and Chinese women's cinema, gender and spectatorship in Chinese cinema, and sex, gender, and performance in Chinese cinema.

The most unforgettable incident at the conference occurred when one of the keynote speakers, a famous male Chinese professor X, remarked during his speech that he believed that only women talked about and supported feminism in China, and if any man claimed that he supported feminism, it must be a lie or he pretended to support the government policy of gender equality. A few audience chuckled after hearing his remarks. I was sitting at the back of the auditorium at that time so I could not see Professor X's

facial expression, but I could hear clearly his tone. He was not joking at all! He meant what he said. I was greatly astonished, and I could not believe that such remarks were made by a famous Chinese professor who enjoyed a high reputation in the academia. I was also ashamed of the professor's misogynist attitude. What a great irony! A Chinese professor speaks against feminism as a keynote speaker at an international conference on Gender and Chinese Cinema!

Moreover, he was not the only one. During the two-day conference, I sensed many Chinese male scholars' resistance to and questioning of feminist stances and my feeling was shared by other female attendees. In her review of the conference, the Chinese female director and scholar Yang Yishu writes about male participants' opinions on feminism,

> For example, some contend that the maternal sacrifice is prevalent in both the animal world and human societies, and thus, it does not reflect women's oppression in patriarchal societies. Some believe that individualism should come before feminism because individualism is more effective than feminism to resist the force of nationalism. And others criticize the feminist perspective in studying films because they believe that such a perspective focuses only on gender and neglects other important issues in films.

All three types of views reveal a strong resistance to feminism. The first opinion confuses the maternal behaviors in the animal world and in human societies, and ignores the gendered division of labor and organization of power in human societies. The second view neglects the fact that individualism is also a socially constructed concept, which is

determined by specific cultural, historical, and political conditions. In many cases, individualism is gendered and racialized. Thus, to claim that individualism is more effective than feminism in resisting the force of nationalism not only overlooks the socially constructed feature of individualism, but also reinforces the disconnection among various social movements and consequently weakens their counteractive forces against the grip of patriarchal nationalism. The third view is a misunderstanding of feminism, which believes that feminism studies gender relations at the expense of other issues. Sadly, such misunderstanding is quite popular in contemporary China.

Intriguingly, though she stipulates male participants' views on feminism, Yang does not give any comments on these views. For me, her reluctance to refute the anti-feminist views reflects the peculiar conditions of feminism in China, which is summarized by another keynote speaker, the famous Chinese woman director Huang Shuqin, "Though the gender equality policy has been enforced in China since the 1950s, it is still a lonely and luxurious thing to talk about feminism in contemporary China." Huang's remark reveals that many Chinese are unfamiliar with or reluctant to embrace feminist ideas in spite of the implementation of the state feminism in the 1950s.

Compared with the anti-feminist stances of many male scholars, female participants in the conference showed more interest in feminism and gender studies, and they were also more conscious of the dynamics among gender, representation, and politics. Some took feminist approaches to study the representation of women in different historical periods in Chinese cinemas. For instance, Mary Ann Doane investigated the cultural politics of stardom, class, modernity, and representation through analysis of 1930s films

in Shanghai. Shuqin Cui studied the awakened female consciousness in contemporary Chinese cinema. Other female scholars and artists explored the meaning of women's cinema. For example, Lingzhen Wang contended that women's cinema is not a unitary concept but instead historically constructed and influenced by mainstream culture. Huang Yushan believed that women's cinema referred to films that are directed by women directors or represent female consciousness. And Yiman Wang argued that women's cinema should also include women's active participation in script writing, acting, and postproduction.

I view the conference as both a traumatic and a transformative event in my life. It was traumatic because it displayed many forms of gender discrimination that I have previously witnessed or experienced, and moreover, it made me see clearly feminism's status in contemporary China. I am no longer surprised when I find it hard to talk about feminism with my elder relatives and my science major friends, but I remain shocked to find well-educated and highly regarded male Chinese professors with abundant knowledge of western feminism and Chinese women's movements possessing deep-rooted misogynic attitudes.

The conference was also a transformative and empowering event for me. Through attending various presentations and symposiums, I began to know many women scholars, writers, and directors from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and U.S.A. American feminist scholars, such as Mary Ann Doane and E. Ann Kaplan offered incisive analyses of the representation of Chinese women in early Chinese cinema. Mainland Chinese women directors Huang Shuqin and Li Yu, Taiwanese woman director Huang Yushan,

and Hong Kong women directors Mable Cheung and Yau Ching shared their experiences as women directors in overcoming various political, economic, and commercial obstacles to make films. Though they had different understandings of feminism and women's cinema, all of them were open to sharing their views and experiences, and contributing to the diversity of women's voices.

The conference opened up a new world for me. In this world, the meanings of feminism, women's cinema, and Chinese cinema were debated by people from various linguistic, cultural, racial, national, educational, and generational backgrounds. Since the conference, several questions have haunted me: What is feminism? Is feminism singular or plural? If feminism is plural, what are the causes for its variants, and what are their relationships? What is women's cinema? Does it mean cinema that represents women? Or does it mean cinema directed by women and for women? What are the features that distinguish women's cinema from other cinemas? Also, what is Chinese cinema? Does "Chinese" in Chinese cinema connote linguistic, cultural, and national meanings or does it also include other meanings? What are the relationships among feminism, women's cinema, and Chinese cinema?

Engaged by these questions, I began to seek answers. After I got my M.A. in English from Nanjing University, I chose to undertake the Ph.D. program in Comparative Literature at The University of California, Riverside. During my study in the USA, I have continued my training in fields such as gender studies, post-colonial studies, and psychoanalysis, and moreover, I have developed strong interests in film studies, queer studies, trauma studies, and Sinophone studies.

As I probe these fields, I find that the fields of trauma studies, gender and sexuality studies, and Chinese film studies are segregated and gendered. The current English language scholarship on trauma studies is mainly conducted by Euro-American based scholars with focuses on historical events related to Europe and the U.S., such as the Holocaust and the Gulf War. A few investigate sexual trauma in Euro-American contexts. Compared with trauma studies, gender and sexuality studies cover wider geographic areas and are more aware of the hierarchal power structures in different times and places in the world. In the field of Chinese film studies, despite the large body of works on Chinese-language cinema, the majority of the existing scholarship is devoted to the study of national cinema and the works of male Chinese directors, such as Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou, Feng Xiaogang, Tsui Hark, Patrick Tam, Edward Yang, Hou Hsiao Hsien and Tsai Ming Liang. Only a few study the works of the established women directors, such as Huang Shuqin, Hu Mei, and Ann Hui.

Among these works, Lingzhen Wang's anthology *Chinese Women's Cinema: Transnational Contexts* is a groundbreaking work that tries to bridge between gender and sexuality studies and Chinese film studies. Examining the diverse cinematic practices of twenty-five Chinese women filmmakers from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, the sixteen contributors take various theoretical approaches to examine these women filmmakers' complicated negotiations with local and global politics, cinematic representation, and issues related to gender and sexuality. The anthology excavates the long ignored female filmmakers, such as Dong Kena, Ning Ying, Tang Shu Shuen, Mable Cheung, Clara Law, and Sylvia Chang. It also offers innovative readings of the

works of established female directors, such as Huang Shuqin, Hu Mei, and Ann Hui, and studies newly emerging women directors such as Li Yu and Xu Jinglei. It seeks to reevaluate established film theories and to remap feminist film discourses through a critique of the patriarchal apparatus of dominant cinema studies and an examination of women directors' diverse cinematic practices in Sinophone communities.

In spite of its pioneer status, the anthology leaves much space for further exploration in Sinophone cinema. One of the problems is the lack of interaction between different essays. Due to the anthology format, the essays in the book have different thematic concerns and perspectives, and thus the book offers only individual case studies of Sinophone female filmmaker's works from the 1920s to the 2000s. It fails to address the similarities and differences of these women filmmakers' cinematic practices, and the possible relationships between these women directors' works and their specific temporal and spatial contexts.

Building on the works of this previous research, I attempt to bridge Sinophone studies, Chinese film studies, transnational feminism, and gender studies through the study of five Sinophone films in post-1976 China, post-1987 Taiwan, and post-1997 Hong Kong. The five films are Huang Shuqin's *Woman, Demon, Human* (1987), Li Yu's *Fish and Elephant* (2001), Zero Chou's *Spider Lilies* (2007), Ann Hui's *Song of the Exile* (1990), and Mabel Cheung's *The Soong Sisters* (1997). Each of the five films was made in a historical moment when the society had undergone drastic socio-political change. I investigate socio-political influences on the filmmaking practices of Sinophone women directors and the domestic and international reception of these films. I argue that these

films' re-excavation of repressed family stories, and representations of entanglements among gender, sexuality, nation-state, and identity enact negotiation by these women directors of the forces of patriarchal nationalisms, colonialism, socialism, and heterosexual norms in mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong at the turn of the century.

In what follows, I first situate my work in the debate on the concept of Sinophone in American academia, then I move to the analyses of the relationships of the five films to the New Wave movements in the three places, and finally, I sketch the outline of the whole project.

Chinese and Its Discontents

The controversies over "China," "Chinese," and "Chinese Culture" have been discussed by scholars from various disciplines such as area studies, history, literature and cultural studies, and postcolonial studies. In "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center", the famous neo-Confucian scholar Tu Weiming proposes the concept of "Cultural China" to understand the changing views of Chinese and Chinese culture from pre-modern times to contemporary world. In Tu's view, China should be understood as a civilization-state rather than a nation-state, and Cultural China consists of three interrelated symbolic universes,

> The first consists of mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—that is, the societies populated predominantly by cultural and ethnic Chinese. The second consists of Chinese communities throughout the world…and the third symbolic universe consists of individuals, such as scholars, teachers,

> journalists, industrialists, traders, entrepreneurs, and writers, who try to understand China intellectually and bring their conceptions of China to their own linguistic communities. (12-3)

Though the three universes all relate to Chinese culture, Tu points out that their influences on the current discourse on Chinese and Chinese culture are largely determined by their respective economic power and political status in the world. Contrasting the success of the "periphery" of the Sinitic world —Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore— with the "center" of the Sinitic world—the mainland China— in the postwar era, Tu contends that these peripheries exert much greater influence than mainland China on international discourses on Chinese and Chinese culture.

Examining the influences on Chinese intellectuals exerted by the clash between traditional Chinese culture and western culture since the late nineteenth century, Tu reasons that Chinese intellectuals in the twentieth century have experienced, as termed by Mark Elvin, a "double disavowal of both Confucianism and Marxism" (26). Reflecting on the Chinese government's atrocity in the Tiananmen Event, Tu concludes that the center of the Sinitic world—China— has lost its capability and legitimacy to carry on the agenda of Cultural China, and instead, the peripheries demonstrate possibilities for fulfilling such task (27-8).

Written before the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of China as a new world economic power, Tu's article is useful in understanding different types of Chineseness and the relationship among nation-state, culture, and power. But his article equates

ethnicity, culture, and identity, and neglects the diverse identifications among members within the three universes.

His attitude is critiqued by Allen Chun as "advocating a kind of pan-national Islamic fundamentalism in the imagined community of exiled Chinese intellectuals" (124). Chun challenges the equation of ethnicity, culture, and identity through distinctions among the three concepts and close readings of the construction, circulation, consolidation, and strategic adoption of culture and identity of "Chineseness" by various forces, such as nationalist forces in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Chinese diaspora.

Analyzing differences among ethnicity, culture, and identity, Chun argues that culture and identity often need to draw on ethnicity to create an image of shared values and an imagined community for their own legitimatization, and at the same time, they also need to transcend ethnic and national boundaries (125). Examining various identity construction processes in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Chinese diaspora, Chun contends identity construction is always driven by the specific social, political, and economic needs of each community. Moreover, Chun points out globalization's complex influences on culture and identity. Though globalization has opened up new space for the emergences of new identities and more flexible identifications, Chun cautions that simple promotion of multivocality does not necessarily lead to challenging authority; instead one should pay close attention to both the multiple voices and the contexts of these voices, as well as the relationship between these voices and their contexts (134-5). Chun's analyses reveal the important role of ethnicity in the construction of culture and identity and the risk of a simplistic advocacy of plurality in the globalizing era.

Similarly to Chun, Rey Chow also investigates the discrepancy among ethnicity, culture, and identification in areas studies and postcolonial studies. In "Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem," Chow problematizes the monolithic understanding of Chineseness and uncovers the hidden logic of the construction of the essentialist concept from both Chinese intellectuals and Western scholars in Chinese studies. Reviewing Chinese studies scholars' changing attitudes towards western theories from hostility to welcome, Chow believes such a change corresponds to the changing social and political conditions of China since the late 1970s (Chow 1998, 3). Chow critiques the orientalist approach in China studies, which upholds a binary view of Chineseness and Westernness. She points out that both Chinese intellectuals and Western scholars in Chinese studies reveal a certain degree of "differentialist racism," which according to Etienne Balibar, uses cultural difference rather than biological difference to categorize individuals and groups. Chow argues that "differentialist racism" creates an essentialized understanding of Chinese, and thus overlooks the diversity of the concept "Chinese" in terms such as ethnicity, dialect, history, and culture. In Chow's view, a rethinking of the notion of ethnicity will be beneficial in reimagining many fields of studies, such as modern Chinese studies and postcolonial studies.

Seen in this light, Shu-mei Shih's work on the "Sinophone" reexamines the concept of Chinese and bridges Chinese studies with diaspora studies, transnational feminism, film studies, postcolonial studies, and cultural studies. In her groundbreaking book *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific*, Shih investigates the semi-colonial history of China from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century.

Shih reasons that the construction of the concept of Chinese originated from three major sources,

> [T]he racialized nation's resistance against imperialism and semicolonialism in the early twentieth century; a practice of self-examination that internalized Western categories of the self; and, finally and most importantly, the suppression of its ethnic minorities for their claims on and contributions to the nation. (24)

Shih thinks that unified national concepts such as "China" and "Chinese" have always been built on the resistance against a threatening external force (colonialism in this case) and the suppression of the dissident voices of the internal minority groups.

Investigating the circulation of the concept in the contemporary world, Shih contends that "Chinese" is "a national marker passing as an ethnic, cultural, and linguistic marker" (24). Thus, she thinks the concept fails to examine the diversity of ethnicity, culture, and language in Sinitic communities, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Chinese diaspora. Accordingly, she proposes the term "Sinophone" to categorize the production and circulation of contemporary culture in Chinese language communities outside mainland China and inside Asia Pacific: Taiwan, Hong Kong, and U.S.A. Shih defines "Sinophone" as "a network of places of cultural production outside China and on the margins of China and Chineseness, where a historical process of heterogenizing and localizing of continental Chinese culture has been taking place for several centuries" (4). Drawing on the examples of visual works in Sinophone communities, such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and Asian American communities, Shih demonstrates the way in which

Sinophone articulations in these places reveal the Sinitic-language-speaking communities' complicated relationships with China.

In his review of Shih's book, Sheldon Lu remarks that "the concept of 'Sinophone' loses its critical edge in this exclusionary approach to China and the Chinese diaspora" since the term neglects the fact that "China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Chinese diaspora are mutually imbricated in the globalizing world" . Instead, Lu proposes that the concept of "Sinophone" should include all Chinese-speaking communities. I think Lu's definition of "Sinophone" is more useful. Shih's concept of "Sinophone" is a trenchant criticism of China-centrism, but her argument downplays the multiplicity of Chinese languages (the diversified dialects in China) and neglects the anti-hegemonic use of the dominant official Chinese language Mandarin by people both inside and outside mainland China. Thus, her discussion of Sinophone runs the risk of essentializing Chinese languages and creating a new binary between Sinophone and Chinese languages.

In my dissertation, I use the term "Sinophone" in a neutral sense, referring to various China-originated languages and dialects both inside and outside China. In this case, Sinophone cinemas include Mandarin and other Chinese dialect cinemas from both inside and outside mainland China.

Women's Cinema in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong

Similar to "Chinese" and "Sinophone", the notion of "women's cinema" is also a highly debatable term. Major feminist film scholars such as Claire Johnson, Laura Mulvey, Teresa de Lauretis, Mary Ann Doane, Kaja Silverman, and E. Ann Kaplan have

contributed to the development of this term. Their diverse opinions are far beyond the scope of this study. For my dissertation, I would like to use women's cinema in a broad sense. In my definition, women's cinema denotes films made and directed by women, which convey a clear sense of the hierarchical structure in patriarchal societies.

Sinophone women's cinema includes films made and directed by women directors from mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, and Chinese diaspora. Due to the scope of my project, I have limited my study to Sinophone women's cinema to five films made by women directors in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong between the 1980s and the 2000s. They are Huang Shuqin's *Woman, Demon, Human* (1987), Li Yu's *Fish and Elephant* (2001), Zero Chou's *Spider Lilies* (2007), Ann Hui's *Song of the Exile* (1990), and Mabel Cheung's *The Soong Sisters* (1997).

From the 1980s to the 2000s, drastic social changes occurred in the three locations and prompted the emergence of cinematic movements, such as the New Wave cinema and the documentary movements. The five selected directors actively engaged with these movements; however, their films were neglected due to the gendered nature of previous Chinese cinema studies. Locating the five films in their specific historical condition, my analyses show that the five directors have ambiguous relationships with dominant cinematic movements. Some of them work within the movements whereas others depart from the dominant trends of that period.

The three senior directors—Mabel Cheung(1950-), Huang Shuqin(1939-), and Ann Hui(1947-)— had different relationships with the famous New Wave movements in China and Hong Kong. As a blanket term, New Wave Cinema is used to describe films

made in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan from the late 1970s to the late 1980s, which were heavily influenced by Italian Neorealism, the French New Wave and the Japanese New Wave. New Wave Cinema in these three Sinophone communities shares some important similarities. All these films are produced in an era of a relatively tolerant social environment and increased cultural communications with outside world. The late 1970s witnessed the end of The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and the beginning of the Reform era in in mainland China. Similarly, Taiwan has also undergone a series of democratic reforms since the late 1970s. In Hong Kong, anticolonial political activism between the 1950s and the 1970s created a space for the emergence of a counterculture, which embraced liberal politics and experimental arts, and rejected commercialism.

The New Wave directors in these three places learned from European film techniques, departed from previously dominant genres, renovated, and reinvented narrative methods. As representatives of New Wave cinema in mainland China, the Fifth Generation directors[1] abandoned conventional storytelling, resisted the socialist-realist tradition, and experimented with various narrative methods and cinematic styles. Taiwanese New Wave directors broke away from the martial art genre and melodramas, and concentrated on realistic, down-to-earth portrayals of the everyday life of Taiwanese people. Hong Kong New Wave cinema rebelled against the dominance of Mandarin swordplay movies that were unrepresentative of Hong Kong people's daily life, and

[1] In Chinese film studies, scholars use different generations to categories Chinese directors in various periods. Fifth Generation Chinese directors refer to a group of Chinese directors who graduated from the Beijing Film Academy in early 1980s, and their films have brought international acclaim for Chinese cinema from the 1980s to the 1990s. Among them, Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige are the most famous.

Cantonese youth films, which were heavily influenced by American popular culture. Hong Kong New Wave directors revived Cantonese-language cinema through their mixing of genres, depictions of the contemporary life of Hong Kong people and exploration of the modern urban sensibility of Hong Kong.

New Wave Cinema in the three Sinophone communities earned great international acclaim. With few exceptions, such as Hong Kong director Ann Hui, scholarship on Chinese cinema has mainly concentrated on male New Wave directors such as the Fifth Generation mainland directors Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou, Hong Kong New Wave directors Tsui Hark, Patrick Tam, and Taiwanese New Wave directors Edward Yang and Hou Hsiao-Hsien. Commentators have neglected the contributions of female filmmakers in these three regions.

The reason for the marginalized status of women directors, in my view, comes from women directors' distance from the nationalistic stance of the New Wave movements. Male New Wave directors in these three Sinophone communities endeavored to produce films that articulated national or regional identities through the cinematic representation and construction of history, the portrayal of common people's everyday lives, and the depiction of contemporary social problems. In contrast, their contemporary women directors, such as Mable Cheung and Huang Shuqin departed from the nationalistic stance. During this period, Mabel Cheung had finished her immigration trilogy—*Illegal Immigrant* (1985), *An Autumn's Tale* (1987), and *Eight Tales of Gold* (1989). The trilogy highlights early Chinese immigrants' interaction with their mainland counterparts, and their confrontation and negotiation with racism, sexism, economic exploitation, and

cultural conflict in the 1980s New York. Cheung's transnational perspective was somehow alienated in the 1980s Hong Kong when the New Wave cinema endeavored to construct a local Hong Kong identity to counter the influence of both British colonialism and Chinese nationalism. This perspective is also reflected by Cheung's later film *The Soong Sisters* (1997). In Chapter Six, I investigate the film's representation of women, kinship, nation-state building, and history and contend that the film's feminist stance undercuts the official Chinese historical discourse.

In a similar vein, the female perspective in Huang Shuqin's films contrasts sharply with the masculinist perspective in Chinese male New Wave directors' films, which mainly center on the construction of a national identity in mainland China. Her film *Woman, Demon, Human* (1987) is viewed as the first feminist film in China. In Chapter Two, I analyze the film's representation of a contemporary Chinese woman artist's negotiation with her various roles as a daughter, wife, mother, cross-dressing performer, and a socialist citizen. I also demonstrate that the way in which her cross-dressing performance helps her come to terms with the gender and sexuality discourse influenced by Confucianism, socialism, and conventional Chinese theatrical norms.

Differing from Huang and Cheung, Ann Hui was more actively engaged with the Hong Kong New Wave movement. Ann Hui was viewed as one of the pioneers of New Wave Cinema in Hong Kong, and her first feature film, *The Secret* (1979), is often seen as the foundational film of that movement. In "Women on the Edge of Hong Kong Modernity: The Films of Ann Hui", Elaine Yee-lin Ho points out that Ann Hui's early films in late 1970s to late 1980s focus mainly on cultural contestation and neglect issues

relating to women and gender, but that since the 1990s, Hui's films have taken a feminist turn (181). Ho's analysis delineates the changing focuses of Hui's film in various periods. In my view, the film *Song of the Exil*e (1990) reflects Ann Hui's feminist turn. In Chapter Five, I examine the way in which the film represents the tangled relationship among gender, ethnicity, nationalism, colonialism, and identity.

Coming of age in a different historical moment, the two young women directors—Li Yu and Zero Chou— enjoy more opportunities but meanwhile face new challenges. The 1990s witnessed changing situations for film industries in all three Sinophone communities. In mainland China and Taiwan, economic growth, the development of technology, and increasing interaction with other parts of the world provided great opportunities for both established and young directors to engage in diverse cinematic practices, such as independent cinema and documentary movements. On the other hand, the 1997 Asian financial crisis and Hollywood's expansion into Asian markets brought serious challenges for film industries in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China. Facing new opportunities and challenges, the younger generation of directors tried different ways to pursue their film careers. Instead of seeking support from the government, many young directors began their careers by using digital equipment and non-professional actors, making documentaries and low-budget feature films. They then exhibited their films in international film festivals to draw critical attention.

Such is the case of Chinese woman director Li Yu (1973-). Li started her directorial career making television programs for Chinese Central Television (CCTV) in the mid-1990s. During this period, she directed three documentaries— *Sisters* (1996),

Stay and Hope (1997), and *Honor and Dreams* (1998). Later, she quit her television job and began to prepare her first feature film, *Fish and Elephant* (2001), which is arguably the first film to portray the life of lesbians in mainland China. Two subsequent films, *Dam Street* (2005) and *Lost in Beijing* (2007), deal with gender, sexuality, and their entanglement with tradition, modernity, migration, and globalization in contemporary China. Due to their sensitive topics, *Fish and Elephant* (2001) and *Dam Street* (2005) were banned in China and circulated outside China or in edited versions online. *Lost in Beijing* (2007) received permission to be screened in China after several edits. In Chapter Three, I analyze the way in which the representation of lesbian desire and female homosocial bonding in *Fish and Elephant* challenge the existing hierarchal structure in China.

Compared with their mainland counterparts, young generation women directors in Taiwan enjoy more freedom in the selection of cinematic themes and get more support from non-governmental film funding organizations. Taiwanese woman director Zero Chou (1969-), who emerged in the mid-1990s, has already produced more than twenty documentaries and feature films. Set mainly in Taiwan, Chou's films cover a wide range of issues. For instance, her documentaries, *Looking for the Forgotten Artists* (1997), *Being Ceased* (1998), and *Wanderers' Bay* (1998), endeavor to recover and reconstruct the local cultures and histories of Taiwan. Her feature films such as *A Film About The Body* (1996), *Splendid Float* (2004), *Spider Lilies* (2007), and *Drifting Flowers* (2008) inter-relate the body, queerness, history, memory, trauma, and local culture. In Chapter

Four, I investigate the interconnectedness among queerness, colonialism, and Taiwan identity in *Spider Lilies.*

Except Huang Shuqin, the four other directors are still actively making films today. Despite their different backgrounds, all five women are interested in exploring social issues, such as gender, sexuality, culture, history, ideology, and identity. In the following, I lay out the outline of my dissertation and the main arguments in each chapter.

Outlines

The dissertation consists of six chapters: the first chapter focuses on the development of gender and sexuality discourses in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, and the five following chapters study the five selected Sinophone films. The way I arrange the sequence of the five films follows both regional difference and chronological order.

The first two films— Huang Shuqin's *Woman, Demon, Human* (1987) and Li Yu's *Fish and Elephant* (2001) — are from mainland China. Made after the beginning of the Post-Mao era, Huang's film is regarded as the first feminist film by Chinese film scholars. Li's film was made during a time that drastic social change had taken place in China, and thus the film's depictions of the lesbian life was valuable to the examination of the patriarchal hegemony in China. Similar to Li's film, Zero Chou's *Spider Lilies* (2007) also tackles the topic of queer sexuality and moreover, the film reveals the intertwining of queerness, colonialism, modernity, and Taiwan identity. The last two films—Ann Hui's *Song of the Exile* (1990), and Mabel Cheung's *The Soong Sisters* (1997) —serve as great texts for exploring Hong Kong directors' reflections on the notions of family, kinship,

homeland, Chineseness, and Hong Kong identity. Locating each film in its specific historical condition, I examine the way in which the film represents and negotiates power dynamics among gender, sexuality, modernization, history, nation-state, ideological conflict, and identity in post-1976 China, post-1984 Hong Kong, and post-1987 Taiwan. I contend that all five films demonstrate a clear feminist consciousness that challenges the existing patriarchal hierarchy.

Chapter One "Gender and Sexuality Discourses in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan" delineates the development of gender and sexuality discourses in the three Sinophone communities. Analyzing the influence of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism on the gender and sexuality discourse in pre-modern China, I point out that the three philosophies hold relatively tolerant views on non-normative sexualities. Among them, Confucianism has played a vital role in shaping tradition Chinese gender and sexuality discourse. It establishes a rigid gender hierarchy between the male and the female, and non-normative sexual practices are tolerated on condition that they will not challenge the existing patriarchal heterosexual structure.

Situating the emergence and development of modern and contemporary gender and sexuality discourses in the modern histories of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, I show that patriarchal heterosexual hegemony in the three places was maintained in spite of their divergent colonial legacies and modernization processes. But at the same time, modernization has provided opportunities for the development of feminism and queer activism in the three Sinophone communities, which consequently challenge patriarchal heterosexual hegemony.

Chapter Two "Identity and Performance in *Woman, Demon, Human*" examines the performance of identities in Huang Shuqin's *Woman, Demon, Human* (1987). The film depicts Chinese woman artist Qiu Yun's negotiations with her various identities as a daughter, mother, wife, cross-dressing opera performer, and socialist citizen. Through analyses of Qiu Yun's relationships with her mother, her biological father, her adopted father, her first love Teacher Zhang, her husband, and her theatrical persona Zhong Kui, I reveal that Qiu Yun's trauma has been inflicted by maternal abandonment, Confucian gender discourse, and socialist gender discourse.

Drawing on Siu Leung Li's study of cross-dressing in Chinese opera and Judith Butler's elaboration of relations among sex, gender, cross-dressing, and identification, I argue that the film's subversive potentiality comes from the female protagonist's cross-gender identification and the film's depictions of tensions among sex, gender, identification, cross-dressing performance, Confucianism, and socialism.

Chapter Three "*Fish and Elephant*: Breaching the Law of the Father" focuses on the depiction of Chinese lesbians' negotiations with patriarchal hegemony in Li Yu's *Fish and Elephant* (2001). In the film, all three women protagonists are portrayed as marginalized figures: Qun is a middle-aged single lesbian woman who works as an elephant keeper in the Beijing Zoo, Jun is a young girl who has killed her rapist father and come to her ex-girlfriend Qun for shelter, and Ling is a self-employed female clothes designer and sales woman in an outdoor market. The film depicts two contrasting types of interpersonal relationships: the antagonistic or isolated relationship between female

and male protagonists versus the supportive, healing, and nurturing homosocial bonding among women characters.

Under the guidance of Adrienne Rich's ideas of compulsory heterosexuality and the lesbian continuum and Eve Sedgwick's notion of "homosocial bonding," I study lesbianism and female homosocial bonding in the film. Building on Ann Cvetkovich's notion of quotidian trauma, I argue that contemporary Chinese women and lesbians experience quotidian trauma as a result of sexism, classism, regionalism and homophobia. Through the examination of the production, exhibition, and circulation of the film, I contend that the film's success in international film circuit as an underground Chinese film reflects complex power dynamics among political censorship, market demands, and the rules of international cinema.

Chapter Four "*Spider Lilies:* Tattoo My Trauma, Tattoo My Desire" probes the representation of body, desire, memory, trauma, and identity in Zero Chou's *Spider Lilies* (2007). The narrative focuses on the development of a romantic relationship between Takeko, a lesbian tattoo designer, and Jade, a young webcam girl. The development of their romance simultaneously evokes the two women's repressed traumatic memories of the Jiji earthquake in Taiwan, leading to family break-up and maternal abandonment. I build on Teresa de Lauretis' notion of lesbian fetishism to analyze the ways in which the images of the spider lily tattoo, the green wig, and the jasmine image function as lesbian fetishes, which are connected with homosexual desire, the lost female body, patriarchal influences, and trauma. Dominick LaCapra's theory of trauma and Ann Cvetkovich's queer reading of the relationship between sexual trauma and queer desire suggest that the

lesbian desire in the film is not only derived from various forms of trauma but also functions as a way to work through it.

I also analyze the way in which the film's depiction of the power struggle among the sex worker, the client, and the state apparatus exemplifies John Greyson's elaborations on surveillance and countersurveillance between the state apparatus and queer artists. Probing the tangled relationship of queerness, trauma, colonialism, and Taiwan modernity in the film, I contend that the film suggests that the construction of a coherent Taiwanese identity is an impossible task.

Chapter Five "*Song of the Exile*: The Lure of Home" studies intersections among gender, ethnicity, nationality, culture, patriarchy, and power in Ann Hui's *Song of the Exile* (1990). By examining the complex relationship between a Japanese mother, Aiko, and a Chinese-Japanese daughter, Hueyin—their tensions, conflicts, negotiations, and final reconciliation—I delineate the tortuous processes by which both the mother and the daughter come to terms with their respective and interrelated traumas, inflicted by xenophobia, nationalism, and patriarchal hegemony.

Drawing on Edward Said's elaboration on the relationship between exile and nationalism and Gloria Anzaldua's analysis of the in-between space and transformation, I contend that the film resists the temptation to treat Hong Kong as the safe, protected home for exiles. Instead, the film suggests that the emergence of new homes and communities is closely related to constant border-crossings and negotiations with the unfamiliar and the unknown.

Chapter Six "*The Soong Sisters*: Women and the Nation-State" investigates the representation of the relationship among women, male alliance, kinship, and nation-state building in Mabel Cheung's *The Soong Sisters* (1997). Building on Michele Foucault's elaboration of the relationship between the spoken and the unspoken in a discourse, I study the film's representation of the dominant revolutionary nationalist discourse in the late nineteenth century China and how such discourse suppressed voices of dissents, such as those of the reformist nationalist and women. I also use Gayle Rubin's notion of "the exchange of women" to illustrate that the foundation of the modern Republic of China is built on the formation of Sun-Chiang-Soong-Kung kinship and the consolidation of patriarchal structure. Examining the film's negotiations with official historical discourses in People's Republic of China and Republic of China, I argue that the film's feminist perspective undercuts the official nationalist historical discourse, and urges the viewer to rethink the notions of nationalism and homeland.

Living in contemporary commercial patriarchal societies in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, these women directors need to strike a balance among governmental censorship, market demands, and artistic expression. Their diverse cinematic practices are valuable for the study of women's negotiations with patriarchy, nationalism, colonialism, and socialism in the three Sinophone communities. At the same time, Sinophone women's cinema also joins efforts with women's cinema from other parts of the world to urge the audience to rethink the power dynamics in contemporary world.

