Chinese Play-Making:
Cosmopolitan Intellectuals, Transnational Stages, and Modern Drama, 1910s-1940s

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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2015

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how Chinese modern drama, or *huaju*, provided intellectual play-makers a vital but tension-ridden venue to (re)produce forms of "self" as "enlighteners" to the masses and "participatory citizens" of the nation for the task of building a modern China by (re)defining social norms within the *huaju* "stage." I present a three-fold understanding of "play-making" that incorporates its textual, performative/theatrical, and meta-theatrical senses while dealing with specific *huaju* plays that were written and staged in Columbus, Ohio (Chapter 1), Shanghai and Ding County (Chapter 2), Jiang'an (Chapter 3), and Chongqing (Chapter 4). My narrative focuses on four cosmopolitan dramatists—Hong Shen (1894-1955), Xiong Foxi (1900-1965), Yu Shangyuan (1897-1970), and Xia Yan (1900-1995)—while they mobilized *self* and *huaju* against the backdrop of successive wars and (re)constructions on domestic and global scales in the first half of the 20th century. I demonstrate how play-making, seen and practiced as a "democratic institution," attempted to form a "unity" incorporating the metropolitan masses, a rural base for the Mass Education Movement, and shelters for war refugees during the Second Sino-Japanese War.

My three-fold approach to play-making problematizes understandings of *huaju* in extant scholarship and significantly revises the deficient discourse of modern Chinese theatre. *Huaju* has been designated in both China and theatre studies as being oriented toward intellectuals and informed by "Western modernity," particularly so during the

genre's formative phase in the 1920s. Although such an identity earned for *huaju* the glory of being an ideal modern cultural form and a social-educational frontier for May Fourth intellectuals, it also rendered *huaju* an "undesirable other" in the 1990s when scholarly attention shifted from elite May Fourth culture to popular culture and alternative modernities. Today, while "traditional" and popular cultural forms have been critically unraveled and thereby historically understood, the "Western" and "intellectual" tags associated with *huaju* have remained intact and have not been subject to revisionist scrutiny. My approach provides a needed alternative imagination of *huaju* and *huaju*-making—as "cosmopolitan" instead of "Western," and "democratic" instead of "elitist."

In addition to presenting a revisionist understanding of *huaju*, this dissertation sheds light on four pioneering *huaju* play-makers who, though recognized as important Chinese dramatists, have yet to receive sufficient scholarly attention. My close reading of their play-making practices contributes to the field of modern Chinese drama by bringing more signature plays and key play-makers to light. Meanwhile, I demonstrate the vital and two-way traffic between *huaju* theatre and the political reality (worldly stage). I link the process of "play-making" on the extended *huaju* stage with the project of nation-building that took place among China's overseas student community, its domestic metropolises and rural reconstruction bases, and wartime capital. *Huaju* thereby gains a fuller examination of its artistic meanings, social function, and trajectory of development. We see how, through a three-fold understanding of "play-making,"

cosmopolitan dramatists, the (rural) masses, and performers negotiated with each other in (re)defining artistic and social norms, as well as (re)producing self- and national-identities during the first half of China's 20th century.

Dedication

To Sufang Wang (王素芳), Lianqiu He (何连秋), and John M. Knight

Acknowledgments

Beyond the intimacy formed between my subjects and myself in the process of (re)searching and (re)writing, this dissertation has grown out of the intellectual inspiration, academic training, and financial support I have gleaned while pursuing the goal to become a scholar. I owe thanks to the many people and institutions who have sustained me through this thrilling journey.

My dissertation committee at The Ohio State University, Kirk Denton, Patricia Sieber, and Christopher Reed, inspired, nurtured, and supported this project as it developed from an academic curiosity to a polished work of scholarship. Kirk Denton, with all-embracing encouragement and great patience, has stimulated and crucially disciplined my explorations since I became his student in 2007. Prof. Denton's genuine interest and critiques on literary and cultural historical narratives—canonical or alternative, extant or formulating—have inspired me to take issues with the celebrated cases of modern Chinese literature and attend to the neglected ones. His persistent training with regards to exerting "close-reading" on both literary works and the social-political contexts in which they appeared have nicely "programmed" me in defining, approaching, and developing intimacy with the "texts" I examine. His scrupulousness in research provides a model for me to arrange my arguments and, at times, restrain my thoughts from going unnecessarily wild. Patricia Sieber has served as my most enthusiastic sounding-board throughout my stay at OSU. Prof. Sieber's research passion,

scholarly boldness, and expert use of interdisciplinary practices opened my eyes to an attractive status of academic being. Her shifting identities between inspiring mentor, supporting institutional leader, and constructive reviewer have greatly blessed my graduate student life. Prof. Sieber's steady encouragement for me to find my niche in academia has allowed me to grow and (re)define myself on my own terms. Studying with Christopher Reed, I learned how to articulate and align my revisionist readings to a historicist approach and ground literature in its historical soil. From the history seminars I took with him, I gained great opportunities to discover and arrange archival materials with respect. Along with pressing me on issues of historical significance and to write in accurate, concise expressions, Prof. Reed reminds me to reserve a tint of historical imagination for my research topic.

The most crucial phase in the development of my dissertation was the restaging of Hong Shen's *The Wedded Husband* (1919) at OSU in November 2013. This production would not have taken place without invaluable assistance from Ms. Hong Qian (Hong Shen's daughter), Prof. Julia Andrews (History of Art at OSU), Prof. Siyuan Liu from the University of British Columbia, Prof. Xiaomei Chen from the University of California Davis, and Prof. Sieber and Prof. Denton. I thank Prof. Andrews for introducing me to Ms. Hong Qian, who was then visiting OSU to conduct research for a revised edition of her biography of her father. My fortuitous stroll with Ms. Hong Qian on a sunny June afternoon not only shed new light on my study of Hong Shen and the framework of my

dissertation, but more importantly, it inspired me to restage Hong Shen's (a senior member of the Buckeye Nation) *TWH*. I extend my deep gratitude to Prof. Liu who, through Prof. Chen's recommendation and introduction, took time out of his hectic schedule to direct the play. Observing Prof. Liu handle casting, script revisions, and specific directing issues pulled me tangibly closer to the world of theatre. I also thank Prof. Sieber and Prof. Denton again, for encouraging and guiding me to produce the play. Finally, I thank the College of Arts and Sciences at OSU for offering a Research and Creative Activity Grant that made both the revival of *TWH* and a series of related academic activities possible.

In addition to caring mentors, I have benefitted from countless inspiring and provocative conversations with my cohort and "conference pals." Tarryn Li-Min Chun from Harvard University included me in her 2013 AAS Panel (Playmakers: Power, Authority, and the Chinese Stage) which inspired me to further develop my approach to modern drama from the play-making perspective. Similar interest in key dramatists and signature works has given Megan Ammirati from University of California Davis and me great joy in conducting "detective work" on the limited but intriguing materials available. Conversations with Nan Ma from University of Wisconsin-Madison expanded my research scope. Liang Luo from University of Kentucky and Emily Wilcox from Michigan University, who are both more advanced in their academic routes, provided insightful comments on different paper presentations. At home, I specifically thank

Mengjun Li, Qiong Yang, Wenjuan Bi, Qin Chen, Di Luo, Yan Xu, and Fangfang Sun. Their intellectual talent, personal charisma, and moral support constituted the most memorable episodes of my OSU student life. I feel extremely proud and fortunate to have shared laughter and tears with these compassionate souls. Finally, I express my appreciation to Mrs. Debbie Knicely, whose thoughtfulness made the entire third floor of Hagerty Hall, where I spent a good seven years, warm and cozy.

My dissertation project, which started at OSU, has ended at Williams College. Here, I extend my gratitude to my colleagues at Williams College for their understanding, support, and efforts to create a nurturing environment while I completed this dissertation. Their generous offer to give me a reduced teaching load for my first year at Williams did more than preserve crucial time for writing. More importantly, it gave me space to complete the transition from graduate student to faculty member.

Last, but not least, my thankfulness goes to John Knight, the *zhiji* of life. John's faith, appreciation, and rigorous critiques of my research magically work together. His warm accompaniment made the brutal winter of 2014-15 a particular season to remember.

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Man He, trans. "Wei zhi you shi: yibu xieshi de zhongguo ticai ju" (The Wedded Husband: A Realistic Chinese Play) by Hong Shen, in *The Wedded Husband: A Modern Chinese Literature and Culture Publication*. Kirk A. Denton, ed. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Foreign Language Publications, 2014, pp 50-72.

Fields of Study

Major Field: Modern Chinese Literature and Culture
Theatre and Performance
Modern Chinese History

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Introduction

I still remember how, around nine o'clock on the night of November 17, 2013, I tiptoed through the narrow, pitch-black path extending from the back stage to the corner of the Roy Bowen Theatre in Columbus, Ohio so that I could stand by the audience to watch the Ohio State University student revival of *The Wedded Husband: A Chinese Realist Play*. Written by Hong Shen (1894-1955)—a pioneering figure in modern Chinese drama and film—and originally staged in the OSU Chapel in April 1919 while Hong was an undergraduate student majoring in ceramic engineering, *TWH* had the distinction of being not only the first English-language play written by a Chinese national, but also the catalyst for Hong's future career. Because I had closely read the script and taken part in numerous rehearsals—and was therefore quite familiar with the production—I could not help but be distracted during the performance by the details on- and off- stage that remained unknown to others. I looked at the multi-racial and mixed-gendered group of student performers, chosen after two rounds of casting, and recalled how I had unexpectedly found the Chinese garments that they were wearing at a store nearby the Shenyang Imperial Palace, and how these clothes were later carefully fitted by the costume designer, Ashley Wills, an Ohio native who had never been to China. Listening to the cast's delivery of the English dialogues, I thought of the revisions Siyuan Liu (the director) and I had made to Hong's original text for the new production. I also drew comparisons between the audience—made up of OSU students, the Columbus Chinese

community, and invited scholars from America, Canada, and the UK—and the cosmopolitan spectatorship which greeted Hong's 1919 production. In the darkness, the transnational origin and the contemporary scene of Chinese modern drama conflated to provide me with a broader understanding and appreciation of "play-making."

While the path connecting the backstage to the audience seating area is only about 100 feet long and should takes less than a minute to walk, it took me seventeen months to complete. Between June 2012 and November 2013, I brought a forgotten play into contemporary scholarly attention by first broaching the idea of a live performance; then becoming involved in budgeting and applying for a grant for the production; reading through and revising the script with the director; conducting actor casting; seeking appropriate theatre space; devising marketing strategies; and researching the fascinating cosmopolitan tenor of the play when it was first written and staged in 1919. This seventeen-month process, in addition to transforming me from a doctoral student specializing in modern Chinese drama to an (amateur) producer who revived a show that ran for 4 performances and drew over 700 audience members, forced me to broaden and redefine my understanding of modern Chinese drama. Balancing artistic concerns with the play's historical importance, alongside budgeting and marketing issues, gave me a historicist understanding of and empathy with the cosmopolitan intellectuals I studied who made, and not merely wrote, plays that crossed continents, cultural and language barriers, and the porous line between front and back stages.

This dissertation examines a loose network of cosmopolitan intellectuals, a (peasant) mass audience, (student) actors, and cultural entrepreneurs in the first half of twentieth-century China who participated in building a modern nation by means of play-

making. Here, the "plays" in question refer to dialogue-centered modern Chinese drama (or, spoken drama, *huaju*), that has been commonly understood as having been introduced to the Chinese stage at the turn of the twentieth century in imitation of Western Ibsenesque dramas.[1] Viewed as a potent alternative to Chinese traditional operatic theatre—a genre which synthesizes singing, dancing, and acrobatic performances—and predominantly promoted by May Fourth intellectuals, *huaju* has been designated in the scholarship of both China studies and world theatres as being oriented toward intellectuals and informed by "Western modernity," particularly so during the genre's formative phase in the 1920s. Such an identity earned for *huaju* the glory of being an ideal modern cultural form and a social-educational frontier for May Fourth intellectuals to practice self- and mass- enlightenment, but it also rendered it an "undesirable other" in the 1990s when scholarly attention shifted from elite May Fourth culture to popular culture and alternative modernities. Whether idealized or marginalized, *huaju*—especially *huaju* in the first half of the 20th century—has not received its critical due. While "traditional" and popular cultural forms have been critically unraveled, carefully read, and thereby historically understood, the "Western" and "intellectual" tags associated with *huaju* have remained intact and have not been subject to revisionist scrutiny. *Huaju*'s once-"glorious" labels now drive off investigations by scholars with a postcolonial bent, and the vitality of the genre is not widely known. Simple yet critical questions have consequently remained unanswered: what are the "Western" influences imbued in *huaju*? How "intellectual" and how "not-popular" was *huaju* among the urban and especially rural masses? And finally, how

[1] Xiaomei Chen, *Acting the Right Part: Political Theatre and Popular Drama in Contemporary China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 17.

pertinent was *huaju* to the project of nation-building in the first half of the 20th century when Chinese history was especially dramatized through war and revolution, and *huaju*'s own course of development was increasingly politicized?

Answering these questions will prove difficult unless we revise the framework of our investigation significantly. Accordingly, this dissertation adopts a comprehensive view to examine the process of "play-making"—or *huaju* practices—between the 1910s and the 1940s, instead of pursuing a narrow inquiry into the texts of signature plays. My understanding of "play-making" is three-fold: textual, performative-theatrical, and meta-narrative. In the "textual" sense, I pay particular attention to the "textual affinity" and "textual borrowing" among plays written by cosmopolitan intellectual dramatists. I detect and construct how cosmopolitan dramatists—such as Hong Shen, Xiong Foxi (1900-1965), Yu Shangyuan (1897-1970), and Xia Yan (1900-1995)—recycled dramatic plots and stories borrowed from 1910s "conservative" and popular fiction writers—belonging to what is known as the "mandarin ducks and butterflies" (*yuanyang hudie*) school—as well as from each other, from Shakespearean plays and other world classics, and from the real-life stories of *huaju* practitioners. I do not see this "affinity"/ "borrowing" as signs of a lack of creativity or plagiarism; rather, I emphasize how this "borrowing" was conducted and how individual textual variants served playwrights' ideological agendas. Play-writing, the first layer of "play-making," was a collective endeavor that embodied and expressed affect among educated urban youth, the peasant masses, and *huaju* practitioners. In borrowing and circulating drama stories, these cosmopolitan dramatists forged social networks based on drama literature.

In a strict sense, no drama literature is a complete work until it is staged. The second layer of "play-making" refers to the work's performative and/or theatrical aspects. Although I have attempted to distinguish the performative aspect (performances of actors for an audience) from the theatrical aspect (the space of the theatre and the stage, and the use of theatre technologies such as lighting, etc.), the dearth of documentation about productions of the plays examined has sometimes forced me to conflate the two. My research reveals that the performance and staging of plays for a variety of audiences— a cosmopolitan urban public, a peasant audience, and war refugee community— allowed dramatists to expand and strengthen the networks they had already built around drama literature. In the very process of translating their ideologies of self and nation, these cosmopolitan dramatists became play-makers. The dramatists I examine here had, to different extents, positive experiences with the cosmopolitan culture of America (or Japan, in the case of Xia Yan), which allowed them to achieve their goals of self-actualization and forming a national identity. These play-makers shared the hope of using *huaju* as a tool to transform peasants and performers into active participants in the shaping of a modern public. However, these goals, while partly actualized, were strongly challenged. Using archival materials, drama reviews, and memoires, I analyze how gender, racial, and class differences shaped relations among performers—as well as between performers and their audiences—and influenced the delivery of performances and (re) shaped these *huaju* into public spaces where characters, performers, and audience could potentially form an alliance that would empower them to participate in nation building. I also explore how the stage—and by extension the physical theatre space—influenced the productions of plays that shared similar plots. These staging

variations, determined by the availability or not of advanced staging techniques (such as lighting) and the different kinds of stages used (modern stages or open-aired theatres), materialized plays with similar plots in different ways to serve their specific audiences. In this dissertation, thus, performances and specific staging strategies constitute the second-layer of "play-making," and the *huaju* I analyze are not simply literary texts but plays performed in the public spaces of theatres, theatres of a variety of type and with a variety of audiences. In actualizing scripts in public theatre spaces, these dramatists expanded their play-making networks from other playwrights to, for example, performative and manual laborers. As such, *huaju* theatre was transformed, at least ideally, into a "democratic" community where playwrights, performers, and audiences became like-minded friends (*zhiji*). Although it was often not realized, cosmopolitan dramatists' efforts to achieve such an ideal should be carefully examined, as it formed as core aspect of their play-making identity.

Once a play is staged, everyone who watches it becomes a critic. This dissertation pays particular attention to critiques (reviews, retrospective evaluations, and canonization efforts) written by the play-makers themselves. Such materials reveal the behind-the-scenes plotting and staging strategies and illuminate how intellectual dramatists' play-making efforts were positioned, canonized, and self-censored. In reading these materials as "meta-narrative," my third layer of play-making, I turn to the canonization of *huaju*, or the making of *huaju*-history. Ranging from writing self-promotional essays, harsh self-criticisms, and historical narratives of *huaju*'s development, to making a self-referential *huaju* play about *huaju*-making, the meta-narrative aspect of "play-making" not only demonstrates various efforts to canonize

huaju between the 1910s and the 1940s, but also nicely shows how both *huaju* and *huaju* histories were imagined, practiced, and revised. Benefiting from comparative constructions and readings of this layer of "play-making," I argue that intellectual *huaju* play-makers, although striving to enlighten the masses and make a modern nation, never lost sight of also shaping *huaju* into a modern cultural form. This third layer of "play-making" allows us to understand the shifting dynamic among artistic, political, and commercial concerns embedded in *huaju* theatres in the first half of the 20th century.

Whereas each chapter constructs and reads the three-folded "play-making" of signature *huaju* plays, this dissertation also aspires to shed light on four pioneering *huaju* play-makers: Hong Shen, Xiong Foxi, Yu Shangyuan, and Xia Yan. Although recognized as important Chinese dramatists, these figures have been greatly overshadowed by Tian Han (1898-1968) and have not yet received sufficient scholarly attention. My close reading of their play-making practices, thus, contributes to the field of modern Chinese drama by bringing more signature plays and key play-makers to light. Moreover, Hong, Xiong, Yu, and Xia exerted their play-making talents in defining, popularizing, institutionalizing, and (alternatively) canonizing *huaju*, respectively. In treating all these aspects, the dissertation reflects the vitality and complexity of *huaju*-making in the first half of the 20th century. Finally, the dissertation follows these play-makers as they travel from cosmopolitan cities in America, Japan, and China, to rural Chinese villages, to the war capital of Chongqing and other hinterland shelters for war refuges. These various locations are critical to the diverse construction of the relationship between play-making and nation-building in *huaju* theatre. In the remainder of the Introduction, I first take issue with existing canonical narratives of *huaju*-making; then

turn my attention to the extant scholarship that has inspired me to conduct my research and frame my questions. I conclude with a brief overview of the dissertation's four case studies and a note on sources.

The Problematic Canonical Narratives of Huaju

My story of "play-making and nation-building" begins with a loaded term: *huaju* (spoken drama). Having first appeared and gained popularity among theatre reformists in the early 1920s,[2] the term *huaju* was designated the official name of modern Chinese drama at the suggestion of Hong Shen and with the endorsement of Tian Han and Ouyang Yuqian (1889-1962) in April 1928. The emphasis on *hua* (spoken dialogue)—which signaled an affinity with the then-popular Ibsenesque plays, rather than the Chinese operatic tradition that stressed singing, acrobatics, and other stylized performative skills—made *huaju* a welcomed forum for students attending Western-style colleges and universities in China to exercise their public speaking skills in both Mandarin and English.[3] Although student drama activities in state-sponsored universities created under the Qing (1644-1911) and in Western (principally American) missionary colleges[4] were "amateur" (*fei zhiye de*) in the market sense, the literary pursuits and artistic qualities of these organizations gave early student *huaju* productions an elitist "art for art's sake" hue,

[2] Siyuan Liu points out that Chen Dabei (1887-1944), a *wenming xi* (civilized drama) veteran, coined the term *huaju* in 1922. Chen proclaimed that "*huaju*, the equivalent of Western 'drama,' is a theatrical form that performs social life using the most progressive art of the stage." See Siyuan Liu, *Performing Hybridity in Colonial-Modern China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 8.
[3] As Wen-Hsin Yeh points out, "Once foreign languages and Western learning were admitted into the mainstream academic curriculum" at the turn of the 20th century, "these courses rapidly came to absorb student energy and attention." See Wen-Hsin Yeh, *The Alienated Academy: Culture and Politics in Republican China 1919-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 10.
[4] Ibid., 3.

as can be seen in the Chinese translation of "amateur"—*aimei de*—which literary means "love beauty."

In fact, well before the 1928 inauguration of the term *huaju* and self-designation of Tian, Ouyang, and Hong as the genre's "founding fathers," *huaju*, under the names *xinju* (new drama), *wenming xi* (civilized drama), *aimei ju* (amateur theatre), and *feizhiye de xiju* (non-professional, or non-commercial theatre),[5] was widely practiced in the 1910s and 1920s by urban students through school drama clubs and for charities in performances that were open to the public. Moreover, students, such as Lu Jingruo (1895-1915) and Ouyang Yuqian, who had been exposed to both cosmopolitan culture and hybrid forms of theatre in Japan and who had returned to Shanghai in the 1910s, started running their own drama troupes, staging "professional" *wenming xi* that clearly reflected a higher artistic standard but often drew more meager box-office returns than other "commercial" *wenming xi* productions which coexisted amongst the various reformist productions staged on Shanghai's "new stages."[6] Although predominantly "non-commercial," these early *huaju* performances often shared the stage and were arranged in tandem with commercially-oriented performances, including magic shows, Peking opera, commercial *wenming xi*, etc. In short, despite its "amateur" status—in both aesthetic and non-commercial senses—*huaju* was never completely divorced from other forms of modern theatre in the first two decades of the 20th century; indeed, *huaju* participated in a scene that was no less chaotic than the operatic milieu of the late Qing.

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[5] Dong Limin, *Hong Shen* (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999), 86; Xiaomei Chen, "Mapping a 'New' Dramatic Canon: Rewriting the Legacy of Hong Shen," in Peng Hsiao-yen and Isabelle Rabut, eds., *Modern China and the West* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 225.

[6] Representatives of Shanghai's "new stages" included the Xin wutai (New Stage) and Da wutai (Grand Stage), etc.

In contrast to *huaju*'s historical origins in the exciting and somewhat chaotic "world of theatre"—whose territory included both entertaining opera houses and "alienated academies"—canonical narratives of *huaju*'s origins are much neater, and place *huaju* firmly within the New Culture Movement (Xinwenhua yundong, 1915-1925). Hong Shen's "Introduction" to the well-known *Compendium of Modern Chinese Literature: Drama Volume* (*Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi: xiju juan*), published in 1935, was one such pioneering effort to forecast the trajectory of *huaju* by regulating its history. Building on extant scholarship's close reading on this seminal piece,[7] I find, quite unexpectedly, traces of ambiguity in Hong's understanding of *huaju*, despite his explicit canonization of *huaju* as the modern literary genre of "drama" (*xiju*).[8] Hong's conflicted mindset rests on two pillars. First, Hong inaugurates the beginning of modern Chinese drama with Hu Shi's (1891-1962) one-act play, *Zhongshen dashi* (*The Main Event in Life*, 1919), which was originally written in English and appropriates Henrik Ibsen's (1828-1906) *A Doll's House* (1879) to promote the individualism and pursuit of free love that were prevalent themes among May Fourth men of letters. Hong's retroactive "inauguration" of Hu Shi's play as *huaju*'s beginning was likely influenced by the numerous "Nora plays" (*Nala ju*) that flourished after *Event* and featured Nora-like characters' struggling to leave their homes. By 1935, the genre of "Nora-plays" had become the "tradition" and main repertoire of *huaju,* and Nora-like characters had became the stock protagonists, albeit with social and gender variants, of the *huaju* stage.

[7] See Xiaomei Chen, 2014, 232-34; Siyuan Liu, 8-9.

[8] For a more detailed analysis and construction of the multilingual translation of "*xiqu*" (opera) and "*xiju*" (drama), see Patricia Sieber, *Theatres of Desire: Authors, Readers, and the Reproduction of Early Chinese Song-Drama, 1300-2000* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 22. Especially relevant is the section entitled "The Anatomy of Multilingual Translation."

However, Hong's designation of *The Main Event in Life* as the first *huaju* play was not unequivocal. No stranger to the heterogeneous overseas students' play-making activities taking place in Japan and America in the 1900s-1910s, Hong did not leave out of his account the activities of the Spring Willow Society (*Chunliu she*), a Chinese overseas student drama society founded in Japan in 1907 that practiced *wenming xi*. However, the Spring Willow's legacy, in Hong's narrative, was as a student theatre production that joined the New Culture Movement via Ouyang Yuqian's—by then the sole remaining representative of the "Four Nobles of the Spring Willow Society" (*Chunliu si junzi*)[9]—participation in *huaju*-making in 1920s Shanghai. The more direct connection between the Spring Willow Society—a student drama society in Japan—and the Spring Willow Theatre (*Chunliu juchang*)—a *wenming xi* commercial troupe in Shanghai—is strategically "overlooked" in Hong's account. By doing so, Hong explicitly draws a line between *huaju*—defined as "drama" and as a modern literary genre—and a plethora of hybrid theatres that includes *wenming xi*, reformed Peking opera, etc. Meanwhile, Hong traces the unfortunate absence of *Event* on the *huaju* stage to its controversial plot which prevented female students from performing the play in public. Apart from using such an anecdote to emphasize Hu Shi's avant-garde pursuits and further canonize *huaju*'s contribution to the iconoclastic ethos of the New Culture Movement, Hong's narrative, in my reading, suggests an incomplete origin for *huaju*, one that prioritized drama literature over performance and theatricality.

The second conflict lies in Hong's understanding of the role of drama literature in *huaju*-making. Whereas Hong claims that drama demands cooperative efforts between

[9] The other three representatives are Lu Jingruo, Wu Wozun (1881-1942), and Ma Jiangshi (1887-?)

the creative work of the writer and the labors of others in directing, stage and costume designing, and theatre critique,[10] his *Drama* volume clearly prioritizes the dramaturgic and the literary over the performative and theatrical. Hong includes modern dramas written by various play-makers, including May Fourth intellectuals, *wenming xi*-cum-amateur drama activists, and Peking opera reformers in order to present *huaju*'s evolutionary trajectory. But this seemingly comprehensive approach is still exclusively based on playwrights' contribution to modern drama's literary repertoire. Dramatists in Hong's "Introduction" are first and foremost identified as "men of letters" (*wenren*) but not "men of theatre" (*juren*). True, *Drama*—as the last volume[11] of the first compendium of modern Chinese literature—would necessarily weigh literature over performance. However, the "paradox" between Hong's recognition of drama as a collective work—though brief and made in passing in his "Introduction"—and his editing work on drama literature in the plays selected for inclusion, suggests an inherent but unreconciled tension between literary "play-writing" and cultural "play-making."

As a cosmopolitan dramatist who was directly involved in play-writing, acting, directing, stage managing, and stage designing and who worked through the *wenming xi* and *huaju* eras, Hong, nevertheless, decided to "suppress" in his "Introduction" *huaju*'s intimate connection with *wenming xi* as well as the performative and theatrical aspects of *huaju*-making. *Huaju*, thereafter, was whitewashed of its shared origin with other hybrid theatres, its textual intimacy with "conservative" and commercially minded popular literature, and its amalgamation of intellectual, performative, and manual work into a

[10] Xiaomei Chen, 2001, 19.
[11] *Drama* is the 9th volume of the *Compendium*. The 10th volume is *Shiliao suoyin* (*Historical Materials and Index*).

"chaotic" whole. With Hong's confirmation, albeit with a shade of hesitation, *huaju* gained its currency as a modern invention by May Fourth men of letters who imitated Western dramatic conventions as an alternative to traditional operatic theatre.

As the first major milestone in creating the teleological myth of *huaju*'s early formation, Hong's "Introduction" became the model for future historical narratives of drama. Tian Qin's (dates unknown) 1944 study, *Chinese Drama Movement: The Brief Review of Chinese New Drama* (*Zhongguo xiju yundong: xin zhongguo xiju jianbian*),[12] echoes the *huaju* genealogy put forward in Hong's "Introduction." If anything, Tian underplays the existence and development of *wenming xi* even more than Hong, removing entirely any mention of the Spring Willow legacy in Japan. Tian also avoids mentioning the cross-dressing phenomenon that was practiced by Spring Willow founders such as Li Shutong (1880-1942) both on *wenming xi* stages and in their outlandish everyday lives in Japan.[13] Moreover, the *huaju* repertoire that grabs Tian's attention was tied to works that stimulated mass nationalist sentiment while plays based on *qing* (feelings and sentiments) were mostly ignored.

In 1937, two years after Hong's publication of his "Introduction," prominent dramatists from various political persuasions (Nationalist, Communist, and liberal intellectuals) converged in Shanghai to hold a forum to forecast the future of *huaju*. Most of the speeches and polemics were then documented in the first issue of *Xiju shidai* (*Drama Times*). With specific discussions on playwrights' commissions, *huaju*-actor training, and expanding the reach of *huaju* to capture the urban masses, *Drama Times*

[12] Tian Qin, *Zhongguo xiju yundong: xin zhongguo xiju jianbian* (*Chinese Drama Movement: The Brief Review of Chinese New Drama*) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1946).
[13] Huiling Chou, "Striking Their Own Poses: The History of Cross-Dressing on the Chinese Stage," in *TDR* vol. 41, no. 2 (summer 1997), 140-50.

celebrated *huaju*'s professionalization (*zhiyehua*) and proclaimed 1937 to be "the year of *huaju*" (*huaju nian*). Although still prioritizing playwrights over other types of play-makers, *Drama Times* nonetheless marked a major step forward by recognizing and canonizing *huaju*-making efforts of the 1930s. As Milena Doleželová-Velingerová states, *huaju*, though widely regarded as forming within the context of the rise of modern Chinese literature in the May Fourth period, did not fully come into being until the 1920s and the 1930s.[14] The much belated arrival of the "year of *huaju*" in 1937 demonstrated dramatists' interest in incorporating the full scope of *huaju*-making—including drama literature, performance, actor-training, and theatre management—into the canonical narrative of *huaju*'s development. Unfortunately, this attempt was abruptly cut short by the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945).

戲劇時代
第一卷 第一期 創刊號 目錄
「戲劇時代」……本社同人
一九三七年中國戲劇運動之展望……
翰笙 唐納 徐公美 殷揚
王平陵 西苓 王家齊 李春舫
張庚 谷劍塵 尤兢 姚克
袁牧之 余上沅 姚時曉 戴涯
阿英 張鳴琦 陳治策 江菊林
鄭伯奇 洛晶心 白楊 許幸之
章泯 凌鶴 陳樾山 常任俠
應雲衛 易喬 沙鷗 夢迴
趙慧深 藍洋 胡萍 唐槐秋

Figure 1.1 *Xiju Shidai* (*Drama Times*), vol. 1, no.1, May 1937, Shanghai. Courtesy of the Shanghai Library.

[14] Milena Doleželová-Velingerová, "The Origins of Modern Chinese Literature," in Merle Goldman ed., *Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 29 and 31.

During the war, when the theoretical construction of "play-making" yielded to the goal of "national defense" and "state-building," play-makers faced the urgent task of making *huaju* approachable by the rural masses so as to cultivate their patriotic and nationalist sentiment. More than other cultural forms, *huaju* was particularly charged with stimulating the masses' participation in the war effort, especially during the "grim years" of 1942-1944 when the war was in a protracted stalemate. It was in such a distressing environment that Mao Zedong (1893-1976) delivered his 1942 "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art"[15] in the Communist base area. Although the conference addressed literature and art in general, parts of Mao's *Talks* are relevant to the development of *huaju*:

> The question of audience is the question of for whom we are writing. This problem is not the same in the anti-Japanese bases in the Border Area, northern China, and central China as in the general rear or in pre-war Shanghai…The audience [in the Yan'an base] for works of literature and art here consists of workers, peasants, and soldiers, together with their cadres in the Party, the government, and the army. There are students in the base areas too, but they are either cadres already or cadres of the future. Once they are literate, cadres of various kinds, soldiers in the army, workers in factories, and peasants in the countryside want books and newspapers, while people who aren't literate want to see plays, look at pictures, sing songs, and listen to music, they are the audience for our works of literature and art.[16]

Albeit with militant rhetoric and an explicit class-based framing of "the people" for whom "literature and art are written," Mao's *Talks* here deal with what is a common issue of "readership" and "spectatorship." With its concerns of "putting efforts into raising

[15] Mao Zedong, "Zai Yan'an wenyi zuotan hui shang de jianghau" (Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art), trans. Bonnie S. McDougall, in *Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art": a Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1980), 57-86.
[16] Ibid., 60.

standards or into reaching a wider audience"[17] (*tigao haishi puji*), the *Talks* echoed and explicitly readdressed the question—what is the appropriate relationship between play-makers and their audience—that had stimulated, inspired, confused, and troubled *huaju*-makers nationwide. However, the political rhetoric in the *Talks* has outweighed, in later readings, its discussion of the relationship between plays (or literature and art in general) and audience. Although located in rural Yan'an, the Communist base was not unfamiliar with *huaju* plays that were made and watched in metropolises. The influx into Yan'an of elite artists, as Brian DeMare aptly constructs, "fueled a craze for Western-style spoken drama."[18] In response, the *Talks*, as read by DeMare, "began a forceful push for cultural workers to create art for the peasant masses, not the petit bourgeoisie of the Greater Rear Area."[19] In the *Talks*, "plays" in Yan'an and the greater war torn countryside, such as the base areas in and around Shanxi, were allegedly cleansed of *huaju*'s metropolitan and elitist air and transformed from so-called grand productions (*daxi*) to representatives of "new folk opera" (*geju*) that were a "mixture of various folk songs, local operatic traditions, and Western drama."[20] Although the extent of the drama movement taking place in the "liberated areas" (*jiefang qu*)—which DeMare describes as the "pretense of creating a dense infrastructure of Communist-directed performance organization"—is certainly overstated,[21] later canonical narratives about the process by which *huaju* took

[17] Ibid., 68.
[18] Brian James DeMare, *Mao's Cultural Army: Drama Troupes in China's Rural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 54; See also David Holm, *Art and Ideology in Revolutionary China* (London: Clarendon Press, 1991), 47-48.
[19] DeMare, 54.
[20] Ibid., 22.
[21] Ibid., 55. DeMare illuminates several other "faulty" assumptions about Communist cultural mobilization, as seen from drama troupe activities during the war. For example, the line between "professional" and "amateur" remained permeable despite the Communist's efforts to shape dramas as art for the masses.

root among the masses in the 1930s and 1940s have clearly been influenced by such Party talks. Play-making during the war period is predominantly narrated and understood as a variant of the Yan'an model; and alternative practices of "nationalizing" and "popularizing" *huaju*—such as those that took place in and around Chongqing, the wartime capital—are examined to a far less extent.

Literature Review

The reality of *huaju* as a theatre form that includes textual, performative, and self-referential construction and demands collaborative work from intellectual, performative, and manual labor has, thanks to recent scholarship, recently begun to receive proper attention that had been "suppressed" in the problematic canonical narrative described above. Ever since Xiaomei Chen first raised the rhetorical question "why not modern Chinese drama?"[22] in 2001, a plethora of literary and cultural, anthropological, and theatre and cultural history works have enriched the field. First, Chen answered her own question by revising the flawed discourse through her study of Maoist and post-Mao theatre productions. Plays, reviews, personal memories of live performances, as well as visual images related to modern drama posters from the 1960s to the1980s make up the rich "cultural text" for Chen. As a PRC citizen during her formative years—when she was a cultural performer, an active reader of play scripts, and an audience member who watched theatre productions—Chen skillfully makes us of invaluable materials of modern drama to "read" the textual, performative, and theatrical aspects of the plays she studies. The quality and scope of her research allows Chen to break free of the dominant

[22] Xiaomei Chen, 2001, 117.

"tradition" of drama study, which is to either provide historical surveys or to focus on playwright(s). In contrast to these approaches, Chen remains cognizant of the relationship between the politicized modern drama and the dramatized polities of the 1960s to the 1980s. Her insightful discernment and skillful demonstration of the "dialogue" between drama literature, performance, posters, audience responses, and contextual political movements has rejuvenated the field of modern drama studies and inspired many followers.

But not every scholar is as fortunate as Chen when it comes to having personal contact with the materials they study. Compared to Chen's "contemporary" plays, any study of modern dramas written and staged during *huaju*'s inception and consolidation in the late Qing and early Republican (1911-1949) periods constitute a tougher topic for researchers. Luckily, Siyuan Liu is up to the task. Liu, taking a theatre historian's perspective, unpacks the hybridity of *wenming xi* in literary, translation, and performance senses.[23] In addition to problematizing the distinction between *wenming xi* and *huaju,* Liu sufficiently challenges any discourse that attempts to construct strict binaries between old and new, conservative and radical, and traditional and modern. The hybridity of *wenming xi* and early *huaju* that Liu uncovers further affirms the need to continuously question *huaju*'s canonical narrative by teasing out "conservative" voices embedded within the "radical"; and to highlight the "traditional" lurking underneath the "Western" façades of play-makers and the play-making process. Most pertinent to my research is Liu's critical understanding of the so-called "Western influence" that supposedly shaped *wenming xi* and *huaju*. By carefully tracing its intercultural elements, Liu succinctly

[23] Siyuan Liu, 9-10.

demonstrates that classical Chinese theatre, Japanese *shinpa*, and Western spoken theatre converged in Tokyo and traveled to Shanghai for the formation of civilized drama. Thanks to Liu's scholarship, the once vague concept of "Western influences" on modern Chinese drama has become more tangible and specific. Moreover, these "Western influences," in Liu's construction, go beyond the "textual" level. *Wenming xi*'s absorption of "Western influences" is not merely about translating Western plays and fiction into Chinese—which in itself already constitutes a complicated example of "Lin Shu Inc."[24]—but refers to an even broader "Inc." that requires participatory agents, including text, personnel, and even theatre space.

Apart from being inspired by the work of Chen and Liu, my inquiry into the development of *huaju* is further informed by three groups of studies. The first is Chinese studies' recent engagement with the subfield of "affect studies." Intrigued by the idea of affect—which, as Ruth Leys observes, has fascinated scholars in the humanities and social sciences worldwide[25]—Haiyan Lee problematizes existing studies of the question of "love" in modern Chinese literature which she believes have failed to "elucidate the dialectic of individualism and nationalism."[26] Lee then offers her suggested revision; namely, not to approach love as "a transhistorical and transcultural constant"[27] but to

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[24] Here, I borrow the phrase coined by Michael Gibbs Hill. Hill writes, "By necessity, then, I do not center solely on Lin Shu as a quasi-author figure, but rather take him to be a key member of a larger network of individuals occupied with translation and the reproduction of texts from earlier periods of Chinese history—what I call 'Lin Shu, Inc.'" Lin Shu (1852-1924), as Hill points out, "served as a flagship author for the Commercial Press…a central force in the literary culture of the late Qing dynasty and the early Republic." Although Lin knew no foreign languages, he completed over 180 translations of Western literary works into classical Chinese in a twenty-year period with the help of an oral interpreter. Michael Gibbs Hill, *Lin Shu, Inc.: Translation and the Making of Modern Chinese Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2 and 6.

[25] Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 37 no. 3 Spring 2011, 435.

[26] Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 7.

[27] Ibid., 8.

instead construct a critical genealogy of affect, or "structure of feelings," that in the Republican period reflected the various Confucian, enlightenment, and revolutionary mores that were mobilized by the project of Chinese modernity. By historicizing sentiment within the Chinese literary and cultural scenes of the first half of the 20th century, Lee confirms that "emotion talk" is never merely the representation and expression of inner emotion, but "articulatory practices that participate in (re)defining the social order and (re)producing forms of self and society."[28]

The "emotion talk" that Lee examines covers a wide range of texts that echo and reinforce each other across borders—which are themselves already porous—among literary genres and cultural media. While using such an all-embracing approach to trace the process by which love became an all-pervasive subject is necessary, Lee's method also has its shortcomings. Through it, the discourse of "love"/feelings is given such broad significance and substantial power to (re)define the social order and (re)produce social forms that it runs the risk of loosing its specific embodiments. In other words, Lee answers the question *why* the individual and nationalistic discourse turned to emotion talk but falls short when it comes to articulating *how* such emotion talk is specifically conducted.