Chapter One Gender and Sexuality Discourses in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan

Gender and sexuality discourses in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan have long been contested terrains for various political forces. The ruler often used them to regulate the individual's sexual activities and consolidate patriarchal hierarchal structure. When the present regime was challenged by antagonist forces internally or externally, the ruling class would have to make changes to the existing gender and sexuality discourses to solve the crisis and protect its rule.

In the following, I begin with the introduction of traditional gender and sexuality discourse in pre-modern China, and then I situate the emergence and development of modern and contemporary gender and sexuality discourses in the modern histories of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. My analysis shows that patriarchal heterosexual hegemony in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan was maintained in spite of their divergent colonial legacies and modernization processes. But at the same time, modernization has provided opportunities for the development of feminism and queer activism in the three Sinophone communities, which consequently challenge patriarchal heterosexual hegemony.

Gender and Sexuality Discourses in Pre-modern China

Traditional Chinese discourses on gender and sexuality are mainly influenced by Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, among which Confucianism has played a dominant role. As the indigenous Chinese philosophy, Confucianism has been the state ideology in China for over two thousand years. Originated during the Spring and Autumn

Period (771 to 476 BC), Confucianism is generally believed to have been founded by the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551–479 BC). Confucianism was originally an ethical and sociopolitical teaching and later Confucius's followers incorporated metaphysical and cosmological elements into the original teachings. At the core of Confucianism are its cosmological view and ethics. Confucianism believes *Tian* (translated as "Heaven") is the "Great One" and the source of reality, and thus the ruler of the kingdom is often regarded as *Tianzi* (the Son of the Heaven). Moreover, Confucianism advocates a humanistic ethics, which is exemplified by Five Constances: Ren (humaneness); Yi (righteousness or justice); Li (proper rite); Zhi (knowledge); Xin (integrity), and Four Virtues: Zhong (loyalty); Xiao (filial piety); Jie (continence); Yi (righteousness). The ideal society envisioned by Confucianism is the one which is ruled by the sage king—a virtuous, wise, and powerful ruler and in which all social members faithfully fulfill their roles in the social hierarchy.

The best representative of hegemonic Chinese patriarchal discourse, Confucianism stipulates the five basic social relationships: ruler to ruled, father to son, husband to wife, elder brother to younger brother, and friend to friend. Except for the last type (friend to friend), the former has authority over the latter in relationships. Under the influence of Confucianism, class divisions and boundaries are strictly maintained.

In terms of gender relationships and sexuality, Confucianism features with male dominance, female subordination, and heterosexual hegemony. Men, especially the senior upper-class ones, had authority over all women and men from the lower class. To continue the patrilineality, a man often took concubines if his wife could not give birth to

a male heir. The husband had absolute authority over the wife and his concubines. Likewise, the wife and her children enjoyed privilege over the concubines and their offspring. Besides concubinage, Chinese men could also enjoy sexual services from sex workers if conditions permit.

Contrary to men's privilege in satisfying their sexual desires, women in pre-modern China lived under a great number of social regulations. The "Three Obediences and Four Virtues" in Confucianism are apt examples. As specific moral principles to regulate women, "Three Obediences" meant that a woman must obey her father before her marriage, her husband after her marriage, and her son after the death of her husband. "Four Virtues" refer to a woman's morality, proper speech, modest manner, and diligent work. Thus, a man could divorce his wife as long as he found that she did not possess the "Four Virtues." A woman who engaged in an extra-marital affair, either willingly or forced, would be severely punished by the husband's family. In many cases, she would be sentenced to death whereas the man who engaged in the same affair was excused or only received criticism, depending on the man's social status.

Confucianism holds that a virtuous woman needs to be diligent, subservient, and chaste, and most importantly, she should be able to support and reproduce the existing system. Within this system, a woman could become powerful only when she became a wife, gives birth to a male heir, and then became a matriarch in the family. Thus, bearing a male heir was the most significant way for a woman to improve her own status in the family. Finding no other way out in the social hierarchy, most women became reproducers of the patriarchal heterosexual system. Their morals and behaviors were

controlled, and their desires and self-will were suppressed by Confucianism. And only a few women chose to be nuns or sworn sisters[2] to escape the constraints of the marriage. Confucianism has exerted the greatest influence on Chinese societies and the Chinese diaspora in the areas of politics, economics, ethics, philosophy, education, and the family.

Differing from Confucianism's rigid gender roles and regulation of sexuality, Daoism and Buddhism hold relatively tolerant views towards the two. With a history of over two thousand years, Daoism is the indigenous Chinese philosophical and religious tradition. Marked by its *yin-yang* cosmology, Taoism refuses essentialist conceptions. In Daoism, *yin* and *yang* are the two basic components of all materials. *Yin* is often associated with concepts such as dark, cold, and female whereas *yang* is often connected with light, hot, and male. Though they seem contradictory, Daoism regards *yin* and *yang* as complementary and interdependent. It believes that *yin* and *yang* are fundamental constituents of all lives. The two depend on each other and can mutate into each other. Both men and women are constituted by *yin-yang* elements. Thus, a person's gender, sex, and sexuality cannot be treated in an essentialist way. Similar to Daoism, Buddhism also holds sexuality and gender roles to be transient and ever changing. Moreover, Buddhism believes that human life and the existing secular social relationships are only a phase in an entire universe.

Influenced by these three belief systems, traditional Chinese discourse on sexuality is quite tolerant. None of these three beliefs treat sexuality as the central feature of a

[2] Sworn sisters were women in ancient China who had sworn to support and live with each other as family members for their eternal life. These women were bounded by vows, not by blood. They lived in a women-only community to help each other and resist patriarchal gender and sexuality roles. They were not necessarily lesbians.

person's identity, and accordingly, non-heterosexual practices are tolerated as long as they do not threaten the heterosexual family structure and the social hierarchy. For instance, Liu Dalin and Lu Longguang have delineated the long history of homosexuality in pre-modern China. Tracing the earliest record of Chinese male homosexual acts in the Shang Dynasty (1600 BC-1046 BC), they contend that homosexual acts exist throughout Chinese history. Many upper-class and middle-class male elites engaged in homosexual acts and the whole society had been tolerant towards homosexuality before the rise of Neo-Confucianism, an ideology with a restrictive attitude towards sex and sexuality, in the early eleventh century (1-16). Even so, homosexual acts still existed in China. They point out that the vibrant homosexual culture in Qing dynasty (1644-1912) was closely related to the Manchurian ruler's forbidding of inter-ethnic heterosexual marriage between the Manchu and the Han majority[3]. Under this circumstance, many male Manchurian elites had sex with male Han prostitutes to seek fun outside the marriage (19).

In contrast to the rich records of pre-modern male homosexual acts, materials of pre-modern female homosexual acts are scarce. Liu and Lu explain that such contrast results from men's privilege in literary and historical narrative production (25). Drawing on the few existing materials, they divide female homosexual acts in ancient China to three categories: these between women in imperial palaces, such as the queen consort, the emperor's concubine, and the maid; these conducted by Buddhist and Taoist nuns; and these among secular women (25-32). The work by Liu and Lu illustrates the tolerant

[3] The last imperial Chinese dynasty, Qing dynasty, is ruled by the Manchurian, an ethnic minority originated in Northeastern China. Except Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) and Qing dynasty, the Han people, the largest ethnic group in China, has always been the ruling class throughout Chinese history.

feature of traditional Chinese discourse on sexuality. But meanwhile their study of the reason for the rapid development of male homosexual culture in Qing dynasty demonstrates that sexuality has always been a vital tool for the ruler to maintain the ethnic boundaries. Moreover, the contrast between male homosexual culture and the invisibility of female homosexuality echoes the gender hierarchy between men and women in pre-modern China. Thus, non-heterosexual activities were tolerated on the condition that these practices would not challenge the structure of patrilineal heterosexual hierarchy.

In spite of these restrictions, proto-feminist movements existed in pre-modern China. For instance, Yenna Wu points out that Chinese indigenous activisms which advocated women's rights can be dated back to the late seventeenth century. The activism mainly endeavored to ban foot-binding, and did not demand other rights for women. Later, in the early nineteenth century, some male intellectuals advocated gender equality between men and women (32). Wu's work shows that pre-modern activisms for women's rights gradually developed from the early denunciation of the bodily oppression of women to a stronger demand for gender equality. It also reveals that that proto-feminist activism in pre-modern China was relatively independent of other social activism. But the situation began to change after China's encounter with colonialism and modernization in the mid-nineteenth century.

Modern and Contemporary Discourse of Gender and Sexuality in Sinophone Societies

The range of the modern period in the three Sinophone communities has long been a controversial topic. For the convenience of my analyses, I treat the modern period in the three Sinophone communities as the period from the First Opium War (1839–1842) to the late 1970s and the 1980s. During this period, all three places encountered colonization and modernization that featured the struggles between colonial forces and local nationalist forces. Consequently, discourse about gender and sexuality has been influenced by these struggles. In the following, I situate the development of modern discourses of gender and sexuality in the modernization process of three Sinophone communities in the sequence of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. The discourses of gender and sexuality in the three places diverged from each other after Hong Kong and Taiwan were ceded to Britain and Japan by imperial China in the nineteenth century.

The emergence of modern discourse on gender and sexuality in the three places synchronized with the colonization of China and the rise of anti-colonial nationalist discourse in the mid-nineteenth century. Since Britain defeated the Qing China in the First Opium War (1839–1842), China signed a series of unequal treaties with western colonial powers (Britain, France, Germany, Russia, USA, Portugal, and Japan). These treaties forced China to pay war indemnity, granted extraterritoriality, and opened its market to the colonizers. Among these treaties, Hong Kong Island was ceded to Britain as a crown colony under the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, and Taiwan was ceded to Japan under the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895. These treaties caused great sufferings for Chinese but at the same time, they broke the century-long Closed Door Policy imposed

by the Qing government, which initiated the divergent modernization processes of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

Under this circumstance, anti-colonial nationalistic discourse became the dominant social discourse in late imperial China. The Qing government's defeat by western powers made Chinese nationalists realize that China must undergo modernization so as to compete with western powers, and the transformation of tradition Chinese culture would be an essential step. Consequently, they actively incorporated western discourses to their own modernization agenda.

Among various western discourses, western sexology, Enlightenment ideas, and Marxism greatly influenced the emergence of modern gender and sexuality discourse in China at the turn of twentieth century. Wah-shan Chou contends that dominant gender and sexuality discourse in the Republican Era (1912-1949) was built by the ruling party—the Kuomintang (KMT)—to serve its goal to consolidate the newly founded Republic of China. Chou remarks that the nationalists possessed an ambiguous relationship with Confucianism. On the one hand, they viewed Confucianism as the symbol of "backward" traditional Chinese culture and thus they aimed to "liberate" women from the tyranny of Confucianism. In nationalists' view, women should be granted rights of education as the primary childrearer so that the younger generation could be better educated. But on the other hand, they found that a modern centralized China also needed to maintain the patriarchal heterosexual structure. Thus they were reluctant to strive for gender equality (42-5). Accordingly, modern gender and sexuality discourse created by the nationalists adopted elements of biological determinism,

homophobia, and heterosexual hegemony from nineteenth century western sexology, and at the same time, it maintained Confucian gender hierarchy. This feature is described by Chou as an "alliance between Confucian marital institutions and the scientific discourse of gender duality" (47). Chou's work explains that the KMT's adoption of western sexology or Confucianism is closely related to its agenda, which stressed both modernization of the nation and a stable social environment for the new government. Thus, homophobia's replacement of homo-friendliness in gender and sexuality discourse aimed to consolidate the heterosexual hierarchal structure—the cornerstone of a stable centralized Republic of China.

In a similar vein, the gender and sexuality discourse upheld by Chinese socialists was also determined by its own agenda. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s mobilization of women in the national independence movements helped it defeat its major rival—the KMT —in the Chinese Civil War and found the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. Li Xiaojiang reasons that the socialist discourse strived to liberate women from the oppressions of feudalism, exemplified by Confucianism, and newly developed capitalism; however, it appropriated feminism by reducing women to the symbol of the feudal oppression or the signifier of the oppressed proletarian class (267-8). Li's analysis reveals the subordination of feminism to the socialist struggle for national independence. And a similar situation occurred after the foundation of the PRC.

The foundation of the PRC has exerted mixed effects on Chinese women. Yenna Wu argues that Chinese women's social status was improved since 1949, but meanwhile the establishment of the socialist government organization— the All-China Women's

Federation (Fulian) —has strengthened the CCP's control over women. Moreover, equality between men and women in the Mao Era (1949-1976)[4] was based on the erasure of gender difference, and women were measured against a male standard (32-4). Wu remarks that the post-Mao era (1978-) has witnessed the development of women's nongovernmental associations and grass roots women's movements as well as the reintroduction of contemporary Anglo-American and French feminisms in China (36-7). In spite of the existence of various feminisms in contemporary China, Chinese women still "prefer a feminism that ensures gender equality while recognizing mutuality and biological differences" (38). Wu's analysis calls attention to Chinese feminism's strategic use of biological difference to counter the legacy of the gender discourse in the Mao era which demanded "whatever a man can do, a woman can do". Moreover, Wu's analyses show how Chinese state feminism and market economy influence feminism and women's movements in contemporary China.

Similarly to the development of feminism, the discourse on sexual non-conformity has also been subsumed in the Mao Era and the post-Mao Era. From 1949 to 1978, class struggle was the priority in the society, and it surpassed all other social activism. Since the implementation of Deng Xiaoping's "Open and Reform Policy" in December 1978, Chinese society has experienced drastic socio-cultural transformation. Wah-shan Chou points out that the influx of western cultures in 1980s China generated discussion of homosexuality in public (98-9). The dominant legal and medical discourses exhibited a

[4] The Mao Era (1949-1976), was a historical period of People's Republic of China under the leadership of Mao Zedong from the foundation of PRC in 1949 to Deng Xiaoping's ascendance to power in 1976. It covered many historical events, such as Land Reform (1950), the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

derogatory attitude towards homosexuality. Chinese sexual minorities have been disciplined either as "hooligans" or as people with mental disorders. It was not until 1997 that the word "hooligan" was removed from the law; however, Chinese law continues to embody an ambiguous attitude towards non-heterosexual activities (108-110). Though no law prohibits non-heterosexual activities, same sex partners do not enjoy equal rights with their heterosexual counterparts in many fields, such as housing, marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc.

Apart from social pressure, the familial pressure to marry people of the other sex is also a great burden for Chinese sexual minorities. In a society which values filial piety, especially to fulfill the reproduction obligation, Chinese sexual minorities who refuse to marry the other sex will suffer from familial pressure, their own sense of guilt and others' gossip. Accordingly, many Chinese sexual minorities either enter the heterosexual marriage against their own will or choose a paper marriage[5], and only a few will stay single. Chen Yaya illustrates the dilemma for Chinese sexual minorities in her study of the life of contemporary Chinese lesbians. Chen points out that many Chinese lesbians find their homosexuality after entering a heterosexual marriage. Under great social pressure, many of them choose to maintain their heterosexual marriages. Some of them engage in extramarital affair with other lesbians. Accordingly, many people criticize such

[5] The paper marriage between sexuality minorities in contemporary China often takes place between a gay and a lesbian, who play the heterosexual role in front of the public. Before they get married and live together, they often negotiate a set of rules that stipulate the way to share costs of living expense, take one's partner into the house, and handle the interpersonal relationship with the in-laws. In most cases, the gay husband and the lesbian wife do not have sex and they have their own sexual partners. But in some cases, they may have sex so as to have a child and then it would raise another problem about how to inform the child of the complicated interpersonal relationships among its biological parents and their respective partners.

lesbians' action as immoral. The greatest headache for many Chinese lesbian mothers is the relationship between their children and their partners. Due to the marginality of the homosexual in the society, most lesbian mothers feel reluctant to come out to their children. For the unmarried lesbians, some of them choose not to marry because of the difficulty of choosing between the child and the partner. Meanwhile, a few lesbians are positive about coming out to their children and living with children and partners together (17-21). Chen's study shows that the existing choices for Chinese lesbians are greatly confined by the dominant gender and sexuality discourse that prioritizes reproduction and heteronormativity over the individual's desires.

Modern and contemporary gender and sexuality discourse in Hong Kong is also greatly influenced by Hong Kong's colonial history. In her study of Mabel Cheung's films, Staci Ford contends that they represent "a particular Hong Kong feminist sensibility" (343), which promotes "small victories for women," but at the same time "safeguard[s] particular gender boundaries" (344). The stress on harmony between men and women, Ford believes, derives from Hong Kong people's unique history and geography. Sandwiched between two powerful countries— China and Britain, Hong Kong people have developed many non-confrontational tactics in claiming their own rights under different regimes (345). Ford's argument highlights the impact of Hong Kong's geopolitical position on its local women's movements. Influenced by traditional Chinese Confucianism and British colonialism, women's movements in Hong Kong need to activate as many useful forces as possible to fight for gender equality and women's rights.

Despite their similarities, Hong Kong feminism differs from Chinese feminism in its relationship with the government. In her study of the history of Hong Kong feminism, Gar-yin Tsang points out women's movements in Hong Kong have been greatly influenced by western feminism and advocated by individuals and nongovernment organizations, such as the Hong Kong Council of Women (HKCW), the Association for the Advancement of Feminism (AAF), and the Hong Kong Women Workers Association (HKWWA). These organizations set up women's resource centers to provide refuge for battered wives and offer counseling services and various programs for individual empowerment. They also organize lectures and exhibitions to raise public awareness of women's issues, launch campaigns to address women's problems, and exert influence on policy makers. All these activities enhance public understanding of women's issues and improve women's living conditions in Hong Kong (276-285). Tsang's study uncovers the agency of the individual and nongovernment organizations in the development of local feminism in Hong Kong.

Similarly to Hong Kong feminism, the discourse on sexual minorities has also been influenced by the changing social political conditions in Hong Kong. Chou delineates its development from the British colonial period (1840-1997) till the late 1990s. Under British colonialism, Hong Kong was a segregated society up until the 1970s. The racial line between the British colonizer and Hong Kong people was strictly maintained, and non-normative sexualities were criminalized in colonial law. The MacLennan Incident in

1980[6] exposed the entanglement among homosexuality, interracial tension, and colonial bureaucratic scandal. Accordingly, the issue of homosexuality entered the public view and generated heated discussion on homosexuality among church, political, legal, medical, educational professionals and sexual minority groups. Furthermore, the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 accelerated Hong Kong people's effort to build a democratic society, which consequently led to the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1991 (66-78). Chou's study demonstrates that sexuality is a significant tool for the ruler to maintain various boundaries and consolidate the existing colonial hierarchal structures. Thus, the development of the discourse on sexual minority can be viewed as an important part of Hong Kong's decolonization process.

Similarly to its Hong Kong counterpart, modern gender and sexuality discourse in Taiwan has been influenced by its colonial legacy and Taiwanese modernity. Reviewing colonial polices executed by various colonizers in Taiwan: Europeans (1624-1662), Chinese (1662-1895), Japanese (1895-1945), and Kuomintang Regime (1945-2000), Fran Martin contends that colonial cultures have exert great influence on the formation of Taiwanese modernity, and such modernity is not singular but plural (11). Martin points out that Japanese colonialism and the KMT regime exerted a huge influence on the emergence of a queer community in Taiwan. Both regimes avoided direct reference to homosexuality in their legal codes, but both severely punished non-normative sexualities.

[6] The MacLennan Incident in 1980 was a famous case in Hong Kong that combined queer sexuality, interracial tension and colonial bureaucratic scandal. John MacLennan, a Scottish police inspector in Hong Kong, was founded dead in 1980. In Wah-shan Chou's account, it was suspected that he committed suicide not only because of his own homosexual practices with Chinese boys but also because he knew too much about the higher colonial officers who were also engaged in similar practices (66).

Moreover, the KMT regime "linked unruly sexualities (those that are public, homosexual, and non-familial) with imagined threats to the nation of the Republic of China" (14). Martin's analysis uncovers that the Japanese and the KMT colonizers shared the same aim to construct and manage the colonial subject through the regulation of their sexuality. Moreover, the sexuality discourse promoted by the KMT prioritizes one's national and racial identities over one's sexuality.

Besides the regulation of non-normative sexuality, Japanese colonialism and the KMT dictatorship also suppressed the voices of dissident groups, among which women's voices is an important one. Under strict social control at that time, Taiwanese women had very limited rights and suffered from gender discrimination in society. The early 1980s witnessed the rise of social activism in Taiwan, which aimed to end the KMT's dictatorship and demand rights for ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups. Under these circumstances, modern gender and sexuality discourses in Taiwan began to emerge, among which indigenous feminism is an important one. In "How the Feminist Movement Won Media Space in Taiwan: Observations by a Feminist Activist," the Taiwanese pioneering feminist activist Yuan-chen Lee shared her experience of developing grass root feminist activism. In 1982, Lee established *the Women's Awakening Journal* to disseminate ideas of gender inequality to the public. The journal gradually developed into a nation-wide organization and gained attention and recognition from mass media in Taiwan. To promote feminist ideas, enthusiastic feminists, such as Lee, made connection with other social movement groups, held street demonstration on

women-related issues, and made efforts to improve women's social status through legislative measures (95-6).

Besides, Lee and her Women's Awakening Organization also vigorously participated in transnational communication with women's study foundations and feminist organizations in Hong Kong, Mainland China, the U.S.A, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, the Philippines and India. The close Taiwan-U.S. relationship after the Second World War has enhanced communications between feminists from both sides and provided many opportunities for US sponsored Taiwanese feminist movements. The communication with the Hong Kong feminist organizations makes Lee feel that Hong Kong male feminists are more sincere and supportive than their Taiwanese counterparts (100). Due to the ambivalent and sometimes hostile relationship between Taiwan and mainland China, Lee has only limited information about the modern women's movement in the mainland. Even so, she and other Taiwanese scholars made great efforts to publicize the discovery of the Women's Script[7] in Hunan province in mainland China by publishing a systematic edition of the script. They also enhance the communication by going to the mainland to attend women's study conferences and promoting mainland feminist books in Taiwan (108). Lee's devotion to the development of indigenous feminism in Taiwan and her active engagement with feminist scholars and activists outside Taiwan demonstrate the mutually beneficial relationship between the development of indigenous feminism and the cross-cultural communications.

[7] With a history of about seven hundred years, Women's Script is Chinese script invented by women and used exclusively among women in Hunan, a southern province in China.

The 1980s also witnessed the emergence of queer activism in Taiwan. Wah-shan Chou contends that Taiwan queer activism has been closely associated with the women's movement. The development of the women's movement provided space for sexual minorities, especially for lesbians, to struggle for their rights; however, at the same time, tension also existed between the two movements. Since the majority of the women's movement in Taiwan strove for equality between two sexes with little challenge of the existing patriarchal heterosexual hegemony, the alliance between the queer movement and the women's movement was formed on condition that the heterosexual norms remain unchallenged (152-56).

Besides making alliance with women's movement, Chou points out that Taiwanese queer activism ranges from "active intellectual theorization to aggressive political activism, strategic media manipulation, strong women's voices, prolific university activism and a substantial variety of socializing venues and commercial commodities" (141). Despite its achievements, Chou remarks that, Taiwan queer activism is marked by its elitism which neglects "the social distinction between rich and poor, urban and rural, and college intellectuals and working-class grassroots" (163).

Chou's work pinpoints the strength and limits of Taiwan queer activism and women's movements. The Taiwan women's movement demands gender equality but ignores the heterosexual hegemony's oppression of sexual minorities. Similarly, Taiwan queer activism asks for equal rights with heterosexuals but neglects other forms of oppressions, such as classism, and urban-country hierarchy.

The trajectories of the development of modern and contemporary gender and sexuality discourses in the three Sinophone communities have illustrated the dynamics among colonial power, nationalism, women and sexual minorities. My analyses of Sinophone Women's cinema in the following chapters foreground women directors' negotiations with these colonial legacies, nationalisms, and socialism in their specific historical conditions.

Chapter Two Identity and Performance in *Woman, Demon, Human* (1987)

The late 1970s and the early 1980s witnessed a small art revival in China. The end of the Cultural Revolution [8] (1966-1976) provided a temporarily tolerant political environment for the public to express their ideas on the event and come to terms with the traumatic experience. Consequently, many artistic works dealt with the relationship between the individual and society in socialist China. Among them, Huang Shuqin's *Woman, Demon, Human* (1987) explores tensions between gendered identities and the range of patriarchal discourses within which they operate in modern China.

This chapter focuses on the performance of identities in Huang Shuqin's *Woman, Demon, Human* (1987). The film depicts Chinese woman artist Qiu Yun's negotiations with her various identities as daughter, mother, wife, cross-dressing opera performer, and socialist citizen. Situating the film in the specific historical moment of China in the 1980s, I argue the film's subversive potentiality comes from the female protagonist's cross-gender identification and the film's depictions of tensions among sex, gender, art, Confucianism, and socialism.

As one of the senior women directors in China, Huang Shuqin has experienced major social changes in China since the foundation of People's Republic of China in 1949. Born into an artist family in 1939 in Shanghai, Huang Shuqin developed strong

[8] The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was a political movement took place in the People's Republic of China from 1966 until 1976. Mao Zedong, the chairman of the CCP, initiated the movement to consolidate his rule by purging his antagonists within the CCP. It emphasized personal worship of Mao and alienated other interpersonal relationship by dividing people to the "revolutionary" ones who faithfully follows Mao and the "counter-revolutionary" ones who disagree with or challenge Mao. The movement caused a great disaster for the whole society. Many people, especially the dissent political leaders and intellectuals were persecuted in the movements, and people from all classes were called on to abandon their work and participate in the class struggle.

interests in directing under her parents' influence. After graduating from the Director's Department of the Beijing Film Academy in 1964, Huang Shuqin, like her colleagues, strove to free Chinese cinema from the impact of Chinese opera and to establish a modern Chinese cinematic language[9]. This dream was shattered by the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). During the Cultural Revolution, the Huang family was persecuted: the mother died, and the father and daughter were prohibited from making films. It was only after the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 that Huang Shuqin resumed her directing career. She faced great challenges, however, such as strict censorship, the pressure of the market, and a critical trend that favored nationalist cinema, exemplified by films made by the Fifth Generation directors. Despite these difficulties, Huang Shuqin has produced eight films and three television dramas to date. Her major cinematographic works include *The Modern Generation* (1981), *Forever Young* (1983), *Childhood Friends* (1984), *Crossing Border Action* (1986), *Woman, Demon, Human* (1987), and *La Peintress* (1994).

Among these films, *Woman, Demon, Human* (1987) is considered the most representative of Huang's works. Based on the life of the Chinese opera actress Pei Yanling (b. 1947), the film depicts the artistic journey of a fictional opera actress Qiu Yun and her relationships with her parents, lover, and husband from the 1950s to the 1980s in various flashbacks. Qiu Yun is the daughter of an opera actor and actress in a travelling troupe. Growing up in an opera family, Qiu Yun develops strong interests in

[9] Early Chinese cinema is heavily influenced by Chinese opera, especially Peking Opera. The early directors and investors make many Chinese opera films to cater to the taste of populace at that time and meanwhile to use Chinese opera films as a national form to compete with the powerful European and American films.

acting. In her childhood, she often imitates her parents' acting with her boy playmates. One day, she runs to a barn while playing a game with boys. There she accidentally witnesses the sex scene between her mother and an unknown man, who is later proved to be her biological father. The next day her mother disappears in the middle of her performance, generating gossip inside the troupe and bringing humiliation for Qiu Yun and her father, Mr. Qiu. Later, Qiu Yun becomes a famous actress who specializes in playing male roles in the county troupe under the strict training of her father. Her talent is soon discovered by Teacher Zhang[10], a famous teacher and actor in the provincial troupe[11]. Zhang successfully persuades Mr. Qiu to send Qiu Yun to study with the provincial troupe. During her time with the provincial troupe, Qiu Yun's skill in playing male roles improves greatly. At the same time, a mutual attraction between Qiu Yun and Zhang develops, which is gossiped about by the rest of the troupe. Under pressure from both their colleagues and the Communist Party, Zhang quits his job and leaves, and Qiu Yun suffers from alienation and slander in the troupe.

Years after the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, Qiu Yun resumes playing male roles. Though Qiu Yun has achieved great career success as an internationally renowned opera actress who specializes in playing male roles, her family life is not very good. Her husband is an irresponsible man, who neglects his family obligations, indulges himself in gambling, and owes large debts. Qiu Yun feels she has to balance career and

[10] In modern Chinese culture, a person is often addressed by the combination of his/her occupation and last name, such as Teacher Zhang, Student Zhu, Minister Wang, and Doctor Li etc.

[11] In China, administrative divisions from the upper to the lower include: the province, prefecture, county, township, and village.

family duties. At the end of the film, Qiu Yun returns to her hometown to give a performance. After the show, she drinks with her father and confides in him about her inner thoughts on marriage and life. The film ends with the deep communication between Qiu Yun and her stage persona—the male ghost Zhong Kui.

Interestingly, the film has received contrary evaluations from film critics inside and outside China. For instance, American film critic Vincent Canby views *Woman Demon Human* as an "odd" and "opaque" film which is full of "[h]okum's magic spell." In his opinion, the woman protagonist Qiu Yun's choice of playing male roles is driven by her strong love for her father, Mr. Qiu, who specializes in playing male roles. Canby is unsatisfied with the film's brief reference to Qiu Yun's experience during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) through short dialogues. He remarks that the film is only effective in its depictions of Qiu Yun's theatrical training. Canby's reading reveals a somewhat Orientalist stance. According to his criteria, the film is not good because of its opaqueness in meaning and its failure to directly represent the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution. The positive parts of the film only come from its portrayal of Chinese opera training. Canby fails to examine the importance of the woman protagonist's cross-dressing performance. He also completely ignores the film's depictions of the woman protagonist's painstaking negotiations with various patriarchal forces in modern China as well as the film's innovations in Chinese cinema history. Thus, a film which explores the life of a woman actress under patriarchal systems in modern China becomes a Freudian story about "Daddy's Little Girl and How She Grew."

In contrast, Chinese film critics praise the film for its endeavors to offer a woman's perspective on contemporary Chinese life. The famous Chinese film critic Dai Jinhua offers an interesting reading of the film's relationship to feminist cinema. In Dai's view, the director Huang Shuqin has "no intention of making an experimental feminist film" and instead she possesses an "essentialist" understanding of gender and believes that "a woman's happiness comes exclusively from marriage, which is the 'natural product' of heterosexual love" (2002 153). But Dai also reasons that the film's depictions of the life of the woman artist question "essentialist gender expression and the hypocritical and fragile sexual landscape of patriarchal society" (*ibid*). Thus, the film is "to date the first and only 'feminist film' in China" (*ibid*). Dai's analysis of the film reveals the film's ambivalent relationship with gender roles. On the one hand, the film depicts the female protagonist Qiu Yun's various roles as a daughter, lover, wife, and mother, but on the other hand, the way in which the film questions these roles reveals a strong feminist consciousness.

Though it is questionable whether *Woman, Demon, Human* is "the first and only 'feminist film' in China", Chinese film scholars generally agree with Dai's evaluation of the film's contribution to the representation of a Chinese woman's consciousness (*nǚxing yishi*). But Dai's view of the director Huang Shuqin's "essentialist" understanding of gender is problematic. As my analyses show, the film represents a disjunction between the sexual and gender identifications of the protagonist Qiu Yun's. I contend that *Woman, Demon, Human* is not a radical feminist film that explicitly refutes patriarchal values, but instead exhibits a woman director's contemplation of women's status under the triple

influence of Confucianism, socialism, and Chinese theatre conventions from 1950s to 1980s in China. These influences can be seen in Qiu Yun's relationships with her mother, biological father, adoptive father, Teacher Zhang, and her husband. Building on works by Gayle Rubin and Judith Stacey, I argue that both traditional Confucian gender norms and socialist gender discourses exert great influence on Qiu Yun's identifications, estranging her from her parents and lover. Drawing on Siu Leung Li's study of cross-dressing in Chinese opera and Judith Butler's elaboration of relations among sex, gender, cross-dressing, and identification, I find multiple significances in Qiu Yun's cross-dressing. The film creates various ambiguities with which to call attention to the complexities of women's status in modern China.

Confucianism, Socialism, and Identities

In the film, interpersonal relationships are very important. These relationships influence Qiu Yun's attitudes toward womanhood. These relationships have themselves been strongly influenced by the relationship between the individual and the Chinese Communist Party, and that between the family and the state. The interpersonal relationships and Qiu Yun's conception of her identities are regulated both by conventional Confucian discourse and by modern socialist discourse. Moreover, the film reveals that Qiu Yun lives under the discipline of various male authority figures at different stages of her life, namely the father, the teacher, the husband, the Party, and the state.