I do not mean to suggest that Lee's construction of "love" does not greatly benefit from the cross-fertilization of her broad reading. Nor do I deny the necessity of situating "affect study" at the convergence of different cultural forms. However, I believe that were I to adopt such an approach for my study, it would render *huaju*'s participation in articulating affect further "marginalized." The specific mechanism of *huaju*, which not

[28] Ibid.

only "talks" but also performs and stages "affect," has not yet been sufficiently studied. Thus, if placed next to popular fiction, cinema, and other visual cultures that have received substantial scholarly inquires, nuanced but significant issues—such as how *huaju* accommodates and generates an "affect" that in turn shapes both its direct public (audience) and distant public (nation)—would be ignored, and the reading of "affect" deriving from *huaju* would be exceedingly flat. Thus, it is necessary first to step backward and thoroughly examine how *huaju* works to make different structures of feelings before examining how "affect" was generated across genres and media. Such a "detour" will be beneficial for both the development of *huaju* studies and studies of affect. Moreover, the rather ambiguous overlap in terms of defining "affect" and "performance"[29] makes an examination into how "love" and other affects coexist within *huaju* necessary.

Haiyan Lee's take on the discourse of "love," as she recognizes, builds on and synthesizes a plethora of existing scholarship that attempts to bridge the perceived gap between individual subjectivity and national identity. The fashionable scholarly inquiry into inner subjectivity has developed into an "obsession" during the past decade, especially in the fields of modern Chinese literature and culture.[30] But is individual

[29] For example, Gregory Siegworth and Melissa Gregg believe that affect "marks a body's belonging to a world of encounters." In a similar vein, according to Sara Ahmed, "affects are what sticks or what sustains and preserves the connection between ideals, values, and objects." See Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Siegworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 2; Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (London: Routledge, 2004). Inspired by these works, Amy Holzapfel suggests that such definitions might work equally well for "performance." E. Patrick Johnson even goes so far as to pronounce a "turf war" between affect and performance studies. Both Holzapfel's and Johnson's points are taken from Amy Holzapfel's proposal for the seminar "Performance Studies Part 2: Affect Across Disciplines," which I will participate in, that will be held at the Oakley Center for the Humanities & Social Sciences at Williams College in Fall 2015.
[30] Sabrina Knight, *The Heart of Time: Moral Agency in Twentieth-Century Chinese Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 30.

subjectivity—widely used but vaguely defined—the only lens for us to view and understand Chinese cultural and literary modernity? Sabrina Knight's reading of Chinese fiction writing in the 20th century aptly denies this assumption and broadens our exploration in modern Chinese literature to "a philosophical and moral vantage point."[31] Knight unravels how human beings—in the frame of Chinese fiction and fiction-writing throughout the 20th century—could control their fate, and realize a certain freedom or "agency" in their either stable or crisis-ridden political environments. Moral agency, in Knight's reading, derived from individual and collective "minds" and "hearts," both of which enlightened passive fiction-readers and scholars of the narrative complexity in fiction, particularly the "social fictions" written from the 1920s to the 1940s. As Knight observes, writers, "more engaged and less trapped in narcissistic wounds," displayed "a new willingness to place ethical questions within a concrete social framework."[32] Although Knight focuses predominantly on analyzing fiction and reading hidden meanings with a thorough understanding of narrative techniques, her construction of the power of "moral agency" and the collective turn in fiction writing—from obsession to "narcissistic wounds" to societal concerns—confirms for me a similar trend that I see in reading *huaju* plays from the same period. If we incorporate the performative and theatrical aspects into our *huaju* reading, I believe, the "agency" that Knight historicizes in her narrative techniques will find its echo in both plotting and staging strategies.

The second group of scholarship, which is more directly inspiring and pertinent to this dissertation, consists of cultural historians' studies on several "invented" (operatic)

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[31] Ban Wang, "Studies of Modern Chinese Literature," in Haihui Zhang, Zhaohui Xue, etc., eds., *A Scholarly Review of Chinese Studies in North America* (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2011), 379.

[32] Knight, 104.

traditions, such as Joshua Goldstein's take on Peking opera, Jin Jiang's construction of female Yue opera, and Anna Fishzon's revealing of *fin-de-siècle* Russia through understanding operatic fandom.[33] These studies, which spread across artistic forms and national cultures, converge at the very point of "play-making" and its relation with "nation-building," either explicitly or implicitly. One salient feature common to these studies is how their insightful unpackings of operatic "tradition"—at both national and local levels—are bent to and benefit from their parallel explorations of cultural modernity and nation building. Goldstein explains how cosmopolitan culture serves as the "desired other" for Peking opera play-makers' enacting of "tactical orientalism"[34] to transform Peking opera into national theatre between the 1870s and 1930s. Similarly, Jiang's study examines how female performers of Yue opera "emulated" and incorporated cosmopolitan and modern strategies of play-making, including *huaju*, to transform Yue opera. Moreover, these complicated processes of "play-making" took place in the hands of "play-makers"/ "performers" who consist of intellectuals, actors, theatre academies/pedagogical institutions, cultural entrepreneurs, (mass) audiences, and of course, political authorities. Both the "play" and the process of "play-making" are thus richly expanded. When we remind ourselves that these plays—that were made in China—were performed on specific theatre stages against the backdrop of the 20th

[33] Joshua Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-Creation of Peking Opera, 1870-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Jin Jiang, *Women Playing Men: Yue Opera and Social Change in Twentieth-century Shanghai* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009); Anna Fishzon, *Fandom, Authenticity, and Opera: Mad Acts and Letter Scenes in Fin-de-Siècle Russia*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[34] Goldstein, 270.

century grand (social) stage (*ershi shiji da wutai*),[35] we see that the very process of "play-making" was in turn "making China."

Importantly, the "plays" in these works are conventionally associated with "tradition" and have been long displaced or misplaced in the problematic May Fourth discourse as "reactionary" entities that stood in the way of "progressive" modern nation-building. Thus, in demonstrating that traditional opera-making was not only akin to but actually constitutes a formative site for building the modern nation and exploring cultural modernity, these scholarly studies convey a sense of "surprise" that is particularly impressive and enlightening. Admittedly, when I apply a similar approach to *huaju*—a cosmopolitan art form that is commonly but problematically understood as "Western"—both the scale and effects of "surprise" are reduced. However, this diminished effect should not be interpreted as negating the urgent need for a scholarly understanding of the relationship between *huaju*-making and nation-building.

In part to compensate for the "unsurprising" (but not "unnecessary") accounts of *huaju*-making and nation-building, my dissertation turns to a third group of scholarship for inspiration, which I read as studies of networking in personal, communal, and cultural senses. Kirk Denton and Michel Hockx's *Literary Societies of Republican China* enlarges my focus with its detailed engagement with Republican China's various literary societies that were centered upon poetry, fiction, drama, and other genres.[36] The volume's essays keenly capture the unique nature and mechanism of literary societies that were both historically informed and determined by their specific literary genre and

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[35] Here I refer to the Shanghai journal *Great Twentieth Century Stage* (*Ershi shiji dawutai*) first issued in 1904.

[36] Kirk Denton and Michel Hockx, eds., *Literary Societies of Republican China* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008)

cultural forms. Meanwhile, the essays' narratives further challenge binaries between modernity and tradition, "art for art's sake" vs. art for life, commercial arrangements vs. amateur ideals, private vs. public, etc. Inspired by and/or echoing these essays, recent monographs by Andrew Goldman, Katherine Hui-ling Chou, Liang Luo, Xuelei Huang, and an edited volume by Christopher Rea and Nicolai Volland give further weight to the importance of "networking" for play-making. Goldman's study addresses the parallel flourishing of Peking opera and Beijing, the city, in the late Qing.[37] Chou's dissertation[38] examines the problematic yet revolutionary "body" of actresses that were featured on the *huaju* stage, gazed at through cinema cameras, and practiced in the new woman movement in Republican China. Luo employs the potent cultural agent, Tian Han, to investigate the intertwined development of *huaju*, film, and mass popular songs, and in the process demolish the binaries among the aesthetic avant-garde, the political vanguard, participatory mass culture, and commercial popular culture.[39] Huang opens the gate of the Mingxing film studio, revealing the intellectual networking across "butterfly" and enlightening schools to build a bridge between cinema (often aligned to money making) and *huaju* (seen as pursuing political goals).[40] Rea and Volland go even further by editing a volume that predominantly deals with cultural entrepreneur personalities such as Lin Shu and Chen Diexian (1879-1940) and institutions such as the Shaw Brothers and

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[37] Andrea Goldman, *Opera and the City: The Politics of Culture in Beijing, 1770-1900* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2012)

[38] Katherine Hui-ling Chou, "Staging Revolution: Actresses, Realism & the New Woman Movement in Chinese Spoken Drama & Film, 1919-1949" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1997). Chou's dissertation was later published as a monograph in Chinese. See Chou Hui-ling, *Biaoyan zhongguo: Nü mingxing, biaoyan wenhua, shijue zhengzhi, 1910-1945* (*Performing China: Woman Star, Performative Culture, and Visual Politics, 1910-1945*) (Taibei: Maitian chuban she, 2004).

[39] Liang Luo, *The Avant-Garde and the Popular in Modern China: Tian Han and the Intersection of Performance and Politics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2014).

[40] Xuelei Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking: Crossing Borders, Connecting to the Globe, 1922-1938* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

the Cathay theatre to analyze how the rise of entrepreneurship—as individual and collective agency characterized by mobility between cultural professions and modes of cultural productions—transformed the cultural sphere of China and Southeast Asia.[41] Taken together, these works help me to discern the multiple-layered and sometime problematic "intimacy" between the pioneering generation of dramatists and their cosmopolitan peers overseas; intellectual dramatists and peasant audience/performers; established play-makers and amateur trainees in drama academies; and finally, turning back to *huaju*-making itself, to the cosmopolitan elitist dramatists and local/commercially minded entrepreneurs.

Chapter Overview

Aspiring to rescue *huaju* from the "the deficient qualities of the discourse,"[42] this dissertation reads *huaju*-making as sites where cosmopolitan dramatists constructed their national, gender, and theatre-informed intellectual identities while they attempted to approach, stimulate, and discipline the "people" into modern citizens. Historically, my inquiry focuses on the period from the 1910s to the 1940s, when the world experienced two global wars and China initiated a major round of state-building; and when *huaju*-making forces successively shifted their focus from metropolises (Columbus, New York, and Shanghai) to a constructed "social laboratory" in a northern rural village (Ding County), and then to hinterland shelters for war refugees (Jiang'an and Chongqing). I

[41] Christopher Rea and Nicolai Volland, eds., *The Business of Culture: Cultural Entrepreneurs in China and Southeast Asia*, *1900-65* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).
[42] Xiaomei Chen, reframing C. Clifford Flanigan's view of medieval European drama, implicates "not the deficient qualities of that drama, but the deficient qualities of the discourse" for the relative marginality of modern Chinese drama in Western scholarship. See Xiaomei Chen, 2001, 23.

present a trajectory of *huaju*-making during its initial formalization and consolidation stages in China that is grounded on an array of textual analyses of significant but unduly overlooked plays, and historical evidence about staging these plays for dramatists' cosmopolitan peers, like-minded (*zhiji*) intellectual and performative laborers, and rural and urban mass audiences. Specifically, I scrutinize four means by which *huaju*-making took root in the modern Chinese cultural scene: by making *huaju* plays for foreign and domestic audiences (Chs. 1 and 2), institutionalizing national *huaju* school-theatres (Ch. 3), and self-reflectively writing and canonizing the history of *huaju*-making by making a *huaju* (Ch. 4).

Chapter 1 examines Hong Shen's early theatrical activities in both China and America that pivoted around *The Wedded Husband: A Chinese Realist Play* (hereafter *TWH*), an English-language play that Hong wrote and staged in Columbus, Ohio in April 1919. Presented one month prior to the iconoclastic student parade that sparked the May Fourth Movement and one month after the influential legacy of Nora's home-leaving was first fleshed out in Hu Shi's *The Main Event in Life* in the magazine *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian*), Hong Shen's *TWH* intriguingly appeared to be at odds with both of these seminal events by being a melodrama in which contemporary Chinese gentry men and women asserted the superiority of Confucian ethical traditions (predominantly "filial piety" and "loyalty") over Western notions of science and love. In short, *TWH* presented an alternative path for Nora: one where Nora did not leave home but "bowed" to the sacred tradition of "once wedded one may never marry again,"[43] but did so out of her authentic feelings for her late husband instead of as a blind subjugation to Confucian

[43] Shen Hung, *The Wedded Husband*, in *Poet Lore*, 32 (March 1921), 110-25. The quotation is from the stage direction on page 110.

moral principles. Grounding *TWH* on the Confucian structure of *qing* (feelings), Hong Shen employed the techniques of Chinese "realist theatre" to "enlighten and educate" (*jiaohua*) his "world audience" in Columbus, Ohio. By creating a female protagonist whose agency derived from her authentic feelings, Hong Shen did not present a "modern Nora" in either an Ibsenesque or May Fourth sense, but a "Confucian Nora" whose self-realization deserved recognition and could contribute, on an "equal footing" with the West, to the cultural cosmopolitanism of the post-World War I era.

Parallel with his employment of *TWH*—or a "Chinese realist play"—to serve the goals of "enlightening and educating" the West was Hong's active, high-profile, and, after all, "happier" experience of being an international student in America. Apart from bringing *TWH* and the Confucian structure of *qing* to the Ohio State University student body, Columbus local audience, and "Oriental" scholars from the East Coast, Hong organized hetero-social and multi-cultural student activities aimed at inspiring students' participation in a democratic public. In this sense, Hong performed "romantic interracial intimacy" with his cast in the theatre world and "fraternal interracial intimacy" in his study-abroad life. Although it is tempting to understand these activities as reflecting the binary of theatre vs. reality, Hong's *acting* as a cultivated Chinese gentry man in *TWH* and his *performance* as a cosmopolitan student leader with the personal charisma to write and produce *TWH* in fact revealed more fluidity than rupture in his efforts to revise his designated identity as an "inferior race" to his intellectual peers but a "superior class" to his fellow countrymen. Benefitting from and sheltered by his play-making activities, Hong's trajectory of finding his voice and substantializing his body on theatrical and worldly stages was, in nature, participatory but not hostile.

Ironically, it is Hong's easy fitting in with the "West" that has led to the marginality of his American experience within the canonical history of Chinese modern theatre, its modern intelligentsia, and the modern nation. The myth of making the Chinese nation-state—a myth which has been influenced by ethno-nationalist sentiment[44] and a series of "powerful failures"[45]—has shaped our contemporary understanding of Chinese modern theatre in the early 20th century as a public space to "enlighten" the domestic masses and "agitate" public anger. However, my reconstruction of Hong Shen's play-making activities in America reveals a more optimistic impetus for the development of *huaju*. Having extended his theatrical experience of making on a university campus in 1910s America, Hong turned his focus to writing the "grammar" of modern theatre. Playwrights (intellectual labor), actors (performative labor), theatre technicians (manual labor), and spectators, Hong proposed, would form a *zhiji* relationship in the "democratic space" of the theatre where all voices are heard.[46] The theatre was thus a microcosm of the optimistic, cosmopolitan ethos of the post-WWI era.

Hong's play-making practices, in textual, performative, and meta-textual senses,

[44] Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 28.
[45] Jing Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature: The Making of Modern Chinese Identity, 1895-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 1.
[46] I apply the terms intellectual, performative, and technical laborers to further analyze Hong's discussion. My use of these terms is inspired, in part, by Christopher A. Reed's study on the print culture, print commerce, and print capitalism of late Qing and early Republican Shanghai. Reed argues "print culture, technology, and the business organization of printalism" are all vital parts of Shanghai's printing and publishing industry. A complete story of Shanghai's print industry will necessarily pull together the cooperation of intellectuals, skilled mechanical workers, and cultural entrepreneurs. Similarly, Patricia Sieber investigates Peter Perring Thoms's (d. after 1851)—a printer and amateur sinologist—multi-faceted engagement in the practices of translation. In a similar vein, I examine the intellectual, performative, and manual labors that are all needed in the process of play-making. See Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 24; Patricia Sieber, *Abstract* for "Technologies of Translation: Peter Perring Thoms Bilingual Edition of the Cantonese Ballad *Huajian*/ Chinese Courtship (1824)," in *Sinologists as Translators in the 17-19th Century Conference, 2011,* organized by the Research Center for Translation, Institute of Chinese Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. See https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/rct/pdf/rct_sino_pro_ab.pdf (accessed March 2015).

were loudly echoed by Xiong Foxi and Yu Shangyuan—two passionate souls of China's fleeting National Drama Movement (1925-1926)—when they lived in the I-House in New York in the early 1920s. Funded by the YMCA, John D. Rockefeller Jr., and the Cleveland H. Dodge family, and affiliated to Columbia University, I-House provided both an auditorium (i.e. a well-equipped theatre space) and an international student body (i.e. a ready cosmopolitan spectatorship). In light of translating—in both linguistic and cultural senses—and staging Chinese folklore stories and *chuanqi* plays, Yu, Xiong, and their group of cosmopolitan dramatists were—like Hong Shen—determined to make modern Chinese theatre a tool for uniting all Chinese. Unfortunately, cosmopolitan play-makers' dream of gestating a democratic society in the matrix of theatre crashed harshly when they returned to China.

Upon arriving in Shanghai and Beijing, Hong and Xiong, like their peers, were swept into the whirlwind of a growing intellectual "obsession" with the peasantry—who were conceived as "marginal, voiceless, and exploited"[47]—and which was informed by the "going to the people" discourse, Communist activities in the countryside, the rural reconstruction movement, and similar trends in the 1920s and the 1930s. Chapter 2 delivers a comparative construction and reading of Hong Shen's and Xiong Foxi's play-making practices of writing and staging peasant plays (*nongmin ju*) in the 1930s. In spite of their textual similarities, Hong's and Xiong's peasant plays are often positioned at opposite ends of the dichotomy between cosmopolitan dramatists' "mechanical" and "academic" construction of rural social problems, on the one hand, and the fruitful implementation—deriving from the timely use of a sociological methodology—of a

[47] Liang Luo, 17.

transformative vehicle to create "new citizens" out of peasants and build a "modern rural" upon a village community, on the other.

After unraveling successive layers of discursive manipulations concerning Hong Shens's *Wukui qiao* (*Wukui Bridge*, 1930) and *Qinglong tan* (*Green Dragon Pond*, 1934), and to a lesser extent, Xiong Foxi's *Guodu* (*Crossing*, 1935), I analyze how Hong and Xiong employed a rural (re)construction theme to accommodate and discipline public revolutionary energies. I argue that Hong's and Xiong's plays—the former criticized for its intellectual approach and the latter glorified for its peasant orientation, nonetheless present two experimental attempts to build and accommodate a participatory rural public by means of building a democratic theatre space. Both attempts, moreover, were colored with the power of public affect, which could lead a frenzied mob to demolish the social structure (Hong Shen) or inspire a rural public to participate in rural and national (re)construction (Xiong Foxi). Xiong—who resided in Ding County, Hebei while it was transformed into a "social laboratory" by the Mass Education Movement (MEM) led by Y.C James Yen (1890-1990) and supported by local gentry families—was able to strategically reshape the "demolition" plot in Hong's *Wukui Bridge* and *Green Dragon Pond* into a play about "constructive" action. By guiding peasant actors' and spectators' public anger against a local bully, Xiong not only restored the local government's authority in his plot-revision, he "exerted" his "authoritative" power, derived from the MEM project, to organize and frame local villagers' everyday lives with his carefully scheduled rehearsal and performance agenda. By means of spreading knowledge of play-making and the technique of building a democratic theatre space, Xiong trained and disciplined his peasant actors in order to flesh out the experimental performance of

Crossing which, allegedly, united peasant actors on stage and peasant spectators off stage into a community based on sympathy. Furthermore, MEM's location in Ding County privileged Xiong to extend the "construction" theme *within* the theatre space to a mass rural (re)construction project *of* the theatre space. The potentially destructive power of the "mob" was carefully released and channeled into the task of community-building. Relying on the agitating affect gleaned from the democratic staging strategies and the disciplining action preserved in daily rehearsals and the construction of an open-air theatre, Xiong achieved his goal of constructing a rural public by, of, and for peasants.

In contrast, Hong, who was based in the Fudan Drama Society (*Fudan jushe*) in Shanghai and the National Drama School (*Guoli xiju xuexiao*) in Nanjing during the mid-1930s, was not provided with peasant actors and peasant spectators to transform into a rural public. At the textual level, Hong himself challenged his own ideal of building a democratic theatre; but at the theatrical level, that ideal was continuously carried out. Expanding the "demolishing" theme that was rather underdeveloped in the one-act *Wukui Bridge* into the four-act *Green Dragon Pond*, Hong confronted and spelled out intellectuals' impotence to "enlighten and educate" the rural masses. When the intellectual character, Lin Gongda, is subjugated to the violence of the mob and transformed from an enlightener to a sacrificial lamb, Hong offers an explicit critique toward both the intellectual and political frenzy for the rural (re)construction movement. In other words, by making a play about peasants' disillusionment with the "enlightenment" discourse and thus poking a hole in the dream of building a democratic theatre for all Chinese, Hong—who stubbornly fleshed out his intellectual critique of political authority and the dominant voice of the intellectual—still found theatre to be an

ideal democratic space to release his anxieties about rural transformations. In addition, this chapter examines Hong's reliance on the structure of a well-made play, actors' skilled performances, and the technical implements of lighting and set-design in staging *Wukui Bridge*. Despite his doubts about the rural reconstruction movement, play-making for Hong Shen still served as a collective endeavor that intellectual, performative, and manual laborers participated in democratically.

The goal of incorporating peasants—as characters, actors, spectators, and play-makers—into the process of play-making was imbued with cosmopolitan dramatists' democratic imaginations but garnered rather mixed results before the War of Resistance (1937-1945). Dramatists' exploration of *huaju*'s aesthetic, social-educational, and political possibilities would be necessarily reshaped when the war reached a protracted stalemate in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Under the urgent call for the participation and cooperation of all Chinese for the sake of national defense and state-building, *huaju*'s employment of "national language" (*Guoyu*), realistic performative norms, and its tolerance for low-tech make-shift stages and impromptu incorporation of propaganda messages all gained recognition and endorsement from Nationalist cultural cadres. In spite of its leftist bent established prior to the war, *huaju* became an integral part of Nationalist cultural construction. The key architect for implementing *huaju* and *huaju*-making on the Nationalist's behalf during the war period was Yu Shangyuan, the cosmopolitan dramatist who had practiced making Chinese theatre for international students in New York in the early 1920s. Chapter 3 examines Yu's management of the National Drama School (NDS), particularly between 1939 and 1945 when NDS was located in the remote hinterland town of Jiang'an. The primary goal of NDS, as outlined

in proposals by Yu and other Nationalist cultural cadres, lay in fostering reliable actors and stage personnel who could master both modern knowledge and the performing techniques of *huaju*. NDS students thus spread political ideologies to the masses and achieved performers' (self) liberation to reach the elevated social stratum of "cultural workers." Such a goal, understandably, demanded commitment from both passionate student-actors/stage technicians and experienced *huaju*-making veterans.

Such intimate team work between masters and students, or professionals and amateurs, would have been difficult to carry out in the metropolitan *huaju* scenes of the mid-1930s, considering that there both commercial theatres and film studios would compete with NDS over the use of potential "faculty." However, NDS' relocation from Nanjing to Jiang'an during the war provided a rare chance for established play- and filmmakers and students to work closely together. Specifically, NDS operated its daily classes and scheduled public performances, fulfilling its pedagogical and performative functions, in Jiang'an's local Confucian Temple (*Wenmiao*) which was renovated into a make-shift stage by NDS students under Yu's leadership. In this chapter, I compare students' use of the Confucian Temple as NDS' headquarters with two major NDS productions, *Tuibian* (*Metamorphosis*, 1940) and *Hamuleite* (*Hamlet*, 1942), both of which were inspired by the space of the Confucian Temple. I argue that NDS' transformation of the Confucian Temple provided a physical space and a symbolic trope for *huaju*-making in Jiang'an. Within NDS' refugee community that was built upon *huaju*-making, established dramatists and student amateurs; a drama school and a local residence; and world-class plays that espoused the political ideology of national defense and state building all converged.

In short, Chapters 1-3 of the dissertation lay out how *huaju*-making empowered dramatists to actualize their own cosmopolitan intellectual identities in 1910s America, facilitated their attempts to reach out and "enlighten and educate" the Chinese peasantry in the 1930s, and incorporated their efforts at training cultural workers for cultural projects of national defense and state building in 1940s Jiang'an, respectively. Thus, by the late 1930s and early 1940s, *huaju*, albeit not without controversy, had undergone a three-fold intertwined transformation; namely, popularization (*dazhong hua*), nationalization (*minzu hua*), and professionalization (*zhiye hua*). Starting as a foreign and elitist cultural form in the early 20th century, *huaju* had become a significant cultural force integral to Chinese cultural modernities, an effective vehicle to spread political ideologies, and a form of entertainment relevant to the masses' everyday lives. The year 1937 was even dubbed the "year of spoken drama" (*huaju nian*), thought unfortunately it passed largely uncelebrated because of the outbreak of the war. Five years later when the war dragged on and Chongqing, the temporary capital, suffered its "grim years" (1942-1944), Xia Yan, Song Zhidi (1914-1956), and Yu Ling (1907-1997) collectively wrote *Xiju chunqiu* (*Annals of Theatre*, 1943, hereafter *XJCQ*) and had it staged by Zheng Junli (1911-1969) as director and with other Shanghai film/*huaju* veteran actors as the cast. Chapter 4 examines the making of *XJCQ* and inserts it into the convergence between the tradition of creating a "backstage discourse" in the "theater of dramatists," the Chinese cinematic obsession with the "backstage" influenced by both Hollywood melodramas and the development of sound films, and the vogue of canonizing *huaju* in the 1930s. By making a *huaju* about *huaju*-making, Xia, a cosmopolitan who had studied in Japan between 1921 and 1925, led Song and Yu in writing a self-referential and self-reflective

canonization of *huaju* history.

Although *XJCQ* was not the first back-stage *huaju* nor the first effort at canonizing the historical development of *huaju*, *XJCQ*, in my reading, offered the first subversive *huaju* canonization that prioritized play-making over play-writing and provides a satisfying depiction of the transformation of “men of letters” (*wenren*) to “men of theatre” (*juren*). Intriguingly, Xia Yan found Ying Yunwei (1904-1967), a “cultural entrepreneur” who made his fortune in Shanghai banks and ship companies, to be the “ideal candidate” to flesh out the trajectory of *huaju* history. The play’s leading character, Lu Xiankui, who is based on Ying, despite being criticized by his peers for his “commercial” convictions, eventually becomes the only one who can lead and organize Shanghai “men of theatre” in the late 1930s after the Japanese invasion. Via its parallel canonization of Yu and significant back-stage stories, *XJCQ* flips the hierarchy that had become increasingly consolidated in other canonizing efforts of *huaju*-making. Furthermore, with its clear priority of performance over script, back-stage drama over stage performance, and “cultural entrepreneur” over (leftist) established dramatists, *XJCQ* made an even more radical move by entrusting the *zhiji* relationship, embedded in Hong Shen’s idealization of theatre space, to the leadership by Lu Xiankui (Ying Yunwei), a *huaju*-maker who struggled to balance political, commercial, and artistic pursuits. Finally, “men of theatre”—empowered by *XJCQ*—challenged other canonizing narratives with their own self-canonization: making a *huaju* about *huaju*-making. Their efforts extended the “democratic space” inscribed in theatre by Hong Shen from play-making to the making/canonizing of the history of play-making.

In addition to basing my analysis on close-readings of the plays themselves, my

three-fold "play-making" framework rests on two types of documentation (and mediation): archival materials and personal memoirs. Fruitful visits to the libraries and archives of OSU, Columbia, Shanghai, Chongqing, and Baoding unearthed previously unknown materials recording key play-makers' activities in these areas; the Nationalist Party's cultural policies and regulations with regards to *huaju* performances and actor training; and rare advertisements for signature plays and performances. These scattered pieces of historical evidence, when assembled, serve as the nodes that privilege me to understand the process of play-making, challenge and problematize extant scholarship on modern drama, and most importantly, construct an alternative narrative of *hujau* in the first half of the 20th century. Moreover, these materials add a welcome balance to my necessary reliance on (auto)biographies and memoirs. I am keenly aware how autobiographical texts constitute another layer of narrative influenced by self- and political- censorship. Often, these narratives do not read coherently but render contradictory understandings. Rather than overlooking such conflicts, I highlight them and, with the help of historical archival materials, hypothesize the rationale for why key dramatists would make such contradictions. Attempts to reveal these conflicts facilitate my goal of extending my research from plays (drama literature) to the more encompassing framework of "play-making." As we shall see, historical contingency and individual agency play important but charming roles in my story of Chinese play-making in the first half of the 20th century. Fittingly enough, the curtain opens here, on the Oval of The Ohio State University, nearly a century ago.

Chapter 1: When S/He is not Nora:
Hong Shen, Cosmopolitan Intellectuals, and Chinese Theatres in 1910s China and America

Introduction

On April 11 and 12, 1919 in Columbus, Ohio, Hong Shen (1894-1955), then a student majoring in ceramic engineering at The Ohio State University (OSU), staged *The Wedded Husband* (*Wei zhi youshi, TWH*),[1] a "realistic Chinese play" he had written for a graduate-level English seminar, at the campus chapel[2] before a receptive audience of 1,300. After receiving positive reviews from both the OSU and the general Columbus communities, as well as rousing academic inquiries from established scholars of Oriental study located in the Midwest and along the East Coast, Hong Shen gained the confidence to forgo his original goal of "saving the nation by means of a substantial industry" (*shiye jiuguo*), i.e., engineering, to instead chart a career path in drama, where his true passion and talent lay. In May 1919, Hong Shen included *TWH* as part of his successful application to Harvard's first and most prestigious playwrights program, Workshop 47, which was organized by Professor George P. Baker (1866-1935). Hong Shen also became involved in writing and staging English-language plays in the Cambridge and New York areas. Finally, in 1921, *TWH* was published in *Poet Lore* magazine, a literary

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[1] The Chinese title, "*Wei zhi youshi*", was presented in the flyer of the *The Wedded Husband* when it was first staged at The Ohio State University in April 1919. "Wei zhi you shi" comes from "zhangfu sheng er yuan weizhi youshi, nüzi sheng er yuan wei zhi youjia" (When a son is born parents hope he will one day have a home and family; when a daughter is born, they hope she will one day find a husband). See David Hinton trans., *Mencius* (Washington: Counterpoint, 1998), 105.

[2] The Chapel was part of the original University Hall, a large multi-purpose building located by the campus Oval.

journal that adopted a global scope in its coverage of drama works of the early 20th century.[3] In the space of three years, *TWH* thus went from being the final project for an English seminar to being a fully realized dramatic work, and in the process gained the distinction of being the first multi-act English play written, staged, and published by a Chinese national.[4]

Hong Shen's endeavor to stage a "realist" Chinese play in America distinguished *TWH* from the well-known "debuts" of modern Chinese drama and theatre that took place in Shanghai, Tokyo, and Beijing during the first decades of the 20th century. For example, Rebecca Karl argues that *Guazhong lanyin* (*Departing Poland*), the 1904 debut of new-style Peking opera in Shanghai, employed "an opera about the partition of Poland"[5] to indicate "how China's late Qing crisis-ridden situation came to be linked to a geographically far-off yet conceptually proximate imaginary of others."[6] In a similar vein, the 1907 production of *Heinu yutian lu* (*The Black Slave's Cry to Heaven*), which is typically credited as the beginning of modern Chinese theatre and was staged by the Spring Willow Society (*Chunliu she*), a group of Chinese students studying abroad in Tokyo, dramatized black people's struggle against discrimination in America to stimulate concerns about the survival of the "yellow people" in China. Finally, Hu Shi's

[3] *Poet Lure* was founded by two brilliant young literary scholars, Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke, in Maryland in 1889. With the launch of *Poet Lure*, Porter and Clarke began to explore the work of Shakespeare and Browning but soon opened their pages beyond North America and Europe to include writers from Asia, South America, and the Middle East. With a vibrant publishing history, *Poet Lure* introduced many of the great playwrights and poets of the era, often presenting them in English to American readers for the first time. See http://www.writer.org/poetlore/ Accessed August 15, 2014.
[4] In 1915-16, Zhang Pengchun (1892-1957) published "The Intruder," "The Man in Gray," and the "Awakening" (all one-act plays) in *Liumei qingnian* (*Journal of the Chinese Students Christian Association in North America*). However, these English-language scripts were never staged.
[5] Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 28. Karl provides a literal translation of *Guazhong lanyin* as *Planting the Melon Cause of Orchid*.
[6] Ibid., 29.

Zhongshen dashi (*The Most Important Event*) published in 1919 as the first Chinese vernacular play, appropriates Henrik Ibsen's (1828-1906) *A Doll's House* (1879) to address issues of relevance to May Fourth men of letters. By contrast, in staging "China" to the modern world (America), *TWH* offers a mirror image to modern Chinese drama's fashion of "staging the world" (Poland, African-Americans, Ibsen, etc.) in China to formulate a discourse of nationalism.

Yet, despite the unique perspective that *TWH* offers to the development of *huaju*, discussions of the play remain curiously absent from scholarship. To my knowledge, the only published English-language work that addresses the trajectory of Hong Shen's career as a key figure in the world of modern Chinese drama and theatre is a brief essay written by Walter and Ruth Meserve in 1979, where they include *TWH* among Hong Shen's English works, and provide a brief discussion of the play's plot and performances in 1919.[7] *TWH* also appears in Dave Williams's 1997 drama collection, albeit with an unfortunate misreading of the "truism" of understanding the American self through the Chinese other.[8] Most recently, Weili Ye, in her study of Chinese students in America in the early 20th century, has made an explicit request to the field of modern Chinese drama and literature to treat Chinese students' (including Hong Shen's) theatrical activities as an integral part of the early history of modern Chinese theatre.[9] Unfortunately, Ye does not herself offer any analysis of the literary and performative background of *TWH*.

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[7] Walter J. and Ruth I. Meserve, "Hung Shen: Chinese Dramatist Trained in America," in *Theatre Journal* 31.1 (March 1979): 25-34.

[8] Williams views *TWH* as "a wholesale adoption of the Euro-American culture's image of the Chinese, rather than any resistance to it." Dave Williams, ed., *The Chinese Other 1850-1925: An Anthology of Plays* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1997), xiv.

[9] Weili Ye, *Seeking Modernity in China's Name: Chinese Students in the United States 1900-1927* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 212.

Such neglect began to abate in November 2013, when Steven Liu directed the first revival of *The Wedded Husband*, fittingly staged at OSU. The accompanying Hong Shen Symposium brought together scholars from across the field, including Xuelei Huang, Liang Luo, Xiaomei Chen, Kirk Denton, Patricia Sieber, and others, to discuss and reinterpret Hong Shen's *oeuvre* within the context of the Republican China and early 20th century American mediaspheres. More recently, Xiaomei Chen has proposed reading Hong Shen's life and career—including his playmaking activities at OSU—as "stories of theatricality in the broader sense of the word" that can "map out a new drama history."[10] After nearly a century of neglect, the time is ripe for the (re)introduction of *TWH* to Chinese modern drama studies.

What happens when we include *TWH* in our scholarly accounts of the formation of *huaju*? How would such inclusion challenge, complicate, and revise understandings of key players (such as Hong Shen) and the development of modern Chinese drama in its formative phase? In order to answer these questions, this chapter presents a reading of *TWH* on its textual, performative, and metatextual levels. I begin by tying together the significant textual borrowings that exist between *TWH* and earlier works—a prose piece by Bao Tianxiao (1876-1973), a "contemporary costume old opera" (*shizhuang jiuxi*) orchestrated by Qi Rushan (1877-1962) and Mei Lanfang (1894-1961), and a civilized drama (*wenming xi*) staged by Ouyang Yuqian (1889-1962) and Lu Jingruo (1885-1915)—that appeared during the late Qing (1644-1911) and early Republican (1911-1949) eras, and have, until now, escaped scholarly scrutiny. By constructing the textual connection between the "founding fathers" of the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly literature,

[10] Xiaomei Chen, "Mapping a 'New' Dramatic Canon: Rewriting the Legacy of Hong Shen," in Peng Hsiao-yen and Isabelle Rabut, eds., *Modern China and the West* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 225.

reformed Peking opera, civilized drama, and *huaju*, my reading of *TWH* confirms that the "conservative," "reformist," and "radical" labels so often applied by scholars to describe writers and dramatists during the late Qing-early Republican transition are ill-fitting in practice. Next, I turn to the performative aspect of *TWH*, and examine how the play's gender-appropriate and racially mixed cast empowered Hong Shen and his fellow Chinese overseas students to modify their "inferior" racial identities and lessen the fear for interracial intimacy between Chinese men and white women. After making *TWH* a gateway to reach out to America and the world, Hong Shen then turned his gaze to the practice of making Chinese theatre in America. This chapter concludes by investigating how Hong Shen, in envisioning theatre as a microcosmic democratic space, created the grammar for the development of modern Chinese drama. I argue that Hong's play-making activities in America provided him the means to actualize three interrelated goals: to "enlighten and educate" (*jiaohua*) Americans via an authentic and sincere display of sentiment (*qing*) infused with Confucian ethical norms; to present Chinese culture and Chinese men as equal players on the world stage; and to at once explore and discipline the rules of modern Chinese theatre to bring it into line with global theatrical trends. This chapter demonstrates that when we return *TWH* to its rightful place in the landscape of modern Chinese theatre in the early 20th century, an important but heretofore unknown chapter in the development of modern Chinese drama is illuminated, a chapter in which She, the protagonist, and He, the playwright, were both *not* Nora.

Why Not The Wedded Husband?

A likely reason for *TWH*'s absence within the field of Chinese studies is due to the fact that the textual (written in 1918 and published in 1921) and performative (live performances in 1919) presentations of the play were conducted in English. However, this language barrier is not the only reason for the neglect of *TWH* in scholarly accounts, nor does it adequately explain why Hong Shen himself barely mentions *TWH* in his 99-page editorial "Introduction" to the 1935 *Drama* volume in *Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi* (*The Compendium of Modern Chinese Literature*), a work intended to carve out a canon of modern Chinese drama.[11] The more determinate factor for scholarly neglect of *TWH* is, I believe, the fact that *TWH* does not "appropriately" fit post-May Fourth canonized narratives about the effects of the Nora legacy on the development of modern Chinese drama, on the one hand, and the trajectory of modern Chinese intellectual history, on the other.

When Hong Shen inserted a brief contextualization of Hu Shi's (1891-1962) one-act play—*The Most Important Event*— into his seminal "Introduction," he did so to provide a clear starting point for the development of modern Chinese drama. Based on his reading of Hu Shi's "Preface" to *Event*, which was published in the March 1919 edition of *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian*),[12] Hong Shen pointed out that *Event* was originally written in English for a Beijing reunion of Chinese students who had studied in the United States. Later, at the request of several female students in Beijing who hoped to

[11] Hong Shen only mentions "*Wei zhi you shi*" (*The Wedded Husband*) once in passing in his "Introduction," stating that it was part of his successful application to Prof. Baker's drama workshop at Harvard. See Hong Shen, "Introduction," *Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi* (*The Compendium of Modern Chinese Literature*), Vol. IX (Shanghai: Liangyou tushu yinshua gongsi, 1935), 58.
[12] *Xin Qingnian* (*New Youth*), Vol. 6. No. 3, 1919.

stage the play as a student theatre production, Hu Shi translated *Event* into Chinese. The hopes of these female students for staging the play were soon dashed, however, because no one among them dared to take the leading role of Miss Tian. Nor did their women's school (whose name was not mentioned) believe it was suitable to stage such "a morally corrupt" play. Hong Shen contrasted Miss Tian's Nora-like "home-leaving" in the play with the female students' reluctance to perform such a controversial work in reality. By highlighting the difficulties to *act* like Nora in late 1910s China, Hong Shen read *Event* as a "social drama" (*shehui ju*) that "reflected social realities."[13] Although primitive and crude in terms of dramaturgy and unable to be staged in public, *Event* was still significant for its catalytic role in forming the hereafter expanding repertoire of "Nora plays" in which male playwrights, as Xiaomei Chen puts it, "sought inspiration for their anti-official discourse against the established Confucian traditional culture and its implied truth… With this play, Hu Shi pioneered a long tradition in Chinese spoken drama, a tradition that would witness numerous Nora-like characters struggling to leave their homes, whether the homes of their parents or of their husbands."[14] In his "Introduction," Hong Shen fully credits Hu Shi's bold efforts to create and employ the very first Chinese Nora in a vernacular play to underscore the existing tension between May Fourth men of letters' collective ideological exploration and the troubled realities of China. With his inauguration of Hu Shi's *Event* as the canonical beginning of spoken drama's history, Hong Shen arguably started the standard narrative of modern Chinese drama, where She, the female protagonist, and He, the playwright, are both Nora.