The mother-daughter relationship is traumatic and repressed in the film. The mother is a nameless marginalized figure, who appears only three times. In Qiu Yun's childhood, the mother appears as an adulterous woman who deserts her husband and her daughter. In one episode, little Qiu Yun plays the wedding game with several boys. When two boys fight about who should be her groom, Qiu Yun refuses the role of the bride and runs away into a barn. In the barn, she accidentally witnesses her mother having sex with an unknown man, whom she learns later is her biological father. Confused and scared by the scene, she runs away screaming. Before Qiu Yun understands what has happened, Qiu Yun's mother elopes with her lover in the middle of her stage performance the next day. Her absence enrages the audience, who throw rubbish at the leading actor, Mr. Qiu, to vent their anger. In the back of the stage, little Qiu Yun is taunted by her mother's colleagues, "Where is your mother? Why don't you watch for her carefully? That woman really has no shame".

The episode of the wedding game begins with Qiu Yun's refusal of the gender role she is assigned (the bride), and ends with her being taunted for being the daughter of an adulterous mother. The adults' mockery of the little girl and her mother reveals conventional Chinese patriarchal value's double-standard in judging an extramarital affair. Showing no interest in the reason for the woman's elopement, it excuses the two involved men (the husband and the lover) and disgraces the woman (the wife). Furthermore, it deprives both Qiu Yun and her mother of the opportunity to defend themselves.

Years later, Qiu Yun becomes a famous adolescent actress in the county. Learning the news, the mother and her husband come to watch their daughter's performance. Afterwards, the mother meets Mr. Qiu and begs him to allow Qiu Yun to live with her and Qiu Yun's biological father. Her request is turned down by Mr. Qiu, who indignantly criticizes the mother's corrupt morals and accuses her of wanting to use her daughter to make money. The third meeting between the mother and the daughter occurs many years later when the adult daughter, now a mother herself, returns to her hometown to give a performance as an internationally renowned opera artist. It is only then that the mother finally speaks to her daughter directly, and asks the latter to meet her biological father.

At first glance, the mother's affair and elopement cause the alienation between mother and daughter; however, two problems arise when one reads more closely. First, the reason for the mother's affair is very ambiguous. It is possible that she met Qiu Yun's biological father first. The two may have had an affair from which the woman became pregnant. For unknown reasons, the two separated and she married Mr. Qiu. But after marriage, she met her lover again and decided to elope with him. It is also possible that she did not get along with Mr. Qiu or Mr. Qiu did not satisfy her sexual desire. Thus she decided to elope with the man she loved. Without enough information, it is hasty to conclude that the mother is a despicable woman who has deserted her husband and her daughter. Second, it is unclear whether or not the mother seeks her daughter during the latter's childhood. Shortly after the mother's elopement, Qiu Yun and her father move with the village troupe to various places. Thus, it is hard to conclude that the mother began her new life and completely forgot her little daughter.

Intriguingly, a close reading reveals that the mother abandons her maternal rights so as to protect Qiu Yun for the assault of the gossips. When Qiu Yun performs in the county and later in her hometown, her mother could go to talk to her in public or off stage, but she does not do so. Knowing too well the burden of the stigma of being an adulterous woman's daughter, the mother has never publicly revealed her relationship with Qiu Yun since eloping.

Seen in light of these details, the alienated mother-daughter relationship appears largely influenced by conventional Confucian values. According to Confucian gender norms, a good woman must be virtuous and obedient to her husband, regardless of the husband's temperament or the quality of the marriage life. Thus, the mother's affair and elopement bring shame to both the mother and the daughter in multiple ways. According to Confucian standards, both the girl's mother and her biological father are morally corrupt adults, and thus they are not qualified to be their daughter's guardians.

Similar to the alienated mother-daughter relationship, Qiu Yun's estranged relationship with her biological father also derives from the regulative patriarchal discourse, which denigrates the social status of an illegitimate child. Like her mother, her biological father is a nameless and mysterious figure about whom the audience has little information. He is a faceless figure who, like the mother, appears only three times in the film. The first time, only his back of the head is seen by Qiu Yun during the scene in the hay-filled barn; the second time, only his profile is shown as he watches Qiu Yun's performance with Qiu Yun's mother; the third time, he appears again as a faceless person who hides his face in a bowl to escape from the gaze of his adult daughter. The reason for

his refusal to claim his fatherhood is quite ambiguous. It is possible that he feels guilty for his inability to fulfill a father's responsibilities. It is also possible that he wants to protect Qiu Yun's good reputation by keeping her out-of-wedlock birth a secret. Under the influence of patriarchal gender norms, he needs to constrain his emotions and actions as a mature man. Ironically, in order to be a real caring father for Qiu Yun, he needs to denounce his fatherhood.

In contrast with the nameless faceless biological father, Qiu Yun's adoptive father, Mr. Qiu, is portrayed as a responsible father who supports Qiu Yun's career and loves her deeply. He helps train Qiu Yun in opera performance and sends her to a provincial troupe. Interestingly, at the same time, Mr. Qiu is depicted as a complicit with and victim of Chinese patriarchal values. Having internalized Confucian gender norms, he considers Qiu Yun's mother a shameless adulterous woman who does not deserve custody of her daughter. Thus he indignantly turns down the mother's request for custody when she begs him for it during the girl's adolescence. He also blocks information about her visit from Qiu Yun. In this way, he severs the possible reconnection between the mother and the daughter. Moreover, he teaches Confucian gender norms to Qiu Yun in her childhood. When Qiu Yun decides to learn acting, Mr. Qiu warns her of the two possible fates of an actress: they are either too weak to protect themselves from being taken advantage by men, or they become corrupt, like Qiu Yun's mother. Such admonishing reflects his rigid understanding of women's roles in Chinese theatre. Moreover, he teaches Qiu Yun about the disadvantageous social status of women and the possible danger and shame brought by womanhood.

At the same time, Mr. Qiu is represented as a victim of Chinese patriarchal systems. His disadvantaged status comes mainly from his low social class. He has been a traveling actor in a village troupe, and later he resumes his occupation as a peasant. Both occupations are located at the bottom of the social hierarchy in China. Consequently, his bond with his daughter, Qiu Yun, is severed by the regulative social force of class— the Hukou system in modern China.

The Hukou system, the household registration system in mainland China, has a long history of over two thousand years. A household registration record officially identifies a person as a resident of an area and includes identifying information such as name, parents, spouse, and date of birth. The modern Chinese Hukou system divides Chinese citizens into two groups: urban residents and rural residents. Urban residents enjoy much better treatment than rural residents in many fields, such as, education, housing, and social welfare. The Chinese Hukou system from 1949 to 1978 restricted the mobility of residents within China and abroad. Under this circumstance, a rural resident needed to get several permits to move to the city. The migrant resident could not enjoy major social welfares services. In the film, Mr. Qiu and Qiu Yun are separated from each other when Qiu Yun works in the provincial troupe. Under the Hukou system, Qiu Yun's identity changes from a rural resident to a city resident due to her job offer from the provincial troupe, whereas Mr. Qiu has to stay in his rural hometown as a rural resident.

In the mother-daughter-father relationship, the daughter Qiu Yun has a closer bond with her adoptive father Mr. Qiu. As a child, she does not fully understand the reason for her mother's affair and elopement, let alone Confucian gender norms. Almost all the

people around her, including Mr. Qiu and her mother's former colleagues, teach her that her mother is a shameful, adulterous woman. Under this circumstance, Qiu Yun rejects her assigned gender role as a female and determines to play male roles on stage in her childhood and adolescence. During this period, Qiu Yun's adoptive father Mr. Qiu claims legal rights over the girl. When the girl becomes a famous adolescent actress, custody is shifted to another male figure, Teacher Zhang, a famous teacher and actor from a provincial troupe.

Similar to Mr. Qiu, Teacher Zhang is depicted as a good man and a protective figure for women. In the film, Teacher Zhang is a good teacher who offers useful advice for his students' improvement and a talented actor who are one of the most famous actors in the provincial troupe. In his relationship with Qiu Yun, he plays the role of a protector. The restroom incident is an apt example. In one sequence, Qiu Yun hides into a woman's restroom to escape the pursuit of Zhang, who wants to enroll Qiu Yun to the provincial troupe. Due to her tomboy appearance, Qiu Yun is thrown out of the restroom. Though Qiu Yun and her female friends try to convince others that she is a girl, people distrust them. As the camera pans slowly from the left to the right, the viewer sees the onlookers' facial expression—a kind of joyfulness that derived from Qiu Yun's anxiety and helplessness. Some point out that Qiu Yun is the one who plays male roles on stage,, and other even rudely suggest that she take off her pants to prove her sex. For these onlookers, sex, gender, and gender performance are one and the same. They believe that a short-haired boy-like person must be a boy, and a person who plays male theatrical roles must

be a male. Thus, short-haired Qiu Yun's entry into a women's restroom is regarded as a transgression, which needs to be punished. -

The crisis is solved when Teacher Zhang appears. In a long shot, Zhang makes his way in the crowds who circle Qiu Yun. Zhang stands next to Qiu Yun and convinces people of her gender by showing his identification card as a teacher and actor from the provincial troupe. The film emphasizes that Qiu Yun's female identity can only be validated by a man. The explanations of herself and her female friends are null in the face of the dominant male discourse, represented by the onlookers. In this episode, Teacher Zhang acts as a savior for Qiu Yun, and his authority and power come from the intersectionality of his gender and his higher social status.

After Qiu Yun goes to the provincial troupe, Zhang uses his expertise to teach her skills of playing male theatrical roles. Mutually attracted, the two develop a strong affection for each other. One night, when Qiu Yun practices alone in a barn, Zhang comes to her and confesses his love for her as well as his loveless marriage. Feeling confused and shocked, Qiu Yun runs away. Though their romantic relationship has not begun yet, various gossips fill the dressing room. As the camera slowly pans from one painted face to another, the viewer hears Qiu Yun's colleagues say, "They are having an affair…. They meet in the barn…. Her mother did the same thing…. Like mother like daughter". The rumor reiterates patriarchal value's double-standard in judging an extramarital relationship. Though both Zhang and Qiu Yun are involved, the rumor excuses the man and defames the woman. These gossips activate the traumatic event in

Qiu Yun's childhood and interpellate her as the daughter of an adulterous woman, and moreover as a shameless slut who intrudes on a successful man's marriage.

Besides the rumor, the Communist Party's intervention also terminates the beginning of their romantic relationship. In Chinese socialist discourse, romantic love belongs to corrupt capitalist values, and it will contaminate a socialist citizen's morals. Moreover, family obligation is far more important than romantic love and the individual's freedom of choice. Thus, the Party has the responsibility to save the socialist subject from moral corruption. In the film, a male Party officer Mr. Wang invites Zhang's wife and children to the troupe to surveil him and regulate his behavior. Wang asks Zhang to quit performing for a few days in order to rebuild the intimate relationship with his family members. Differing from the direct slander in the dressing room, the Party adopts a more implicit disciplinary method. By inviting Zhang's family members to join the troupe and by cancelling his performance, the Party interpellates him as both a traditional Confucian subject who needs to be a reliable father and husband for the family, and a good socialist subject who obeys the party's rules and maintains his model role as a successful socialist artist. Under these pressures, Zhang quits his job and moves back to his hometown. In Zhang's views, his leave will stop the rumor against Qiu Yun and secures her role as the leading actress who specialized in playing male roles in the troupe.

Similar to Mr. Qiu, Teacher Zhang plays important roles in Qiu Yun's transition from a girl to a young woman. Both men are loving and responsible, and meanwhile they have authority over the girl. As father or teacher, they make decisions for her. In Qiu Yun's childhood, Mr. Qiu demonizes the image of her mother and reinforces the

discriminatory Confucian gender norms. In Qiu Yun's adolescence, Mr. Qiu decides to transfer his authority to Mr. Zhang and asks the latter to take the girl to provincial troupe. When Qiu Yun wants to try female theatrical roles, Mr. Zhang persuades her to play the "advanced" male theatrical roles, which exhibit the "true" beauty of the art. Even in their relationship, it is Mr. Zhang who makes the decision to break up and leave. Compared with their advantageous status in their relationships with Qiu Yun, both men have to obey the regulation of the state patriarch—the Communist Party.

Qiu Yun faces similar regulation in her adulthood. Both conventional Confucian patriarchal values and socialist discourse demand that she maintain her role as a good wife and mother as well as a successful socialist artist. In the film, Qiu Yun's husband is represented as an invisible figure and whose information is conveyed by his son and wife. He is a narrow-minded man who neglects family duty and shows little support for his wife's career. He gambles all day and is deeply in debt. Through a conversation between Qiu Yun and her female colleague, the audience learns the husband's attitude towards Qiu Yun's theatrical roles: He thinks she is ugly when she plays male roles, but he feels upset if she plays female roles. This attitude reflects the husband's deep-rooted patriarchal values. He views his wife Qiu Yun as his subordinate who needs to obey his orders and meet his needs inside and outside the family.

Qiu Yun lives under the surveillance not only of her husband but also of socialist discourse, which interpellates her as a successful socialist artist, a good wife and mother, and a model of new Chinese career woman. A scene in which she is threatened with blackmail exemplifies this double surveillance. The sequence begins with a long shot of

a man visits Qiu Yun's home and claims to be a friend of her husband. Once Qiu Yun lets him in, he walks around the room and glances over Qiu Yun's trophies which are displayed in the cupboard. Then, he informs Qiu Yun that he holds a large portion of her husband's gambling debts. When Qiu Yun responds that it is not her business, the man shows her a journal article titled "Qiu Yun's Happy Family". The article reports that during the Cultural Revolution Qiu Yun's husband did not mind her background, and the two fell in love with each other. In the new era, the husband supports her career, and thus he deserves part of her money and honors. Then, the man hands Qiu Yun her husband's bills of debt, and cautions her, "It is better to keep it between us, otherwise, it will besmirch our fame."

This scene reveals both socialist discourse's and Confucian discourse's regulation of a successful Chinese career woman. Rather than focus on Qiu Yun's arduous artistic journey or the persecution she has suffered during the Cultural Revolution, the journal article presents Qiu Yun as a renowned opera actress who has a supportive husband, a happy family, and a successful career. Similar to the article writer, the man also believes that Qiu Yun should be grateful for her husband's previous support. Both the article writer and the man choose to ignore the husband's neglect of his family duty and instead they request Qiu Yun to fulfill her role as a wife to repay the husband with her money and honor. The man's caution of Qiu Yun to keep the whole issue a secret enacts patriarchal discourse's effort to silence woman. By this logic, neither the gambling husband nor the blackmailing man need feel ashamed of himself, and instead, it is the wife who should keep silence about her husband's gambling and a stranger's

blackmailing and pay her husband's debt without any complaint. Qiu Yun's reluctant acceptance of the blackmailing reveals that her failure to play the role of a good wife would lead to the failure of her career as well as of her family life.

Qiu Yun's relationships with her fathers, her teacher, and her husband highlight the question of women's agency in patriarchal societies. Gayle Rubin's discussion of the traffic in women and Judith Stacey's analysis of patriarchy and Chinese socialist revolution resonate with this aspect of the film. In her famous essay "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," Rubin offers a critical reading of Freud's theory of the Oedipal stage and Lévi-Strauss's writing about patriarchal kinship systems. Rubin contends that the two scholars' work uncovers the ways in which patriarchy oppresses women and sexual minorities through the division of the sexes, exchange of women through male-dominated kinship systems, and the establishment of compulsory heterosexual desire. In her close reading of Lévi-Strauss' writing on patriarchal kinship systems, Rubin points out that "the exchange of women is a profound perception of a system in which women do not have full rights themselves (177)."

Differing from Rubin, Judith Stacey's analyses of women's relationship with patriarchal systems is located in a specific society. In *Patriarchy and Socialist Revolution in China*, Stacey examines the change of Chinese family structure from the late empire period to the early post-Mao era from a feminist perspective. Through an investigation of Chinese family, socialist revolution, and women's liberation, Stacey confirms Chinese socialism's contribution to improving Chinese women's social status to some extent. At the same time, she points out that the Chinese socialist revolution did not fully liberate

women because it constructed a new patriarchal order through compromise with the traditional Confucian patriarchal order so as to win commoners' support in fighting against foreign imperialists and the Chinese Nationalist Party (261-2). For instance, Stacy remarks that the socialist regime is very tolerant of Confucian misogynistic attitudes and maintains the authority of traditional Confucian patriarchal figures' such as the father and the husband *within* the family. Meanwhile, it puts the modern Chinese family system under the surveillance of the socialist state.

The two scholars' work sheds light on the male characters' authority over Qiu Yun in the film. In Rubin's reading, the exchange of women occurs between two groups of men. Men have the right over women, women are treated as commodities, and the aim of the exchange is to form male alliances and consolidate male-dominated kinship systems. Stacey's analysis shows that traditional Chinese patriarchal figures, such as the father and the husband, form alliances with a new Chinese patriarch—the Chinese Communist Party in the Chinese socialist revolution. In their exchange, traditional Chinese patriarchal figures surrender part of their rights over women to the new Chinese patriarchal principle, and in return, they are protected as socialist subjects. It is worth noting that after the Chinese Community Party consolidated its rule in China after 1949, it gained absolute authority over both men and women in the society.

In the film, traditional patriarchal figures —the father, the teacher, and the husband—have authority over Qiu Yun in her choice of career and love; however, all of them live under the disciplinary socialist discourse. For instance, Mr. Qiu has to separate from Qiu Yun under the household registration system, and Teacher Zhang has to quit his

job in the provincial troupe after the Party officer's intervention in the relationship between him and Qiu Yun. But Qiu Yun is not passive in the face of this control by various patriarchal discourses; instead she actively negotiates with them throughout her life.

Gender, Role Types, and Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera

Besides Confucianism and socialism, the protagonist Qiu Yun's identity is also influenced by Chinese opera conventions. To better understand the significance of her cross-dressing performance in a male dominated theatre, it is helpful to have a brief introduction to the history of Chinese opera.

Originated in the fourth century, Chinese opera is a drama and musical theatre with a history of over a thousand years. During its development, it incorporated many art forms, such as music, dance, acrobatics, martial arts, and literary forms. Due to the diverse dialects and cultures in different parts of China, Chinese opera developed into over three hundred regional operas, among which Peking opera (*Jingju*), Shanxi opera (*Qinqiang*), Henan opera (*Yuju),* Shaoxing opera (*Yueju*), Kunqu, and Cantonese opera are the most famous ones.

Based on the character's age, personality, sex, and social status, role types in Chinese opera fall into four major categories: *Sheng*, the main male role, which consists of *laosheng* (old male), *xiaosheng* (young male), and *wusheng* (male warriors); *Dan*, the female role, which includes *laodan* (old female), *huadan* (young female), *qingyi* (elite female), *wudan* (female warrior), and *daomandan* (young female warrior); *Jing*, the

painted face male role with a forceful personality, which mainly comprises *tongchui* (emphasizes singing), *jiazi* (emphasizes performance) and *wujing* (emphasizes martial actions); *Chou*, the male clown role, which includes *wenchou* (civilian comic male) and *wuchou* (martial comic male). In the film, Qiu Yun plays two types of male roles—*Sheng* and *Jing* on stage. Though female cross-dressing in Chinese opera has a long history, women players have often been neglected or marginalized by both audiences and critics in a male-dominated society.

In his book *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*, Siu Leung Li reviews previous scholarship on Chinese opera and contends that most scholars concentrate on male transvestism and neglect female transvestism, as well as female agency, in Chinese opera. Though the post-Mao era witnessed the proliferation of works on gender and sexuality in China, Li reasons that many scholars reinforce rather than challenge patriarchal heterosexual norms in their works (21-4).

Li offers a revisionist reading of the cross-dressing in Chinese opera. Female cross-dressing in Chinese opera, he writes, emerged in the eighth century, which was several hundred years later than male transvestism (32-3). Li believes that male dominance in early Chinese opera is correspondent to male privilege in ancient Chinese society. Interestingly, women actresses as well as female cross-dressing dominated Chinese opera in Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) when the Mongols ruled China. Li argues that Mongol rule challenged the hegemony of Confucianism, and broke many theatrical restrictions on women players (53). Li contends that the innovations of Yuan theatre guaranteed women a certain degree of representational power. Meanwhile, however, women's dominance in

the theatre was also closely associated with the commodification of the female body for male spectators (50-1). After the fall of the Mongol reign and reestablishment of Confucianism as state ideology in the late thirteenth century, Ming and Qing rulers again domesticated women players to the private troupe and prohibited the mixing of the two sexes on stage. Women players and female cross-dressing returned to the public stage at the beginning of the twentieth century, and women's public performance has flourished since the late 1970s in China (40-1). This phenomenon can be viewed as the return of the long repressed women's performance desire in the late 1970s, a reform time which embraced creativity and diversity.

Adopting a deconstructive approach, Li points out that classical Chinese theatrical theory is based on "a system of binary gender" and a good cross-dresser has to "retain the 'heart-mind' of the opposite sex and transform his/her own 'heart-mind' into that of the opposite sex" (165). He argues that such a theory is self-contradictory because on the one hand, it essentializes the female "heart-mind" and the male "heart-mind," and treats them as essences of a woman and a man respectively, but on the other hand, it suggests that these essences can be learned and transferred.

Li's analysis reveals the male-domination of Chinese theatre, and moreover, it uncovers the disjunctions among sex, gender roles, and performance in Chinese opera. As Li elucidates, Chinese opera does not require the equation between a person's sex and gender role in the theatre. A man can play male roles (*Sheng*, *Jing*, and *Chou*) as well as the female role (*Dan*), and a woman can also play both male and female roles. In terms of cross-dressing, male transvestism can reveal both misogyny (35) and efforts to avoid the

mixing of two sexes on stage (45), whereas female transvestism can offer a certain degree of representational power for women while it also subordinates women to male disguise (50-1).

Seen in this light, Li's view resembles Judith Butler's elaborations on sex, gender, and performance. In *Gender Trouble,* Butler challenges the mimetic relationship between gender and sex. She argues that the presumption of a binary gender system is built on the presumed existence of two biological sexes (1999 10-1). Phallocentrism and heterosexual hegemony encourage and reinforce the mimetic relationship between gender and sex, and require the internal coherence among sex, gender, heterosexual desire, and identity (1999 30-1). Moreover, Butler contends that "gender is always a doing….identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (1999 33). Being aware of gender's performativity, Butler highlights the significance of drag performance. She reasons that "[i]n imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency" (1999 175). At the same time, Butler also cautions that drag is not necessarily subversive to patriarchal heterosexual hegemony because some drag performances actually reinforce gender norms under patriarchy (1999 xxii).

Both scholars' works are helpful for my study of the protagonist Qiu Yun's cross-dressing in the film. Li's study demonstrates that Chinese opera has been dominated by men since its birth, and women's performance has been marginalized and strictly controlled. At the same time, Li and Butler show how sex, gender, cross-dressing and one's subjectivity are relational. Thus, Qiu Yun's cross-dressing on stage offers her some

space to free herself from the restrictive binary sex/gender system upheld by both Confucianism and socialism. While her talent in playing male roles on stage brings her great fame and career success, her cross-dressing also generates jealousy, hatred, and anxiety in both her colleagues and her husband. Though Qiu Yun plays male roles on stage, not every cross-dressing performance is subversive. Some of them represent ethnocentric nationalistic patriarchal values. The tension created by her different cross-dressing performances is explored in the next sections. Furthermore, I also analyze various ways in which the film delineates the discrepancy between Qiu Yun's biological sex and her gender roles, between her theatrical performance and her offstage life, and the significance of rereading the film in contemporary China.

The Tension of Ambiguity

Woman, Demon, Human is a film about the life of a woman artist under patriarchal systems in modern China. In a 1993 interview, the director Huang Shuqin points out that the social codes in Chinese society favor men over women, and favor dependent women over independent women (Dai and Yang 795). Rather than advocate separatist feminism, Huang thinks the practice of feminism in China should be contextualized by Chinese social conditions (Dai and Yang 796). She thinks it is impossible to make "purely feminist" films in China. Instead, directors can "insert some feminist notions to orthodox and conventional modes" (Dai and Yang 802). As the previous analysis of women's discourse in China in Chapter One shows, Chinese feminism promotes collaboration rather than antagonism between men and women. Thus, many women artists in China

who advocate women's empowerment and critique patriarchy do not agree with separatist feminism's values and practices. The director Huang Shuqin is one of these women artists.

Intrigued by the life of the female opera actress Pei Yanling who specializes in playing male roles, Huang Shuqin aims to direct a film about the life of a cross-dressing woman opera player in China. *Woman, Demon, Human* (1987) is the fruit of her labor. Rather than directly confront patriarchal values in China, the film purposely delineates many ambiguities surrounding important topics such as the relationship between art and life, Chinese women's status in general and Chinese women artists' social status in particular. I contend that these ambiguities actually reflect the limits of the gender duality and the disjunctions among sex, gender, and identification.

One of the film's ambiguities is captured by the different emphases of its Chinese and English titles. The film's Chinese title is *Ren, Gui, Qing*, literally translated as *Human, Ghost, Love*. Its English title is *Woman, Demon, Human*. The English title stresses a specific human species—Woman—and reveals a negative attitude towards the non-human being—demon. Compared with the English title, the Chinese title is more neutral in terms of gender, sex, and attitudes towards the non-human being—the ghost.

These differences resonate with the director Huang Shuqin's views on gender and Chinese culture. As her remarks in previous interviews show, Huang thinks feminist practice should correspond with the historical realities of China— a country heavily influenced by Confucianism and Chinese socialism. Both Confucianism and Chinese socialism demand the individual's subordination to the nation-state. The accentuation of

collectivity over individuality and gender difference is illustrated in the gender neutral word "human" in the film's Chinese tile, which contrasts with the stress on the gendered identity, "woman," in the English title. At the same time, both titles raise several questions, such as does woman refer to a specific woman or does it stand for the capitalized Woman in a universal sense? Who stands for demon? What is the relationship among woman, demon, and human?

Similarly to the ambiguous title, the film's opening reveals ambiguous relationships between stage and life, between woman and man, and between human and ghost. The film begins with Qiu Yun's theatrical make-up process and the juxtaposition of the actress and the male ghost Zhong Kui[12] in a mirror room. Accompanied by strong powerful Chinese theatrical music, the film opens with a close-up of three bowls containing white, black, and red pigments. Then, three Chinese characters roll onto the screen, with "human" (*ren*) superimposed over white pigments, "ghost"(*gui*) over black pigments, and "love"(*qing*) over red pigments. Following the title, the credits of the film crew roll onto the screen, with theater images as the background. Interestingly, the theater images begin with a male ghost image Zhong Kui, and end with an anonymous female image. Then the music becomes soft, Qiu Yun, a good-looking young actress, stands in front of a dressing mirror and looks at her image in the mirror. A series of close-ups show

[12] Zhong Kui is a famous Chinese mythological figure. According to the legend, Zhong Kui is a talented but ugly-looking young man in the late seventh century. He got the first place in the Imperial Exam and according to the custom, he would be granted an important government office position. But he was deprived of this honor because of his ugly-looking face. Out of rage and great disappointment, he committed suicide. The Jade Emperor, the head of deity, sympathized with the unjustified deeds against Zhong Kui in the human world, and consequently, he entitled Zhong Kui as the King of ghosts, who is in charge of all ghosts.

her applying Peking opera facial makeup and putting on the costume. The process of her preparation alternates with lines of credits, and ends with an intriguing theatrical image that juxtaposes Zhong Kui's face (on the left) and a young woman's face (on the right) in a way that the two seem to confide to each other.

After she finishes her transition from a beautiful young woman to an ugly male ghost Zhong Kui, Qiu Yun sits in a room full of mirrors. Then, the audience sees that Qiu Yun examines herself in the mirror, and meanwhile the male ghost also studies himself in the mirror. As the camera slowly pans from left to right, the image of the actress and that of the male ghost merge with each other and become indistinguishable.

Two major ambiguities in the film's opening are the use of three colors—white, black, and red, and the relationship between the woman actress Qiu Yun and the male ghost Zhong Kui. In the film, the three colors, white, black, and red, appear in the beginning scene of the three bowls and then reappear in the theatrical character Zhong Kui's makeup. Intriguingly, the three colors connote contrary meanings in Chinese opera. In "Signs in the Chinese Theater," Karel Brusak examines the connotations of colors in Chinese theatric makeups. He points out that "[b]lack means simplicity, sincerity, courage, and steadfastness; red denotes loyalty, honesty, and patriotism" and "white stands for hypocrisy, irascibility, baseness, and viciousness" (66). At the same time, he cautions that the meaning of a specific color is also related to its contextualized usage with other colors or its applicability to the parts of the character's face (*ibid*).

In the opening scene of the three bowls, white, black, and red are respectively connected with "human" (*ren*), "ghost"(*gui*), and "love"(*qing*). Following Chinese

theatrical conventions, the three pairs of combinations suggest that human beings are flawed (the meaning of the color white) whereas the ghost embodies virtues such as sincerity and courage (the meaning of the color black), and love is related to loyalty, honesty, and patriotism (the meaning of the color red). Interestingly, all of the three colors—white, black, and red are used in the theatrical makeup of the male ghost Zhong Kui. Black is the main color of Zhong Kui's face, white is only applied to the areas around his eyes, and red is applied to his forehead. Combining the meanings of the colors with the legend of Zhong Kui, the film seems to suggest that Zhong Kui stands for both a virtuous man with a little flaw (his angry decision to commit suicide after being treated unfairly) and an upright king of ghosts who determines to vanquish all evil spirits in the world.

Besides the unclear use of colors, the mirror scene also shows the ambiguous relationship between the actress Qiu Yun and the theatric male ghost Zhong Kui. Qiu Yun's transformation from a young beautiful woman to an ugly-looking male ghost Zhong Kui and the juxtaposition between the two raise several important questions: Why does a pretty young woman play a male role (*jing*) rather than a female role (*dan*) in Peking Opera? Why does she choose the ugly male ghost Zhong Kui among all male characters? How does she view the apparent disjunction between her sex and gender as a Chinese woman and her theatrical role? What is the significance of the male ghost Zhong Kui in her life? These questions serve as important driving forces for the film's narrative.

I contend that Qiu Yun's cross-dressing performance and alternative identification with both Zhong Kui's sister and Zhong Kui enables her to keep a distance from the

restrictive gender role for a modern Chinese woman under Confucianism and socialism. Before I investigate Qiu Yun's performance and identification, it is necessary to offer background information on Zhong Kui and his sister.

According to Zeliang Xu, Zhong Kui is a mythological figure, which originates from the exorcist tool named Zhong Kui in ancient Chinese exorcism (111). The personification of Zhong Kui took place in the early fifth century, a period of division and constant warfare in imperial Chinese history. Xu points out that the earliest story of Zhong Kui vanquishing the ghosts appeared in a Taoist Sutra *Taishang tongyuan shenzhongjing*. In the eighth century, the image of Zhong Kui began to appear in literature and folklore, but during this period he was depicted only as a powerful ghost vanquisher (111). After the tenth century, the image of Zhong Kui began to be expanded from that of an exorcist to that of a more fully-developed character with a distinctive personality in various literary texts. In the fourteenth century, Zhong Kui became an important character in vernacular literature. During this period, he was portrayed in polarized ways: the righteous Confucian scholar who committed suicide to protest against political corruption and became the king of ghosts after his death in contrast to the greedy treacherous court official who was sentenced to hell after death. Xu contends that ancient Chinese authors often use the character Zhong Kui to critique political corruption in the society. Such features were kept by the writers in late imperial China and moreover, they also invented new Zhong Kui stories, such as "Zhong Kui Marries off His Sister" to reflect contemporary life (112-4). Though Zhong Kui's sister appeared in Chinese drawings as early as the tenth century, she did not become a character in literary texts

until the fourteenth century. The sister has also been depicted quite differently in various literary texts: an elegant lady, a handsome intelligent woman, or a promiscuous woman (114).

As Xu's analysis shows, Chinese artists draw on ritual, religion, folklore, and life experience to construct the popular character Zhong Kui in Taoist sutra, painting, and literature. His diverse images as an exorcist, a ghost vanquisher, an upright Confucian scholar, and a corrupt court official reflect artists' diverse motivations from the promotion of a religious teaching, to combat against supernatural power and criticism of political corruption. Thus, Zhong Kui distinguishes himself from other male characters played by Qiu Yun— the historical figures Zhao Yun, Guan Yu, and Jiao Zan. The three men are famous for their impressive military talents, and more importantly, they are the embodiment of the highest Confucian values— loyalty to one's master (often an elite male Han Chinese) and one's culture (Han Chinese culture). In my view, such loyalty reflects their ethnocentrism and classism.