[13] Hong Shen, 1935, 23.
[14] Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 123.

Yet, Hong Shen's own 1919 production, *TWH*, staged only one month after the publication of *Event*, presents an alternative reading of the Nora story. Set in Tianjin "just after the [1911] Revolution where nobles were still addressed by their titles and the people in general hesitated to break the old Chinese tradition,"[15] *TWH* was not a "social problem play" but a melodrama in which gentry men and women retained their Confucian ethical traditions (predominantly "filial piety" and "loyalty") and willingly bowed to the sacred tradition of "once wedded one may never marry again."[16] Rather than advancing the trope of "home leaving" (with "home" signifying tradition in general), *TWH* affirmed the sanctity of Confucian values. Expectedly, this "regressive slant" has led scholars such as Dave Edwards to categorize *TWH* as a piece of cultural conservatism, and has contributed to the play's marginality in the canonized *huaju* narrative that has been charged with radical political ideologies. Yet, it is the unorthodox perspective that *TWH* provides that makes its marginality unwarranted.

At the very same time that *Event*'s iconoclastic "home leaving" theme made the play too controversial to be staged in Beijing,[17] the "home affirming" message of *TWH* was successfully performed in Columbus, Ohio. Furthermore, with Hong Shen's insistence, *TWH* was staged with a gender-appropriate and racially mixed cast—five male Chinese overseas students, including Hong Shen, and two female American students—a move that boldly challenged then-current performative traditions in China (where single-sex performances were the norm) and America (where Asian characters were depicted by white actors in yellow-face). This interracial and hetero-social encounter between

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[15] Shen Hung, *The Wedded Husband*, in *Poet Lore*, 32 (March 1921), 110-25. The quotation is from the stage direction on page 110.
[16] Ibid., 125.
[17] Hong Shen, 1935, 59.

Chinese male students and their American female peers, framed within the melodramatic theatricality of *TWH*, presented a positive image of Chinese intellectuals' gender and racial identities in late 1910s America, and stands in contrast to the formative but bitter experiences of other "Chinamen abroad," such as Lu Xun (1881-1936) and Wen Yiduo (1899-1946).[18] The canonized narrative of Chinese overseas students thus seems to welcome the interpretation of Chinese (male) intellectuals inferior racial identity and troubled gender identification—i.e., the powerful "failures," which "gave rise to nationalism, race, and literary modernity."[19] In contrast, Hong's successful staging of *TWH* suggests an experience abroad that was far less bleak. Rather than being driven to intellectual fervor out of alienated despair, it was the cosmopolitan ethos of post-WWI America that enabled Hong Shen to find his dramatic voice.

It is these two "inappropriate" features—namely, *TWH*'s cultural conservatism against the Nora legacy and the cosmopolitan environment in which it was created and staged—that make the play a difficult fit within canonical narratives about the development of modern Chinese drama and China's post-May Fourth intellectual trajectory. And it is precisely for these reasons that *TWH* should be returned to our accounts of modern Chinese drama's formation, so that we may have a fuller picture of the genre's development and how *huaju* enabled Chinese overseas students to participate in the cosmopolitan culture of the postwar era by bringing "China" to the world. The "conservative" side of Hong Shen and the "cosmopolitanism" nature of early modern

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[18] As is well known, Lu Xun turned to literature after his (in)famous experience of being an "observer and spectator" at the photographed execution of a Chinese spy; and Wen Yiduo became involved in the National Drama Movement (*Guoju yundong*, 1924-1926) in part because he took offense at the discriminatory treatment of male Chinese students at the 1924 graduation ceremony of Colorado College.
[19] Jing Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature: The Making of Modern Chinese Identity, 1895-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 1.

Chinese drama in America should not be seen as "inappropriate" detours from conventional narratives, but as welcomed alternatives that fruitfully complicate our understanding of both Hong Shen and modern Chinese drama.

Reconsidering Conservative, Reformist, and Radical: Media Transposition from *A Strand of Hemp* to *The Wedded Husband*

Bao Tianxiao and A Strand of Hemp

Despite its historical significance, *TWH* remained largely unknown to the Chinese public during the first decade after its 1919 staging. This changed somewhat when Hong Shen wrote two memoirs, one included in his "Introduction" to *Drama*, and the other a personal history narrative ("A Life of Drama"), which appeared two years earlier, in 1933.[20] Compared to the vague and general reference to *TWH* in "Introduction," where only its Chinese title is mentioned, Hong Shen delivers a detailed plot summary of *TWH* in "A Life of Drama" and explicitly states that the inspiration for the play was drawn from a Chinese short story "One Strand of Hemp" (*Yilü ma*, hereafter "Hemp"), which Hong Shen claimed to have heard about from other Chinese students, but never read.

"Hemp" was written by Bao Tianxiao, one of the most prolific writers in the late Qing and early Republican eras. Like many of his Jiangsu peers, Bao was highly active in the world of publishing and fiction writing.[21] Included among the many ventures with which Bao was involved were contributing short stories, both original and translations of

[20] Hong Shen, "Xiju de rensheng" (A Life of Drama), in *Wukui qiao* (*Wukui Bridge*) (Shanghai: Xiandai shuju, 1934), 1-32.
[21] For more on Bao Tianxiao, please refer to Parry Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: The Univeristy of California Press, 1981); Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).

Western works, and editing supplements to *Shibao* (*Eastern Times*), such as *Xiaoshuo shibao* (*Fiction Times*) and *Funü shibao* (*Women's Times*).[22] *Hemp* made its debut in 1909 as the lead story for the second issue of *Xiaoshuo shibao*.

Bao's later writings suggest that he did not consider "Hemp" to be one of his most remarkable works. Only vaguely remembering the story in his 1971 autobiography, *Chuanying huiyi lu* (*A Memoir from the Mansion of Bracelet's Shadow*), Bao recalls that he drew his inspiration for the piece from eavesdropping on a conversation between a hair-combing servant (*zou shutou*) and some of his female relatives that centered around a blind marriage (*zhifu wei hun*) between two gentry families.[23] Although the groom-to-be in the story was mentally challenged, the marriage still took place as scheduled because both families felt duty-bound to keep their promises. Soon after the marriage, the bride caught diphtheria and only survived thanks to her husband's round-the-clock care. Then, after the husband himself became infected with diphtheria and died, the bride, no longer at risk of death but still in a coma, was dressed in a hemp gown as her mourning apparel. Bao later acknowledged that what immediately drew him to this inner-chamber conversation was that it possessed a strong "*chuanqi* flavor," which I take to mean the sentimentalism embedded in vernacular fiction and drama under the influence of the Ming (1368-1644) "cult of *qing*."[24]

As the works of cultural and literary historians such as Dorothy Ko, Maram Epstein, and Haiyan Lee have revealed, there was an unprecedented upsurge of fiction

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[22] Denise Gimpel, *Lost Voices of Modernity: A Chinese Popular Fiction Magazine in Context* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 201.
[23] Bao Tianxiao, *Chuanying lou huiyi lu* (*A Memoir from the Mansion of Bracelet's Shadow*) (Hong Kong: Dahua chuban she, 1971), 361.
[24] Ibid.

and drama devoted to the celebration of *qing* from the mid-Ming.[25] Viewing "a broadly defined Neo-Confucian orthodoxy" and "the late Ming cult of sentiment" as the two dominant discursive systems in the late sixteenth century,[26] Epstein reads the "redefinition of the place of the emotions and desires in human nature" as a "counter-orthodox discourse" that she calls the "aesthetics of authenticity."[27] Both Lee and Martin Huang argue that this upsurge can be traced back to late Ming writers' making *qing* into "a central issue in fiction and drama by promoting it as a supreme human value."[28] Lee points out that the Wang Yangming (1472-1529) School awarded *qing* the "foundational status previously reserved for *xing* (nature) and *li* (ritual)."[29] As one of the major creative forces behind the growth of sentimental fiction during the final decade of the Qing, it stands to reason that Bao would write such a story to attract his readers, who tended to be moderately educated females (mostly housewives) from China's urban areas. Thus, although "Hemp" does not rank among Bao's defining works, it does nicely represent the discourse of late Qing and early Republican sentimentalism, or the "Confucian structure of *qing*," as Haiyan Lee succinctly puts it.[30]

In turning this slice of womanly gossip into a "new short story" (*duanpian xinzuo*) for *Fiction Times*, Bao chose to highlight the later part of the tale over the former. Thus, what he emphasizes in "Hemp" is the bride's mourning for her dead husband, not her

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[25] Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chamber: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Maram Epstein, *Competing Discourses: Orthodoxy, Authenticity, and Engendered Meanings in Late Imperial Chinese Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001); Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* (Stanford: University of Stanford Press, 2007).
[26] Epstein, 6.
[27] Ibid., 62.
[28] Martin W. Huang, "Sentiments of Desire: Thoughts on the Cult of Qing in Ming-Qing Literature," in *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)*, Vol. 20 (December 1998), 161.
[29] Haiyan Lee, 34.
[30] Ibid., 25.

earlier resistance to the arranged marriage. In Bao's work, a gentry woman whose name remains unknown devotes herself to the cultivation of womanly virtue while at the same time being receptive to the insights of "new learning" (*xinxue*). The female protagonist has her own male *zhiji* (like-minded friends) with whom she exchanges poems and develops a certain romantic sentiment, though this sentiment is not yet explicitly addressed by the time her father arranges for her to marry the mentally challenged boy. Once the groom-to-be's intellectual shortcomings are known, the female protagonist understandably tries to convince her father to renege on the marriage deal. In reaction, the father attempts to convince his daughter to accept the match by referring to a story published in *Eastern Times*—of which *Fiction Times* was a supplement—which recounts how a certain European lady, Mary, kept her vow to marry her designated groom in spite of his becoming handicapped.

Apart from being a clever strategy to promote *Eastern Times*, Bao's allusion to Western chastity effectively brings forth *Hemp*'s first emotional conflict in which the female protagonist, the patriarchal power figure, and the story's urban readers are each given space to make their own readings. The father, representing the archetypal figure of a gentry man struggling to adjust to the uneasy ethical and cultural transition of the late Qing, unexpectedly celebrates the womanly virtue of the European Mary. To his pleasant surprise, within the new and modern (i.e. Western) world, there is a model of the virtuous woman, ready to inspire wayward members of China's current generation who, in the father's eyes, aspire to subvert all established ethical principles and social order. Hence, at the same time that the father proclaims Mary to be a "chaste woman" (*zhenren*), he also scorns what he considers to be the corrupted ethos of the contemporary age:

> Now that the new knowledge has started causing disasters and social chaos, the old morality has already fallen. Those who promote divorce view the conjugal relationship as a kind of hotel. The proclamation of the ancient sages, "once married, always married," has already become as light as dust in the air. Regarding marriage, how can there be no regrets? People should just follow their fate and bear the marriage.[31]

The female protagonist, however, has a different understanding of the Mary story. Confronted by her father, the gentry woman tearfully points out that he has overlooked, if not misunderstood completely, the true motivation for Mary's actions:

> Father, you should have learned [from the story] that Mary and James [her husband] shared a reciprocal affinity between their hearts, which greatly differs from our custom of securing wedlock only by the words of go-betweens. Second, even though James is physically ill, he still has a clear mind and sentimental feelings. As he is not dumb or lacking in sensibility, it is understandable why Mary and others would recommend their companionship to each other. It is unlike our barbaric marriage, where one is married off randomly and supposed to keep the marriage for a lifetime.[32]

The gentry woman discerns that the fundamental difference between her case and the sacrifice of the Western widow lies in the issue of an authentic and sincere sentiment, or *qing*. The reason she sympathetically understands and sanctifies Mary's decision to wed is because she sees that this decision derives from the couple's true feelings for each other, and not from the ethical obligations imposed on them by society. In other words, when conjugal obligations and bonds are "grounded within sentiment" and not merely

[31] Bao Tianxiao, "Yilü ma" (One Strand of Hemp), in *Xiaoshuo shibao* (*Fiction Times*) (vol. 1 no. 2, 1909), 1-5.
[32] Ibid.

"soldered together through ethical injunctions,"[33] the observation of womanly virtue and defense of the marriage pact become causes worth celebrating.

Despite the protagonist's eloquence, as well as the rather disturbing state of her groom-to-be, the marriage goes on as planned. Then, after informing his readers how the groom nursed and saved the bride's life at the cost of his own, Bao carefully stages the manner in which the female protagonist slowly develops and expresses an authentic sentiment for her late husband, which comes about through deep mournful wailing in private, the belated realization that it is her former husband who is her true *zhiji*, and finally, crying and bowing (*kubai*) in public in front of her husband's tomb.

> Thus the lady held the bed and performed mournful wailing: "I let my husband down, I failed my husband!" Her attitude toward the groom accordingly evolved, abandoning her despising heart and shedding grateful tears. The groom is not at all insane, he is a seed of authentic feelings. Later, the bride felt uncontrollable grief after learning of the groom's last words that he left with his parents, asking them to take good care of the new bride. Bowing to the spirit tablets, the new widow ejects another forceful cry. Her grief is so deeply touching and moving that a stranger may shed tears after hearing [the bride's crying]. Alas, readers, you should know that the lady's mourning differs from other new widows who mainly cry for their own unfortunate fate. This lady cries because she has failed a man of sentiment![34]

The emotional conflict that Bao expects will most affect his readers (in Bao's own words, "'Hemp' will give readers a good cry") is thus not the injustice of the institution of arranged marriage, but the sorrow that arises when one realizes that one has overlooked a person of true sentiment. Notice how Bao directly addresses his readers to distinguish the protagonist's sorrow, which is motivated by an authentic feeling of *qing*, from that of other widows whose cries are only a means of lamenting their own troubled fates. It is

[33] Haiyan Lee, 34.
[34] Bao Tianxiao, 1909, 1-5.

the female protagonist's willing subjugation to the power of *qing*, more than the tragic life of widowhood, that generates a "good cry" to be shared by the female protagonist and "Hemp"'s readers.

A Strand of Hemp *on Stage: Meilan Fang's and Ouyang Yuqian's Adaptations in Shanghai New Theatres*

"Hemp" was not only popular among urban housewives. It also attracted attention from various "new theatres" around the mid-1910s, roughly five years after the story was published, when both opera reformists and promoters of new drama (*xinju*) were anxiously looking for stories to adapt. Current scholarship, as well as archival materials, reveals that the growth of new drama during the 1910s shifted away from contemporary political issues to sentimental melodramas that aspired to build a new social-psychological order within the post-revolutionary routines of everyday life.[35] Indeed, soon after the new republic was declared in 1912, a conservative reappraisal of family values replaced the feverish revolutionary spirit of earlier times to become the main theme explored in theatres. "Hemp"'s celebration of the female protagonist's transformation—from a "new woman" harshly critical of Chinese marriage customs to a sentimental widow willing to obey the cult of chastity—echoed such cultural conservatism and was a motive, but not the only one, for staging the work during the so-called "script hunger" of the mid-1910s.

The intense sentimentalism and succinct dramatic structure embedded in "Hemp," expectedly, drew attention from those involved in various theatre experiments of the day,

[35] Zhu Shuangyun, *Xinju shi* (*History of New Drama*) (Shanghai: Xinju xiaoshuo she), 1914; and Li Jin, "Theatre of Pathos: Sentimental Melodramas in the New Drama Legacy" in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* vol. 24 no. 2 (Fall 2012), 94-128.

experiments that were "aesthetically vitalizing as well as politically inspired."[36] Adaptations of "Hemp" were staged by both Mei Lanfang and the Spring Willow Theatre (*Chunliu juchang*), in the 1916/17 performance year. Here, I will question *how* these theatrical forces, conventionally labeled as either conservative (Mei Lanfang) or radical (Spring Willow Theatre), or as representing the traditional/modern dyad, made Bao's piece a vehicle to *perform* their own chosen political identities as well as to formulate an audience-cum-community that would tread together along the play's ideological and aesthetic paths. When we examine Mei Lanfang's and the Spring Willow Theatre's versions of *Hemp*, the *prescriptive* labels that have long-flourished in scholarly and critical profiles of modern Chinese drama, often depicting the genre as an inherently "progressive" form of art, are not amenable.

Undoubtedly, "Hemp"'s most famous reincarnation was Mei Lanfang's early contemporary costume Peking opera (*shizhuang jiuxi*) of the same name, which enjoyed sensational popularity in Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai in 1916. *Hemp* was Mei's fourth contemporary costume Peking opera, but the first to have its scenario outlined by Qi Rushan,[37] and marked the beginning of an intellectual-performative cooperation between the two that would last until the 1930s. Their version of *Hemp* offered a "progressive" critique of China's marriage customs. Given that Mei and Peking opera are usually depicted as "traditional" and thereby excluded from histories of modern drama, this "modern touch" is indeed quite striking, and reveals that the binary between "progressive" and "conservative" in early Republican theatre was actually quite porous.

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[36] Joshua Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-creation of Peking Opera, 1870-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 89.
[37] Mei Lanfang, *Wutai shenghuo sishi nian (1)* (*Forty Years of Life on Stage I*) (Shanghai: Pingming chuban she, 1952), 274.

Prior to discovering Bao's "Hemp," Mei, feeling threatened by the bold steps in drama reform that were then being taken by "actor-innovators"[38] (such as Wang Xiaonong [1858-1918] and Feng Zihe [1885-1942]), new stage owners (Xia Yuerun [1878-1931] and Xia Yueshan [1868-1924]), and drama critics (Chen Qubing [dates unknown]), had already begun a rather anxious search of his own for source materials to adapt for "hybrid" drama in Beijing. Joshua Goldstein writes that between the 1900s and 1910s, Peking opera was an "open-ended form, as apt for staging contemporary and foreign content as for presenting ancient classics."[39] The eclectic nature of Shanghai theatre, featuring Beijing operatic music and acrobatic gestures in "modern" playhouses with proscenium stages and electric lighting, had already become common practice and easily attracted patrons' attention and patronage. Between 1913 and 1914, Mei had made several trips to Shanghai where, after visiting the new-style stages and watching hybrid dramas, he became "seemingly limitless in ambition and energy"[40] when it came to reforming the artistic content and operational system of the moribund opera culture of Beijing. As Mei recalls, his reformation efforts after 1914 were specifically directed toward creating four categories of "new drama": old costume new opera (*guzhuang xinxi*), contemporary costume Peking operas, new ancient-costume plays (*xin guzhuang xi*), and *kun* opera (*kunqu*).[41] Among these innovations, contemporary costume Peking opera was the one that most quickly flourished in the 1910s.

By 1920, however, contemporary costume Peking opera and other hybrid drama experiments "had been abandoned by almost all self-respecting intellectuals, patriotic

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[38] Goldstein, 95.
[39] Ibid., 102.
[40] Ibid., 116.
[41] Mei Lanfang, 254.

dramaturge, and Peking opera stars."[42] This rapid extinction is presented as necessary and natural in most scholarly narratives of Chinese drama history, as they represented, at best, "gawky products of an adolescent cultural miscegenation."[43] However, such a retrospective diagnosis should not prevent us from recovering the theatrical power that Mei and Qi's *Hemp* employed to break through social boundaries between elites and the illiterate masses, men and women, and regional and cultural differences, in order to unite them all through a shared emotional experience.[44] Nor should we overlook the fact that the "shared emotional experience" provided by Mei and Qi in their version of *Hemp* was decidedly different and for a different purpose than the one provided earlier by Bao for his predominantly female readership.