In the film, Qiu Yun's identification vacillates between Zhong Kui's sister, a powerless woman who needs protection, and Zhong Kui, a powerful mythological figure. In her childhood and adolescence, Qiu Yun is portrayed as an isolated disadvantaged female who is confined by patriarchal discourses, like Zhong Kui's powerless younger sister who waits to be saved by Zhong Kui. The nail incident is an apt example. When she replaces Teacher Zhang to play leading male roles in the provincial troupe, Qiu Yun becomes the target of her colleagues' discontent and jealousy, and consequently she falls victim to the conspiracy of the nail incident. In the scene, Qiu Yun's hand is punctured by

a nail which has been inserted into a table purposefully before her performance. A series of shots reverse shots juxtapose Qiu Yun who suffers from pain and alienation inside the dressing room with Zhong Kui who tearfully sings about his great concern over the happiness of his younger sister outside the room. At that time, Qiu Yun lacks the courage and ability to fight with prejudices against her as a leading female actress who plays male roles on stage. Thus, she identifies with Zhong Kui's sister and waits to be saved by a powerful figure like Zhong Kui.

Years later, Qiu Yun becomes a successful career woman but she identifies herself with Zhong Kui. During her conversation with her female friend, Qiu Yun reveals that she views Zhong Kui as the best man in the world. Though few people like him, she would like to devote herself to play his stories on stage. Ironically, at this stage, Qiu Yun begins to perceive the superficiality of Zhong Kui's power. As the above analysis shows, Zhong Kui is a powerless young man during his life time. Due to his ugly-looking appearance and low social status, he is put into a disadvantageous position in feudal China, and the only way to express his anger and rebellion against unfair treatment is to commit suicide. Moreover, his power and glory as the King of Ghosts after his death are also granted by a truly powerful figure—the Jade Emperor, the head of deities. Without the sympathy of the Jade Emperor, Zhong Kui would remain powerless after his death. In other words, the empowerment of a disadvantaged person does not come from his self-empowerment but from the sympathy of an authority figure.

Seen in this light, the mythologized figure Zhong Kui resembles the mythologized new modern Chinese woman Qiu Yun. Similarly to Zhong Kui, Qiu Yun enjoys a high

reputation as a good wife and mother and as a model socialist woman artist, whose success demonstrates women's improved social status under socialism. In a thought-provoking way, both Zhong Kui and Qiu Yun enjoy limited agency, and their power and fame largely come from authority figures.

Thus, Qiu Yun's identification with Zhong Kui is subversive of the existing hierarchal system for two main reasons. First, the film departs from the conventional image of Zhong Kui,an upright Confucian scholar, and instead it focuses on Zhong Kui's image as a loving brother who cares deeply about his younger sister's happiness, and acts as a responsible matchmaker finding a good man for her. Thus, familial love replaces authoritarian ethnocentrism and classism, and becomes Zhong Kui's priority. In my view, this emphasis reveals the film's departure from the dominant socialist discourse which prioritizes the socialist state over the family.

Judith Stacey argues that the post-1949 Chinese family system can be characterized as patriarchal-socialism, "which represents the socialization of most, but not all, productive activities in the context of sustained, but reformed, patriarchal authority over women, marriage, and the domestic economy" (217). Under patriarchal socialism, personal life, family, and mass organizations are both subordinate to the Chinese Communist Party. Thus, to have a family life that is free from political intervention is a bold claim for modern Chinese citizens.

Second, the meeting between Qiu Yun and Zhong Kui at the end of the film blurs the boundary between woman and man, between human being and ghost, and between heterosexual desire and homosexual desire. At the end of the film, Qiu Yun walks alone

at night to the dark stage after the audience disperses, and her father becomes drunk. On the dark stage, Qiu Yun (played by woman actress Xu Shouli) finally meets the character Zhong Kui (played by the opera artist Pei Yanling). Holding each other's hands, the two eagerly confide to each other. Zhong Kui tells Qiu Yun that he is her alter ego and expresses his concern for her pressures and alienation in life. Qiu Yun confides that she has been waiting to be saved by Zhong Kui since her childhood. She is happy to play Zhong Kui on stage and marry the stage. Soon, Zhong Kui plans to leave the stage. In the finale, a long shot shows the image of Zhong Kui appearing on the wall of the stage and Qiu Yun standing on stage. Qiu Yun begs Zhong Kui not to leave, but finally Zhong Kui disappears and Qiu Yun slowly exits the stage.

The ending is full of ambivalences. Intriguingly, Qiu Yun's hero is another woman, the one who cross-dresses as the male ghost Zhong Kui. Such desire oscillates between the heterosexual one and the homosexual one. Moreover, for the first time in the film, the two major female players—Xu Shouli who plays the female protagonist Qiu Yun and Pei Yanling who plays the male ghost Zhong Kui meet with each other. Their performance and intimate conversations about performance and life, as well as career and family blur the boundary between art and life demonstrate the film's self-conscious feminist stance, and challenge the existing authoritarianism.

The film's ending seems to suggest that supportive female bonding could be an important way for women to negotiate with the existing socialist patriarchal structure. This possibility is explored by Li Yu's *Fish and Elephan*t, a film that foregrounds the

significant roles of the lesbian desire and the female bonding in women's self-empowerment and their negotiations with various types of trauma in contemporary China.

Chapter Three *Fish and Elephant*: Breaching the Law of the Father

The image of the Chinese lesbian has long appeared in Chinese literature and history as the shadow of her straight sister. When her sister enjoys the glory as an empress, she is the lonely imperial palace maid who is forced to save her virginity for the emperor even though he may never visit her during her lifetime. While her sister becomes the wife and mother in a heterosexual family, she either lives as one of the sworn sisters, or becomes a nun in Buddhist or Taoist temples. Fighting with her sisters and brothers for women's liberation, national independence, and socialism, she becomes a citizen in the new socialist China. To her disappointment, she finds that her voice is still unheard. The state feminism recognizes her demand for gender equality as a woman, but it declines her lesbian needs for gay marriage and adoption of children. Differing from her contemporary Hong Kong lesbian sisters, she lacks the resources to emigrate to a queer-friendly country and start a new life. Unlike her Taiwan lesbian sisters who actively fight for their own rights and receive wide support home and abroad, she has to struggle with strict Chinese censorship and undertake her fighting with other queer members underground—on the internet, in bars, and at home.

Despite all these difficulties, she finds supportive peers who are willing to work with her for a more tolerant and diverse society, in which the needs of marginalized groups can be addressed. Woman director Li Yu (b.1973) is one of such supportive peers. One of the emerging women directors in contemporary China, Li Yu is famous for her efforts to represent marginalized people. Having previously worked as a reporter at the local television in Shandong province, Li began her directorial career in 1996 as a

documentary director for China Central Television (CCTV). Later, she became an independent director. She has now made three documentaries which include *Sisters* (1996), *Stay and Hope* (1997), and *Honor and Dreams* (1998), and five feature films consisting of, *Fish and Elephant* (2001), *Dam Street* (2005), *Lost in Beijing*(2007), *Buddha Mountain* (2010), and *Double Xposure* (2012). Her films have won several international prizes, such as the Elvira Notari Prize[13] at the 2001 Venice Film Festival, the Best Asian Film Prize at the 2002 Berlin International Film Festival, the Golden Lotus Prize at the 2006 Deauville Asian Film Festival, and the Award for Best Artistic Contribution at the 2010 Tokyo International Film Festival.

Li's feature film debut, *Fish and Elephant* (2001), describes the life of two lesbians in contemporary Beijing. Qun, a thirty-year-old single lesbian from Sichuan, works as an elephant keeper at a zoo in Beijing. Pushed by her elderly, divorced mother, Qun goes on blind dates with several men. Meanwhile, Qun meets Ling, a single middle-age woman, who sells women's clothes in a market. The two soon fall in love with each other and move in together. Their relationship is interrupted by the visit of Qun's mother who comes from Sichuan to urge Qun to get married. Additionally, Qun's ex-girlfriend Jun also comes to Qun for help. Jun tells Qun that she has robbed a bank and is being pursued by police. It later turns out, however, that Jun stole a pistol and killed her father, who has constantly raped her in her childhood. Jun's arrival causes misunderstandings and a temporary break-up between Qun and Ling. At the end of the film, Qun's mother marries

[13] Elvira Notari Prize is a prize founded by Italian woman filmmaker Lina Mangiacapre in 1987 at the Venice Film Festival to commemorate the famous Italian woman filmmaker Elvira Notari. The Prize is awarded to people who produce meaningful films of women.

Zhang, a middle-aged widower, Qun and Ling make up with each other, and Jun gets into a gunfight with the police.

Focusing on the relationship among Qun, Ling, Qun's mother, and Qun's ex-girlfriend Jun, the film touches several important topics in contemporary China, such as lesbianism, family and marriage, child sexual abuse, and migrant workers. Due to the sensitive topic of lesbianism and child sexual abuse, the film has remained as an underground film,[14] and has never been publicly screened in China; instead the film was sent to international film festivals. Since its debut in 2001, it has drawn wide critical attention abroad. Some critics praise its groundbreaking efforts to represent the life of Chinese sexual minorities. For instance, Shelly Kraicer remarks that, despite some minor flaws, the film "opens a door, treats its subject with sensitivity, a graceful, intimate, good humoured honesty, and a lack of pretension[15]." In Kraicer's view, the honesty in the film comes from its use of non-professional actors and its realistic representation of Chinese lesbian life. And the male characters' inability to comprehend the meaning of lesbian identity provides its humor. I agree with Kracicer's compliment of the films' realistic style, but I see the humor in the men's response as a disavowal and containment of the lesbian identity.

Other critics explore the film's representation of the power relationships in contemporary China. Shuqin Cui argues that *Fish and Elephant* is "neither a popular lesbian romance nor a coming-out film" because it "shows how lesbians negotiate their

[14] In China, a film needs to be submitted to Chinese censors before it goes to any film festival or to theaters. An underground film refers to a film made by a director without the official approval.
[15] Kraicer, Shelly. "Review of *Fish and Elephant.*" The Inside Out Toronto Lesbian & Gay Film & Video Festival. May 23, 2002. Web. July 7, 2014.

identities and relationships within the heterosexual system" and "sociocultural norms punish the female body for sexual abnormality even as the film offers resistance in a female protagonist who defies subordination" (215). Cui's remark points out the heterosexual norms' regulation of the female body and the negotiations women must make as a result; however, it neglects other important issues raised by the film, such as classism, the country-city divide in China, and the interconnectedness between the structural inequality and women protagonists' trauma.

In this chapter, I analyze the dynamics among structural inequality, trauma, lesbianism, and female homosocial bonding in contemporary China. Building on Ann Cvetkovich's notion of quotidian trauma, I argue that contemporary Chinese women and lesbians experience quotidian trauma as a result of sexism, classism, regionalism and homophobia. I also draw on Adrienne Rich's idea of compulsory heterosexuality and the lesbian continuum and Eve Sedgwick's notion of "homosocial bonding" to examine lesbianism and female homosocial bonding in the film.

Through a historical analysis of the environment in which female protagonists live, I contend that their trauma has been inflicted by the Chinese patriarchal and heterosexual structure. The structure is upheld by a centralized punitive state apparatus, inequality among different social groups, and the promotion of a dominant restrictive gender and sexuality discourse. Female protagonists deal with these influences through homoeroticism and supportive female homosocial bonding. Furthermore, I argue that the film's success in international film circuit as an underground Chinese film reflects

complex power dynamics among political censorship, market demands, and the rules of international cinema.

The Law of the Father and Quotidian Trauma

Fish and Elephant is a film about the Law of the Father and its traumatic effects on women and lesbians. My use of the Law of the Father is a socio-political one. It refers to any forms of law, ideology, custom, convention, and ethics, which serve to consolidate patriarchal heterosexual hierarchy at the expense of suppressing dissent voices. In the film, the Law of the Father is built on the establishment of paternal authority on both individual and collective levels through various forms, such as compulsory heterosexual marriage, men's disavowal of the existence of lesbians, men's regulation and abuse of women's bodies, and the structural inequality that consists of heterosexual hegemony, sexism, regionalism, and classism.

As an important component in patriarchal structure, heterosexual hegemony reproduces patriarchal social relations through the normalization of heterosexuality and the pathologization and suppression of non-heterosexual practices. In her influential essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," Adrienne Rich uncovers the hidden assumption of heterosexual normativity in feminist scholarship. Rich points out that some feminist scholars such as Barbara Ehrenreich, Deirdre English and Jean Miller ignore lesbians in their analysis of women's social status in capitalist patriarchal societies. Through close readings of Kathleen Gough's discussion of male power, Catherine MacKinnon's analysis of sexual harassment of working women, and Kathleen Barry's

investigation of female sexual slavery, Rich contends that heterosexual normativity, like motherhood, is a social construct, which aims to consolidate male dominance in patriarchal societies (238). Furthermore, Rich proposes the term "lesbian continuum" to refer to "woman-identified experience" and "forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support" (239). Rich also believes that an exploration of lesbian experience beyond the limits of the white middle-class western women's studies can open a new space for feminists to study the interlocking relationship among gender, sexuality, race, class, and power (245).

Rich's disclosure of the hidden heterosexual assumption is illuminating for feminist studies because this assumption neglects heterosexual hegemony in patriarchal societies and weakens feminist critique of the structural inequality in patriarchy. Her notion of "lesbian continuum" expands the concept of lesbianism from the sexual relationship between women to more general identifications and supportive relationships. Thus, Rich's "lesbian continuum" has generated heated debate among feminists, which is beyond the scope of my work. In this chapter, I focus on the way in which the film *Fish and Elephant*'s representation of the Chinese lesbian experience can enhance our understanding of the interconnectedness of gender, sexuality, class, and power in contemporary China.

In China, the heterosexual patriarchal structure has created an institution of compulsory heterosexuality that is portrayed in the film through its depiction of marriage as strictly heterosexual, and lesbianism as invisible. The institution of compulsory

heterosexual marriage has been established in China for over three thousand years. Both polygyny in pre-modern China and monogamy in modern China serve to consolidate the patrilineal patriarchal hierarchy through the promotion of compulsory heterosexual marriage, family ethics, and restrictive gender and sexuality norms. As I have analyzed in Chapter One, Chinese family ethics and restrictive gender and sexuality conventions are heavily influenced by Confucianism, which upholds a set of hierarchal relationships to strengthen the feudal patriarchy.

The socialist revolution in twentieth-century China has improved Chinese women's social status to some extent; however, gender inequality still exists. The main reason, Judith Stacey argues, is that Chinese socialists have constructed a new patriarchal order through a compromise with the traditional Confucian patriarchal order so as to win popular support in fighting against foreign imperialists and the Chinese Nationalist Party. This compromise makes Confucianism still influential (261-2). I want to add that the communist-ruled modern China shares a similar patriarchal hierarchal structure with the Confucianism-dominated feudal Chinese regime because both use discriminatory policies to enforce ethnic and class boundaries as well as regulative gender and sex norms. The sole structural difference is that the feudal patriarch—the emperor—has been supplanted by the Chinese Communist Party.

To consolidate this structure, the Chinese government has utilized both traditional Confucian ethics and western scientific discourses, especially medicine, psychiatry, and eugenics, to naturalize heterosexual hegemony. Thus, most Chinese believe that heterosexual marriage is destined for everyone. Such is the case in *Fish and Elephant*.

The middle-aged single lesbian protagonist Qun is pushed by her family members to get married. Her male cousin and her mother help set up five blind dates for her. For Qun's cousin and mother, it is a woman's destiny to get into a heterosexual marriage and becomes a wife and mother.

To free herself from marriage, Qun comes out to her cousin, her blind date, and her mother. Qun's revelation of her lesbian identity is disavowed by the men, whereas her mother accepts it after an inner struggle. Before Qun's first blind date arrives, she tells her cousin that she feels uncomfortable dating men. Irritated, he uses Confucian gender norms to remind Qun that her destiny as a woman is to marry a man and becomes a wife and mother. When Qun explains to him that she has no feelings for men, he denies the existence of lesbians and criticizes Qun for being crazy and needing a therapist. Similarly, during the second blind date, the man also disbelieves Qun and tries to find reasons for her "abnormalcy" such as being introverted and having little contact with men.

In both scenes, Qun's lesbian identity is denied, ignored, or denigrated by men. Intriguingly, the dating scenes are not fictional. The director set up fake dating advertisements so that straight men came to date with Qun[16]. Thus, these men's unrehearsed reactions reveal the invisibility of Chinese lesbians in the society. Moreover, this detail in the film blurs the boundary between documentary and fictional. The invisibility of Chinese homosexuals is analyzed by Liang Shi in "Beginning a New Discourse: The First Chinese Lesbian Film Fish and Elephant." Building on the social status of homosexuality in China and Foucault's elaboration on the emergence of the

[16] Kraicer, *ibid.*

homosexual as an identity, Shi contends that "homosexuality does not constitute a focal social issue in China, not because it is tolerated or accepted but because it is by and large unrecognized " (24). Regarding Qun's failed coming out, Shi remarks:

> Xiaoqun's [Qun's] confession of her sexual identity does not lead to her coming out of the closet. She comes out only to find that the lesbian category and identity do not exist in public space. Nobody recognizes her, and subsequently people either misplace her or force her back into the closet. It turns out that there is no outside to her closet. (28)

I agree with Shi that "homosexuality does not constitute a focal social issue in China," but the reasons for the marginalization of sexual minorities are more complex than people's inability to recognize these social groups. First, authoritarianism puts any social activism under the government's control. Accordingly, identity politics of the queer community mainly take place online by young people, unnoticed by the public at large. Second, these identities are disavowed rather than unacknowledged. As I have analyzed in Chapter One, the discourse on sexual minority has never disappeared from Chinese history and instead it has always been repressed by dominant discourses in various periods. In contemporary China, the dominant gender and sexuality discourse consists of Confucianism, socialism, and western gender and sexuality discourses. The aim of this hybrid discourse is to normalize heterosexuality and consolidate the patriarchal heterosexual structure through pathologization and marginalization of sexual minorities.

In the film, the men's disavowal of Qun's lesbianism results from their efforts to maintain the stability of the binarism of heterosexuality/homosexuality, and

normal/abnormal. For them, Qun's homosexuality is the dangerous Other that needs to be contained. In her book *Fatal Women: Lesbian Sexuality and the Mark of Aggression*, Lynda Hart describes the function of coming out in a hegemonic heterosexual culture. She contends that:

> Coming out is then not simply making an appearance as a sexual subject. The disclosure is not the revelation of a secret, but an implication of how the addressee's desire is constituted and maintained by the production and dis-appearance of its opposite/other. Homosexual disclosures thus reveal the paradox of sexual identities. For on the one hand, heterosexuality secures its ontology by constructing the homosexual as external and foreign, and hence implicitly hostile. On the other hand, the homosexual is intrinsic to the constitution of the heterosexual—the "other" *within*—the "perversion" always only comprehended as a deviation from "normality". Understood this way, coming out is a de-secreting, a rupture of the binary opposition. It instigates a crisis that undoes the distinguishing, the setting apart, the secession of the "one" from the "other." (16) [original italics]

Hart's reasoning highlights the threat of the disclosure of the homosexual identity to a "normal" coherent sexual identity for the heterosexual addressee. In the film, the moment Qun's cousin and blind date learn of Qun's lesbianism, they disavow it. Then, both men try to contain this Other either by pathologization (the cousin asks Qun to see a therapist) or denial and normalization (the blind date believes Qun's lesbianism can be "cured" by meeting more men). In this way, the two men reconfirm the "normalcy" of their own

heterosexuality and subdue lesbianism to a temporary digression from "normal" womanhood.

The film further depicts a patriarchal and heterosexual power structure through the regulation and abuse of the female body. Coming from southwestern China with little education and few connections, Ling makes a living by designing and selling women's clothes at a market in Beijing. In this atmosphere, she often experiences voyeuristic customers. In one scene, Ling entertains herself by painting her toe nails while no costumer comes to her shop. Then, a young man comes in with his girlfriend. While the girl browses clothes, the man is attracted by Ling. Standing next to her, he looks at her and smokes. Sensing his gaze, Ling turns her back towards him. But he moves to face her again until Ling acknowledges his stare. Though he has a girlfriend, the man takes the liberty of expressing his erotic desire for another woman.

Besides the voyeuristic male gaze, Ling also confronts sexual harassment from male customers. A man enters her shop and asks the price of a red belly band[17]. The first signs of his aggression emerge when Ling asks for 60 RMB, but he unreasonably haggles it down to 10 RMB. Next, he suggestively asks that Ling try it on for his amusement. Feeling threatened, Ling flees the shop, but the man pursues her. She eventually loses him when he is unable to follow her into a woman's restroom. The man's economic and sexual aggression reveals his sense of supremacy over Ling as both a man and a customer. Supported by traditional male superiority mentality and newly developed sense of

[17] Belly band is a conventional Chinese woman's undergarment, which covers chest and abdomen.

importance attached to the customer in a market economy, he thinks it is reasonable to ask Ling to try on the belly band and accept a low price.

Perhaps the most extreme case of patriarchal abuse of women occurs with Jun, Qun's ex-girlfriend. When she was a child, Jun had been constantly raped by her father. Though her mother knew it, she had remained silent all her life until her death. When Jun grows up, she takes revenge. After sleeping with a policeman to steal his gun, she shoots her father, and then runs to Qun for shelter. Seen in this light, Jun's body signifies patriarchal violence and maternal complicity. She has been raped and abused by her father, and betrayed by her mother. Such experience makes her tough and rebellious. To seek revenge, she has to use her body to satisfy the policeman's sexual desire so that she can steal his gun to kill her rapist father. As she confesses her feelings and deeds to Qun, Jun shows no regret about having killed her father.

Toward the end of the film, Zhang, a police officer, traps Jun in the elephant house. Over a loudspeaker, the police tell Jun that she must "surrender or die." Jun refuses to come out and manages to shoot a policeman. Enraged, Zhang enters the elephant house to confront her face-to-face. After some struggle, Jun points her gun at the back of Zhang's head. To persuade her to surrender, Zhang says, "It is not worthwhile for a woman to do this." Hearing it, Jun pulls the trigger but finds that she is out of bullets. And then the scene ends.

Jun's killing and unrepentant attitude resemble these of the famous American serial killer Aileen Wuornos (1956-2002). From 1989 to 1990, Wuornos killed seven of her male customers when she provided them sex service in Florida. Wuornos defended her

killings as self-defense because all seven men had raped or tried to rape her during the sex service. Even so, she was charged with murder and sentenced to death by the State of Florida in 2002. This event has generated heated discussions in public. Some advocate Wuornos's death penalty whereas others think the penalty legitimizes men's violence against women, especially women sex workers.

Lynda Hart is one of Wuornos' supporters. Through a close reading of Wuornos's positive attitude towards her job as a sex worker, her insistence of her killing as self-defense, and "unrepentant" attitudes toward her own "crime," Hart contends that Wuornos's job and self-defense transgress the logic of the exchange of women in patriarchal economy—that a woman should be the object of the exchange not the subject of the exchange, and her death penalty is the state patriarch's punishment for her transgression (153). Hart's words uncover that the systematic patriarchal violence operates through the criminalization and punishment of women's self-defense against men's violence.

Jun kills in a situation similar to that of Wuornos. Jun's rapist father and the policemen use violence to abuse or control her body with the threat of killing her if she resists. When violence fails, they take other measures to ensure their control of her. For instance, when the police officer Zhang is temporarily held hostage by Jun, he activates the discourse of proper gender norms to persuade Jun to assume her womanhood and abandon her aggressive resistance. Similar to Jun's abusive father, the state patriarch embodied by Zhang attempts to control and regulate both her body and her mind.

The state patriarch further aims to assert its control through regionalism and classism. As I have mentioned earlier, Confucianism, socialism, and urbanization exert great pressure on Chinese women. The socialist revolution's compromise with Confucianism has ensured the survival of the patriarchal structure. Meanwhile, the imbalanced distribution of resources among different regions, classes, and ethnicities has created new hierarchal relationships. Generally speaking, the Han-ethnic male communist bureaucrat is on top of this hierarchy, while ethnic minorities[18], lower-class women, and rural and western province residents are groups in contemporary China.

Under the circumstances, rural women with little education and few connections are highly disadvantaged. They can live only as housewives and farm hands in the countryside, or work in the developed Eastern areas. Because of their background, most of them can find only poorly paid temporary work as babysitters, domestic servants, street sweepers, or workers in labor-intensive industry. Moreover, under the contemporary Chinese household registration system, they cannot enjoy the same rights as their urban counterparts. Regardless of where they live, these women's needs and desires cannot be met and are forced to form a heterosexual patrilineal family for support. To some extent, they reluctantly produce and reproduce the existing social hierarchy.

Living under the structural inequality, these underprivileged women experience trauma on a daily basis. Differing from trauma caused by catastrophic events such as war and natural disasters, quotidian trauma needs to be understood from a different

[18] In contemporary China, there are altogether 56 ethnic groups, among which Han is the largest, constituting about 90% of the total population. Other major minority groups include Zhuang, Hui, Manchu, Uyghur, Tibetan, and Mongol.

perspective. In her book *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures,* Ann Cvetkovich explores the relationship between trauma and queer sexuality. Building on feminists' work on trauma, especially those by Judith Herman and Laura Brown, Cvetkovich contends that a depathologizing understanding of quotidian trauma can be fruitful in transcending private-public and personal-historical binarisms. Moreover, she draws on a Marxist interpretation of trauma to propose a materialistic reading within specific social conditions (29-44). Cvetkovich's work helps to extend the scope of trauma studies from the medical and psychological to the cultural. Furthermore, she shifts the focus from the impact of catastrophe on people to the impact of structural inequality (e.g. racism, sexism, and homophobia) on individuals.

The structural inequality caused by the centralization of power and modernization is traumatic for Chinese women, especially rural women with little education and cultural capital. In the film, an apt example is Qun's mother. Born in 1950s rural China, Qun's mother is greatly influenced by Confucian thought. She believes that a woman's purpose is to become a wife and mother. Ironically, though she has been faithful and loving, she must face her husband's adultery. Several years after their marriage, the husband impregnates another woman out of wedlock and then asks her for a divorce. After the divorce, her husband enjoys his life with his new wife and child whereas she struggles to raise her two children. Her son's death in an accident is the final blow that deprives her of the opportunity to become the matriarch of the family.

To make things worse, the increasing urban-rural divide makes it difficult for her to support Qun. Her lack of social support as an aged rural housewife causes her great

insecurity and anxiety. Thus, she encourages Qun to get married. But her attitude towards heterosexual marriage begins to change after she witnesses the intimate and supportive relationship between Qun and Ling. While she initially struggles to come to terms with Qun's lesbianism, she eventually accepts Qun's lesbian identity.

Qun also faces the discrimination and isolation resulting from classism and regionalism. Having received little higher education, Qun lacks the qualifications to find a well-paid job. As a migrant worker from Sichuan, she cannot enjoy the same rights as Beijing citizens under the Chinese household registration system, and instead she lives in a shabby apartment, surviving on her meager salary as an elephant keeper. Qun has little interaction with people, spending most of her time in the zoo taking care of the female Asian elephant Sa Kuan. In the opening sequence, the emotionless face of Qun is first seen in a medium shot. Then, in a long shot, Qun stares into the distance from a bridge, paying no attention to the people walking by. A second sequence that shows her isolation occurs in the zoo. A long shot shows that Qun faces the elephant and sprays water on her to help her cool down. When a male worker walks past, Qun comments on the hot and humid weather, but he gives no response. This happens a second time. In both cases, the man either ignores her or treats her as a psycho who talks to an elephant.

In contrast with the disadvantageous women, almost all male protagonists come from privileged groups. Qun's male cousin and her five male blind dates are middle-class. They work in places such as the municipal taxation department, the accounting office at a big factory, or the municipal police department. All of them hold conventional views on gender and sexuality and support the institution of compulsory heterosexual marriage. In

their view, women have the obligation to establish a heterosexual family, serve their husbands, and bear and take care of children. Thus, they pathologize women who disobey rigid gender roles (Qun), sexually harass self-employed women (Ling), and control and regulate rebellious women (Jun).

Lesbianism, Female Homosocial Bonding, and Trauma

Women in the film find various ways to negotiate the restrictions of heterosexual normativity, sexism, classism, and regionalism. Some of them develop homoerotic relationships, some confront the patriarchal authority directly, and others crisscross the boundary between heterosexual and homosexual desires. In each of these cases, women rely on their lesbianism and homosocial bonding so that they may come to terms with their quotidian trauma.

My use of female homosocial bonding comes from Eve Sedgwick's notion of "homosocial desire." In *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Sedgwick develops the sociological term "homosociality" and the concept of "male homosocial desire" to understand all forms of male bonds, such as male friendship, mentorship, and rivalry. Sedgwick points out that unlike female homosocial bonding, male homosocial desire is often accompanied by homophobia. (1-3). Due to her focus on male homosocial desire, Sedgwick does not further explore the features of female homosocial bonding. In this chapter, I use the notion of female homosocial bonding to describe a wide range of non-erotic supportive relationships between women, such as

mother-daughter bonding and female friendship. In the film, female homosocial bonding supports women's negotiations with the patriarchy by managing their trauma.

Qun's romantic relationship with Ling helps her counter the pressure of heterosexual marriage. Once their relationship begins, she gains the courage to first come out to her cousin and blind dates, and then her mother. The order is significant because it reflects her increasing self-esteem and self-confidence. In the film, the people Qun cares about are her mother, Ling, and Jun. Qun cares more about her mother's acceptance of her lesbianism rather than the men's. Qun shows indifference to her cousin and male blind when they disavow her lesbian identity.

In contrast, Qun has done many preparations for her coming out to her mother. To avoid giving her mother a shock, Qun introduces Ling to her mother as her roommate and best friend. When the mother and Ling develop a close relationship, Qun invites the mother to a restaurant, and have a dinner with her. During the meal, Qun comes out to the mother. Initially astonished by Qun's confession, the mother falls into deep thought after Qun's expression of her strong sense of happiness as Ling's partner. Later, the mother tells Qun that she respects the latter's choice in marriage and life. Qun's coming out to her mother is painful for both the daughter and the mother. Liang Shi remarks that the mother's eventual acceptance is not complete:

> The mother's acceptance is not based on recognizing Xiaoqun's [Qun's] lesbian identity and coming to terms with its value content but on her unconditional maternal love resulting from the genetic mother/daughter bond.

> What she really accepts is her daughter, not her daughter's homosexuality, which happens to be part of the package. (28)

Shi underscores the paradox of the mother's acceptance of her daughter and her difficulty in accepting homosexuality. But accepting Qun is the first step in accepting diverse sexualities and gender roles. Qun and Ling's homoeroticism and the mother-daughter bonding help Qun and her mother resist the great pressure of heterosexual norms.

Qun's romantic relationship with Ling also helps her to come to terms with her familial trauma. Despite her hardships living in the alienating city, she always remains steadfast, rarely revealing her anxiety. Only in front of Ling does Qun confess her inner feelings. In one scene, Ling misunderstands Qun's relationship with Jun. Thinking Qun has cheated on her, Ling poisons Qun's fish. Qun is reminded of a traumatic memory, which she tells to Ling. At the age of five, Qun learned that her father had cheated and impregnated another woman out of wedlock. Her father and the woman asked her mother for a divorce. In confusion and fury, Qun ran to a river nearby, in which she found many dead fish. After her parents' divorce, Qun and her elder brother were brought up by her mother. Her brother treated her as a man and asked her about the type of person she would like to marry. Qun replied that she would marry the same type of women he would. But her brother's subsequent death taints these more pleasant memories of him, and the poisoned fish bring all traumatic events back to the present.

Revealing these feelings signals the beginning of Qun working through her familial trauma. Dominick LaCapra points out that working through means the traumatized person is able to distinguish the traumatic past from the present. S/he can then rebuild

faith and hope and embrace the possibility of a future. This process often includes "mourning and modes of critical thought and practice" (22). After mourning for the loss of her brother and father, Qun now has the courage to accept the past. Moreover, she gains the strength to negotiate heterosexual norms and classism by claiming her own lesbian identity and choosing the partner whom she loves. At the end of the film, Qun and Ling make up and buy new fish together. Thus, homoeroticism and homosocial bonding act as counterforces against Qun's past trauma.

Qun's relationship with Jun also shows the supportiveness of homosocial bonding. Though she no longer loves Jun, Qun decides to help her at the risk of being punished by the law. Every day, Qun brings Jun food, and they talk and play chess. It is not until Zhang comes to talk to her that Qun learns that Jun has killed her father. But instead of turning her in, Qun lets Jun tell her side of the story by relating her past trauma.

Jun's confession is shot in a restrained manner. The camera maintains such a distance from the two women that their facial expressions cannot be seen clearly. A long shot shows that Jun and Qun sit side by side on the bed in Qun's small dorm room in the zoo. Qun listens attentively as Jun explains that she never intended to lie to her, but instead was deluding herself that the rape and murder had never happened. After telling the long-repressed story, Jun bursts into tears and they embrace each other. In the non-intrusive long shot, the director leaves space for a traumatized lesbian's cathartic confession.

The scene ends with a close-up of the juxtaposition of the stolen gun with a black-and-white framed picture of Qun and Jun in their adolescence. In the photo, Qun stares at

the camera while the long-haired Jun shyly rests her head on Qun's shoulder. The photo signifies the happy memory of a past they cannot return to. The gun symbolizes both patriarchal authority and Jun's rebellion. Thus, the juxtaposition foregrounds the interconnectedness between the past and the present, as well as the power struggle between the abusive regulative patriarchy and supportive female homosocial bonding.

In Jun's mind, when the whole world turns against her, she still has Qun to protect her though they are no longer lovers. In contrast with her painful relationship with her parents, the homosocial bonding between Jun and Qun provides a source of warmth, comfort, and companionship for Jun, allowing her to bravely face her trauma. Differing from Qun who begins working through her trauma and build intimate romantic relationship, Jun chooses to take revenge and openly rebels against the patriarchal hegemony by killing her rapist father and fighting the pursuing policemen.

Differing from both Qun and Jun, Ling has a more complex relationship with heterosexual norms. Ling does not claim her lesbian identity, and she has sex with both her ex-boyfriend and Qun. In this sense, her desire vacillates between hetero-eroticism and homoeroticism. Even so, Ling's different attitudes toward men and women show her preference for homosocial bonding over heterosexual ones. For instance, when a male customer asks about the price of a female red belly band, she is firm about it and refuses to haggle. But the first time Qun visits her shop, she is willing to sell a jacket to Qun at a low price.

In a similar vein, Ling views hetero- and homosexual sex differently. She is passive when she sleeps with her boyfriend whereas she becomes very active with Qun.

Moreover, her boyfriend remains a vague, anonymous figure. There are no shots of his face, only his silhouette. The man' body is an optional vehicle for Ling to satisfy her sexual desires, and there are no deep connections between her boyfriend and her. In contrast, the film stresses Ling and Qun's intimacy through long shots, medium shots, and close-ups, whether they are having sex, feeding fish, going shopping, or having dinner together.

Ling's negotiation with patriarchal heterosexual norms can also been found in her occupation. As a self-employed clothes designer, Ling designs women's clothes exclusively, insists on her own style, and challenges heterosexual ethics. The clothes she designs are timeless, following neither conventional nor modern formal dressing codes. In this sense, Ling's shop becomes a female space in which different types of women can find unique clothes with which to express themselves.

The shop enables Ling and Qun's relationship, and it also witnesses the growth of an adolescent girl. In the beginning of the film, a girl enters Ling's shop with her boyfriend. She wants to buy a low-cut sleeveless tank; however, her boyfriend thinks the tank is too "exhibitive." The girl asks Ling whether the tank can be altered to a more conventional style, but Ling replies that the conventional is not her style. The girl leaves the shop disappointed but later returns to Ling's shop alone, tries on the tank, and buys it. The affirmation of her own beauty standard demonstrates the girl's self-affirmation and her disapproval of the intervening patriarchal standard imposed by her boyfriend. Her changed attitude illustrates the empowering function of Ling's shop.

Underground, Independent, and Mainstream Cinema in China

Tackling sensitive issues, such as lesbianism, child abuse, and structural inequality, *Fish and Elephant* joins the cinematic movement hailed as the underground and independent cinema in China that has risen since the early 1990s. The film's production, circulation, and reception at home and abroad reflect the power dynamics among artistic freedom, Chinese censorship, international film festival rules, and market demands.

Unlike the films of the Fifth Generation Chinese directors which are featured with their allegorical representations of Chinese history and depictions of rural Chinese scenery, the underground and independent cinema focus more on the contemporary life of ordinary Chinese, especially these of marginalized people, such as dissident artists, pickpockets, sex workers, and migrant workers. Differing from their Fifth Generation predecessors who were sponsored by the state studio, underground and independent directors have to find their own financial aid in the Open and Reform Era[19]. Thus, the film's artistic features, commercial potentiality, and political correctness are sponsors' major concerns. But other factors may also influence its production, and a case in point is the production of *Fish and Elephant*.

In one interview, the director, Li Yu, discusses the experience of making her first feature film *Fish and Elephant*. The biggest challenge for Li was to find funding. At that time, she was lacked professional training and experience, Because of her unknown status

[19] The Open and Reform Era refer to the period after the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Since 1978, Chinese government has taken a series of "open door" and reform policies in many social, economic and cultural areas. The era witnesses the replacement of the planned economy with a market economy, the entry to the global market, and invigorated communications between China and the rest of the world in almost all social fields.

and the film's controversial content, she received many rejections. When an investor finally showed interest, he demanded sexual favors. Feeling humiliated and outraged, Li rejected the investor's offer. Later, she sold her own house and borrowed money from friends and relatives to fund the film[20]. Perhaps not surprisingly, the investor's sexual harassment resembles the customer's harassment of Ling.

The circulation and reception of *Fish and Elephant* also illustrate the difficulty for Chinese directors to work amongst domestic sensors, international regulations, and the demanding global market. Fully aware of the strict censorship in China, Li submitted *Fish and Elephant* to the 2001 Venice Film Festival as an underground Chinese film. Later, the film made its way to Berlin and Toronto Film Festivals, and garnered positive critical attention from international film critics. For instance, Shelly Kraicer praised the film's bold move as the first to represent Chinese lesbians[21].

Lesbianism is not new for the western film audience, but the novelty of being an underground film from China made it a success. A director in China needs to get official approval before making a film. Current Chinese censorship mainly censors the ideological stance of an artistic work, such as the critique of socialism and the legitimacy of communist rule, the critique of national culture and ideology, the advocation of the independence of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Tibet, explicit depictions of sex, or the promotion of decadent lifestyles and improper morals. In the case of *Fish and Elephant*, its depiction of lesbianism and child abuse challenge the existing Chinese censorship. For

[20] Gu, Yuxue. "Li Yu: An Avant-Garde Director from Jinan." *Qilu Weekly*. April 14, 2013. Web. May 25, 2014.
[21] Kraicer, ibid.

Li Yu, the only venue available to her was the international circuit. Interestingly, censorship has become an indispensable element for Li's international success. In the book *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture*, Geremie Barme offers a subtle reading of independent Chinese directors' relationship with Chinese censors and the international film circuit:

> Trading on their international success, many of the independents played their Western supporters and mainland opponents against each other to create an alternative system of countercultural hierarchy that, although less restricted and paternalistic than the official culture, represented a kind of baneful orthodoxy and fit neatly into the chain of production and consumption for global festival culture. (193)

Barme incisively uncovers the way in which sophisticated Chinese directors maneuver among the state, foreign patrons, and the market. Using their "banned in China" status, Chinese directors accumulate international cultural capital, such as fame and sponsorship for future work. Most Chinese artists return to China with enough fame to get domestic sponsors and an audience. Meanwhile, they also maintain their international networks. This strategy has been used by many famous Chinese independent filmmakers such as Zhang Yuan, Jia Zhangke, and Lou Ye.

The international fame of a director does not necessarily bring box office success. Following *Fish and Elephant* (2001), Li Yu's second feature film *Dam Street* (2005) won the Golden Lotus Prize at the 2006 Deauville Asian Film Festival. But similar to *Fish and Elephant*, *Dam Street* was a box office disaster overseas. These failures prompted Li Yu

to go mainstream with future feature films. Jason McGrath has analyzed this contrast between international success and box office failure. Because the audience of Chinese independent cinema are mostly cultural elites both in China and overseas, he contends that commercial failure taught Chinese independent directors a lesson:,

> The censorship of the market can be even more restrictive than political censorship, and the audience for potentially subversive underground or art cinema is a niche market that can be catered to without necessarily affecting film culture in general, much social stability as a whole. (172)

McGrath highlights the challenge for Chinese independent directors to pursue their artistic interests while making their works consumable for a wide audience. Seen in this light, the film director's negotiation with mainstream aesthetics become necessary in the contemporary world.

Six years after *Fish and Elephant* (2001), Li Yu has developed the skills to maneuver among domestic censorship, the international cinema circuit, and the global market. Her third film *Lost in Beijing* (2007) adopts a mainstream melodramatic style and casts internationally famous actors and actresses such as Tony Leung, Fan Bingbing, Tong Dawei, and Elaine Jin. Set in Beijing, the film depicts the complex relationships among three migrant workers, a lascivious businessman, and his vengeful calculating wife. The film tackles problems of workplace rape, the sex trade, adultery, adolescent abortion, and bribery. To get official permission for the film's distribution at home and abroad, Li Yu compromised with Chinese censors and cut many "improper" sex scenes. But she sent the uncut edition of the film for its premier at the 2007 Berlin International

Film Festival. Though the film was banned for obscenity one month after screening in Chinese theaters, it won both box office success and critical acclaim at home and overseas.

Interestingly, Li Yu share many similarities with Taiwanese lesbian director Zero Chou. They have moved from documentaries to feature films, focused on marginalized social groups, and negotiated political and commercial pressure. While Li Yu's *Fish and Elephant* depicts Chinese women and lesbians' quotidian negotiations among Confucianism, modernization, urbanization, regionalism, and patriarchal heterosexual norms, Zero Chou's *Spider Lilies* represents the entanglement between a possible non-patriarchal queer family structure and the haunting specter of the colonial past. Breaching the Law of the Father, both directors address the power dynamics among gender, sexuality, modernity, and patriarchy.

Chapter Four *Spider Lilies:* Tattoo My Trauma, Tattoo My Desires

The life of contemporary Taiwan *tongzhi*[22] community is featured with social activism, self-representation, and media representation. On October 25, 2014, over 65,000 people joined the 12th Taiwan *Tongzhi* Pride Parade in Taipei. The participants included *tongzhi* and heterosexual people both inside and outside Taiwan. Blued, the leading Chinese gay social media software company, as well as Google Taiwan, Clean Master, and more than 140 social organizations, participated in the event[23]. Founded in 2003, the annual Taiwan *Tongzhi* Pride Parade has become one of the most influential events for queer communities in East and Southeast Asia. The 2014 theme was "Walk in Queer's Shoes," and the organization wanted the parade to improve *tongzhi*'s self-identification and self-pride, and highlight the differences among *tongzhi* communities. Moreover, they also urged participants and the media to think about the relationship among power, sex, gender, class, nationality, race, and ethnicity. They believed that the recognition of these differences and the power hierarchy was necessary for the acceptance of queerness and diversity[24].

The parade drew wide attention from mainstream media within and outside the island. For instance, the state news agency in Taiwan— the Central News Agency (CNA)—delineated sides in a neutral fashion. The agency described the *tongzhi* community's advocation of diverse family models, and its opponents, such as the

[22] Emerged in the 1990s, *tongzhi* is a Chinese term used to describe to sexual minorities in Chinese communities. It is equivalent to the English term queer or LGBTQIA.
[23] "The 12th Taiwan Pride Parade: 65,000 People Embrace Diversity." *Blued*. October 26, 2014. Web. January 2, 2015.
[24] Andycyrus. "Taiwan LGBT Pride 2014 Walk in Queers' Shoes." Taiwan Pride Organization. October 22, 2014. Web. January 2, 2015.

Christian organization Taiwan Protect Family Alliance[25]. In contrast to CNA's neutral stance, a report by Andrew Jacobs from *The New York Times* shows a supportive attitude. Comparing the discrimination and persecution of queer people in other Asian countries, such as China, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia with the vibrant *tongzhi* movements in Taiwan, Jacobs remarked that "With its lively news media, panoply of grass-roots organizations and a robust, if sometimes noisy, democracy, this self-governing island has become a beacon for liberal political activism across Asia[26]." Jacobs also criticized the homophobic forces from Christians and Taiwanese who upheld traditional Confucian views of the heterosexual family.

The 2014 Taiwan *Tongzhi* Pride Parade epitomizes the vibrant *tongzhi* movements in post-martial law Taiwan. The removal of martial law in 1987 instigated a relatively tolerant social atmosphere in the country, allowing various social rights movements to emerge. In the field of cinema, a variety of *tongzhi*-themed films appeared, such as Yee Chin-yen's *Blue Gate Crossing* (2002), Chen Yin-jung's *Formula 17* (2004), Tsai Ming-liang's *Vive L'Amour* (1994), *The River* (1997), *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (2003), *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone* (2006), and Zero Chou's *Splendid Float* (2004), *Spider Lilies* (2007), and *Drifting Flowers* (2008).

In this chapter, I examine the tangled relationship of queerness, trauma, colonialism, and Taiwan modernity in Zero Chou's *Spider Lilies*. I build on Teresa de Lauretis' notion of lesbian fetishism to analyze the ways in which the images of the spider lily tattoo, the

[25] Chen, Chichong. "Taiwan Tongzhi Parade Will Take Place on Ketagalan Boulevard This Afternoon" *The Central News Agency News*. October 25, 2014. Web. January 2, 2015.
[26] Jacobs, Andrew. "For Asia's Gays, Taiwan Stands Out as Beacon." *The New York Times.* October 29, 2014. Web. January 2, 2015.

green wig, and the jasmine image function as lesbian fetishes, which are connected with homosexual desire, the lost female body, patriarchal influences, and trauma. Dominick LaCapra's theory of trauma and Ann Cvetkovich's queer reading of the relationship between sexual trauma and queer desire suggest that the lesbian desire in the film is not only derived from various forms of trauma but also functions as a way to work through it. The film queers mainstream by its depictions of the dead and dysfunctional patriarch and the emasculated young men. The film's depiction of the power struggle among the sex worker, the client, and the state apparatus exemplifies John Greyson's elaborations on surveillance and countersurveillance between the state apparatus and queer artists. Furthermore, the haunting ghost of the father, the uncannily return of the mother, and the establishment of a new queer family headed by the young Taiwanese-Japanese lesbian Takeko at the end of the film indicate the breakdown of the traditional patriarchal family in favor of a non-patrilineal family structure, but it also suggests that the new family structure is constantly haunted by the past. *Spider Lilies* locates queerness at the center of modern Taiwanese identity in a way that queer desire, trauma, and remnants of colonialism make the construction of a coherent Taiwanese identity an impossible task.

Spider Lilies: Synopsis and Receptions

As one of the most renowned contemporary female directors in Taiwan, Zero Chou (1969-) is famous for her depictions of indigenous Taiwanese culture and the Taiwan *tongzhi* community. To date, she has directed sixteen documentaries, seven feature films, and two television dramas. Planning to direct a rainbow film series to represent the life of

Taiwan queer community, Chou has finished three of the six films *Splendid Float* (2004), *Spider Lilies* (2007), and *Drifting Flowers* (2008). Her documentaries and feature films have won several local and international prizes, such as the 2002 Taipei Film Festival Award for Best Documentary, the 2003 Marseille Festival of Documentary Film Award for Best Documentary, the 1st CJ Asian Independent Film Festival Audience Award (2004 Korea), and the 2007 Teddy Award for Best Gay/Lesbian Feature Film at the Berlin Film Festival.

Among her three queer films, *Spider Lilies* (2007) best reflects Chou's meditation on sexuality, identity, and trauma in contemporary Taiwan. Set in Taipei, the film explores queer desires of a group of young marginalized Taiwanese. Takeko is a lesbian Taiwanese-Japanese tattoo artist whose younger brother, Ching, had suffered from amnesia after an earthquake as a child. Living a secluded life, Takeko's only friend is a young gay man, Dong, who is also her client. One day, Jade, a webcam girl, visits Takeko's tattoo shop and recognizes her as her childhood crush. Jade tries to build a romantic relationship with Takeko, while a stuttering policeman named Yu falls in love with Jade during his assigned task to surveil the online activities of webcam girls. Through twists and turns, the film ends with Ching's recovery from amnesia and the rapprochement of Jade and Takeko's relationship. Alternating between past and present, the film foregrounds the protagonists' painstaking negotiations undertaken when confronting traumatic pasts.

Since its debut, the film has won both commercial success and wide critical attention. It was a box office success in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, and Korea, and

it won the Teddy Award 2007 for best gay/lesbian film at the Berlin International Film Festival. It has also generated heated discussion among critics. Some think the film limits itself on the lesbian romance rather than seriously challenging heterosexual norms. For example, the Chinese film scholar Chen Linxia argues that the narrative of *Spider Lilies* concentrates on the romantic relationship between Jade and Takeko, and portrays their life as distant from the larger society, severing the connection between the Taiwan *tongzhi* community and other social groups. Moreover, its sentimentalism weakens the film's potential challenge to the oppression of sexual minorities (30). Chen's comments neglect the significance of the film's sentimentalism and representation of the alienated conditions of the two protagonists. In my view, sentimentalism is used in the film to reflect natural disasters and colonialism's traumatic effects on protagonists. He also fails to see the way in which the film queers the mainstream through intricate depictions of the interaction between *tongzhi* community and other social group, For instance, the stuttering policeman abandons his affiliation with the state apparatus after he falls in love with the webcam girl Jade.

Other critics highly praise the film's exploration of homoeroticism, emotions, and identifications. For instance, Sonia Kolesnikov-Jessop, the chief editor for lifestyle and fashion at Louise Blouin Media, a global media company, remarks that "Much more than a story about a lesbian relationship, 'Spider Lilies' explores the themes of guilt, family obligation and repressed feelings[27]." She points out that the director Chou views *Spider*

[27] Kolesnikov-Jessop, Sonia. "In Taiwan, '*Spider Lilies*' Fuels a Small Gay Renaissance." *The New York Times.* June 7, 2007. Web. June 1, 2014.

Lilies as a film about and beyond the scope of lesbian relationships in Taiwan[28]. Her remark highlights the film's exploration of the lesbian protagonists' complex inner worlds and the film's relationship with Taiwan queer community. In a similar vein, Taiwanese film scholar Ivy Chang examines the relationship among queer performance, identification, and heterosexual norms in *Spider Lilies*. Affirming the lesbian identity of the two protagonists Takeko and Jade, Chang contends that their performances blur the boundary between male/female, straight/gay, mourning and melancholia, and help them to overcome their grief and shame (303). Chang's analysis is useful in understanding the importance of performance in protagonists' perceptions of self-identity and transformation in the film.

The three critics' comments exemplify most existing evaluations of the film, which focus on the topic of lesbianism in the film and neglect its delicate representation of the complex relationship among queerness, colonialism, and Taiwan modernity. In the following, I will first analyze the importance of the lesbian fetish in the construction of lesbian subjectivity and the role of lesbianism in female protagonists' coming into terms with their traumatic past. Then, I analyze the way in which the film queers the mainstream by its depiction of various masculinities that diverge from the hegemonic masculine model. At last, I explore the interconnectedness among queerness, colonialism, and Taiwanese modernity.

[28] Kolesnikov-Jessop, *Ibid*.

Lesbian Fetishes and Trauma

Spider Lilies is first and foremost a film about the Jiji earthquake.[29] In one interview, Zero Chou mentions that the prototype of the female protagonist Jade comes from a boy traumatized from the Jiji earthquake. After the earthquake, the boy's mother left home with her older son. Due to the traumatic effects of this abandonment, the boy said that his mother died in the earthquake whenever he was asked about her. For Takeko, Chou remarks that the character embodies her own views on human nature. Chou believes that human beings receive consolation through ritual. For example, Takeko gets solace to counter the traumatic effects of the earthquake through the ritual of tattoo[30].

The story of the traumatized boy is one about trauma, amnesia, and maternal abandonment. But the story told by *Spider Lilies* is richer than its inspiration. It is also a story about love, hope, and departure. The film's most fascinating feature is how it connects queer desire with various forms of trauma, such as maternal abandonment, death of family members, natural disasters, and colonialism. In this section, I explore how the trauma of the loss of mother and the survival of the earthquake is entangled with the female protagonists' homosexual desire and patriarchal forces.

In this film, the spider lily tattoo and the green wig are the two images that embody the intersection of trauma, lesbian fetishes, and homosexual desires. The images are significant because they both are symbols of identity in various cultures. For example, in

[29] The Jiji earthquake, also known as the 921 earthquake, was a 7.6 Mw earthquake that occurred in Jiji, Nantou County, Taiwan on September 21, 1999. During the earthquake, over 2,000 people were killed and more than 10,000 people were injured.

[30] Chen, Fangyi. "A Born Director: Zero Chou and *Spider Lilies*." *Taiwan Cinema*. February 1, 2007. Web. June 1, 2014.

China, the spider lily is a symbol of joy and happiness, whereas the Japanese view it as a sign of sorrow and separation. The spider lily is paradoxical in other ways, too. It often grows near tombs, but has beautiful flowers. Interestingly, when the flower blooms, its leaves fall, and when its leaves grow, its flower withers. The plant can be used to make medicines, but it also poisons people who eat it accidentally. The plant's rich ambiguity is further complicated by the spider lily tattoo's association with patriarchal authority, familial trauma, and Takeko and Jade's prohibited desires.

For Takeko, the spider lily tattoo is a constant reminder of her dead father, her amnesiac younger brother Ching, her homosexual desire, and the earthquake. Takeko was a Japanese-Taiwanese girl who lived in a small village in Taiwan with her Taiwanese father and younger brother Ching. One night, she was asked by her father to look after Ching, but upon receiving her girlfriend Zhen's invitation, she left Ching at home alone and went to her girlfriend's house. As the two girls were about to have sex, the earthquake occurred. When Takeko ran back home, she found her father buried under the debris and Ching sitting near the dead body, numbly watching the spider lily tattoo on their father's left arm. Due to this shock, Ching loses his memory, and the only thing he remembers about the past is the spider lily tattoo. He also becomes a timid person who lacks any sense of security and is afraid to build connections with others.

The father's death and the brother's loss of memory evoke a strong sense of guilt in Takeko's heart. Though the earthquake and her date with her girlfriend coincidentally occurred on the same night, Takeko views herself as an irresponsible daughter and sister who prioritizes her own love over her duty to take care of her younger brother. Moreover,

she views her homosexual desire as something that needs to be denounced. Thus, she breaks up with her girlfriend and represses her homosexual desires.

To help Ching's recovery, Takeko asks a male tattoo master to tattoo the same spider lily on her left arm, and asks that he teach her the tattoo art. At first, the master refuses because he believes a girl should not enter the profession. Takeko replies that she is not weak and she is willing to do it at whatever cost. Upon her persistence, the master asks her to bring him the spider lily tattoo from her father's corpse. After she does this, the master tattoos the same spider lily on her arm and teaches her the art of tattoo. Later in her adulthood, she opens her own tattoo parlor in Taipei, frames the spider lily tattoo from her father's corpse and hangs it on the wall of the parlor.

Analyzing the spider lily tattoo's significance, Ivy Chang contends that, "the spider lily tattoo functions as an ambivalent fetish: it substitutes for the phallus to consolidate the patriarchal values while erotically re-inscribing Bamboo's [Takeko's] escapist desire and unfulfilled love" (283). Chang's analysis is influenced by Teresa de Lauretis' work on lesbian fetishes. Critiquing previous psychoanalytic work which treats the paternal phallus as the only signifier of desire, De Lauretis remarks that Leo Bersani's and Ulysse Dutiot's rereading of Freud's theory on fetishism can free desire from the control of the Phallus (225-6). Building on their work, she defines fetish as the signifier of desire, which marks the separation and difference between the object of desire and its absence (229). Fetish, she elaborates, is "in contradistinction to the paternal penis-phallus, serves as the sign or signifier of prohibition, difference, desire" and it plays "a pivotal place in lesbian subjectivity" (232).Unlike Freudian theory of fetishism, which connects fetishism

with masculinity, desire, and agency, de Lauretis's redefinition of fetish defies the hegemony of phallocentrism and endows women the agency to develop a non-heterosexual desire and build a subjectivity beyond the scope of patriarchal heterosexual model.

In the film, the spider lily tattoo is closely associated with Takeko's dead father, the tattoo master, as well as her homosexual desire. Seen in this light, I agree with Chang that the spider lily tattoo's is associated with the phallus and Takeko's desire; however, I do not think that Takeko's access to the spider lily tattoo "consolidate[s] the patriarchal values." Instead, I contend that Takeko's possession of the spider lily tattoo and her mastery of tattoo symbolize her appropriation of patriarchal values, and such appropriation enhances her agency within the patriarchal system. Initially, Takeko simply wants the tattoo so that she can help Ching recover from amnesia. But after she removes her father's tattoo and learns tattooing, she becomes an heir of both her father (bears the same spider lily tattoo and acts as the family head) and the tattoo master ("steals" men-exclusive knowledge).

Her father's death becomes Takeko's rebirth as she now controls her own body and her life, as well as takes care of her amnesiac brother. Moreover, Takeko's mastery of tattooing helps her to become independent. In the film, almost all her tattoo clients are men except Jade. Takeko designs tattoos and often chooses their sizes, colors, and complexity, as well as where they should be applied. Moreover, Takeko even contributes to the symbolic reconstruction of masculinity. A case in point is the change of her gay client Dong. As a young jobless punk, Dong lives on bulling students for money. Feeling

unconfident about his own aggressive appearance, he often chooses the student who looks weak and walks alone. To enhance his self-confidence, Dong asks Takeko to design tattoos to strengthen his masculinity. And Takeko tattoos a demon's head on Dong's chest. Believing in the tattoo's magic power to give him strength, Dong successfully bullies a group of students for money. Seen in this light, Takeko uses the male master's tool to exercise her will in reshaping masculinity.

Despite Takeko's newfound independency, patriarchal and family values still torment her. Even though it has been years since the earthquake, she is haunted by her father's ghost and experiences guilt over her brother. She also represses her homosexual desires and avoids any intimate relationships, spending most her time working and taking care of Ching. Takeko's vulnerability to patriarchal values and her repression of her homosexual desire are related to her obsession with the traumatic past. Dominick LaCapra argues that one's bond with the dead, especially with the intimate dead, may create one's "unconscious desire to remain within trauma" (23). In Takeko's case, it is difficult for her to resist the patriarchal idea that she is an irresponsible daughter who indulges herself in love due to the correlation among her date, the family tragedy, and the earthquake. The situation begins to change when Takeko meets Jade again in adulthood. Their romantic relationship allows Takeko to work through her trauma.

For Jade, the spider lily tattoo signifies her homosexual desire through a detour via the uncanny return of the absent maternal figure. Such return occurred in the first meeting between Jade and Takeko after the earthquake. In a flashback, the viewer sees that little Jade sits under a tree by the street corner and looks into the distance. The handsome

adolescent Takeko, wearing a dark green baseball hat and a white T-shirt, rides a silver bike from the end of the road. When Takeko approaches, Jade eagerly introduces herself and shows her green wig. She asks if the wig is beautiful on her, and Takeko compliments it. Noting her unique accent, Jade asks whether Takeko is a Taiwanese aboriginal. Takeko replies that her mother is Japanese and she lived in Japan as a child. Saddened, Jade responds that her mother died in the earthquake, so she feels lonely. Hearing this, Takeko hugs and comforts her. Takeko takes her home on her bike while gently humming a song. Sitting on the backseat in the gentle afternoon breeze, little Jade happily hugs Takeko from the behind, enjoys her melodious song, and feels fascinated by the spider lily tattoo on Takeko's left arm.

This meeting shows an uncanny return of the absent mother. During this conversation, Jade and Takeko exchange their given names and respective mothers. The omission of the paternal influence (their family names) forms a contrast with the emphasis of their mothers; however, both mothers are portrayed as absent figures. Throughout the film, they never appear on screen, and are only mentioned by their daughters or the mother-in-law. We never learn Takeko's mother's temperament, appearance, occupation, hobbies, age, or class. It is also unclear why her mother is absent at all.

Similarly, Jade's mother is also ambiguous. In the above scene, Jade says that after her mother died in the earthquake, she has lived with her paternal grandmother. But later, the grandmother tells Takeko that after the earthquake, Jade's father went to prison and Jade's mother left home with her son. Reasons for the father's imprisonment and the

mother's leave are enigmatic. But whether or not she left with good reason, the mother shows little affection for Jade. Throughout the film, there is no direct mother-daughter communication. The audience learns from the grandma that the mother occasionally sends money to her and Jade. To repress the traumatic memory, Jade has fabricated a lie to herself and Takeko. The exchange of their mothers' information between Takeko and Jade excavates two mothers from the past. They share not only the traumatic experience of surviving the earthquake, but also the trauma of losing their mothers.

The relationship between Takeko and Jade simultaneously resembles and differs from that between a mother and a daughter. Jade shows her strong interest in Takeko with her many personal questions and by proudly exhibiting her green wig. In return, Takeko patiently answers Jade's questions, hugs her, takes her home by bike, and hums a song for her. Their interaction, recalled years later by the adult Jade, signals her first memory of love. For Jade, the older Takeko embodies a combination of an ideal maternal figure and a dreamlike lover—handsome, patient, trustworthy, and reliable.

The image of maternal body in lesbian desire is analyzed by Teresa de Lauretis. She contends that the object of lesbian desire is "the lost female body itself" (231). Sometimes, the lost female body appears as a "nurturing, anodyne, maternal body" (365) in lesbian fantasy. De Lauretis argues that the maternal body is not maternal body per se, but instead it is "the fetishized scenarios of an empowered and exclusively femininity" and the lost "female body" (365). In Jade's case, the empowered female body is Takeko's because it resembles and differs from her lost maternal body. At the same time, Takeko plays the maternal role in her relationship with Jade, and in this way, she becomes the

absent mother for both Jade and herself. In this uncanny way, the lost maternal figures return to Jade and Takeko. Marking Takeko's difference from her mother as well as Takeko's difference from Jade and Jade's mother, the spider lily tattoo becomes the lesbian fetish for Takeko and Jade.

Another example of the return of the lost female body for Takeko reoccurs with Jade's green wig. During their first meeting as adults, only Jade recognizes the other. To evoke Takeko's memory and build an intimate relationship with her, Jade wears the green wig she used to wear as a child and asks Takeko to tattoo spider lily on her body. Takeko turns down her request and tells her that the flower is ominous. Then Jade introduces her occupation as a webcam girl and gives her business card to Takeko, asking her to visit her blog. Later, Jade visits Takeko's tattoo parlor and demands a tattoo of spider lilies to commemorate her childhood love. When Takeko questions her memory, Jade retorts that it is the adult rather than the child who forgets the past. Jade's words as well as her green wig trigger Takeko's memory of the long repressed memory relating to the earthquake, the death of the father, and her homosexual desire. They also remind Takeko of the happy time between her and Jade in the past.

Takeko's homosexual desire has been reignited by Jade's actions, especially by her webcam performances. In one scene, Jade argues online with male clients who make harsh moral judgments on her. After the fight, Jade feels sad and exhausted. As she plans to go offline and end work, Takeko comes online and begs her for a one-on-one performance, and Jade agrees. In a long shot, Takeko takes off her glasses and looks away from the computer screen in which the audience sees Jade undressing herself. In

flashbacks, the images of Jade's persistence of getting the spider lily tattoo emerge in Takeko's mind. Takeko looks again at the screen while Jade is singing "Little Jasmine," which was initially sung by Takeko when she took Jade home on the bike in her adolescence. Then, Takeko sees Jade siting on the floor in front of her bed, naked and wearing the green wig. She curls up her legs and arms into a fetal position and looks blankly away from the camera. Singing the song of "Little Jasmine" in a gentle and melancholic tone, Jade loses herself in her own thoughts. As Jade sings, several close-ups juxtapose her with Takeko, whose tears slowly roll down her face as she listens to the song.

The scene is represented in a non-voyeuristic way. Jade's undressing is avoided by Takeko taking off her glasses. Similarly, the audience cannot get the voyeuristic pleasure because the undressing process is blocked by Takeko's back. Curled up in a fetal position, Jade hides her sexuality from the camera. Her nudity and her fetal gesture make her more like a delicate child rather than an alluring woman. Even so, her green wig stresses her adulthood and makes Takeko aware of her homosexual desire.

The green wig and the jasmine song evoke Takeko's memory of the past. She remembers the time she spent with Jade and how they shared the happiness of each other's companionship as well as the sorrow of the loss of their mothers. She also remembers the coincidence between her homosexual love, the family tragedy, and the earthquake. Jade's performance connects Jade with Takeko through the disclosure of their sadness as well as longing for the lost love object. It also generates desire and identification between the two. This scene blurs various boundaries between past and

present, the subject of desire and object of desire, desire and identification, and even the lesbian desire and the mother-daughter bond.