Mei Lanfang offers an account of *Hemp*'s transformation from page to stage in his 1952 memoir, *Forty Years of Life on Stage*. During a fateful dinner in 1916, Wu Zhenxiu (1883-1966) brought a copy of *Fiction Times* to Mei and Qi, recommending that they adapt Bao's short story. At that time, with the advent of the New Culture Movement (*Xin wenhua yundong* 1915-1925), the tradition of arranged marriage was coming under increased attack despite still being a common practice. Wu therefore encouraged Mei and Qi to "perform the misery of the story" in order to "warn those cruel and ignorant parents."[45] Quickly discerning the potential power of affect embedded in the story, Mei and Qi drew out their outline for *Hemp* in just two days. Their version of *Hemp*, different than Bao's, was intended to provoke social change.

[42] Goldstein, 131.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., 99.
[45] Mei Lanfang, 273.

The most dramatic revision they made to the original story was to have the female protagonist perform a violent scene of self-destruction where she pierces her throat with a pair of scissors rather than join the "cult of chastity." Explaining that he and Qi were dissatisfied with Bao's decision to have the female protagonist become a chaste widow, Mei wrote:

> We think the play structure [if we followed Bao's ending] would be rather loose [i.e. ineffective]. The widowhood [that Bao designated for the female protagonist] is indeed very cruel. Thus, we changed it into a scene where Miss Lin [the female protagonist] commits suicide by piercing her own throat after she was overcome by the contradictory and complicated situation and felt rather desolate, futureless, and lifeless. With our revision, the play structure is more tightened and the dramatic tension is more heightened. Also, we emphasized the evil fruit of blind marriage. Hopefully it will further alert the society [of the cruelty of blind marriage].[46]

Although Mei in his 1952 memoir was rather unhappy with the "conservative" ending of his 1916 revision, feeling that a conclusion where the woman avoided both suicide and arranged marriage would have worked better,[47] his depictions of the overbearance of tradition and the female protagonist's violent suicide in protest to her victimization were in themselves already a radical leap from Bao's short story. Acting as the protagonist on stage, Mei vividly depicted how the female body was stabbed and pierced (achieved via theatrical illusion) by tradition. In order to reveal the harm that "traditional marriage" still wrought in the early Republican years, Mei and Qi employed the power of sentiment to challenge custom.

Like Bao's readers, the audience members of the opera *Hemp* were also touched and shed their tears. However, this "good cry" was not derived from their affinity for

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[46] Ibid., 275.
[47] Ibid., 277.

qing but by their aversion to *li* (ritual). In other words, tears were shed in protest against suffocating ethical rules and moral norms, not as a moving affect to the sanctity of sentiment. In this way, Mei and Qi stood at the forefront of the trend adopted by successive May Fourth discourses; faulting *tradition* for its heartless rules that violently subjugate individuals, be they reluctant fathers or vulnerable women.

The *Hemp* of Mei and Qi also differed from the original in the size and scope of its audience. Bao's version was intended for a female audience and, by its nature, limited to those who could read (or those who may have had the story read to them). This requirement of literacy brought with it an added class dimension, since the ability to read in the late Qing was still the privilege of the few. In contrast, Mei and Qi's *Hemp* attracted an audience of men and women from varying social classes and locations.[48] Although both versions of *Hemp* created a "shared community" between audience/performers and readers/writer, these communities were different in both scope and intent.

Reflecting the ethos of the times, Mei's performance was a sensational success across Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai. On April 19, 1916, *Hemp* made its debut at the Jixiang Yuan (Happy Garden) in Beijing.[49] Later that year, Mei staged *Hemp* in Beijing's Sanqing Yuan (Three Celebration Garden) that had been recently renovated. This performance, according to Fu Sinian (1896-1950), attracted a crowd big enough to

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[48] The educator and cultural critic Fu Sinian recalled that he went to the theatre to watch *Hemp* twice, with his schoolmates and his old female relatives respectively. See "Xiju gailiang gemian guan" (A Comprehensive View on Theatre Reform) in *Fu Sinian quanji* (*The Complete Works of Fu Sinian*) vol. 4, (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chuban she, 2003), 1088.
[49] Liao Taiyan, "Meilanfang yu bao tianxiao" (Mei Lanfang and Bao Tianxiao) in *Shuwu* (*Book house*), no. 11 (2012), http://www.housebook.com.cn/201211/18.htm Accessed November 20, 2014.

cause severe traffic in the *Da zhalan* area.[50] Recalling the performance nearly three years later, Fu complained that both the story writer (Bao Tianxiao) and the opera singer (Mei Lanfang) had yet to gain "absolute enlightenment"; and that neither the story nor the performance possessed "excellent structure."

Nevertheless, Fu believed that *Hemp*'s progressive message compensated for its traditional performative forms, and he deemed the work to be a "transitional play"[51] (*guodu xi*) that contributed to the cause of drama reform. The most praise-worthy quality embedded in *Hemp*, Fu believed, was that its content predicted the "social problem plays" (*wenti ju*) that were then beginning to rise in the May Fourth era. Fu wrote:[52]

> This play, after all, has the overtone of a "social problem drama." A careful analysis will reveal several layers of social problems: (1) the marriage is decided not by individuals but by parents; why is this? (2) Parents made the marriage arrangement for their own sake, not for the sake of their children; why is this? (3) Once engaged, the wedlock could not be unlocked because of dignity and convention; why is this? (4) If a nominal husband dies for some uncanny reason, what life will the widow have? In today's society, the widow would receive significant [social] pressure and would just end her life with suicide…

Hence, what Fu found to be most striking about Mei and Qi's "conservative" work was its "radical" political commentary.

Evidence suggests, however, that *Hemp*'s success was not due to its "radical" message alone. The play's impressive box-office run in Beijing and Tianjin prompted Shanghai commercial theatres to invite Mei to stage *Hemp* there, as well. On November 5, 1916, *Shenbao* (*Shanghai News*) published an advertisement promoting the arrival of

[50] Fu Sinian, 2003,1088.
[51] Ibid., 1089.
[52] Ibid.

the play. Although both Mei's excellent performance and the play's power to "reform society" were addressed in the ad, they were not done so to the same degree:[53]

> This play is Mei Lanfang's famous and well-known play. Mei's natural beauty is further embellished by the contemporary costumes, [and thus is] very eye-catching. Moreover, Mei's performance [both singing and acting], his expressions of joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness, are all shockingly vivid. The story is coherent and well structured… The play has won national popularity, audiences [everywhere] all applaud the performance. Moreover, the play can also transform the society. The [Shanghai] gentry merchants requested Mei's performance several times. After a long-standing invitation, Mei [and *Hemp*] will finally perform at our [Heavenly Toad] stage.

Differing from Fu's mixed appraisal of *Hemp* in which the play's progressive nature was praised while its performance and plot were found to be lacking, the Heavenly Toad Stage's advertisement heavily promoted *Hemp*'s performative (Mei's performance), theatrical (contemporary stage set and costumes), and dramaturgic (the plot structure) merits, and only mentioned its ability to evoke social change in passing. Indeed, it was *Hemp*'s mature literary preparation, alongside Mei Lanfang's fame, that most rendered the play attractive to Shanghai viewers. As already mentioned, the city at that time was suffering from a paucity of scripts—both quantity- and quality-wise—which caused performers and audience members alike to hunger for good "theatrical dramaturgy" or "stageable scripts."

It should come as no surprise, then, that with Mei's arrival, Ouyang Yuqian, the spiritual leader of the Spring Willow Theatre (*Chunliu juchang*) and the troupe's leading actor, who at the same time performed at the Heavenly Toad Stage (*Tianchan da wutai*), saw an opportunity. Soon after Mei's performance in Shanghai, Ouyang adapted *Hemp*

[53] *Shenbao*, Nov. 5, 1916.

into the Spring Willow Theatre's civilized drama repertoire, but with Bao's and not Mei's ending:[54]

> Miss Zhao deeply mourned after learning that young Master Shi [the groom] died because of nursing her… Having received letters from Hua Junfu (Miss Zhao's earlier *zhiji*), Miss Zhao at once ordered the letters to be returned. Even after she returns to her parent's home, she still avoids meeting Hua. Now, people all comment that Zhao's chastity is comparable to gold, rock, ice, and snow.

The Spring Willow Theatre's loyalty to Bao's "conservative" ending may evoke surprise among those whose knowledge about the troupe comes primarily from the canonical narratives of modern Chinese drama and literature. Led by Lu Jingruo and Ouyang Yuqian in Shanghai between 1914 and 1916, the Spring Willow Theatre is nearly always depicted in drama histories as inheriting the progressive crown worn by Ouyang and Lu's previous group, the Spring Willow Society (*Chunliu she*), the Chinese students' drama club that allegedly staged the very first modern Chinese drama in Tokyo in 1907.[55] Siyuan Liu argues that the two major canonizations of modern Chinese drama—that took place in 1935 and 1955, respectively[56]—successfully separated the Spring Willow from "civilized drama", the catch-all phrase used by drama reformists to describe "obscene" performances that were primarily motivated by commercial interests. Yet, a careful examination of the Spring Willow Theatre's productions will reveal that textual-borrowings from Western and Japanese political fictions and social problem plays

[54] Zheng Zhengqiu, *Xinju kaozheng baichu* (*One Hundred New Drama Plays*) (Shanghai: Zhonghua tushu jicheng gongsi, 1919), 47.
[55] Ge Yihong, et al. *Zhongguo huaju tongshi* (*A History of Modern Chinese Drama*) (Beijing: Wenhua yishu, 1990), 45.
[56] Siyuan Liu, *Performing Hybridity in Colonial-Modern China* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 8. In 1935, Hong Shen's "Introduction" initiated the practice of excluding *wenming xi* from the parameters of modern Chinese drama. However, in 1957, when Tian Han and Ouyang Yuqian initiated the 50-years celebration of the *huaju* movement, they officially marked the history of *huaju* as starting with the 1907 Spring Willow production of *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven*, which was a civilized drama.

constituted only a minor part of its repertoire, and that some of the Spring Willow Theatre's "serious works" were only proposed but never staged. Succumbing to box-office pressure, the majority of Spring Willow plays, both adaptive and original works, were sentimentalist melodramas devoid of political intent. Valuing the bonding force of sentimentalism more than overt pronouncements of enlightenment/moralism, Ouyang and Lu's adaptation of *Hemp* carefully preserved "the power of sympathetic tears" that Bao's version had successfully aroused, leaving the "social problem" focus of Mei and Qi behind. Like Bao, Ouyang and Lu employed *qing* for a conservative purpose.

In juxtaposing Mei's and Ouyang's *Hemp*s, I have demonstrated the surprising "misplacement" that occurred between Mei Lanfang's Beijing efforts at operatic reform and the Spring Willow Theatre's intent to create a commercially viable stage production in Shanghai. In this case it was Mei's contemporary costume Peking opera, or, what May Fourth iconoclasts considered to be the commercial and traditional theatre, that best predicted the "social problem plays" of the May Fourth era which, according to canonical narratives, were deeply rooted in the radical discourses of Westernization and modernization. By contrast, the Spring Willow Theatre, a group traditionally labeled as "progressive" in scholarship, produced a version of *Hemp* reflective of the "sentimentalist" trends that May Fourth thinkers strongly criticized. When *Hemp* is our case study, the "traditional/modern" binary used to explain the development of Chinese modern drama appears remarkably ill-defined.

*Loyalty (*Zhong*) and Filial Piety (*Xiao*) Is what Matters Most—A May Fourth Man of Letters' Conservative Take on* Hemp

If an examination into the ideological topography embedded within the successive *Hemp* narratives reveals the problematic imposition of popular fiction, Peking opera reform, and civilized drama based on the Western/tradition dyad during the late Qing-early Republican transition, then the even more tenuous adaptation of *Hemp* by Hong Shen calls into yet further question the canonizations of dramatists, spoken drama, and modern Chinese intellectuals' identities in early 20th century China and America. Specifically, when viewed through the lens of Hong Shen's dramaturgic adaptation of *Hemp*, the deep-rooted image of the iconoclastic "May Fourth Man of letters"—central to canonizations of Chinese modern drama—is fundamentally challenged and must be revised. Such a revision, by necessity, brings with it other revisionist glances to be cast at the heterogeneity of literary and cultural modernity on both national and global scales in the first decades of the 20th century. Thus, a thorough account of Hong Shen's mental and social "preparation" for *TWH* should be extended backwards in several directions: temporally, to 1914/1915, when he contributed essays to popular reading journals; spatially, to Beijing, where he studied at Tsinghua (1912-16); and socially (by which Hong formed his self-identity) to the conservative side exemplified by Bao Tianxiao and other examples of "Saturday literature."

In an interesting but covert manner, Hong Shen's course of adapting *Hemp* started and in turn furnished the complicated process of domesticating Ibsen's most prominent female protagonist—Nora, from *A Doll's House*—in modern Chinese literature. Scholars have succinctly demonstrated how Nora's home-leaving theme—

both the patriarchal home dominated by parents and the bureaucratic one staffed by husbands—became a core cultural and rhetorical source for male intellectuals' pursuit of iconoclasm and individualism in writing and/or performing "new women" during the New Culture/May Fourth era.[57] Yet, scholarly discussions regarding the intellectual agents behind, and popular reaction to, Nora's domestication tend to fixate on only a few retrospective appropriations[58] that questioned the legitimacy of "home-leaving." It seems that in most cases, Nora and the trope of "home leaving" was warmly embraced by progressive intellectuals. In this surprisingly hegemonic narrative regarding Nora's domestication in China, the Spring Willow Theatre's production of *A Doll's House* directed by Lu Jingruo in 1914, followed by Hu Shi's *Event* written and published in 1919 as the first modern play in vernacular Chinese, mark Nora's theatrical and dramaturgic debuts in China. However, a careful contextualization of these celebrated "debuts" reveals that they were in fact failed or incomplete.

Like Hu Shi's *Event*, which was unable to be staged in public, the Spring Willow Theatre's well-known production of Nora also remained a mere proposal. According to Xu Muyun (1900-1974) and A Ying (1900-1977),[59] Lu Jingruo staged *A Doll's House* in 1914 when he and Ouyang Yuqian ran the Spring Willow Theatre in Shanghai. In

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[57] Shuei-may Chang, *Casting off the Shackles of Family: Ibsen's Nora Figure in Modern Chinese Literature, 1918-1942* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2004), 25-49.
[58] For example, Ouyang Yuqian's *Huijia yihou* (*After Returning Home* (1922-1924)), as Xiaomei Chen argues, "complicated the May Fourth concern of women's liberation and the entire genre of the 'Nora Plays'." See Xiaomei Chen, "Modern Chinese Spoken Drama," in Victor H. Mair, ed., *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 853. Regarding Lu Xun's concerns of the financial independence of female students, China's would-be Noras, see "Nala chuzou yihou zenyang"(What Happens after Nora Leaves Home?) originally given at the Beijing Women's Normal College in 1933.
[59] See Xu Muyun, *Zhonguo xijushi* (*China's Drama History*) (Shanghai: Shijie shuju, 1938), 130; A Ying, "Yi Pusheng de zuopin zai Zhongguo" (Ibsen's Works in China), in *Wenyi bao* (*News of Literature and Art*), no. 17, 1956. Also see *A Ying quanji* (*The Complete Work of A Ying*) (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1979), 667.

addition to A Ying's authoritative recognition, Lu Jingruo's essay "Yipusheng zhi ju" (Ibsen's Plays), known as the first piece that comprehensively introduced Ibsen to Chinese readers, published in the first and only issue of *Paiyou zazhi* (*Actors' Magazine*)[60] in 1914, also enhanced the credibility of Lu's early domestication of Nora. Calling Ibsen "Shakespeare's chief competitor" in terms of talent and the "top-notch player of drama revolution,"[61] Lu enthusiastically recommended and praised 11 social dramas, including *A Doll's House*, which was translated from Japanese as 人形の家 (*ningyō no ie*).[62] However, the focus of Lu and Feng's short essay was on introducing Ibsen as an iconoclastic Western dramatist rather than examining the plots and details of his specific plays. Thus, *A Doll's House* was presented to the limited readership of *Paiyou zazhi* simply as an introduction to Ibsen's repertoire with no specific texts discussed with any substance. When it came to the purported civilized drama production, Lu Jingruo indeed proposed to stage Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and *The Wild Duck* (1884) to his fellow Spring Willow comrades. However, Lu's proposal was, according to Ouyang, never realized, because

> First, we [the Spring Willow Theatre] did not have a stern resolution; second, we really did not have time because we needed to prepare new performances every night; and finally, many people were opposed to spending efforts on staging those plays [Western plays] because they were too difficult to understand. It would be in vain to put those plays on stage.[63]

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[60] As one of the earliest drama magazines in Republican China, *Paiyou zazhi* was edited by Feng Shuluan (1883-?) and issued by the Shanghai wenhui book bureau. The journal's sole issue appeared in September 1914. See Liu Hecheng, "Jinchu yiqi de *Paiyou zazhi*" (The Single Issued Actor's Magazine) in Chuban shiliao Publication Archives, 2005 (01), 64.

[61] Lu Jingruo and Feng Shuyuan, "Yipusheng zhi ju," (Ibsen's Drama) in *Paiyou zazhi*, no. 1, September 20, 1914, 4-6.

[62] http://www.ibseninchina.com.cn ChinesePerformance.htm. Accessed November 21, 2013.

[63] Ouyang Yuqian, *Zi wo yanxi yilai (1907-1928)* (*Since I Perform*) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chuban she, 1959), 52-53.

The first "domestication" of Nora was not a staging of *A Doll's House* by the Spring Willow Theatre, as is often asserted.

Nora's first reception in China came instead through an essay, with a heavy commentarial voice. In 1915, a certain Le Shui[64] published an article titled "Oumei mingju" (European and American Signature Plays) in *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (*The Short Story Magazine*, hereafter, *XSYB*) where a detailed synopsis and critical reading of *A Doll's House*, known as "A Lovely Wife," was for the first time introduced to the Chinese public.[65] This mysterious Le Shui was none other than Hong Shen, and his choice to introduce Nora in *XSYB* provokes us to re-read the standard narratives of Hong Shen and other May Fourth men of letters, on the one hand; and of the biography of "Nala," the canonized iconoclastic "new woman" who first cast off the shackles of family, on the other.

In his essay, Le Shui juxtaposes *A Doll's House* with "Gan'en er si" (*A Women Killed with Kindness*) and "Xifang meiren" (*The Fair Maid of the West*), both written by the Elizabethan playwright Thomas Heywood (1570-1641), and "Shoucai lu" (*L'avare*) written by Molière (1622-1673). Inverting the "hierarchy" that previous discussions on Ibsen strictly observed—namely, prioritizing the playwright (such as reading Ibsen as "Shakespeare's chief rival" in Lu Jingruo's introduction) over his plays—Le Shui focuses on the "innovative" plot twists centered on the domestic conflicts that *A Doll's House* and the other plays commonly shared. After a quick summary of the play, Le Shui employs a

[64] The penname was inspired by "Zhizhe le shui, renzhe le shan" (The wise find pleasure in water; the virtue finds pleasure in mountains), from the *Analects*.
[65] Le Shui, "Oumei mingju" (European and American Signature Plays), in *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (*Short Story Monthly*), vol. 6 no. 6 (1915).

commentary voice to highlight the "themes" (*juzhi*) of the work where he reads Nora, who is referred to as Nalei, as a rather negative character. While showing sympathy for Nalei and further acknowledging that people should be able to understand a woman's opinions and actions by assuming her perspective, Le Shui does not glorify her determination to cast off the shackles of the bourgeois family structure and maintain her independence. Rather, Le Shui/Hong Shen warns his readers to avoid following Nalei and Haimoer's (Nora's husband) steps in getting divorced. He argues that the message of *A Doll's House* was that both the husband and the wife should take greater responsibilities to save, rather than abandon, their crumbling relationship:

> First, a woman will have her own opinions and behaviors. People should scrutinize her side of the story and then defend her. Men should not only apply the way of the husband [to the wife] to demand perfection or reproach women's [actions]. Second, it is very difficult for husband and wife to get along, [thus, both] should tolerate the other, but ought not to break up or even divorce. All husbands tend to be enraged and act wantonly, but do not closely analyze what actually happened. All wives [on the other hand] are near-sighted. Once separated from their husbands, wives tend to be cold-blooded, disheartened, and joyless. Furthermore, they would take an extremely unwise path. This act [women leaving their marriage] should not be [done] without caution.[66]

Reading Nalei as a simple but naïve woman who made a reckless, (self)destructive, and unwise decision to run away from her marriage obligations, Hong Shen criticizes both Nalei and her husband for being unable to tolerate each other in order to defend their family virtue. Though often identified as a progressive May Fourth man of letters, Hong Shen here expresses the cultural conservatism conventionally associated with the Saturday School fiction writers (Bao Tianxiao) and commercial theatre (Peking opera) singers. His introduction of an "unwelcomed" Nora to Chinese readers also suggests that

[66] Ibid.

the politics of the Chinese domestication of Nora initiates not from an iconoclastic position, but as a mindful warning against hasty transgressions from gender norms.