Apart from the iconic spider lily tattoo and the green wig, the image of jasmine is also a lesbian fetish. In the film, the jasmine image is represented in three forms—the jasmine flower, the jasmine tattoo, and the jasmine song, and all of them are closely linked with the homoeroticism between Jade and Takeko. As a popular flower in Southern China and Taiwan, jasmine has long been viewed as the symbol of feminine beauty, love, and friendship. Unlike the spider lily, whose flower and leaves never meet, the flower and leaves of jasmine coexist harmoniously. In this sense, jasmine symbolizes companionship, union, and hope in contrast to the spider lily's negative connotations of separation and death.

This more positive connotation of jasmine is reflected in the film with its association with Takeko's changed attitude towards her own homosexual desires as expressed in her relationship with Jade. To meet Jade's request for a tattoo to represent her love, Takeko designs a jasmine tattoo especially for her after she sings the jasmine song in her performance. On the night when Takeko tattoos the jasmine flower on Jade, the two confide their feelings for each other, recollect the traumatic past, and then have passionate sex. Intriguingly, their sex scene is alternated with close-ups of the delicate jasmine flower blooming at night, accompanied by the background music of the jasmine song. Seen in this light, the jasmine tattoo represents Takeko's confirmation of her homosexual desire and her inclination to break from the traumatic past as symbolized by the spider lily tattoo.

In the film, their homoeroticism continues to help both Jade and Takeko work through their past trauma. For Jade, the great trauma is her maternal abandonment. After living in self-illusion for many years, Jade finally has the courage to face her long repressed memory and embrace her loss, pain, and fear when she develops her intimate relationship with Takeko. In the above sex scene, Jade confides that she was abandoned by her mother after the earthquake. She is afraid that Takeko will also forget and abandon her, so she tries to immortalize her memories with the jasmine tattoo. Her confession and lesbian desire mark the beginning of her working through process. LaCapra contends that,

> Working through is an articulatory practice: to the extent one works through trauma (as well as transferential relation in general), one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one's people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to future. (21-2)

In LaCapra's view, to come to terms with one's trauma, one must remember the past, encounter the trauma, feel its power, release emotions through methods such as mourning and narration, cultivate the ability to differentiate past from present, and then to embrace the future. In Jade's case, after mourning her loss, she accepts her past and shifts her focus onto her current life, especially her relationship with Takeko.

In a similar vein, homoeroticism gives Takeko courage to confront the past and work through her trauma. Jade's reappearance and the development of their romantic relationship help Takeko reaffirm her own homosexual desire, as analyzed previously. Furthermore, she also directly confronts the ghost of her father. On the night when she

and Jade have sex, Takeko forgets to pick up Ching from the recovery center. Ching walks home at night alone, and falls down from a hill and falls into a coma. The coincidence triggers Takeko's traumatic memory. But this time, Takeko begins to face the challenges of these events and comes to terms with her complex feelings. On her way to search for Ching, she encounters the ghost of her father in a valley. Rather than blame herself for Ching's disappearance, Takeko shouts that she has tried her best to take care of her brother, and the ghost vanishes. In contrast to her shock and self-hatred in her adolescence, Takeko confronts the oppressive patriarchal symbol— the ghost of the father, and prioritizes her homosexuality over her filial obligations. Takeko's shifted priority demonstrates the beginning of her working through past trauma.

Takeko's newfound triumph over the past is further demonstrated with her embrace of a future with Jade at the end of the film. In the last scene, Jade wears her green wig and walks towards Takeko's tattoo parlor, accompanied by the jasmine song. The film ends with a long shot of Takeko's father's spider lily tattoo on the wall, and then, a close-up shows its deterioration. The contrast between the disintegrated spider lily tattoo from the male body and the vibrant jasmine tattoo on the female body demonstrates the triumph of the homoeroticism and the female protagonists' working through their trauma.

The function of the lesbianism in working through processes of Takeko and Jade echoes the relationship between sexual trauma and queer desire, which is explored by Ann Cvetkovich. Critiquing the conventional healing discourse which often draws a causal relationship between sexual trauma and queer desire, Cvetkovich suggests a queer reading of the relationship, which points to "the unpredictable connections between

sexual abuse and its affects, to name a connection while refusing determination or causality" (90). For Cvetkovich, challenging the causality between sexual abuse and queer desire can generate diverse interpretation of the relationships between the two phenomena, and thus defies the pathological understanding of queer desire.

Though *Spider Lilies* is not a film about sexual abuse, it is closely associated with different forms of trauma and queer desire. The film suggests that the lesbian desire derived from a traumatic past can also be a way to work through the trauma. Moreover, the film's queer desire is more than lesbian desire, as it is also a desire of queer masculinity and modern Taiwanese identity, which is examined in the next two sections.

Masculinity and Its Discontents

Besides representing the lesbian fetish's entwinement with the lost female body, patriarchal influence, and trauma, the film also queers the mainstream through its depiction of male figures. In the film, male figures fall into three categories: the dead patriarch, the dysfunctional patriarch, and the emasculated young men. The film's depictions of masculinity indicate the waning influence of traditional patriarchy and the emergence of queer masculinities that diverge from the hegemonic self-assertive aggressive homophobic masculinity.

An apt example of the dead patriarch is Takeko's father. In the film, the father appears three times on the screen: first, as a dead body under the debris of their house, second, as a corpse on the bed in a small hut, third, as a ghost to Takeko. With no specific traits, he is reduced to a signifier of patriarchal influence. His death is meant to remind

Takeko of the earthquake and the family tragedy; however, as previously shown, his influence is finally counteracted after Takeko reaffirms her homoerotic desire and builds an intimate relationship with Jade.

The dysfunctional patriarch is represented by the Criminal Investigation Bureau in Taiwan. In the film, the bureau undertakes a project to crack down on online sex work[31]. To get evidence, the officer asks Yu, a stammering policeman, to undercover as a client for online sex services, and use electronic surveillance equipment to record the activities of webcam girls online. The bureau's use of undercover entrapment and electronic surveillance echoes a similar situation that occurred in Canada in the 1980s. In "Security Blankets: Sex, Video and the Police," John Greyson discusses the power struggle between the state apparatus and queers in Canada from the 1980s to the 1990s. Greyson illustrates the state's efforts to surveil and contain gay sexuality in public life. He remarks that undercover entrapment is often used in downtown Toronto whereas video surveillance is employed in the province. The undercover policeman often goes to public restroom and pretends to be gay by playing with his penis until another man shows similar interest. Then the policeman declares his real identity, arrests the man, and sues him in court. The video surveillance system is equipped in public restrooms to record sexual activities of gay men (385-6). These efforts greatly help the police to obtain evidence. Greyson, however, also points out that the queer artist such as himself actively

[31] The gender and sexuality discourse in contemporary Taiwan is still influenced by traditional Confucian gender norms, which uphold heterosexual patrilineal family and suppress all non-heterosexual and non-reproductive sex practices. Thus, sex industry in contemporary Taiwan is illegal.

create a counter discourse by making queer videos and organizing queer art exhibitions to resist the state's discipline.

In *Spider Lilies*, the undercover policeman, Yu, neglects his job and betrays his affiliation with the state apparatus when he becomes Jade's client. Being a timid and unconfident person, Yu does not know to how to flirt with her, let alone get evidence. After learning Jade's love story, Yu gradually falls in love with her, and neglects his work. His supervisor scolds him and his colleagues tease of him. To accelerate the investigation progress, one policeman teaches Yu how to record Jade's activities, and advises him to entrap her by offering more money for a nude performance. In spite of this pressure, Yu does not follow the order and instead he tries several times to persuade Jade to quit, but she refuses. On the day when the bureau sends policemen to arrest webcam girls, Yu confesses his true identity to Jade just in time to help her escape from the police's arrest.

Yu's characteristics and actions digress from the image of the ideal policeman, an authority figure and advocate of patriarchal laws. Due to his difficulty in effective communication, he is deprived of the opportunity to accept challenging tasks; therefore, he lacks the chance to get promoted. The whole bureau faithfully implements the patriarchal law to suppress all non-productive sex practices, and he is the only policeman who sympathizes sex workers. His sympathy and love for Jade distances him from other policemen who view webcam girls as shallow, snobbish, and disgraceful. Ironically, Yu's marginality at the center of the state apparatus offers him opportunities to intervene in the bureau' discipline of sex workers. His neglect of his surveillance job and his revelation of

his undercover policeman identity to Jade signify his temporary break from the authoritarian status apparatus. In a way, his undercover identity is reversed after he falls for Jade: he becomes an undercover ally for sex workers inside the Criminal Investigation Bureau, and helps them escape the state's persecution.

This representation of surveillance and countersurveillance functions as what John Greyson calls a convergence of the "surveillance of desire, surveillance of dissent, and the practice of countersurveillance" (393). The Criminal Investigation Bureau uses undercover policemen and the electronic surveillance device to surveill non-productive sexual practices between webcam girls and their clients, but such action meets the resistance from the internal (Yu's betrayal) and the external (the sex industry's prosperity and resilience). The film's practice of countersurveillance is revealed in its purposeful arrangement of a marginalized yet intervening policeman inside the state apparatus, and its delineation of the vibrant heterosexual and homosexual desires travelling in virtual and real worlds.

Besides the portrayal of the dead and dysfunctional patriarch, the film also depicts male protagonists who fail to meet the patriarchal masculine standards. Ching and Dong are apt examples. Throughout the film, Ching is portrayed as a needy boy who lacks courage, independence, and a sense of security. In his childhood, he always needs the companionship of Takeko. On the fatal night of the earthquake, Takeko wants to go to meet her girlfriend, but Ching holds her hands, begging her to stay. Despite this, Takeko leaves Ching for her girlfriend's home. During the earthquake, Ching's father sacrifices his own life to save him. Because of the great shock, Ching loses all his memory except

for his father's spider lily tattoo. Unable to connect with others, Ching also lacks the ability to support himself. Thus, guilt-ridden Takeko takes care of him. She sends Ching to a recovery center during the day when she works in the tattoo parlor. After work, she takes Ching home, cooks for him, tells him story before his sleep. Ching forms a sharp contrast with Takeko and Jade: while all three have experienced the catastrophic earthquake, the family break-up, and the loss of the mother, only Takeko and Jade exhibit courage in facing reality and support themselves by their own efforts, whereas Ching is dependent on his father and his sister to survive.

In a similar vein, the film's depiction of the young gay man Dong is also critical. Dong is a jobless punk who lives on bullying school boys for money. In contrast with his aggressive appearance, he is an unconfident and timid gay. To cover his inner weakness, he relies on the tattoo for strength, and becomes a client and friend of Takeko. After learning about Takeko's lesbianism, Dong happily reveals his own gayness and treats Takeko as an elder sister. To increase Dong's self-confidence and strength, Takeko tattoos a demon's head on Dong's chest, and later, double-knives on his arm. At first, the tattoo helps Dong get money from students, but later, he loses the arm with the double-knives tattoo after a street fight.

Seen in this light, Dong and Ching represent non-mainstream masculinity. Being unconfident and vulnerable, they rely on the tattoo or others to gain a sense of security and confidence. Ching's amnesia and Dong's amputation reflect psychical and physical lack of the ideal self-assertive aggressive masculinity.

Traumatic Departure: Queerness, Colonialism, and Taiwanese Modernity

In the film, queerness is closely associated with colonialism and Taiwanese modernity. The film's characterization and depiction of the ethnicized and sexualized subject reveal a strong connection between local queer community and the colonial legacy, among which Japanese culture is an influential one. The influence of Japanese culture is illustrated by the film's portrayal of Takeko's Japanese heritage and Jade's resemblance of a *bishōjo,* a Japanese term for a pretty young girl with big eyes, long hair, and a slim body. Ivy Chang points out that the image of *bishōjo* was imported from Japan to Taiwan in the 1980s and it has then become a wide-circulated image of a desirable womanhood in phallocentric imagination in Taiwan (284-5). In the film, the popularity of Jade is demonstrated in her status as the object of desire for both Yu and Takeo. Meanwhile, Jade also views Takeko as her own object of desire. Thus, the erotic desire is entangled with the ethnicized sexualized objects embodied by Jade and Takeko.

The interconnectedness between colonial histories and local queer culture in Taiwan is studied by Antonia Chao. In her study of the formation and development of two major lesbian communities—the T-Po[32] community and the lesbian feminist community in Taiwan, Chao points out that the emergence of *tongzhi* community has been influenced by Taiwan's colonial history and KMT's Cold War policies. According to Chao, during the colonial rule of Qing China (1683-1895), about "80% of Taiwan's population was male" due to the implantation of rigid migration laws in Taiwan (377). Later, the Taiwanese (Hakkien) term for male cross-dresser—*kaxian*, appeared during

[32] T-Po role is a lesbian role identity which resembles the butch-femme dyad. T stands for Tomboy and Po is the feminine lesbian in the couple.

Japanese colonial era (1895-1945). During White Terror Era (1949-1987), the KMT regime persecuted political dissents, social activists, and queer people, and labeled them as spies or dangerous communists (378).

KMT's brutal policy was backed up by US militarism and financial aid due to their common interests to counter the communist forces in East and Southeast Asia during the Cold War Era. The influx of US popular culture in the 1960s brought many American cultural products such as Hollywood films, American fast food, and gay subculture (378). For instance, the first T-Po lesbian bar opened in 1985 in the red-light district after Japanese colonization, when American popular culture began to develop (380). In the 1990s, the lesbian feminist community was formed by lesbian intellectuals who received high education in prestigious universities in the U.S. (384). Drawing on Spivak's notion of subaltern, Chao argues that lesbian feminists in Taiwan actually construct a subaltern class—the T-Po community in their pursuit of a more advance modern society (387). Criticizing the class bias of the middle-class lesbian feminists, Chao advocates diverse representations of various lesbian communities in Taiwan.

Chao's work historicizes the emergence and development of major Taiwan lesbian communities and their relationships with various colonizers in Taiwan. Chao's call for diverse representations of Taiwanese lesbians is supported by *Spider Lilies*'s representation of the life of lower-class lesbians. Both Takeko and Jade belong to this subaltern group. As a self-employed tattoo artist, Takeko is responsible for her own means of living and does not receive any social welfare provided by the state. Compared with Takeko, Jade faces more restrictions. As a webcam girl in an online sex show

company, Jade works at home under the regulation of a middle-aged woman named Ms. Zhao. To get her payment, she needs to attract enough clients. Besides Zhao, Jade is also surveilled by the Criminal Investigation Bureau, as previously discussed.

The use of internet to discipline and meet diverse sexual desires by the state, sex workers, and sex service clients exemplifies a new model of discipline and resistance in modern era. Moreover, internet also plays a major role in the construction of one's identity and formation of interpersonal relationship. For instance, the unconfident stammering policeman Yu gains self-confidence and a new sense of self-perception through use of internet, and especially after his interaction with Jade. Jade also uses the internet to tell her love for Takeko, and her online performance has enhanced her relationship with Takeko.

Apart from internet, the emergence of a new form of non-patriarchal family structure in the film also suggests the advent of Taiwanese modernity. The earthquake causes the death of the father and the absence of the mother. After that, the lesbian daughter Takeko becomes the head of a family which consists of her brother Ching, her quasi-brother Dong, and her lover Jade. The new family's mixed ethnicity and sexuality suggests a form of Taiwanese modernity that differs from the official patriarchal heterosexual model promoted by various regimes after the end of the Second World War.

Examining the influenced of various regimes on Taiwanese modernity in postcolonial era, Fran Martin contends that colonial cultures have exerted great influence on the formation of Taiwanese modernity, and this modernity is not singular but plural. She elucidates that,

> If there is a Taiwanese modernity, it is a highly syncretic formation that has been shaped in fundamental ways by Japanese colonialism, Chinese Republican Culture, the U.S. military presence and economic aid, and KMT Cold War political and cultural practices. In the past two decades [the 1980s to the 2000s], this mix has been further complicated by the attempts of successive central governments to redefine Taiwan's modernity through appeals to the values of democracy, liberalism, and pluralism. As a result of these histories, modernity in Taiwan is defined more by rupture and disjuncture than by any universal or unifying qualities. (11)

Martin's work highlights the influence of Japanese colonialism, KMT totalitarianism, and US neocolonialism on the formation of Taiwanese plural modernity. It also reveals that the building of a coherent Taiwanese modernity requires the expungement of influences from Japanese colonialism and Communist China. More importantly, it demands the consolidation of a stable heterosexual patrilineal family structure through establishment of heterosexual hegemony and regulation of all non-heterosexual and non-procreative sexual practices.

Seen in this light, the film demonstrates the contemporary Taiwanese regime's disciplinary effort, which is demonstrated by the Criminal Bureaus' crack down on online sex services. But as has been shown, the state's regulation has been intervened by its insider—the policeman Yu. And moreover, the stable heterosexual patrilineal family structure is broken down in the film with the death of father and the emergence of a queer family.

The ending of the film reveals a traumatic departure from Taiwan's colonial past, which is illustrated by Ching's recovery from amnesia and coma, after he falls down from a hill where spider lilies bloom. On the night Takeko and Jade have sex, Takeko forgets to pick Ching up from the recovery center. Walking home alone, Ching is enchanted by the blooming spider lilies on a hill. As he approaches the flower, all past memory of the earthquake, his sister's abandonment, and his father's death, and the spider lily tattoo emerge in his head. The moment he touches the spider lily plant, he falls down from the hill, and falls into a coma. Later, he is sent to a hospital and awakes a day later. In flashbacks, the events after the earthquake also occur to Ching's mind. He remembers himself sitting alone in front of his father's corpse, and later witnessing the tattoo master tattoos the spider lily on Takeko's arm.

The moment Ching meets the spider lily flower, the traumatic past visits him. The flower awakens Ching from his amnesia in the similar way as the burning child awakens his sleeping father in Freud's famous dream analysis. The feature of the traumatic awakening is examined by Cathy Caruth. Reading Freud's narration of the burning child dream, Caruth contends that:

> To awaken is thus to bear the imperative to survive…. Such an awakening, if it is in some sense still a repetition of the trauma…is not, however, not a simple repetition of the *same* failure and loss…but a new act that repeats precisely a departure and a difference…. (105-6) [original emphasis]

Caruth's remark points out the paradox of the traumatic awakening: it simultaneously repeats and departs from the original traumatic event. The convergence of past and future

is illustrated by a scene emerged in Ching's head after he awakens from the coma. In front of a house, the little Ching cries and calls Takeko, and Takeko gently picks him up. And then the two hugs tightly and weeps together. The intactness of the house makes it difficult to distinguish the temporality of the scene. It may occur before the earthquake or after the earthquake reconstruction. Furthermore, the validity of this scene as a memory is equivocal because it has never appeared before. In the film, it is the first scene of Takeko and Ching hugging and crying together. Except this scene, Ching's recovered memory of the traumatic past matches that of Takeko's. Thus, the scene can be viewed as one of Ching's recovered memories, and it can also be interpreted as Ching's own fabrication to heal the trauma. Seen from this perspective, the scene signifies the concurrence of past and future.

Similar to the earthquake, colonialism is also a catastrophic event that constantly visits Taiwanese. The survival of the young generation—Ching, Takeko, and Jade——can be read as a traumatic departure and rebirth from Taiwan's colonial past; however, such trauma is always accompanied with loss, pain, and the haunting of the past. The amputation of Dong and the loss of mothers point to such pain and loss; moreover, the uncanny return of the Japanese mother in the lesbian fantasy associated with the spider lily tattoo suggests that a postcolonial non-patrilineal family and a modern Taiwan identity cannot be imagined without the confrontation with its traumatic past.

Chapter Five *Song of the Exile*: The Lure of Home

One of the most renowned directors in the Hong Kong film industry today, Ann Hui has produced more than twenty films in diverse genres and styles, often exploring Hong Kong identity and female subjectivity. Born to a Chinese father and a Japanese mother, Hui grew up in Macau and Hong Kong, and received her education in Hong Kong and London. After finishing her studies at the London Film School in the mid-1970s, Hui returned to Hong Kong and initiated the Hong Kong New Wave along with directors such as Tsui Hark, Patrick Tam, and Allen Fong.

Since her directorial debut of *The Secret* (1979), Hui has shown great concern for Hong Kong identity and the life of marginalized social groups, such as immigrants and women. Many of her films reflect a feminist sensibility, such as a critique of patriarchy, the social control of women, and women's agency in a patriarchal society. Elaine Yee-lin Ho points out that Ann Hui's early films in late 1970s to late 1980s ignore gender, focusing instead on cultural contestation, since the 1990s; however, Hui's films have taken a feminist turn (181). Ho's analysis delineates the changing focuses of Hui's film in various periods. In my view, the film *Song of the Exile* (1990) reflects this feminist turn by situating a complex mother-daughter relationship within the historical entanglements among Manchuria, Macau, Hong Kong, China, Japan, and Britain from the 1940s to the 1970s.

The film begins on the eve of Hueyin Cheung's graduation in 1973. Her years at a London film school have given her friends and a familiarity with the local culture. Receiving the news of her younger sister Huewei's forthcoming wedding, Hueyin returns

to Hong Kong after her job application has been rejected by BBC. Before and during the wedding, Hueyin comes into constant conflicts with her Japanese mother, Aiko. The intertwined flashbacks of Hueyin and Aiko reveal Hueyin's close bonding with her Chinese grandparents and Aiko's subsequent alienation from her in-laws in Macau in the 1950s. After the wedding, Huewei emigrates to Canada with her husband, and Hueyin accompanies her mother to visit her hometown in Beppu, Japan. During the trip, Hueyin experiences the exoticism of Japanese culture and begins to understand her mother better. As they become closer, Aiko reveals how she fell in love with Hueyin's father, which removes the long-standing tension between them. Afterwards, they return to Hong Kong where Hueyin finds a job at the local television station. The film ends with Hueyin's visit to her grandparents in Canton.

Since its debut, the film has garnered wide critical attention. Some scholars praise its feminist stance, whereas others criticize its unrealistic portrayal of Hong Kong. For instance, Patricia Erens situates the film within the larger context of the tradition of women's autobiography and exile literature, and contends that *Song of the Exile* continues such a tradition and reflects an emergent Hong Kong identity (54). The similarity between the experience of Hueyin and that of Ann Hui suggests the film's autobiographic quality. Erens's analyses also uncover the close relationship between exile and the formation of an emerging identity.

Rey Chow does not agree that the film has such a strong critique of patriarchy because of its polarized attitudes towards its male and female characters. Chow contends that the intertwined flashbacks of the mother and the daughter confuse temporal, spatial,

geographical, and mental boundaries, and thus construct the female "psychic interiority" (Chow 2007, 95). For Chow, *Song of the Exile* depicts the patriarch, Hueyin's Chinese grandfather, as "worth loving and tolerating" despite his xenophobia and prejudice, whereas the women "are often shown to be sympathetic only insofar as they seem capable of learning to accommodate these father figures" (Chow 2007, 101). Chow ignores the film's diverse representation of men and women that go beyond the perpetrator-victim binary. For instance, Hueyin's grandfather is both a victim of Japanese colonization of China and a perpetrator of his Japanese daughter-in-law, Aiko, by alienating her in the family. Furthermore, Aiko and Hueyin do not passively "accommodate these father figures;" instead, they constantly negotiate patriarchal nationalist discourse in both China and Japan.

Chow critiques the Chinese patriarchy's oppression of women and China's colonialism of Hong Kong but neglects the intricate power dynamics among China, Hong Kong, and other countries. From the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, Hong Kong was the colony of China, Britain, and Japan. But Hong Kong became the economic and cultural colonizer of China and other Southeast Asian countries from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. One of the most widespread forms of Hong Kong culture was Hong Kong cinema. Ding-Tzann Lii points out that it dominated the market in Taiwan, Thailand, and Philippines from 1978 to 1993, severely damaging the development of local film industries (127-8).

Besides the film's attitude toward patriarchal values, its depiction of the relationship among various places has also attracted critics' attention. For instance, Ackbar Abbas criticizes the film's inconsistent depiction of Hong Kong's position:

> On one level, the film clearly situates Hong Kong in relation to other social-affective spaces— London, Macau, Japan, Manchuria, and China—and suggests that Hong Kong as a space can only be constructed out of its shifting relationship with these elsewheres. Yet on another level, especially toward the end of the film, a simple account of Hong Kong as a "home" that one can come back to, as a definite somewhere with its own internalized history, becomes dominant. Understanding, then, becomes based to a certain extent on simplification, both spatial and affective. (39) [original emphasis]

Abbas is dissatisfied with the film's representation of Hong Kong as a contradictory place which exists both in relation to other places and in its own history. But for me, this contradiction is the most attractive feature of the film. The film refuses to represent Hong Kong as the subordinate Other in its relationship to other places nor does it portray Hong Kong as the superior Self secluded in its self-contained world. I contend that the film resists the temptation to treat Hong Kong as the safe, protected home for exiles. Instead, the film suggests that the emergence of new homes and communities is closely related to constant border-crossings and negotiations with the unfamiliar and the unknown.

Canton, Manchuria, Macau, and London: Between the Victim and the Perpetrator

In its attempt to deconstruct the myth of the home as the heaven for the individual, the film delineates the dialectic relationship between home and exile, and uncovers how homes are established through the domestication and exclusion of the Other. In "Reflections on Exile," Edward Said describes the paradoxical nature of the home: homes can "enclose us within the safety of familiar territory" while simultaneously they can "become prisons and are often defended beyond reason or necessity" (185-6). This concept is well illustrated by the depiction of the protagonists' various homes and the internal struggles among them: Canton, Beppu, Manchuria, Macau, and Hong Kong. At the same time, the film also portrays how border-crossings, the home, and exile are intertwined.

In the film, each border-crossing leads to the change of identity. Home is the beginning and ending of the border-crossing; however, it is also the battleground of antagonistic forces. A case in point is the 1950s home of the Cheung family in Macau, where the elder Mr. and Mrs. Cheung, their granddaughter Hueyin, and their Japanese daughter-in-law Aiko live. The old couple and Aiko have taken different journeys to Macau, which embody the power dynamics between China and Japan at that time.

Having fled from their hometown of Canton, which was occupied by the Japanese in the 1940s, the old couple is obsessed with their poignant memories of Japanese colonization and longing for their lost natal home. Accordingly, they view their Japanese daughter-in-law Aiko an unwelcome outsider and a national enemy. Though they are

unhappy about their son's decision to marry her, they still take her in only because she is the mother of their eldest granddaughter, Hueyin.

Compared with her in-laws, Aiko's journey to Macau is more tortuous. Having grown up in Japan, Aiko moved from her hometown of Beppu to Manchuria to live with her elder brother and his family in the 1930s. Though she originally left for Manchuria because of unfulfilled love, Aiko unwittingly became a settler colonizer and contributed to Japan's colonization of China. Japan invaded northeastern China in 1931, driven by its rich resources and opportune timing: there were intense civil wars amongst warlords and the newly founded Republic of China. Aiming to incorporate China as a part of its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere[33], Japan used northeastern China as the base for its invasion of the whole country. To sugarcoat its colonial motive, Japan helped the Manchurian government establish a puppet regime—Manchukuo—to oppose the Republic of China. To consolidate its force in northeastern China and expand its influence, Japanese colonial forces mobilized its citizens—like Aiko in the film—to settle in Manchukuo through propaganda.

After the defeat of Japan in 1945, Aiko became a war victim. Like other Japanese settlers, Aiko and her family faced possible imprisonment. The situation became worse when a serious illness threatened the life of her infant nephew. To save him, Aiko stopped a truck of soldiers, among whom happened to be Mr. Cheung, a Japanese-Chinese translator in the Chinese Army, who used his medical training to save the boy's

[33] The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was an imperial propaganda concept developed and promoted by the Japanese government in the 1930s. It activated an ethnocentric, racist, and paternalistic discourse to fight the invasion of western powers and create a bloc of Asian nations consisting of Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania under the leadership of Japan.

life. Charmed by the family, Mr. Cheung helped send them and other settlers to Japanese repatriation centers. On the eve of her return to Japan, Cheung confessed his feeling for her and proposed. Aiko agreed and the two married and eventually moved to Macau.

Unfortunately, in Macau, Aiko became the victim of internal colonialism in the Cheung family because of the old couple's strong resentment against Japanese. In front of Hueyin and their neighbors, the old couple often describes Aiko as a strange person who hides herself in her room to avoid socializing, and an unqualified mother and daughter-in-law who does not know how to cook. Rey Chow points out that food plays an important role in uncovering the ethnosocial difference between Chinese and non-Chinese in the film. The grandparents' dismissal of Aiko's food as "raw" and "cold" stigmatizes Aiko as an uncivilized barbarian who deserves to be excluded from the civilized Chinese cultural space, symbolized by the grandparents' room with hot and delicious food (Chow 2007, 96-7).

Chow discloses the grandparents' ethnocentrism in their evaluation of the relationship between Chinese and Japanese cultures; however, Chow neglects the fact that their rhetoric of food is a combination of ethnocentrism, patriarchal heterosexual gender norms, and nationalism. In their view, one dispensable quality of a good mother, wife, and daughter-in-law is to cook well for her family. According to their standard, "good food" should follow the rules of Chinese cuisine that require an attractive appearance, aroma, and taste. Influenced by their anti-Japanese nationalism, they believe that Aiko's inability to cook proves not only her failure to fulfill her gender role but also

that she isn't qualified to be integrated into the more "advanced" Chinese culture. Thus, they see it as their duty to rear Hueyin while marginalizing Aiko.

In addition to cooking, the grandparents also teach Hueyin Chinese classics and Chinese history, and take her to Chinese gardens and teahouses. Their childrearing combines parental care with nationalistic indoctrination. Moreover, their role has changed from the victim of Japanese colonization to the vengeful perpetrator of the Japanese with their relationship with Aiko.

Fully aware of her parents-in-law's antipathy, Aiko can do little to stop her alienation. Her knowledge of Chinese is so little that she can barely communicate. On some occasions, she is asked to serve tea to her mother-in-law and her friends, who happily play mahjong, chat in Chinese, and give her no attention. Not knowing mahjong, Aiko stands aside silently to wait for her mother-in-law's orders. In most cases, she works, eats, and sleeps by herself. With the absence of her husband, she does not have any ally in the family.

To resist her domineering in-law's intervention with Hueyin, Aiko has to wield defensive nationalism. The hair cut scene is a telling example. In the scene, Hueyin is demanded by Aiko to have a Japanese elementary school haircut; however, Hueyin refuses and calls her grandfather for help. But Aiko catches and throws her on the bed, spanks her, holds her up and then closes the door. Trembling, Aiko shouts in broken Mandarin, "You must have the haircut and wear the uniform if you want to go to school!" A long shot shows that inside a large mirror, Hueyin sits on the bed silently and tearfully, with fear and frustration. As she is cutting Hueyin's hair, Aiko gradually stops trembling

and begins to smile slightly. Just after Aiko finishes the haircut, the door is pushed open by the grandparents. Hueyin runs to her grandma, and says what her mother has demanded. The couple casts sharp glances at Aiko, and takes Hueyin away. As they walk away from the camera, the grandmother refutes Aiko's demands and a medium shot shows Aiko standing alone in the room in silence. The next day, the grandparents don't allow her to accompany Hueyin to school. The grandmother takes her instead, dressing her in in a causal pink dress, and altering her hair with a large flower hair clip.

The controversy over Hueyin's hairstyle and the uniform exemplifies the power struggle between Aiko and the old couple. Though she knows that her in-laws are the main cause of her suffering, Aiko does not have the courage to directly confront them. The only way to claim her authority as a mother and her identity as a Japanese is to regain control over Hueyin. By fighting, she utilizes defensive nationalism to confirm her Japanese identity. In my view, Aiko's use of defensive nationalism results from her identity as an exile in the Cheung family.

The interdependence between exile and nationalism has been analyzed by Edward Said. He contends that all forms of "nationalism in their early stages develop from a condition of estrangement" (176), however, once the nationalist goal is achieved, "successful nationalisms consign truth exclusively to themselves and relegate falsehood and inferiority to outsiders" (177). Thus, the estranged condition is an important factor for the emergence of nationalism. Though Said stresses the collective feature of nationalism, it sheds light on Aiko's use of nationalism as an individual action. To defend herself against her in-laws's anti-Japanese nationalism, she needs an equally strong

supporting force, so Japanese cultural nationalism becomes her shield. Unwittingly, Aiko becomes the perpetrator in her relationship with Hueyin by forcing her own values onto her daughter.

Like her mother and grandparents, Hueyin is also both victim and perpetrator. Compared with the blatant racism her mother suffers, the racism encountered by Hueyin is more subtle. After finishing her master's degree in media studies, Hueyin applies to work at the BBC. Her application is rejected; however, her English classmate, Tracy Cavalier, is granted an interview. Hueyin lends her necklace to her, and Tracy joyful remarks, "There's something mysterious and oriental about it. Do you think it will bring me luck?" Tracy's comments of the "mysterious and oriental" necklace and the BBC's explicit rejection represent two forms of racism: one eroticizes the Orient and the other relegates it to an inferior position.

Hueyin's role as perpetrator is demonstrated by her complicity with her grandparents' marginalization her mother. As the adult Hueyin narrates, her mother has always been a cold silent woman. She seldom smiles and always stays alone in her room. In contrast, her grandparents offer her love and warmth. Her grandparents' kindness and her ignorance of her mother's victimization makes Hueyin blind to her grandparents' xenophobia, so she chooses to ally with them. A case in point is the bracelet incident. The grandmother wrongly accuses Aiko for stealing her bracelet. Feeling humiliated and helpless, Aiko hugs Hueyin, asking to leave with her for Hong Kong to reunite with Mr. Cheung, her husband. But Hueyin slips away and runs to her grandparents. Later, when Mr. Cheung arrives, Hueyin refuses to leave with him and her mother. At the end of the

scene, a high-angle long shot shows the young couple leaving as Aiko looks back with a complex mixture of emotions. Then, a low-angle shot shows that the grandparents and Hueyin are looking from the window above. The grandfather waves Hueyin's hand to say goodbye and Hueyin smiles happily to her grandfather, showing no grief that her parents are leaving. The scene reveals Hueyin's close bond with her grandparents and her alienated relationship with her mother. Though she is too young to help defend her mother, Hueyin could have left with her, but on the contrary, she chooses to stay with her grandparents.

The complex relationship among the old couple, Aiko, and Hueyin with nationalism and racism show that the line between victim and perpetrator is not clear-cut. Hueyin's alliance with her grandparents brings her temporary protection and happiness; however, her loyalty to the patriarchal values intensifies suffering for both herself and her mother in the years to come.

Hong Kong and Beppu: Reconciliation and Negotiation

In their home in Hong Kong, Aiko and Hueyin continue their conflict, but ultimately they reach reconciliation. For Aiko, moving to Hong Kong marks the beginning of her acculturation. She has improved her Chinese, become familiar with Hong Kong culture, and begins to make new friends. But for Hueyin, the move marks a departure from a familiar protected boundary and her adventure to an unfamiliar environment. In her childhood in Macau, Hueyin is well protected by her grandparents. But later in her adolescence, she has to go to Hong Kong to reunite with her parents and her younger

sister since her beloved grandparents have returned to their hometown Canton to serve their home country, socialist China. Her voiceover says that it is her first time encountering the feeling of abandonment and alienation, only intensified by the flipped statuses of her and her mother.

Feeling sorry for Aiko's suffering in Macau, Mr. Cheung makes every effort to please her in their new home even if such actions may cause the daughters' displeasure. In one scene, Hueyin studies inside her room and becomes annoyed by the noise from the living room, where Aiko is playing mahjong with three women and gossiping loudly about their acquaintances. When Mr. Cheung comes home, he asks Hueyin to cook while warmly greeting his wife, which cause Hueyin's displeasure. Hueyin's anger towards her mother grows further during dinner, when Mr. Cheung suggests that they go see a Japanese film starring Aiko's favorite star, rather than an American film that Hueyin wants. Hueyin accuses Aiko of being a shameful mother and wife who plays mahjong all day and neglects her familial duties. Her father slaps her and she runs to her room.

Later that night, Hueyin learns from her father for the first time that her mother is Japanese, and that her parents met and fell in love in northeastern China during the end of the Second World War. Though she now understands Aiko's plight as a foreigner in Macau, she still does not empathize her. She decides to go to boarding school despite her father and younger sister persuade her to make peace with her mother. The scene ends with a low-angle shot of the mother and the younger sister looking from the window above, and a high-angle long shot of Hueyin walking into the distance without looking back. The resemblance between this departure scene and the earlier one in Macau

emphasizes the similar alienated mother-daughter relationship as well as the changed power dynamics in the family.

Hueyin feels resentment towards her mother because she sees her as a self-indulgent woman neglecting her familial responsibilities. For Hueyin, a good mother and wife should prioritize the needs of her children and husband over her own. Thus, Aiko's choice to play mahjong rather than cook for her daughters and her preference of a Japanese movie over her daughters' favorite American one is interpreted by Hueyin as Aiko's self-centeredness and failure of her motherhood and wifehood. Hueyin's negative opinion of her mother shows the extent of her indoctrination of patriarchal values by her grandparents. Hueyin's grievance also comes from her disavowal of the fact that her mother has replaced her as the center of the family. Though no one purposefully marginalizes her, Hueyin feels that she has been alienated from the family.

This estranged relationship continues even into Hueyin's adulthood, when she returns from London to attend her sister's wedding. Once again, the hairstyle and the dress become the site of the mother-daughter struggle. To show others that they are from the same family, Aiko asks her daughters to have the same haircut as hers. The sequence begins with a medium shot of Huewei sitting in front of a mirror for her haircut. Panning slowly to the right, the camera stops to catch the back of Aiko, the barber, and Hueyin in the mirror. Then in a series of shots reverse shots, Hueyin expresses her displeasure with the haircut, while Aiko insists on the importance of having a family hairstyle. Huewei intervenes and begs Hueyin to stop arguing. The sequence ends with a long shot showing the faces of the three unhappy women. During the whole sequence, there is not any shot

of Hueyin and her mother in the same frame. Their communication is accomplished through reverse shots or shots of their images in the mirror. Immediately following this scene, a flashback brings the audience back to the earlier haircut scene from Hueyin's childhood.

The mirror shots are analyzed by Patricia Erens in "Crossing Borders: Time, Memory, and the Construction of Identity in Song of the Exile." Probing Hueyin's troubled identification with her Japanese and Hong Kong heritage, and Aiko's disillusion of her homeland Japan at the end of the film, Erens argues that the use of mirror shots "highlights the illusion of a unified identity" (48), and that Aiko "seeks to mold her [Hueyin's] looks and to create a traditional identity pleasing to her" (49) in the two haircut scenes. I agree with Erens that the mirror shots emphasize the illusion of a unified identity for both Aiko and Hueyin, but I disagree with her interpretation of the mother's motivations. Instead, I think the two haircut scenes reveal Aiko's changing identity. In Macau, Aiko's insistence of Hueyin having a Japanese haircut and uniform comes from her desire to counter her in-law's strong anti-Japanese nationalism. But she discards her defensive nationalism after undergoing acculturation in Hong Kong. In the second haircut scene, her demands reflect her efforts to build a unified family identity. But unwittingly, these efforts resemble the grandparents' endeavor to maintain the integrity of a Chinese family by excluding Aiko.

When Aiko travels to her hometown in Beppu, Japan with Huyein, her daughter is finally able to understand her mother's alienation and how she herself must negotiate her own Japanese heritage. As a foreigner, Hueyin experiences exoticism, alienation, and

exclusion. She is attracted by local scenery, food, and customs, but with little knowledge of the language and culture, she also feels estranged. In a scene, Hueyin goes out alone to explore, and gets lost in the woods. Feeling hungry, she picks a tomato in the field. As she is about to eat it, a Japanese peasant jumps out and yells at her. She thinks he is trying to catch and punish her. She runs away but is stopped by several other men. It is until Hueyin asks for their forgiveness in English that the men realize that she is not a Japanese. With the help of a Japanese teacher who can speak English, Hueyin learns that the peasant had been trying to prevent her from eating pesticide-sprayed tomato. While the local Japanese villagers surround her, discussing her identity as a Hong Konger in Japanese, Hueyin starts to understand her mother's alienation in Macau.

Hueyin gains further understanding and empathy after witnessing the conflict between her mother and her two uncles. Aiko is reluctant to abandon her rights of the family estate, while her elder brother and his wife want to sell it and move to Tokyo to live with their son's family. Her conflict with her younger brother results from their contradictory views on loyalty and patriotism. He believes that being loyal to Japanese nationalism and imperialism means to participate in Japan's invasion of China. He calls Aiko an unfaithful traitor for marrying Chinese man. Accordingly, he refuses to talk to Hueyin. Intriguingly, Aiko's younger brother resembles Aiko's father-in-law. Both men faithfully support nationalism and endeavor to expunge foreign influence from their home.

After this argument, Aiko goes out to drink at a small bar owned by her ex-lover. When Hueyin finds her here, Aiko brags about her daughter in front of her ex-lover. But

her deep sadness overwhelms her and she starts crying bitterly. No longer alienating her mother, Hueyin hugs and comforts her. Before they return to Hong Kong, Aiko reveals how she met and fell in love with Hueyin's father. A long shot shows them sitting on the seashore and hugging as they watch a sea liner.

Hueyin now has the necessary context to understand her mother's courage to resist Japanese nationalism by marrying a Chinese man as well as oppose her brothers. Her own experience of alienation and exclusion in Japan enhances her understanding of her mother's alienated life in China. She also recognizes her early complicity in her mother's isolation. The hug reveals her complicated emotions about her mother, all of which involve empathy, love, regret, compensation, and consolation. The Beppu trip enhances Hueyin's reconciliation with her mother and induces her to reflect on her own identity.

The trip also offers Aiko an opportunity to discover her own alienation in her homeland. The discovery is painful; however, it also urges Aiko to reconsider the meaning of home. Aiko's changed perception of home is illustrated by the two visits to the family cemetery. In the first, she goes with her brothers, sister-in-law, and Hueyin soon after arriving in Japan. Bowing in front of her parents' tomb, Aiko speaks in Japanese how she misses them and her hometown. Her words move her brother and sister-in-law, but Hueyin cannot understand so she passively follows others to enter, bow, and leave. Upon their leaving, Aiko speaks in Chinese to Hueyin about the renowned status of her family and shows contempt for her Chinese father-in-law's brag of his Chinese family. Aiko's use of Japanese and her derogation of her father-in-law's family in front of Hueyin reveal her distinction of herself as a proud daughter from a renowned

Japanese family from Hueyin and her Chinese grandpa who come from a humble Chinese family.

When Aiko visits the cemetery with Hueyin again at the end of the trip, her attitude has undergone a sharp turn. Standing before her parents' tomb, Aiko speaks in Chinese that it fulfills her wish to take Hueyin to her hometown and the family graveyard, and it is very likely she will not return to Japan. After bowing to the tomb, Aiko leaves without looking back. Hueyin bows to the tomb, and cannot help looking back as she leaves. Aiko's use of Chinese and her inclusion of Hueyin indicate her new identification with Hueyin and Chinese culture. Her decision to depart from her natal home and her acknowledgement of the unknown future reveal the price one has to pay for a new home.

As mother and daughter leave Japan, Hueyin's voiceover says, "It seems very familiar to me. I used to abandon and betray certain things in the past, but I was only fifteen then. While for mother, she is already about fifty. Is there a chance that she will get over these feelings like me?" This voiceover is the first that Hueyin contemplates her mother's complex inner world rather than her own. It shows her concern for her mother's ability to deal with the challenge of dissociating from her birth place.

Hueyin has also undergone the process of reconsidering her home and identity. Hueyin's Canton trip is another important part in the process. Shortly after they return to Hong Kong, Hueyin learns that her grandpa suffered a stroke. Bringing foods and necessities prepared by her mother, Hueyin goes to Canton. During the trip, Hueyin witnesses the poor living conditions of her grandparents and finds that her grandpa's

stroke resulted from the persecution of the Red Guards[34]. Even so, he asks Hueyin not to lose hope in socialist China. Hueyin only looks at him with a mix of shock, sadness, and reluctance. Though she feels sorry for her grandpa's deteriorating health, it is hard for her to identify with his nationalism after Beppu, where she realized how nationalism can suppress women.

The conversation between Hueyin and her grandpa is interrupted by the grandma screaming. Hueyin finds that her young cousin has bitten her. A long shot shows the grandma examining her arm and complaining to Hueyin, and another long shot shows that the little boy stands there, looking at them with a puzzled face. Then the scene cuts to a close-up of Hueyin looking anxious. Some critics, such as Patricia Erens, read the detail as a possible "message about the insanity of the Cultural Revolution, a warning not to trust the Chinese, or a perversion of the adage 'Beware the hand that feeds you'" (56). Such interpretation makes sense to some extent, but I think the scene connotes other meanings. It is unclear whether the child bites his grandma because of his own aggression or the grandma's inappropriate feeding methods.

The grandma's care not only fosters the child's growth but also teaches Chinese patriarchal values. The grandma plays an important role in raising Hueyin, teaching her Chinese values, and estranging her relationship with her mother in her childhood. Even in Hueyin's adulthood, she insists Hueyin identifying with her Chinese ancestors. As soon as Hueyin enters the room, her grandmother asks her to worship her ancestors in front of

[34] The Red Guards were a mass paramilitary social movement of young people, especially young college students. They were mobilized by Mao Zedong in 1966 and 1967 to defend Mao's political status against other leaders during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

the family altar. The grandmother, as argued by Chua Siew Keng, is "a traditional chauvinist Chinese mother-in-law who polices patriarchal loyalties in the conjugal home"[35]. The grandmother shows both maternal love and control. It is ambiguous whether the boy bites her out of pure aggression or because she is mistreating him, but regardless, the scene shows this rebellion against an authoritative caretaker.

Interestingly, Hueyin also shows similar attitudes toward the one who has brought her up. In her childhood and adolescence, she internalizes her grandparents' patriarchal values and isolates her mother from the Cheung family. In her adulthood, she uses her media training learned at London to contribute to Hong Kong's anti-colonial activism. After she returns to Hong Kong from Japan, Hueyin works as a journalist at a local television station and covers the intense anti-corruption demonstrations. As her voiceover narrates, it is the first time that Hueyin can listen attentively to the needs of the local citizens. Jincai Wu et al point out that, Hong Kong's anti-corruption movements in the 1970s reflect its citizens' strong resentment towards the corrupt British colonial government. Under great social pressure, the colonial government compromised and established a new bureau—the Independent Commission Against Corruption—to soothe anger[36]. Hueyin's absorption in these anti-corruption movements causes her to forget her job applications and other belongings in her London dormitory. Her newly developed interest in activism also forms a sharp contrast with her previous indifference to the international politics in London. Thus, Hueyin's shift of focus from London to Hong

[35] Keng, Chua Siew. "*Song of the Exile*: The Politics of 'Home.'" *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*. Web. Jan 8, 2014.
[36] Wu, Jincai et al. "Forty-year History of Independent Commission Against Corruption." *People's Daily*. February 20, 2014. Web. February 5, 2015.

Kong and her investment in Hong Kong anti-colonial movement reveal her changed identification.

Between Home and Exile

The grandparent's reluctant exile forms a sharp contrast with the voluntary exile of Aiko and Hueyin. Their divergent opinions of home and exile also influence their views on identification and change. The old couple's exile in Macau results from Japanese colonization, and consequently, they have identified themselves with Chinese culture and anti-Japanese nationalism. For them, Macau is only a transitional place and Canton is their hometown. Thus, as long as the social condition in Canton becomes stable, they abandon Hueyin and return to Canton. Ironically, they fall victim to dictatorship again, but this time it is Maoist communists, not the Japanese.

Differing from the old couple, Aiko and Hueyin have developed the ability to examine the limits of the home and cross their familiar safe boundary to bravely interact with the other. Yet, their transformative process is never a linear progressive one and it is often featured with hesitance, setback, negotiation, and renegotiation. During her journey from Beppu to Manchuria and then to Macau, Aiko is ambivalent towards nationalism and patriarchy. Marrying a Chinese man after the Sino-Japanese War demonstrates her courage to defy the xenophobic nationalist discourse in both China and Japan, whereas during her struggle with her parents-in-law in Macau, she uses cultural nationalism to consolidate her own identity and her control over Hueyin. In Manchuria, she prioritizes her nephew's life over her own by seeking help from unknown soldiers who may capture

and punish her as a Japanese. Her priority reflects her identification with patriarchal values' demand of women's self-sacrifice but later she shows strong resentment towards her daughter Hueyin's identification with patriarchal values embodied by the grandfather.

Compared with her mother, Hueyin's transformation mainly takes place in her trips to Beppu and Canton. Through the Beppu trip, she has reconciled with her mother and begun to negotiate with her Japanese heritage. The reconciliation is achieved simultaneously with her realization of her previous complicity with the patriarchal nationalist regulation of her mother. But the realization does not necessarily lead to her abandonment of her paternal Chinese heritage. During her Canton trip, she neither refuses her grandma's order to worship her paternal ancestors nor breaks her grandpa's idealistic view of socialist China. Seen in this light, Elaine Ho's analysis of the film is problematic:

> While both women [Aiko and Hueyin]'s early subjectivity is scripted by their hybridized Chinese and Japanese histories and the conflict between the two, it is through Hueyin, the young Hong Kong woman, that the film bears witness to an autonomous desire toward change and self-invention, and to her commitment to finding her own place in a changing Hong Kong community. In mapping this dynamic of individual change onto Hong Kong's early modernity, Song of the Exile inscribe both the woman and the community's liberation from history as an inherited parental or nationalistic determination. (194)

My analyses have shown that both Hueyin and Aiko possess "an autonomous desire toward change and self-invention" (e.g. Aiko's voluntary migration to Manchuria and

marriage with Mr. Cheung). Furthermore, Ho's positive reading of the film's demonstration of "the woman and the community's liberation from history as an inherited parental or nationalistic determination" is undercut by the protagonists' ambiguous relationships with nationalism and patriarchal values.

What troubles me in Ho's reading is that it limits the agent of change in Hong Kong to a single gender, generation, class, and region (the young "Hong Kong" professional woman Hueyin), which deprives men, older women, and other groups of theirs right as the agent for Hong Kong's change. By stressing Hueyin's "commitment to finding her own place in a changing Hong Kong community," Ho also severs Hueyin's connections with other places, and disavows her other identifications and commitments. Following this logic, the emergence of Hong Kong modernity and identity, and the woman's liberation can only be achieved by the consolidation of the Self (woman, Hong Kong, etc) through the suppression and exclusion of the Other (man, Britain, China, Japan, Macau, etc). Ironically, this binarism reinforces the patriarchal nationalist structure which it aims to dismantle.

Instead, I reason that the film uncovers the emergence of new homes, identities, and communities is a torturous "bridging" process. My use of bridging comes from Gloria Anzaldua's work on the function and meaning of bridges. She says that, "Bridges are thresholds to other realities, archetypal, primal symbols of shifting consciousness. They are passageways, conduits, and connectors that connote transitioning, crossing borders, and changing perspectives" (1). I use the verb form "bridging" to describe the changing process of crossing existing boundaries, embracing uncertainties, and making meaningful

connections between different worlds. In the film, Mr. Cheung, Aiko, and Hueyin have undertaken the bridging process to cross the boundaries of racism, nationalism, xenophobia, and cultural differences, and negotiate with colonial patriarchal forces.

The recurrent images of ports and bridges in the film also reveal the in-between space that possesses the potentiality for transformation. In each of these places—London, Hong Kong, Manchuria, Beppu, and Canton—visiting the port is the impetus for change. For instance, at the port of Manchuria, Mr. Cheung proposes to Aiko. At the port of Beppu, Hueyin sits side-by-side with Aiko and listens to the love story of her parents. Seen in this light, the port witnesses the protagonists' transitions to their new life stages.

In a similar vein, the bridges at the beginning and the end of the film also illustrate the connection between different worlds. The film begins with a long shot of Hueyin riding a bike with her two English friends along the bank of the River Thames. Hueyin, with long, straight hair, wears a black tank top and black pants, and laughs happily with her friends, with Westminster Palace and Westminster Bridge in the background. Following the bridge scene, the film shows Hueyin's life at London: getting spring rolls from a Chinese restaurant, listening to music in a square, drinking at a bar, and then receiving a rejection letter from the BBC. Her voiceover brims with optimism because she is armed with a new master's degree and sees her life bursting with new possibilities. In her eyes, social and political events, such as the Vietnam War and the Middle East War, are only images in television.

But as I have shown, her rosy view of life changes by the end of the film. During her visit to Canton, Hueyin wears a white shirt and dark blue pants and in two short braids.

The visit is relatively dull: she chats with her grandparents and helps feed her grandfather in their small shabby room inside an old and crowded apartment building. Hueyin's changes in the two scenes are both physical and psychological. Similar to the popularity of long hair and black tank tops in 1970s London, her new appearance is the standard hairstyle and attire of a "revolutionary" socialist woman comrade in 1970s China. Knowing that the refusal of the socialist aesthetics will bring trouble for her and her grandparents, Hueyin follows the socialist dressing code in China during her Canton trip. In contrast with her distance from politics at the beginning of the film, Hueyin now knows clearly that "the personal is political," and politics pervade home and the society.

Upon her return to Hong Kong, a long shot from Hueyin's perspective shows crowded buildings and an empty street. The film ends with a long shot of a railway bridge, under which several ferry boats are traveling across. At the beginning of the film, the politically innocent Hueyin lives a carefree life within her own small world. Thus, Westminster Palace, the center of British politics, lies outside her view. After her border-crossing experiences in Macau, London, Hong Kong, Beppu, and Canton, she begins to reexamine her heritage and identifications with these places. Similar to her participation of the anti-corruption movements in Hong Kong, her view of the bridge that goes to Canton also broadens her self-perception and understanding of the complex relationship among different worlds. The lure of Hong Kong as a permanent home gives way to the plural vision of an exile who courageously embraces the uncertainty outside the protected and familiar safe space.

Chapter Six *The Soong Sisters*: Women and the Nation-State

Similar to Ann Hui, Mable Cheung is also interested in exploring women's subjectivity and Hong Kong identity in her films. As one of the most famous Hong Kong New Wave directors, Mable Cheung is renowned for her cinematic representation of immigrant issues and transnational themes. Born in 1950 in Hong Kong, Cheung received her bachelor's degree in English from the University of Hong Kong. After finishing her training in drama at the University of Bristol in 1978, she went back to Hong Kong and worked-at a public broadcasting station, Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), and participated in directing television series *Below the Lion Rock* with other rising Hong Kong New Wave directors such as Ann Hui and Allen Fong. In 1980, Cheung went to the U.S. to study cinema at New York University till 1983. Her experiences there provide inspiration for her famous immigration trilogy *Illegal Immigrant* (1985), *An Autumn's Tale* (1987), and *Eight Taels of Gold* (1989), which highlight the early Chinese immigrants' interaction with their mainland counterparts as well as their confrontation and negotiation with racism, sexism, economic exploitation, and cultural conflicts in the U.S. Her later works, such as *The Soong Sisters* (1997), *City of Glass* (1998), and *Echoes of the Rainbow* (2010) examine turbulent social changes in mainland China and Hong Kong in the twentieth century.

Staci Ford argues, Cheung's films can be viewed as "an archive of the interconnectedness of national/transnational histories, of shifts in gender scripts, and of various issues surrounding Hong Kong and Chinese diasporic identities/experiences" (330). A representative of Cheung's cinematic archive is *The Soong Sisters* (1997) which

foregrounds the lives of the three Soong Sisters (Soong Ailing, Soong Ching-ling, and Soong Mayling and their influences in modern Chinese history. Set in Beijing in1981, the film begins with the aged and dying Soong Chingling's wish to meet her sister Soong Mayling, who lives in New York. The event causes a stir on both sides because the two sisters have long been estranged due to their political differences—Chingling being a supporter of the Chinese Communist Party, and Mayling the anti-communist Kuomintang. Through flashbacks, the film portrays the lives of the three Soong sisters and their powerful husbands. The film ends without the sisters' meeting. Chingling dies in Beijing, while Mailing copes with her grief and loss from New York, with the companionship of her old servant.

Since its debut, *The Soong Sisters* has received mixed reception. Some critics have praised its depiction of women's history whereas others criticize its pro-PRC stance. For instance, Staci Ford contends that the film "stakes an important claim for the famous but often underappreciated trio of [Soong]sisters as powerful actors on the international stage, as well as models of the Chinese Republic's 'new women'" (338). Ford stresses the three sisters' model role as new modern Chinese women and their influence on Chinese history. But I think the film reveals that the three sisters suffer limited agency in the nation-state building process of a modern China in spite of their high social status.

Differing from Ford's focus on women's history, Sheldon Lu explores the film's speculation on the relationship among Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan, and particularly the transfer of Hong Kong's sovereignty from Britain to China in 1997. Lu believes that

the film reveals the director's effort to incorporate Hong Kong history with Chinese history. He writes,

> The integration of Hong Kong into China demanded new perspectives in ways that Hong Kong represented itself in terms of cultural production and reception. For instance, the joint production of the epic film *The Soong Sister* (*Songjia huangchao*, directed by Cheung Yuen-ting) covers a span of several decades and depicts the political triangulation of the mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong as the three Soong sisters, who drifted apart and settled in three different parts of China after 1949. The eldest sister, Soong Ailing (Michelle Yeoh), and her husband [Kung Hsiang-Hsi] lived in Hong Kong; the second sister, Soong Qingling (Maggie Cheung), the widow of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, stayed on the mainland; and the youngest sister, Soong Mayling (Vivian Wu/Wu Junmei), wife of Chiang Kai-shek, moved to Taiwan. (106)

Lu offers an analogical reading of the relationship among the three Soong sisters and the interrelated history of Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan. But this simplistic reading ignores the film's nuanced treatment of the sisters' ambivalent identifications with their powerful husbands or with the nationalist discourse. Lu's critique of the film's Pro-PRC stance is also a false accusation. It is true that the film's depictions of some historical events follow the official PRC historical discourse, such as the Kuomintang leader Chiang Kai-Shek's persecution of communists in the 1920s. But I regard such conformity as the filmmaker's negotiation with PRC censors.

In one interview, Mabel Cheung discusses the censorship system she had to negotiate while making the film. Under the Regulation on Management of Motion Pictures in China, only production units with the approval of relevant government agencies can cooperate with overseas producers, and everyone making films in China must work with the state-approved agencies so that they can approve content. Historical figures such as those featured in *The Soong Sisters* are sensitive under Chinese censorship, so they must follow the official PRC historical discourse. It took Cheung a year and half to deal with Chinese censors, and by the end she had to cut 14 minutes which portrayed intimate moments between two historical figures— Chiang Kai-Shek and Soong Mayling. The film uncovers Chiang's persecution of communists but meanwhile it also portrays Chiang as a strong patriotic Chinese leader and a loving husband for Mayling. Similarly, Mayling is also depicted as a courageous independent woman who has made great contribution to Chinese revolution. The film's favorable depictions of Chiang Kai-Shek and Soong Mayling differ from official PRC discourse which portrays the two historical figures as corrupt people who had taken advantage of Chinese revolution. Thus, Chinese censors think the filmmaker must cut positive scenes of Chiang and Mayling[37].

Under these circumstances, the film purposefully omits direct depictions of controversial historical events such as the Chinese Communist Party's rule of PRC and the Kuomintang's rule of ROC (Taiwan) from 1949 to 1981. Instead, it focuses the

[37] Dupont, Joan. "Shooting the Saga of China's Famed Soong Sisters." *The New York Times*. September 19, 1997. Web. January 22, 2015.

diverse roles of the three Soong sisters, their father Charlie Soong, and their powerful husbands in the twentieth-century China.

I read *The Soong Sisters* as both a feminist revision of modern Chinese history, and a postcolonial speculation on homeland and identification. The film reveals that the birth of modern nation-state is built on the dominant group's suppression of the dissent voices, and the formation of the alliance among powerful men through the exchange of women. Through the representation of the repressed women's voices and women's limited agency in history, the film's feminist perspective undercuts the official nationalist historical discourse, and urges the viewer to rethink the notions of nationalism and homeland.

Voices and Silence: The Nationalistic Discourse and Its Dissents

The Soong Sisters is a film with many voices and silences on the narrative of the birth of modern China and the power struggle among various groups. The dominant voice is the revolutionary nationalist discourse upheld by the Tongmenghui (Chinese Revolutionary Alliance) and its successor—the Kuomintang (KMT). What have been suppressed are the voices of reformist nationalists, federalism nationalists, and women. The dynamics between the spoken and the unspoken is analyzed by Michel Foucault. In his study of historical discourses on sexuality in Europe, Foucault elaborates,

> There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion

is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses. (27)

Foucault illuminates the nuanced relationship between the spoken and the unspoken. The spoken and the unspoken do not function as a dichotomy but instead they point to the intricate relationships among speakers, contents of speech, silence, and ruptures inside and outside discourses. Examining the discrepancy between the film's depiction of historical events and official PRC historical discourse, I contend that *The Soong Sisters* negotiates the official nationalist historical discourse through two main methods: the appropriation of the official discourse and the foregrounding of a female perspective on historical events. I first offer a brief history of the development of the revolutionary nationalist discourse in China, and then analyze the film's slippery relationship with this discourse.

The victory of revolutionary nationalist discourse in early twentieth-century China is owed to its tactical use of the rhetoric of national crisis and a mixture of ethnocentrism with anti-feudalism and anti-colonialism. Since Qing China's defeat by the British Empire in the Opium War of 1840, the rhetoric of national crisis had become the dominant social discourse. It was used by two groups of early Chinese nationalists: the reformists who supported constitutional monarchy under the Manchurian rule[38] and advocated a peaceful reform to modernize China, and the revolutionary group— the Tongmenghui who promoted militarism to overthrow the Manchurian Qing Dynasty and establish a centralized modern China.

[38] The last imperial Chinese dynasty—Qing dynasty (1644-1911) is ruled by the Manchurian, an ethnic minority originated in Northeastern China.

Following a series of military defeats by western colonial powers (Britain, France, Germany, Russia, USA, and Japan) from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the Manchurian government suffered a crisis of legitimacy. To maintain its rule, the Manchurian government compromised with colonial powers by paying large amounts of war reparations, opening up ports for trade, ceding or leasing territories and making concessions of sovereignty. Moreover, they also ruthlessly suppressed the nationwide anti-Manchurian anti-foreign rebellions. Thus, the rhetoric of national crisis was widely circulated across the country, and its central narrative was that China, an autonomous country with its enduring Confucian tradition, faced a serious crisis both politically and culturally.

The Manchurian rule's cooperation with colonizers and its suppression of uprisings generated widespread anti-Manchurian sentiments among the Han Chinese ethnic majority. Accordingly, the pro-Manchurian reformist nationalists lost support from the public. In contrast, the revolutionary group— the Tongmenghui added anti-Manchurian and pro-Han rule to its existing anti-colonial and anti-feudal platform. Founded in Tokyo in 1905 mainly by Sun Yat-sen and Song Jiaoren, the Tongmenghui is a revolutionary nationalist group that combines the Xingzhonghui (Revive China Society), the Guangfuhui (Restoration Society) and many other Chinese revolutionary groups in the late Qing Dynasty. The motto of the Tongmenghui is "to expel the Tatar barbarians, to revive *Zhonghua*, to establish a Republic, and to distribute land equally among the people".

The motto is an interesting mixture of ethnocentrism, nationalism, republicanism, and socialism. Ethnocentrism is illustrated in "to expel the Tatar barbarians, to revive *Zhonghua*." In China, the Han-ethnic group has long been the dominant ethnic majority. Except for a few dynasties, such as the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) and the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), the Han-ethnic group has always been the ruling one. With many social political advantages, Han culture is dominant. Accordingly, a Han Chinese-ruled regime with a Han-centric culture is called *Zhonghua*. In contrast, all non-Han ethnic groups are called barbarians by the Han Chinese. The "Tartar barbarians" refer to the Manchu, the ruler of the Qing Dynasty. Seen in this light, the first two clauses utilize Han-centrism to mobilize Han Chinese at home and abroad to overthrow the corrupt Manchurian government. The last two clauses "to establish a Republic and to distribute land equally among the people" reflect the Tongmenghui's advocacy of republicanism and socialism.

The pluralistic political vision of the Tongmenghui made them very appealing both at home and abroad. Chinese who identified with an ethnocentric (Han-centric) Confucian China supported its pro-Han stance. Moreover, its anti-colonial, anti-feudal goals matched the worldwide anti-colonial, anti-fascist movements at the turn of the twentieth century. Consequently, the Tongmenghui won support from people in Japan, USA, and Southeast Asian countries. The jointed revolutionary efforts inside and outside China culminated in the Xinhai Revolution of 1911, which overthrew the Qing Dynasty and founded the Republic of China (ROC).

The dynamics among the Qing rulers, the Tongmenghui, and their foreign allies before the foundation of ROC are exemplified in the printing house scene at the

beginning of the film. Charlie Soong, the head of the famous Soong family, was a Chinese Methodist merchant. Educated in the U.S. during his adolescence as a Methodist, Soong returned to China to work as a missionary in Shanghai. Later, he became rich by running a successful printing company. After befriending Sun Yat-sen , the most renowned Chinese revolutionary nationalist and the founder of the Tongmenghui, Charlie Soong supported Sun's revolutionary career through financial assistance and dissemination of Sun's revolutionary ideas.