In summer 1916, one year after Le Shui's cautionary depiction of Nora, Hong Shen embarked on his prearranged study abroad trip to the United States where the after effects of Le Shui's understanding of Nora and *Hemp* played out in unforeseen theatrical forms in Columbus, Ohio. Specifically, the cultural conservatism Hong expressed in his reading of Nora was loudly echoed by the writing and staging of his version of *Hemp—The Wedded Husband*, which began as the final project for a graduate level English seminar that Hong Shen took in spring quarter, 1918 while he was a sophomore at OSU.

Hong Shen's Version of Hemp—The Wedded Husband

Labeled by Hong Shen as a "Chinese realist play," *TWH* is set in the domestic space of a gentry family in Tianjin "just after the Revolution (1911), when nobles were still addressed by their titles and the people in general hesitated to break the old Chinese tradition."[67] At a time when the city is suffering from scorching weather and is threatened by plague, two gentry families (the Wangs and the Chens) are preparing for a traditional betrothal. The patriarchal heads of these two families, Lord Wang and Sir Chen, enjoy a good relationship as mutually faithful and responsible friends. Twenty years earlier, Lord Wang was a penniless student who benefited from Sir Chen's protection and assistance. At the time of the play, however, their situations have reversed—Lord Wang has prospered while Sir Chen has been beset by one misfortune after another. In addition to having fathered an abnormal and "mentally weak" (or insane)

[67] Shen Hung, 1921, 110-35.

son, the once prosperous Sir Chen has become “too kind” and “too weak” to prevent his family from experiencing financial ruin in the changing political and economic climate of the new Republic. Out of gratitude and a Confucian sense of duty, Lord Wang decides to save Sir Chen’s family by marrying his daughter, Miss Wang, a “responsible,” “dutiful,” and well educated young gentry woman, to the insane son.

Although Miss Wang’s heart is drawn to another man, the “independent and daring” Mr. Yang, who is versed in both traditional and Western learning, she consents to marry the insane boy out of filial piety and obligation to her father’s friend. Sensing the determination of Lord Wang and Miss Wang, Mr. Yang realizes that he is unable to change anyone’s mind, and decides to leave Tianjin for Inner Mongolia on the wedding day. But the agreed-upon wedding ceremony cannot be completed because on that night Miss Wang succumbs to plague. Ignoring the risks, the insane boy does not observe the recommended quarantine and insists on nursing his bride back to health. As a result, the Boy dies eight weeks later after contracting plague himself just as his bride has fully recovered.

Having indirectly caused the death of his friend’s only son as well as almost killing his own daughter, Lord Wang is tortured by self-guilt and the burdens of raising a daughter according to Confucian norms. He decides to go against the custom that “once [a woman] is wedded to a man, she can never marry again”[68] and calls back Mr. Yang from the far desert of Inner Mongolia to arrange a new marriage for his daughter, one that will be based on love instead of obligation. At first, Miss Wang is enthralled by the news and wholeheartedly prepares for the upcoming ceremony. But when Miss Wang learns

[68] Ibid., 130.

from her maid how the insane boy fulfilled his responsibility as a wedded husband to nurse her back to health, sacrificing his own life in the process, her mood changes. In a series of emotionally-charged exchanges between Miss Wang and the Maid, Miss Wang decides to rebuke her father's plans for her second arranged marriage. Taking control of her own destiny, Miss Wang becomes a chaste widow.

Strikingly, the way that Miss Wang asserts her agency is by upholding familial and social obligation. In this manner, Hong Shen presents a version of female empowerment quite at odds with the future Nora-inspired plays of the 1920s. Ironically, however, this empowerment does not liberate Miss Wang from the confinements of the family or transform her into a Chinese Nora; rather, it sends Miss Wang to the inner-chambers and to a life of widowhood that she has chosen on her own.

Qing *Reigns Supreme*

In contrast to Mei and Qi's radical revision of *Hemp*, Hong Shen's play, though written in English and staged in the "modern" United States (and done without Bao's knowledge), not only maintained but actually further developed Bao's vision of the supreme power of *qing*, making *qing* comprehensible under the schemes of *li* (ritual in the Confucian discourse) and *li* (rationality in the Enlightenment discourse). Following the precedent established by Bao, Mei/Qi, and Ouyang, Hong Shen designates Miss Wang, the female protagonist, as the ideal feminine source from which to furnish and deliver the transformative power of authentic *qing*. But in Hong's version the theatrical expression of *qing* is not gendered solely as female, and is also manifest by the insane boy (the husband, Master Chen). Nor do the "sacrifices" committed first by the insane boy and

then Miss Wang appear unintelligible or unbearable to the modern and Westernized intellectual youth, Mr. Yang. Hong Shen evenly distributes the configuration of "love"/*qing*[69] among the dialogues/actions of Miss Wang, the Boy, and Mr. Yang. The supreme power of love/*qing* eventually thrives and is fully celebrated once the melodramatic dichotomies established in the beginning of the play between insanity and rationality, a woman's right to pursue "free love" and the virtue to be gained from observing traditional behavioral codes concerning widowhood, as well as the tension between the pre-revolutionary ethical code and the post-revolutionary modern ethos, collide at the end. That is to say, the tension between "good" and "evil" that has driven the dramatization of a domestic issue, the falling through of an arranged marriage; takes a melodramatic turn when, quite anti-dramatically, the "good" does not completely *defeat* the "evil"; rather, the borders in-between become particularly porous and nearly all of the characters perform a certain boundary-transgression. Without a happy reunion, *da tuanyuan*, between Miss Wang and Mr. Yang, a stylistic feature which, on the surface, was commonly shared by Chinese *chuanqi* and Western melodrama, Hong Shen instead aspires to reach an even higher-scale "reunion" between Chinese sentimentalism (*qing*, loyalty, and filial piety) and the enlightenment values of rationality and subjectivity.

In Hong Shen's carefully plotted drama structure, the first dramatic encounter between a Chinese understanding of *qing* and a Western appreciation of "love," occurs when the insane boy and Mr. Yang foolishly but sincerely attempt to make sense of "love":

[69] Whereas Hong Shen uncritically employs the English term "love" in the English script, he consciously favors the use of *qing* over *aiqing* (love) in the meta-narratives he wrote in Chinese that explained his motivation behind, and the plotting strategies of, this play.

Boy (*looking around*).—Say, don't tell anybody. I want to ask you a question.
Mr. Yang.—A question?
Boy.—Yes, is my wife pretty?
Mr. Yang.—Your wife?
Boy.—I mean her—Miss Wang. Once betrothed to me, always my wife.
Mr. Yang (*Shaking his head*)—Is that so?
Boy.—That's tradition. My father told me that. Now tell me is she pretty. I love her.
Mr. Yang.—Why, have you met her before?
Boy.—Not yet.
Mr. Yang.—And you say you love her?
Boy.—Yes.
Mr. Yang.—How could it be possible? It's the greatest joke I ever heard. "Love at first sight" you go beyond that.
Boy.—If I want to love, I need no sight.
Mr. Yang.—Tell me why do you love her.
Boy.—Because, because she is my wife.
Mr. Yang.—Your wife, to love her is your duty. (*He pauses*) Now let us drop the subject. It is too ungentlemanly to joke about such a sacred thing as love.
Boy.—I mean it seriously. I love her.[70]

The Boy's sincere belief in love between husband and wife at first appears to be only a joke to Mr. Yang, who reveals his suspicions by means of his teasing comment on "love at first sight." The Boy's conflation of "love" and "duty" further irritates Mr. Yang, who seeks to protect the sacredness of love from moral and social burdens, or, in this case, from family obligations. Yet, as the dialogue proceeds, Mr. Yang finds himself moved and acknowledges his misjudgment of the insane boy:

Boy.—Another question, do you think she will love me?
Mr. Yang (*Thinking hard, then desperately*).—She hardly will.
Boy.—Not?
Mr. Yang (*Looking before him*).—No.
Boy.—Never mind, I love her all the same. I can wait.
Mr. Yang (*Looking at boy*).—Wait?
Boy.—If she does not love me today, I will wait till tomorrow; then the day after tomorrow.

[70] Shen Hung, 1921, 117.

> Mr. Yang.—Love is a matter of heart and not a matter of waiting.
> Boy.—All the same to me. I will wait and wait till some day when my hair is white—
> Mr. Yang.—Nonsense!
> Boy.—And if she does not love me then, perhaps she will love me after my death.
> Mr. Yang.—Stop, stop. My friend (*Moved*) My friend, I am sorry, I—misjudged you.[71]

With Hong Shen's well-crafted characterization, the Boy does not lose his "insanity" as the scenes progress; he maintains his symbolic "unintelligence" to counter the "rationality" of Mr. Yang, as well as of a general public that was accustomed to the idea of "love" as psychological testaments of subjectivity and individuality. Yet, the Boy's "insanity," represented here by his conflation of duty and love, does not weaken the inherent power of a *qing*-based conception of "love" that reveals itself to be equally credible and rewarding. This dialogue takes place in the Act I, and foreshadows the insane boy's sacrifice and death in Act II as well as Miss Wang's willingness to accept widowhood in the name of love/*qing* in Act III. Theatrically, Hong Shen employs this dialogue to prepare Mr. Yang and the spectators with a new scheme of the structure of feelings in which love/*qing*, conjugal duty, and Confucian ritual inform and reinforce each other.

This new scheme becomes even clearer in Act II when the Boy argues with the Western-style family about his obligation to stay and nurse his plague-struck wife. After demonstrating the collision between love/*qing* and ritual/*li* for Mr. Yang, Hong Shen further entrusts the Boy to explain the rationale of his "insane" decision to nurse his contagious wife. Dramatically, the insane boy, in a rational and eloquent manner,

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[71] Ibid.

reasons that the ideal-based conjugal relationship should override the scientific-based quarantine and its accompanying panic:

> Doctor.—The plague is very contagious. (*to himself frowning*) What is the trouble; what idea is getting into his head.
> Boy.—No, I won't desert her.
> …
> Boy.—Doctor. I want to ask you—er--another—philosophical question.
> Doctor.—Huh, philosophical! (*shaking his head.*)
> Boy.—People call me insane, a fool. So if my question is not right, please don't—
> Doctor (*Impatiently*).—What is it?
> Boy.—Why should a man love his wife?
> Doctor.—Why should a man love? I give it up. I say, I give it up.
> Sir Chen [Boy's father]—The plague is a serious matter. I have only one boy, that is you.
> Boy.—Father, the plague is everywhere. This is as safe as any place.
> Doctor.—Now tell me what good can you do by staying here?
> Boy.—Nurse my wife; perhaps she is not so hopeless after all. She might recover.
> …
> Boy.—What will a physician do?
> Doctor.—I am trying my best to take care of the sick; cure them and save their—
> Boy.—No, Doctor, you don't do that. (*Pauses*) You don't cure the sick; you give them up. And now, now, now (*unbuttoning his coat*) you talk about my safety, the community's safety, you want to save your own life.[72]

Here, Hong Shen replaces the Boy's lighthearted tone in the previous act with a more sincere and thought-provoking voice. While the Doctor charges that the Boy's decision to stay and nurse Miss Wang is foolish and defies universal practices in the West, the Boy criticizes the modern medical man for talking about the safety of the Doctor, the Boy, and the community, while forgetting the bride. Disregarding concerns for his own health, the Boy raises the play's central philosophical question to the medical doctor and to the audience off-stage: "Why should a man love his wife?"[73] In this debate between the Boy

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[72] Ibid., 125-26.
[73] Ibid., 125.

and the Doctor, or between "insanity" and "science," Hong Shen playfully subverts expected positions, presenting the insane boy as a responsible husband and calm son, and both the Doctor (representing the Western hegemonic voice) and Sir Chen (the Chinese patriarchal voice) as insecure and frustrated. Confronted by the insane boy's philosophical inquiry regarding "what is love," the Doctor simply "gives it up" and is eager to brush the question away, since it is irrelevant to his concerns about contagion. Regardless of how we view the passive escapism of the Doctor and the two fathers, the dynamic of Act II is effectively reverted: at a time when death is casting its solemn shadow, the insane boy provokes deep and sincere philosophical questioning, whereas the Doctor and both patriarchal fathers are unable to conceal their desperation. Moreover, the melodramatic and sometimes even comic presentation of the Boy's understanding of love/*qing* attains, via these dialogues (which are the most intensive and "wordy" in the entire play), its philosophical weight. In contrast, rationality (represented by the Doctor) and the Confucian family structure (voiced by the Boy's father) are tinted with a selfish hue.

As if not yet satisfied, in Act III Hong Shen highlights the "love"/*qing* that is by then sympathetically felt and worshiped by Miss Wang and Mr. Yang. Despite her father's intent to arrange a new marriage between her and Mr. Yang, Miss Wang resolutely relegates herself to the status of widowhood by performing a dramatic mourning scene. Different from the previous adaptors of the *Hemp* story, Hong Shen does not present Mr. Yang as someone who is either indifferent to or lacking understanding of Miss Wang's self-subjugation to the role of the chaste widow. Instead, Mr. Yang fully understands and respects Miss Wang's choice:

> Madam Chen [Miss Wang].—[*to her father*] When I promised you the first marriage, I prepared for a suffering life. But I am quite satisfied, quite happy now as it is. (*Pauses*) And father-in-law, you are so kind to me. (*Pauses again*) And Mr. Yang, how do you do? I am sorry for you. Our marriage is out of the question. Remember me as your friend—as your sister; but for that sacred love, the love between man and wife, (*to Lord Wang*) father, allow me to reserve it for my husband. He loved me and died. Good-bye, Mr. Yang…
> Mr. Yang (*Following her several steps*).—Madam Chen, remember me as your friend, I shall always be at your service.[74]

In this manner, the authenticity and sacredness of love/*qing*, first voiced by the insane boy and scorned by the modern Mr. Yang, eventually reaches its full power over the living and the dead, men and women, "the Orient" and "the West."

The implications of Hong Shen's multicultural synthesis, however, were not well grasped among Western readers/spectators of *TWH*, whether in 1919 or later. The leading characters' striking pursuit of Confucian *li* (rituals) because of their devotion to *qing* (sentiment/love), reflected by the Boy's death and Miss Wang's choice to remain a widow, as well as initial skepticism and then admiration for both *li* and *qing* expressed by the "modern" Mr. Yang, were taken as reflecting the "realist" representation of "the dignity of the high-class Chinese."[75] For most of the Columbus audience in 1919, these three leading characters' choices likely appeared to have been too "natural," i.e., too representative of "authentic" Chinese culture to dwell upon. Not surprisingly, the uniqueness of Hong Shen's position in the context of Chinese May Fourth discourse was not appreciated.

The limited critical scholarship on *TWH* has not addressed Hong's multi-cultural approach, focusing instead on the play's "conservative" ending. Dave Williams includes

[74] Ibid., 134-35.
[75] Chi C. Lin, "Club News" in *The Chinese Students' Monthly*. Vol. XIV, Dec. 1918, 503-04.

TWH in his 1997 drama anthology, and reads it as an example of the "Chinese other" useful for understanding the American self. For Williams, all of the characters' observation of Confucian ethical conventions, especially Miss Wang's subjugation to patriarchal power, reveals Hong Shen's "wholesale adoption of the Euro-American culture's image of the Chinese, rather than any resistance to it."[76] He writes:

> One might expect that the first play [*TWH*] to break decades of silence would attempt to refute the image of Chinese generated by and for the consumption of the dominant Euroamerican culture. This is not the case, as *The Wedded Husband* instead adopts the image uncritically. Its Chinese are deferential, conservative, and more or less willing slaves to ancient customs.[77]

Williams therefore reads the piece, despite its claim to be a "Chinese realist play," as the reflection of a host of economic, social, and psychological issues that shaped how Americans viewed others and themselves in the 1920s.

Yet, both readings, that of the local press at the time and Williams' nearly eight decades later, deviate from the intention Hong Shen explicitly stated in "My Dramatic Life." Neither an uncritical representation of the Chinese elite class nor a wholesale pandering to Americans' "Pacific Orientalist" imagination,[78] Hong Shen unpacks his calculation for structuring the play in his 1933 autobiography. On the surface level, Hong explains that at the time of writing *TWH* he had become exhausted with the

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[76] Williams, xiv.
[77] Ibid., 392.
[78] As John Kuowei Tchen has demonstrated, prior to the Exclusion Act of 1882, "Pacific Orientalism" had generated an abiding fascination among American elites with Chinese luxury goods, culture refinement, and even political ideals. See John Kuowei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture 1776-1882* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999). Also see Emma Jinhua Teng, *Eurasian: Mixed Identities in the United States, China, and Hong Kong, 1842-1943* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 40.

"reunion endings" in both Chinese *chuanqi* dramas and Western melodramas.[79] Consciously writing against the audience's expectation to heighten the conflict between "good" and "evil" while still rewarding "goodness" with Miss Wang and Mr. Yang's marriage, Hong Shen designates no characters as villains, inspiring for them sentimental sympathy and not moral judgment from the audience. Miss Wang's final choice to be loyal to her first marriage leaves, or at least Hong Shen hoped it would, the audience with something to *huiwei* (think retrospectively) about concerning each character's dramatic life.

Hong provides a more subtle reason for his ending. "I wanted to morally transform Americans by an emotional appeal (*ganhua*) to what real loyalty and filial piety are," he emphasizes.[80] Suggesting that Americans' and Westerners' current understanding of Chinese ethical values are inauthentic or mistaken, Hong Shen recounts the encounter between Confucian ethical codes and the individual subjectivities heatedly discussed in post-revolutionary China. Strikingly, these Confucian codes do not simply strangle the subjective voices of the characters in *TWH*. Quite the contrary, Miss Wang's observation of the virtue of woman's chastity suggests more loyalty to her subjective faith in "love/*qing*" (the sacred sentiment), and hence, ultimately, to herself, than to her late husband. Moreover, it is the insane boy's clinging to his understanding of a husband's obligation that empowers him to question love/*qing* and rationality with Mr. Yang and the Doctor. In other words, the traditional Chinese ethical codes do not negate "subjectivity"—the most widely recognized and celebrated register for Chinese modernity—but rather provide a "Confucian structure" for individual feelings,

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[79] Hong Shen, 1934, 15.
[80] Ibid., 16.

responsibilities, and familial-social orders. Love and *qing*, as well as the Western modern subject and the Confucian ethical structure, in Hong Shen's "Chinese realist play," transgress the repressive tradition/liberating modern dyad that was much enforced in China during the New Culture/May Fourth eras. Revising the reception of "China" among his readers and spectators, Hong Shen aspires to find and locate tradition/China and modernity/West in each other. More than writing and staging an ethnographic exhibition or self-Orientalization, Hong Shen seeks to promote a global understanding of the Chinese concepts of *qing*/love, loyalty, and filial piety. What the terms "Chinese" and "realist" mean to Hong Shen is more complex than simply staging a representation of Chinese elites' manners, fashions, and traditions; and it is Hong's desire for global awareness of Chinese values that leads to his promotion and fashioning of a transcultural discourse on sentimental authenticity on the theatre stage.