In the beginning of the scene, all workers are busy printing the Bible under Charlie Soong's supervision. After checking that the printing house is clear of visitors, Charlie signals workers to start printing Sun's revolutionary flyers. Charlie and Sun discuss Sun's trip to Japan and the money Charlie will send him in a few days. Commenting on the two hundred thousand silver dollars the Qing ruler put on his head, Sun jokes that Charlie should turn him in and use the money to finance the revolution. Finding his three daughters watching, Charlie asks them to greet Uncle Sun. After the girls introduce themselves, Sun compliments their cute shoes and encourages them to work for the Chinese when they grow up so that all Chinese can afford shoes.

Their conversation is interrupted by the Qing soldiers who demand entry. Before they break in, Sun flees out a window, leaving one of his shoes behind. Ailing, the eldest Soong sister throws the shoe to the printing machine, which flattens the shoe and subsequently causes the fliers to be ruined. The soldiers search the whole house but don't find anyone. Then they angrily interrogate Charlie, but he calmly replies that he has not

seen anyone suspicious. The soldiers run to the street, arrest some random passengers, and behead them.

In the scene, the cruelty of the Qing ruler is demonstrated in its persecution of the revolutionary and the soldiers' ruthless killings of innocent people. In contrast, the revolutionary nationalists are portrayed as witty, brave, and humane. Protected by his identity as a Methodist, Charlie Soong covers his revolutionary activities with the Bible printing business. His network in the USA and Japan helps Sun's overseas revolutionary activities. Sun is depicted as a humorous and brave revolutionary hero who jokes about his persecutor's bounty money and a tender senior who knows how to please little girls. With their overseas network, the men play vital roles in the overthrow of the Qing ruler.

But the positive depiction of the revolutionary nationalists is weakened by the film's appropriation of the revolutionary nationalist slogan. On the flyer, the Tongmenghui's motto "to expel the Tatar barbarians, to revive *Zhonghua*, to establish a Republic, and to distribute land equally among the people" has been changed into "to expel the Tatar barbarians, to revive *Zhonghua*." The film's purposeful omission of the Tongmenghui's advocacy of republicanism and socialism bespeaks the unfulfilled task of the Chinese nationalist revolution. As it turns out, the revolution has restored a Han-centric culture and regime, which has developed to two republics—Republic of China, and People's Republic of China. Both republics are oligarchies, neither of them realizing the goal "to distribute land equally among the people." Through the appropriation of the Tongminghui's motto, the film critiques the Chinese nationalist revolution's ethnocentrism and its failure to keep its socialist republican promise.

Besides the disclosure of the revolutionary nationalist discourse's ethnocentrism, the film also demonstrates that this discourse subsumes women's voices. An apt example is the film's depiction of the complex relationship between Soong Chingling's feminist consciousness and the revolutionary nationalist discourse. Born into a family which valued education and modern ideas, Chingling and her two sisters, Ailing and Mayling, went to the U.S. to receive a high education at Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia. After their graduation, all three sisters return to China. Due to their father Charlie Soong's friendship with Sun Yat-sen, the eldest sister, Ailing, worked as Sun's secretary. After her marriage, Chingling took her place, traveling to Japan where Sun was exiled, having left China after the backlash of feudal forces against the nationalistic revolution.

In the film, Chingling's feminist consciousness is illustrated by her view on women's roles in the Chinese revolution and her determination to choose her own way of life. When they meet in Japan, Sun and Chingling recall the earlier scene in the printing house when Sun encouraged her to build a modern China where everyone will have shoes. Then, Sun informs Chingling about the danger of working as his secretary: "The revolution is very dangerous, and it does not suit a woman like you." Chingling replies, "If your dream is to liberate China, liberate the forty billion Chinese, and make everyone have shoes, and then my dream is to liberate myself, liberate women, and make every woman choose her own way of life." Sun reveals his doubt about Chingling's ability to adjust herself to the dangerous revolutionary work. In Sun's view, a woman with modern education and good family background like Chingling should live a much easier life. But Chingling expresses her strong determination to choose her own life and contribute to

women's liberation and the Chinese revolution. Her words can be seen as an early twentieth-century Chinese feminist's statement, which refutes gender bias against women, promotes women's self-liberation and self-empowerment, and affirms women's active role in Chinese national independence.

Impressed by Chingling, Sun lets her stay in Japan to work with him. The two soon fall in love with each other, and plan to get married. Chingling returns home to tell the news to her father, but he strongly opposes the marriage. Charlie thinks that it would be a scandal for his daughter to marry his friend, a man who is twenty-seven years Chingling's senior. After Chingling asks why he is so conservative as a revolutionary, he answers, "Revolution is the country's business, but my daughter's marriage is my own business!" Moreover, he claims that he only wants his daughter to be the good girl who has received American education and knows the rules. While he supports the nationalist revolution, he does not support a gender-equal society. In his view, the aim for a woman to pursue a higher education is to prepare her to be a good daughter, wife, and mother. Thus, Chingling's marriage to Sun would bring shame to him and his family. In spite of her father's objection, Chingling returns to Japan to marry Sun, showing that she is serious about choosing her own way of life. Her defiance of the patriarchal authority reveals her strong feminist consciousness.

But Chingling's feminist voice is restricted by the power struggle between of two revolutionary nationalist forces—the right wing KMT and the CCP-and-left-wing KMT alliance after Sun's death in 1925. After the foundation of the Republic of China (ROC) in 1912, the revolutionary group—the Tongmenghui was transformed to the Kuomintang

(KMT), the ruling party of ROC. Due to the Tongmenghui's mixed vision of republicanism and socialism, the newly founded KMT fell into a pro-communist left wing and an anti-communist right wing. After Sun's death, Chiang Kai-shek rose to political prominence and dominated the KMT. As a strong anti-communism nationalist, Chiang endeavored to wipe out communist influence in its cradle. The film depicts his persecution with mass arrests and shootings of communists, and the bombing of a worker activist and his young son.

At that time, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was a small political force compared to the KMT and regional warlords. Thus, the CCP allied with the pro-communist left wing KMT to castigate Chiang's actions as a betrayal of Sun's pro-communist revolutionary philosophy. They asked Chingling to act as Sun's spokesperson and denounce Chiang in public. In my view, the aim of the struggle between the right wing KMT and the CCP-and-left-wing KMT alliance is to win the title of the legitimate heir to Sun's unfulfilled revolutionary nationalist project. Both the KMT and the CCP have inherited Sun's political vision for a modern China based on a single party system, and the major difference between the two lies in which party should be the ruling party to lead the revolution and whether communism is applicable in China.

The film illustrates that the dispute over political authority and communism in the revolutionary nationalist discourse muzzles all other voices in public. A case in point is the discrepancy between Chingling's public announcement of her political stance and her own reflections. In response to the right wing KMT's purge of communists, Chingling makes a public speech. Before speaking, she smokes to calm her nerves. After composing

herself, she indignantly renounces her affiliation with the KMT and criticizes its persecution of the CCP. As she does so, Chingling's voice-over says, "At first, I only want to be Sun Yat-sen's wife, and I don't know that I will turn out to be the spokesperson and defender of his revolutionary philosophy. I think some people make history, and history makes others."

Chingling's speech reveals her disidentification with the revolutionary nationalist discourse. Though she sympathizes with communists, she does not completely identify with the CCP's political agenda. Neither does she identify with the KMT's political vision. But her identity as the widow of Sun Yat-sen prevents her from explicitly articulating her doubts over the revolutionary nationalist discourse—it can exist only in an ex-diegetic voiceover. The voiceover shows Chingling's hesitancy to play the role of Sun Yat-sen's spokesperson and defender. It also allows the viewer to speculate who makes history and history makes whom.

Apart from the repressed feminist voice, the film's way to deal with modern Chinese history also reveals a slippery relationship with the revolutionary nationalist discourse. The film's representation of modern Chinese history spans from the Soong sisters' childhood in the early twentieth century to Chingling's death in 1981. The narrative concentrates on the period from the early twentieth century until the beginning of the Second Sino- Japanese in 1937, during which the sisters have become important historical figures. In contrast, the film spends less than five minutes on later twentieth-century history. Using newsreel footage and newspapers clippings, the film quickly goes over significant historical events, such as the Japanese surrender in 1945, the Chinese

Civil War (1945-1949), and the Foundation of People's Republic of China and the Kuomintang's Retreat to Taiwan in 1949. The historical period of the Chinese Communist Party's rule of PRC and the Kuomintang's rule of ROC (Taiwan) from 1949 to 1981 is completely absent in the film.

The presence and absence of modern Chinese history reflect the film's implicit critique of the revolutionary nationalist discourse. In their respective official historical discourse, both the CCP and the KMT regard themselves responsible for expelling the colonial force and establishing an independent modern China. The CCP portrays the KMT as the corrupt pro-American bourgeois party whereas the KMT depicts the CCP as the dangerous pro-Soviet Union communist party. Both parties view the other's regime as illegitimate and brutal in spite of their own brutal deeds—the KMT's martial law over Taiwan from 1949-1987, and the CCP's series of political campaigns, such as the Anti-Rightist Movement (1957-1959) and the Great Culture Revolution (1966-1976). Both parties persecute dissidents with the narrative of national crisis, and consolidate their own power and regime.

Avoiding direct criticism of both the CCP and the KMT, the film juxtaposes the historical records of the CCP-KMT alliance against the Japanese and the Chinese Civil War with the earlier scenes of the Qing soldiers' killings of revolutionary, and the military confrontation between the Canton army and the KMT's forces. The Qing soldiers kill revolutionaries so as to protect Manchurian rule, whereas the military confrontation between the Canton army and the KMT force results from the conflict between federalism and centralism among the revolutionary nationalists. Owed to his

wider support, Sun Yat-sen was able to defeat Cheng Jiongming, the leader of the Canton Army and supporter of federalism. Like the Manchu rulers, the KMT and the CCP utilize the rhetoric of national crisis to justify suppressing the forces which threaten its rule, be it feudal, modern, domestic, or foreign. This killing for the sake of national security demonstrates that the formation and consolidation of a centralized nation has always been built on the power struggle between different groups with the ruthless repression of dissenting voices.

Male Alliance, Kinship, and the Foundation of a Nation

Delineating the foundation of the Republic of China and its struggle with various feudal and colonial forces, the film connects the birth of a new nation with the homosocial bonding among influential male figures, and demonstrates that the male alliance is formed on the exchange of women through marriages. In her famous essay "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," Gayle Rubin offers a critical reading of Freud's theory of the Oedipal stage and Lévi-Strauss's discussion of the patriarchal kinship system. Rubin contends that their works uncover the ways in which patriarchy oppresses women and sexual minorities: by the division of the sexes, the exchange of women through the male-dominated kinship system, and the establishment of compulsory heterosexual desires. Rubin remarks that the patrilineal kinship system plays an important role in the patriarchal society:

> Kinship systems do not merely exchange women. They exchange sexual access, genealogical statuses, lineage names and ancestors, rights and *people*

— men, women, and children—in concrete systems of social relationships.... the exchange of women is a profound perception of a system in which women do not have full rights to themselves. (177) [original italicized emphasis]

Rubin's words uncover that fact that the patrilineal kinship system functions as an important institution in the patriarchal society. Through the exchange of women, some social relationships such as heterosexual norms, the incest taboo, genealogical status, and male homosocial bonding are maintained whereas other social relationships, such as class, ethnicity, and race may undergo change. Rubin's work sheds light on my study of the entanglement among the exchange of women, kinship, male homosocial bonding, and modern state building in China. In Rubin's analysis, women are objects rather than agents in the formation of patrilineality; however, my analysis of the Sun-Soong-Kung-Chiang kinship illustrates that women as well as men are agents of the formation of powerful alliance.

Sun Yat-sen achieves the status of the Founding Father of ROC through his persistent efforts, wide social network, political maneuvering, and use of the kinship system. Born into a rich family in Canton in 1866, Sun was influenced by the anti-Manchurian anti-foreign legacy of the Taiping Rebellion[39] in his childhood. During his adolescence, Sun lived with his elder brother Sun Mei in Honolulu, where he received a Methodist education. Later, he studied at a Methodist college in Hong Kong. After graduating in 1886, Sun returned to Canton and to work as a doctor.

[39] The Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) is a mass anti-Manchurian anti-foreign peasant rebellion in China. At its height, its leader Hong Xiuquan established the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom with its capital at Nanjing, and ruled large parts of southern China. The Qing government eventually cracked down the rebellion with the help from Britain and France.

At that time, the Manchu Qing government signed several unequal treaties with western colonizers following a series of military defeats since the First Opium War (1839–1842). These treaties forced China to pay war indemnity, granted extraterritoriality, and opened its market to the colonizers. But they also broke the century-long Closed Door Policy imposed by the Qing government, which initiated China's modernization. It is under these circumstances that Sun began his career in the port city of Canton, where colonial and anti-colonial forces converged.

For twenty years, Sun visited cities in China, Japan, U.S.A, and Southeast Asia to find support for his anti-Manchurian anti-colonial nationalist project. In the film, Japan is depicted as an important place for Sun's revolutionary career and personal life. In Japan, Sun established the influential revolutionary nationalist group—the Tongmenghui, which played a significant role in the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty in 1911. Japan has also witnessed the development of Sun's romantic relationship with Soong Chingling. Thus, the film uncovers Japan's paradoxical relationship with China—as both a colonizer of China and a supporter for Chinese national independence.

Sun's charisma, persistence, and wide connections made him the most influential political figure in the early twentieth century China. Consequently, after the foundation of the Republic of China (ROC) in 1912, Sun was elected as the first president of the ROC and hailed as the founding father of modern China. The film reveals that the ROC shares many similarities with previous Chinese feudal dynasties, such as personal worship and the patriarchal structure. An apt example is the ROC founding ceremony. The sequence begins with a long shot of a military parade. The soldiers at the front hold big placards

reading “Long Live ROC!” and these in the back carry large pictures of Sun. Then, in a medium shot, the viewer sees that Sun gladly waves his arm to his audience from the top of the Presidential Palace. Sun is surrounded by Charlie Soong, Mrs. Soong, and other important male figures. The slogan of “Long Live ROC” echoes “Long Live Emperor” in various Chinese dynasties. The picture of Sun highlights Sun’s emperor-like status in the newly founded ROC. Furthermore, the glaring gender imbalance among the political figures in the ceremony uncovers the male-dominated feature of the ROC regime.

Indeed, the consolidation of Sun’s status as the state patriarch owes much to his male allies, among whom Kung Hsiang-Hsi and Chiang Kai-shek are two important people. Kung Hsiang-Hsi is the descendent of the famous ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius, a Yale graduate, and one of the richest men in ROC. As a rich merchant, Kung offered financial aids for Sun’s revolution. Due to his connection with Sun, he was offered many opportunities to develop his business. Differing from Kung, Chiang Kai-shek mainly offered military and political support for Sun’s career. Chiang played a vital role in Sun’s crackdown of the rebellious Canton Army who refused to obey Sun’s order to fight the northern warlords. Besides political connections, the three men are linked through their marriages with the three Soong sisters. Kung marries Ailing, Sun marries Chingling, and Chiang marries Mayling.

The interconnection between the kinship and the political alliance is well illustrated by the film’s depictions of Ailing’s marriage scene. The sequence begins with Ailing’s narration of the content of her letter to Chingling and Mayling who study in the U.S.A. Ailing tells them that their Uncle Sun has become the President of ROC, and she is about

to quit the job as Sun's secretary because she is getting married. Then the next scene portrays the luxurious wedding. Outside a mansion, the guests gather at a large lawn. In western wedding dress, Ailing and Kung cut a big cake together, with good wishes from their family members and friends. While Kung is proud of his successful career in traditional financial business, such as pawnshops and money-lenders, Ailing tells him that his idea is outdated and she is going to help him establish the first thirty modern banks in China after their marriage.

The link between kinship and power is further illustrated in the conversation between the old couple and the guests. Greeted by the guests, Charlie Soong and Mrs. Soong tell them that their second daughter Chingling will take place of Ailing and work as President Sun's secretary. And their youngest daughter Mayling is also graduating from the U.S.A. and returning to work in China. Hearing it, the guests flatter the remarkable achievements of the Soong's. The scene ends with a guest's proposal, "Let's toast to the Soong Dynasty!" The proposal reflects that the Soong family is a significant component in the Sun-Soong-Kung alliance. Ironically, it also reveals that the political alliance through the marriage and kinship is safely maintained and transferred from the feudal Chinese dynasty to the modern Republic of China.

After Chingling marries President Sun years later, the youngest sister Mayling becomes the most attractive woman for men who strive to join the powerful Sun-Soong-Kung alliance. Among them, Chiang Kai-shek is the most ambitious and persistent one. At that time, Chiang is only a low-rank military officer in the KMT, and he knows that he could advance his career by becoming closer to Sun. He sees an opportunity by courting

Mayling. The film shows how Chiang's romantic interest raises controversies in the Soong family. Due to Chiang's low social status, Mayling is hesitant to develop a serious relationship with him. Ailing values Chiang's military ambition. She says that if Chiang marries Mayling, it will strengthen the existing Sun-Soong-Kung alliance to become the most powerful in China. But Chingling sees Chiang as a calculating politician who wants to build the connection with the renowned Soong family for his own gain. As the only one who objects to the marriage, Chingling is alienated in the family.

Though he did not become Sun's brother-in-law before Sun's death, Chiang won Sun's trust due to his great contribution to Sun's crackdown of the Canton Army who refused to obey Sun's order to fight the northern warlords. After the rebellion of the Canton Army, Sun decided to abandon his reliance on regional warlords and establish his own military force. As the film reveals, Kung plays a major role in helping Sun secure financial aids to establish the Whampoa Military Academy—the first military academy in ROC. Sun further appoints Chiang as the Commandant of the Whampoa Military Academy, which is a hug step for Chiang's rise to power in the KMT.

After Sun's death in 1925, Chiang competed with another important figure— Wang Jingwei for the leadership of the KMT. Through his marriage with Mayling in 1927, Chiang formed the new Chiang-Soong-Kung kinship. Consequently, Chiang became Sun's heir and the new leader of the KMT. From 1927 to 1949, the Chiang-Soong-Kung kinship controlled important sectors of the ROC: Chiang was the political and military leader, Kung was the Minister of Finance and Industry, the Soong brothers (Soong Tse Ven, Soong Tse Liang, and Soong Tse An) occupied important positions in the Central

Bank of China, the Department of Finance, and the Department of Foreign Affairs. Regarding the fact of the Soong brothers' absence in the film, the director Cheung has acknowledged that due to time constraints that the film focuses on the three sisters and their influential husbands instead of the three brothers[40]. Through the exchange of the Soong sisters, the Chiang-Kung-Soong kinship is formed. Gayle Rubin's analysis shows that the male alliance is built on the social relationship formed from the exchange of women. But the film does not simply depict men as the active agent and women as the passive object of the exchange.

In the film, all three sisters not only decide their own marriages but also actively engage in politics. Being the most practical one, Ailing cares most about the interests of her family. Her marriage with Kung and advocacy of the marriage between Mayling and Chiang aim to consolidate the Chiang-Soong-Kung alliance. In contrast to Ailing, Chingling and Mayling enter political arena for a nationalistic cause. Having been the First Lady of ROC successively, Chingling and Mayling play active roles in building positive national images and finding international support for ROC. For instance, Chingling takes great risk to help lift up soldiers' spirit at the Whampoa Military Academy inauguration ceremony. Though she has never flown in an airplane before, she volunteers to fly with the pilot on the first China-made airplane so as to strengthen people's confidence in the newly founded republic.

Similarly, Mayling shoulders the responsibilities of the First Lady during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), among which making public speeches is an important

[40] Dupont, *ibid.*

one. In one scene, Mayling stands under the flag of the KMT and delivers an English speech, which calls on the international listeners to support Chinese anti-fascist war by boycotting Japanese products. The scene is modeled after Mayling's famous speeches at the U.S. congress in 1943. In her two speeches, Mayling applauded American's contributions to the Second World War and the long history of US-China friendship, and then she called on U.S. to help China's anti-fascist war. As the first woman addressed a House Reception, Mayling received highly regards in the U.S. For instance, Tony Karon, the senior editor at TIME, views her as "a charismatic intellectual who [has] challenged traditional ideas of silent and subservient Chinese women" and the symbol of "Western-friendly modernity and of unbending resistance to the excesses of Maoism.[41]" Mayling's visits to the United States successfully brought American aids to China.

Due to their divergent political believes, the three sisters gradually drift apart. The film depicts their conflicts, reconciliation, and finally separation. Being an important component of the Sun-Chiang-Soong-Kung alliance, the Soong family has a strong affiliation with the KMT. Because of it, the pro-communist Chingling becomes isolated in the family. She breaks with the family when the anti-communist KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek marries her sister Mayling. Chingling does not visit the family till the outbreak of the Xi'an Incident ten years later.

The Xi'an Incident is a political event that happened on December 12, 1936. At that time, Chiang Kai-shek ignored the invading Japanese and concentrated on the eradication of Chinese communists. Disappointed with Chiang's action, two KMT generals, Chang

[41] Karon, Tony. "Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, 1898-2003." *TIME*. Friday, Oct. 24, 2003. Web. January 23, 2015.

Hsüeh-liang and Yang Hu-ch'eng kidnapped Chiang in Xi'an for about two weeks and forced him to collaborate with the communists to fight against the Japanese. The incident was shocking news for China and the international community. As the political and military leader of the ROC, Chiang's life would influence the Sino-Japanese war and consequently the Asian battlefield of the Second World War. The crisis was finally peacefully resolved through negotiations among the KMT, the CCP, and other international forces. After the crisis, the Anti-Japanese United Front of the KMT and the CCP was formed.

In the film, the three sisters play major roles in the peaceful solution of the crisis through negotiations between the KMT and the CCP. Learning the news of Chiang's kidnaping, Kung and the two sisters use their wide network to gather information. Kung telephones various KMT officers and tried to get connected to the two rebellious KMT generals. Ailing contacts Chingling and informs her of the emergence. Mayling convinces He Yingqin, the acting commander of the KMT army, to solve the crisis through negotiations instead of force. When Chingling arrives, the three sisters exchange information of the responses from the KMT and the CCP. Then Chingling leaves to negotiate with the CCP and Mayling flies alone to Xi'an to meet Chiang and negotiate with the two rebellious generals. Through the sisters' efforts, the Xi'an Incident was peacefully resolved: Chiang agrees to end the civil war and collaborate with the CCP to fight against the Japanese.

The film further fabricates an episode to stress the sister's vital role in the event. On their way back to Nanjing, Chiang and Mayling are informed by the pilot that their plane

is running out of fuel but it is unsafe to land in the dark night since the lighting system in the airport has been bombed by Japanese. And the couple is filled with fear and despair. After figuring out the reason for the plane's hovering, Ailing mobilizes her friends and asks them to use their cars' headlight to create a lighted runaway. Then, the plane lands safely. Chiang and Mayling are saved, and China begins to enter the new period of the Anti-Japanese United Front of the KMT and the CCP.

Though the three sisters play active roles in ROC, the film uncovers that a woman's access to political power is often built on the deprivation of her motherhood, the fulfillment of her wifehood and the alienation of the sisterhood. Chingling risks her life to save Sun during the rebellion of the Canton Army. Though she finally escapes from the siege, she has a miscarriage and lost her fertility afterward. In an uncanny way, six years later, Mayling suffers a miscarriage and loses her reproductivity due to her shock in a failed assassination of her husband Chiang Chiang Kai-shek[42]. The statuses of Chingling and Mayling as widows and childless women demonstrate the gendered nature of Chinese revolution and nation-building. In her analysis of the depiction of revolutionary women as exclusively widows and/or childless mothers in socialist literature, Lingzhen Wang argues that these maternal figures "expose both the gendered revolutionary morality that demands women's self-sacrifice and the suppressive nature of socialist public discourse on women, sexuality, and intimate interpersonal relationships" (139). Her analysis is helpful in understanding the film's depictions of the three Soong sisters. Although the film does not promote socialist values, it uncovers the same revolutionary discourse

[42] Gong, Ci. "Why Soong Chingling and Soong Mayling Are Childless?" *Guangming Net*. Feb 27, 2012. Web. Feb 21, 2014.

which demands women's self-sacrifice and regulates women's sexuality, political beliefs, and interpersonal relationships. Both Chingling and Mayling lose their reproductivity due to their involvement in the life-threatening political events.

Moreover, the sisters' antagonistic views on communism sever their intimate sisterhood. Mayling and Ailing side with their anti-communist husbands whereas Chingling breaks with her family and works with communists in the national independence movements. Thus, choosing to be revolutionary women, Chingling and Mayling are demanded by the dominant patriarchal nationalist discourse to sacrifice their motherhood and sisterhood. On the other hand, wifehood, in this context, means their support of their powerful husbands' political ideologies. Ironically, their fulfillment of their wifehood and the maintenance of their political power are built on their loss of their motherhood and the estrangement of their sisterhood. In contrast, Ailing, the eldest sister, is depicted as a happy wife and mother who cares more about her family than politics. Her detachment from political power, as the film seems to suggest, is rewarded by her happy family which consists of her rich caring husband Kung Hsiang-Hsi and her three loving children.

Traumatic Homecoming and Departure

In one interview, the director Mable Cheung mentions that her intention to make a film about the Soong Sisters comes from her traumatic encounter with China, where she

first went to make the last of her immigration trilogy—*Eight Taels of Gold*[43] (1989). Cheung narrates, "It [her first visit to China] was very traumatic because it was a place I didn't understand and they found me strange; also, I was supposed to call this country my homeland in a few years[44]." Grew up in Hong Kong and educated in Hong Kong, Britain and the U.S, Cheung knew little about Chinese history and culture. To negotiate her own complex feelings, Cheung began to study Chinese history and got to know the Soong Sisters. Enchanted by the experiences of the sisters, Cheung feels that she shares similar traumatic homecoming experiences with the sisters, and thus she decides to make a film on them.

It later turned out that the process of making *The Soong Sisters* was also a traumatic one. Due to the strict PRC censorship, Cheung needed to make her depictions of the historical figures consistent with these in official PRC historical discourse. As mentioned earlier, Cheung had to cut 14 minutes of scenes which foregrounded positive characteristics of the PRC enemies—Chiang Kai-shek and Soong Mayling. The censorship made Cheung feel angry, sad, and helpless. But Cheung also mentioned that a Chinese woman had helped her negotiate with the censor to keep her version of the film's ending. Being surprised and grateful, Cheung remarks that, "So there are people who care about film, who went to trouble for me — maybe China is changing.[45]" Cheung's mixed

[43] *Eight Taels of Gold* (1989) is a film about the homecoming experience of a Chinese immigrant whose nickname is "Eight Taels of Gold." In traditional Chinese belief, a successful man must possess at least eight taels of gold. The film delineates the racism against Chinese in the 1980s US and the cultural shock for Chinese immigrants who returned to a changing China in the 1980s.
[44] Dupont, *ibid.*
[45] Dupont, *ibid.*

feelings on the future of Hong Kong's "homecoming" to China illustrate the feelings of many Hong Kong people who were born and grew up in the postwar era.

In the book *Hong Kong Un-Imagined: History, Culture and the Future*, Wang-chi Wong et al investigate the process of Hong Kong people's changing identifications from the 1840s to the 1990s. They believe that Hong Kong people's identifications can be divided to three stages. In the first stage (the 1840s to 1945), Hong Kong people lived under two powerful competing ideologies—Chinese cultural hegemony which operated through the concepts of family lineage, nationalism, and cultural identification, and British colonialism that worked through bureaucracy, education, cultural policy, and capitalism. During this period, Hong Kong people's identification fluctuated between Chinese nationalism and British colonial capitalism. In the second stage (1945-1984), Hong Kong people felt disappointed towards the socialist China's complicity in British colonialism in Hong Kong in the postwar era. The 1967 Leftist Riot in Hong Kong deeply severed the local people's identification with the socialist China. Moreover, the dominant cold war mentality at that time further broke Hong Kong people's emotional and cultural ties with the mainland. In contrast with the turbulent Chinese society during the destructive Cultural Revolution (1967-1976), Hong Kong people preferred the stable social environment under British colonial rule. In the third stage (1984-1990s), Hong Kong people have gradually developed a peculiar political identification which differs from the previous ones. They argue that the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 awakened Hong Kong people's political consciousness. The Joint Declaration ensures the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong from Britain to China in 1997, and deprives

Hong Kong's political autonomy. Ironically, the newly developed political consciousness makes Hong Kong people realize that they have to take an apolitical stance after 1984 (265-80). Wong et al's analyses uncover that the development of Hong Kong people's identification is heavily influenced by the shifting social political conditions in China, Britain, and Hong Kong. Hong Kong people's "apolitical" attitude in the transition period (1984-1997), in my view, can be viewed as a traumatic departure from the identification with both British colonialism and Chinese nationalism.

In the transition period, British colonial governments gradually loosened its tight control and allowed the local people more political freedom. For instance, Chiu and Lui point out that British colonial government at Hong Kong adopted the "consultative democracy" policy and allowed the local elite to participate in the public decision making process in the early 1980s (8). Such a change aims to pacify the local anti-colonial sentiments and moreover, the colonial government hopes to counter the PRC influence after 1997 by granting the local Hong Kong elites more power during the transitional period.

Similarly, Chinese society has also undergone drastic changes since 1978. Departing from various political campaigns and the planned economy in the Mao years (1949-1976), the post-Mao PRC government has undertaken the route of "socialism with Chinese characteristics," which is a curious mixture of the CCP dictatorship, a strict censorship, and a market economy dominated by the state-owned enterprises. In my view, the current system in China shall be described as "socialism with capitalist characteristics." In the past decades, China has not only welcomed the influx of capitalism in its domestic terrain

but also actively engaged in global capitalism through oversea investments. A case in point is Chinese state-owned enterprises' significant roles in the investment in natural resources and infrastructure projects in Africa and Latin America. China's proximity with global capitalism makes its socialist label dubious.

Consequently, Hong Kong's reintegration to China is not so much a traumatic departure from British colonial capitalism but more a traumatic homecoming to China's "socialism with capitalist characteristics." I view this process as traumatic because Hong Kong has little say in its political autonomy but meanwhile it is also problematic to regard Hong Kong as a passive victim of the complicity between China and Britain. For instance, Ackbar Abbas points out that Hong Kong possesses a superior economic status in its relationship to China. Similarly, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation's acquisition of the full ownership of British Midlands Bank, one of the Big Four British banks, also illustrates Hong Kong's important status in contemporary Britain economy (5-6). Abbas's analysis uncovers the dialectic between autonomy and dependence in Hong Kong's relationships to China and Britain.

Economically and culturally, Hong Kong has long played an influential and sometimes a hegemonic role in East Asia and Southeast Asia in the postwar era. In his study of the expansion of Hong Kong films in Asian countries, Ding-Tzann Lii uses the term "marginal imperialism" to describe Hong Kong cinema's hegemonic role in Asia. In Lii's view, core imperialism refers to the one created by the Western powers (including Japan) and it is characterized with the hierarchy between the domineering colonizer and the subordinated colonized. Building on Michael Taussig's notion of active yielding—the

situation when the self actively interacts with the other, Lii contends that marginal imperialism represented by Hong Kong is achieved by the self's yielding to others (Asian countries) through the creation of a Pan-Asianness that all Asian countries can identify with (127-8). Thus, Lii argues that marginal imperialism exemplified by Hong Kong film industry "represents a rupture (at least in form, if not necessarily in content), not continuity, to global expansion of capitalism" (127). Similar to Abbas, Lii also points out Hong Kong's ambivalent identity between the colonized and the colonizer in the contemporary world.

The dialectics of the colonized and the colonizer and the traumatic experience of homecoming and departure are represented in *The Soong Sisters.* Activating the rhetoric of national crisis, the revolutionary nationalists (the Tongmenghui, the KMT, and the CCP) mobilize the mass to fight the imperial Qing dynasty and the western colonizers (Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Japan). During the process, the dominant revolutionary nationalistic discourse suppresses the voices of the marginal groups, such as these of the reformist nationalist, the federalism nationalist, and women. Moreover, the birth of the Republic of China synchronizes with the formation of the Sun-Chiang-Soong-Kung kinship through the exchange of the three sisters. Returning from the US to China, the three sisters aim to play their part in the anti-colonial national independence movements; however, they later find out that they possess an uneasy relationship with the nationalist discourse. They have to choose between their wifehood (political allegiance) and their sisterhood. Their traumatic homecoming experience suggests that when the

decolonization project is not accomplished, the voices of the subordinated groups cannot be fully articulated.

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