Practicing Interracial Intimacies: The Staging Process of *TWH* in 1919

If we take Yung Wing (aka Rong Hong 1828-1912), the "father of Chinese overseas students," and his experiences in America as the beginning date of elite Chinese studying in the United States, then, by the time Hong Shen set off for Columbus in 1916, there had already been nearly 70 years' worth of Chinese overseas students in the U.S. who had been supported by the Qing court, American missionaries, Western scholarships, and the Republican government. This long period of overseas study, along with "trade, imperial expansion, missionary movements, and global labor migration,"[81] had brought China and the U.S into ever closer contact. At the same time that American communities were

[81] Emma Teng, 2.

awarded with increasing privilege and prestige within Chinese eyes, due in part to the "global unevenness" of the era,[82] overseas Chinese labors experienced the turbulent transformation from being viewed by Americans first as exotic and desirable "Oriental others" and later as being the source of the "China problem."[83] This shift in American perspectives can be framed between 1882 when the Chinese Exclusion Act was first enacted by the U.S. Congress and 1902 when "Chinese Exclusion" was made legally permanent.[84] Although these Acts responded directly to America's domestic labor agitation and were class-specific, Hong Shen and his elite peers who studied in U.S. universities in the 1910s were not exempted from the identity negotiation and reformation that these Acts provoked.

Situated in the juncture between two conflicting social recognitions in 1910s America—"Chinese" and "elite gentry man"—Hong Shen was well poised for an identity crisis. Part of a "superior class" to the Chinese labors who were either banned from entering America or struggled at the bottom of the social strata, in his teachers and schoolmates' eyes Hong Shen appeared to be a talented student and active cosmopolitan with good manners. However, Hong Shen could not and would never see himself as separate from his fellow Chinese laborers,[85] and felt simultaneously agitated by the mistreatment and misrepresentation of Chinese workers while also anxious at being mistakenly judged as belonging to the "inferior class." Hong did not flinch from the tension between a "modern" Chinese man's self understanding and the "accepted" roles

[82] Karl, 16
[83] Emma Teng, 4
[84] Ibid.
[85] When Hong Shen studied at Tsinghua, he had already demonstrated his social and humanitarian concerns by writing *Pinmin canju* (*Poverty or Ignorance, Which is It?*) in early 1916. In order to appropriately reflect on the lives of laborers for this play, Hong Shen paid various visits to the slums nearby Tsinghua and made friends with the low-wage laborers who lived there. Hong Shen, 1934, 6.

for Chinese men in American society to dwell in personal melancholy and anger. Instead, Hong Shen created and fully immersed himself in activities through which he aspired to problematize the abovementioned pressures. Nurtured and inspired by the multicultural ethos of OSU, Hong Shen revised the script he wrote for Prof. Cooper's English seminar to stage *TWH* for a general audience. The "fraternal intimacy" that existed between Hong Shen and other members of the Cosmopolitan Club, a student organization committed to the cause of internationalism, was to become provocatively sensualized via the "interracial intimacy" displayed in the production of *TWH*.

Having inherited Confucian teachings in his hometown before immersing himself in a Western education at Tsinghua and the U.S., Hong Shen comfortably fit the definition of what Weili Ye terms the "special generation,"[86] those Chinese students who had "Confucian learning etched into...(their) childhood memory," while actively engaging the challenges and the excitements of an inescapable West. Despite embracing drama as a writer, performer, and enthusiastic reader-spectator at Tsinghua and in Beijing, Hong Shen, like his "special generation" peers, had likely not thought about abandoning a "substantial" subject for a career in theatre before coming to America. In fall 1916, under the auspices of a Boxer Indemnity Scholarship, Hong set off on his journey to the Ohio State University for a major in ceramic engineering, joining an expanding community of Chinese overseas students in the U.S.[87]

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[86] Jon L. Sarri, *Legacies of Childhood: Growing Up Chinese in a Time of Crisis, 1890-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1990); Weili Ye, 4.
[87] Weile Ye, 8. By 1918, around 1,200 Chinese students studied in America. This was a much smaller number in contrast to the Chinese student population in Japan that amounted to 8,000 in Tokyo alone in 1906.

Judging from Hong Shen's transcript, the "Western-learning" (*xixue*) he received at Tsinghua facilitated his early adjustment to American university life. In his first year at OSU, Hong was able to waive 28 hours (out of 38 in total) in the subjects of Chemistry, Drawing, German, and Mathematics. Starting English 101 with an "Average" grade in Fall 1916, Hong quickly improved and earned a "Good" grade in the spring. Then, in Spring 1918, in a graduate student seminar (English 213) that he took with Prof. Louis Cooper, Hong Shen achieved the highest grade "M-Pass with Merit" with his writing of *TWH*.

Figure 2.1: Hong Shen's Transcript at The Ohio State University. Courtesy of The Ohio State University Archives and Ms. Hong Qian, Hong Shen's daughter, 2013.[88]

Unlike some distinguished Chinese overseas students in Japan (e.g., Lu Xun), who struggled with a heavy workload and sometimes poor grades, Hong Shen extricated himself from such pressures to engage in various theatre-related activities and student

[88] The Ohio State University Archives, 16/p2. I was only able to obtain Hong Shen's transcript thanks to the assistance of Ms. Hong Qian, Hong Shen's daughter.

organizations at local, national, and international levels. Hong Shen's attraction to theatre need not come as a surprise, because he had earlier taken part in the active student drama movement while studying Western learning in China.[89] Tsinghua, in particular, offered student drama as an important extra-curricular activity that provided training in public speech (both Mandarin and English) and gestures and appropriate supervision and guidance in staging Western-style theatre.[90] Hong Shen, who was responsible for between 80 to 90% of the scenario writing and theatre production from 1912 to 1916 at Tsinghua, brought his passion for and experience in student dramatics to OSU. It was in the staged and theatrical realities of OSU that Hong Shen negotiated with a host of social determinatives regarding his own claims of race, gender, and nationality.

Cosmopolitan Intellectuals: Practicing Fraternal and Interracial Intimacy

Among the many activities in which Hong Shen participated as a beneficiary and/or a leader at OSU,[91] the Cosmopolitan Club stands out. It provided an ideal environment in which Hong Shen could engage in defining and enacting "cosmopolitanism" through a practice I describe as "performing fraternal and interracial intimacy." The Cosmopolitan Club, known by Chinese students as *Shijie tongxuehui*, was an outgrowth of the

[89] Siyuan Liu, 32-36. As Liu argues, student drama activities in universities, along with amateur expatriate productions and traveling companies from both the West and Japan, were major sources for making Western-style theatres visible in Shanghai as early as the 1850s.
[90] Gong Yuan, "Zhongguo xindai huju shi shang de 'Qinghu chuantong'" (The "Tsinghua Tradition" in the History of Modern Chinese Drama) in *Xiju yishu* (*Dramatic Art*), no. 3 (2012), 9-10.
[91] According to the OSU school yearbook, Hong Shen was a member of the Cosmopolitan Club, the Ohio State Chinese Students Club, and the Y.M.C.A (Young Men's Christian Association). OSU in the late 1910s had approximately 9,000 students. *Makio* (1919).

cosmopolitan movement that started in Italy in 1898 and reached its greatest influence in the period after the first World War.[92]

From 1918, Hong Shen served as one of three members, along with two Caucasian-Americans,[93] of the editorial board of the OSU Cosmopolitan Club, which at that time included 26 students, 8 faculty members, and 2 honorary members (OSU President William Oxley Thompson [1855-1933] and his wife, Mrs. W. O. Thompson). On February 12, 1918, the OSU Cosmopolitan Club called an officer meeting to announce its newly elected leadership,[94] and then decided to take a photograph on the west side of the library to commemorate the event. The photograph of the Cosmopolitan Club's 1918 officers records a moment when "white" and "yellow" men and women constituted the organization's mixed gender and interracial student leadership.

[92] Weili Ye, 240.
[93] The two Caucasian-Americans were Marry Titus and Clarence Brower.
[94] Miss Tom Helbling, senior in arts-education was elected member of the board of directors to fill the vacancy caused by the withdrawal of Harry L. Kern, senior in agriculture. See Ohio State *Lantern*, Feb. 12, 1918.

Figure 2.2: Members of the OSU Cosmopolitan Club, Feb. 12, 1918. The club included 26 student members (12 American and 14 international); 8 faculty; and 2 honorary members (OSU President William Oxley Thompson and his wife). Hong Shen is second row, third from right. Courtesy of The Ohio State University Archives.

Posing with uniformly serious and solemn expressions, the officers in the photo consciously put forth an official image of the Cosmopolitan Club that reflected its spirit of equal participation: three Caucasian female students stand in the middle of the first row, "carefully segregated" by two Caucasian male students from Hong Shen, who is in the second row, and C.C. Lin, the other Chinese man, who stands in the front row. Although lacking archival materials about what took place before the photo-taking, it is easy to imagine the racial and gender-mixed crowd chatting with each other, perhaps over matters previously discussed in the officers' meeting, but the photograph reflects only a carefully composed image of seriousness and purpose. The crossing of boundaries of gender and race in this photograph are what I label "fraternal intimacy,"—by which I mean closeness among colleagues—in which heterosocial and interracial friendship was highly celebrated but the prospect of interracial sexuality was noticeably toned down.

Hong Shen's editorial contribution to the Cosmopolitan Club further developed the "fraternal intimacy" between Cosmopolitan Club members to increase students' awareness of the early phase of globalization in the beginning of the 20th century. In December 1918, Hong Shen, at the Cosmopolitan Club's first open meeting that quarter, composed a series of 50 questions for the 200 members and guests drawn from on- and off-campus. Hong's questions aspired to generate an understanding of internationalism and cosmopolitanism. Raising questions from "How many of the allied nations have a republican form of government?" to "How old is Charlie Chaplin?", Hong Shen challenged and teased the ensembles' knowledge of the globe before bringing to light that "there are 25 nationalities represented" in OSU alone.[95] In this manner, Hong hoped to foster "fraternal intimacy" between Cosmopolitan Club members and among national cultures more broadly.

Interracial Intimacy: From Fraternal to Romantic

On April 11 and 12, 1919, under the joint auspices of the Cosmopolitan and the Chinese Student clubs,[96] Hong Shen staged *TWH* at the Chapel on the OSU campus with a mixed gender and interracial cast: two Caucasian girls, Lorena L. Vogel and Madeleine M. Tobias, played Miss Wang and The Maid, respectively, while Hong Shen played Mr. Yang, C. C. Lin (Hong's colleague in the Cosmopolitan Club) acted as Master Chen, and 3 Chinese male students portrayed the other characters.[97] With tickets—50 cents for the

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[95] Ohio State *Lantern*, December 16, 1918, LDA.
[96] "To Give Chinese Play in Chapel April 11-12," in Ohio State *Lantern*, April 1, 1919.
[97] Specifically, Lord Wang was played by Chen-Te Chiang, Sir Chen by Kao Chen, the Doctor by Shu-Yung Liu, and the servants and guests by Min Shoa Chang and Ting M. Liu. See Ohio State *Lantern*, April 10, 1919.

main floor and 35 cents for the balcony—on sale in the offices of the University Y.M.C.A., the Chinese and Cosmopolitan clubs, and the "Oriental" and Ohio State-owned restaurants downtown, these two-nights' performances attracted a large audience of over 1,300 people from the university and the general public. "This is probably the first time such a production has ever been attempted in this country," praised Louis A. Cooper, the professor of Hong Shen's English 213 seminar, who went on to say, "This drama, written by a Chinaman and played by Chinese actors, has an atmosphere and setting which we feel is genuine."[98] Meanwhile, on the Friday before *TWH*'s debut, a telegram was received by Hong Shen from Washington D.C., requesting him to send tickets to a group of enthusiastic sinologists, or "Eastern Professors," including Prof. Warner (Columbia School of Fine Arts, New York), Prof. Goucher (Goucher College, Maryland), and Dr. Goudy (Director of the Chinese exhibit at the Centenary Exhibition of American Methodist Missions to be held in Columbus later that summer).[99] Favorable reviews credited the performance with presenting "the dignity of the high-class Chinese" and for making heard Chinese students' voices in "the fight for democracy."[100]

TWH enjoyed popular and critical reception as "the first time such a production has ever been attempted." But to what, exactly, did "such a production" refer? What was deemed "new" about Hong Shen's *TWH*? And perhaps more importantly, how did the staging of *TWH* reflect Hong Shen's own racial and national aspirations? Answering

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[98] Ohio State *Lantern*, April 8, 1919, LDA.
[99] Ohio State *Lantern*, April 8 and April 11, 1919, LDA. The Centenary Exhibition of American Methodist Missions—a three-week exhibit held at the State Fairgrounds in Columbus, Ohio during June and July, 1919—was intended to promote public awareness of missionary activities by the Methodist Episcopal Church in China, India, and Africa.
http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Centenary_Exhibition_of_American_Methodist_Missions Accessed July 1, 2014.
[100] Chi C. Lin, 503-04.

such questions requires us to place *TWH*, a student production, in the broader spectrum of Asian theatres in general as well as in comparison to racial and gender presentations on stage and in cinema in early twentieth-century China and America.

A Realist Play of Sentiment

What most likely appeared provocative and revolutionary about *TWH* for Prof. Cooper was not that it introduced Chinese marriage customs to an American audience, but that it was Chinese student actors who played Chinese characters. At the time that *TWH* was staged, plays with Chinese themes, content, and characters were not unheard of in America, especially along the East and West coasts. As James S. Moy points out, "the notion of Chinese under the sign of the exotic," in theatre and exhibitionary culture, "became familiar to American spectators long before sightings of actual Chinese."[101] However, ever since Voltaire's (1694-1778) *Orphan of China* (1775) was adapted into English by Arthur Murphy and staged in Philadelphia's Southwark Theatre in 1767, Chinese characters "lived" as exotic heroes in America's commercial theatres via Caucasian actors in yellowface.[102] Alongside the increasing efforts of Americans in the first half of the 19th century to seek "their new national identity in the context of older civilizations,"[103] as Esther Lee puts it, their curiosity about "Oriental" art and exhibitions grew. Theatres with yellow-faced "Chinamen" and ahistorical touches of "Chineseness," along with museum exhibitions and circus performances, became a popular avenue for

[101] James S. Moy, *Marginal Sights: Staging Chinese in America* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), 9.
[102] Esther Kim Lee, *A History of Asian American Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 8.
[103] Ibid.

European Americans on the East Coast to obtain both "anthropological education" and "freak-show entertainment" from racial others. These presentations, known as "faux" or "simulated" Chinese theatre, followed the performative norms of American domestic theatres in using English dialogue and obeying the rules of "staging race" that were shared with a cohort of "black" performances in New York theatres by white man in blackface, and easily won both box-office and culture capital.[104]

Thus, in a field where nearly all China-related dramas were "voiced" and "embodied" by Caucasian Americans, *TWH* instantly distinguished itself for being a Chinese drama made by Chinese themselves, and for being understandable to a general American audience.[105] Featured and staged as a student production for a broad public, *TWH*, despite its paucity of financial and human resources, claimed for itself the liberty of envisioning new theatrical and performative norms that professional theatre companies dared not to imagine and that the commercial theatre market would not allow.

At the time that Hong Shen prepared for *TWH* in America, there were two dominant fashions for staging "China" in the theatre world, neither of which Hong found satisfying. America's commercial theatres, under the influences of Orientalism and anti-Asian sentiment, staged "China" as exotic and Chinese as comically impotent or

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[104] The receptions awarded to Chinese drama in American commercial theatres along the East and West coasts varied, in part because established Chinese communities in America's West Coast allowed for a more authentic form of Chinese theatre to be staged there. See Esther Kim Lee, 14-20.

[105] Not all staged depcitions of "China" in early twentieth-century America were presented in yellowface. As Robert Rydell points out, Chinese had already started to perform in the World Fairs by 1893 at the latest. See Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987). Nonetheless, yellowface remained prevelant in Hollywood films and mainstream theatre productions that contained Chinese characters. In fact, the use of yellowface, despite its controversy, still occasionally appears in American mainstream theatre productions. One well-known example is when the non-Asian actor Johnathan Pryce was cast as a Eurasian engineer in *Miss Saigon* in the 1990s. See Krystyn R. Moon, *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850-1920* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 163.

potentially threatening. In China, by contrast, progressive dramatists of the early Republican era were experimenting with mimesis, creating realistic stage props and sets in response to the Western aesthetic of realism and the demands brought forth by lighting and similar technical advancements. Thus, at the same time that American mainstream stages confused and conflated "China" with a wealth of Near-and Far-Eastern cultural symbols, creating an exotic "Oriental" landscape that matched American imaginations,[106] civilized drama and other commercial theatre in China, aiming to substitute the illusion of theatre with the materiality of life, exhaustively made use of everyday objects to stage "reality," often ending up in the process with artistic compromises and scenes worthy of ridicule.

Shaped by both Hong Shen's personal understanding of drama and a lack of financial resources, *TWH* reflected neither of these options. Instead, both the vision and the practices of "realism" in *TWH* were only loosely employed. According to one reviewer:

> Promptly at 8:15 p.m. Shen Hung [Hong Shen], the playwright, appeared before the curtain and explained that the production cannot be taken as an accurate picture of China as that country is changing so rapidly. Mention was also made that many of the stage properties were not Chinese, owning to the difficulty of getting Chinese articles—the lanterns were Japanese, the furniture American, and some of the natural equipment was omitted entirely. [However,] Actual conditions during the first two years of the republic were represented… "It must be remembered that this is a play, not a history or photograph," he concluded.[107]

Bare-bones stage scenes and imperfect props may ruin "a history" or "a photograph" but not a play's power. What Hong Shen considered to be most important was for the

[106] Esther Kim Lee, 14.
[107] Ohio State *Lantern*, April 14, 1919, LDA.

performance to capture and deliver the notion that obligation/ethical responsibilities were based in authentic feelings, for only then would his audience be able to understand and appreciate the intellectual and cultural struggles then taking place in Republican China. In short, the "realism" of *TWH* was to be a realism of sentiment. Hong Shen hoped that for his audience, the illusionary/theatrical reality of *TWH* would arouse authentic sympathy and real emotional understanding.

Mixed Gender Performance

Compared to the difficulty of searching for "Chinese articles" that could exhibit the "rapidly changing country," it was easy for Hong Shen to find Chinese male students among his peers able to perform, in realistic manner, gentry men. All of the male students in the cast were "sons of well-known men,"[108] who were sent by the Chinese government to study ceramics, chemical and mining engineering, or the arts. Coming from "prominent families"[109] like the Wang and the Chen families in the play, these well-educated gentlemen who had experienced cultural and social transition at home and self redefinition in America understood both the emotional topographies (interior) and the mannerisms (exterior) of the male characters in *TWH*. Indeed, these male students' devotion to theatre was fueled by their fascination with acting, which had been a feature of the literati world since the Ming-Qing transition.[110] What's more, the student

[108] Ohio State *Lantern*, April 4, 1919, LDA.
[109] Ibid. For example, C. T. Chiang's (who played Lord Wang) brother was the military governor of Zhejiang.
[110] As Sophie Volpp points out, although the tendency of accusing actors of impropriety could be traced back to the bans against actors' participation in the examination system during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), by the late Ming and early Qing era, the literati's "fascination with actors and acting was spurred and reinforced by his interest in philosophical questions about the phenomenal world and its relation to illusion... Reading drama, viewing theatre, and fraternizing with actors" were not only fashionable, but also

production nature of *TWH* lent the cast an "amateur" (and thereby artistic) aura that protected the play from lingering Chinese biases against the acting profession as fickle, treacherous, and obscene.

Despite its many advantages, this theatre stage nevertheless remained gendered and race-bound. Compared to male students' enthusiastic and active response to Hong Shen's call, no Chinese female students had the nerve to play Miss Wang and the Maid. Hong Shen did include a female musician in the performance: one Pao-Ho Vong, who played "Chinese fiddle" (*erhu*) and accompanied Hong Shen's operatic vocals delivered before the play and between acts, as well as during the wedding scene.[111] But the public exhibition of a female student's "talent" (*cai*) off-stage was far less "daunting" and more culturally acceptable than presenting her "body" in discussions of love/*qing* on stage and performing a marriage ceremony with a mixed-gender cast.

True, all female- and mixed gender-performances were seen on the stages of *huagu xi* (flower-stage operas) and *maoer xi* (operas performed by a female ensemble) in the foreign settlements in Shanghai during the late Qing and early Republican eras, though the risk of being banned remained constant.[112] However, female participants in these theatres were either abandoned daughters from poor families or prostitutes who had to perform both sexual and theatrical labor.[113] As Suwen Luo points out, the struggles of

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"trained the social spectators [the literati] to enter the spectacle and immerse themselves in it, to engage with illusions even while understanding it to be as such." Sophie Volpp, *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 6-8.

[111] Ohio State *Lantern*, April 16, 1919, LDA.

[112] *Huagu xi*, also known as "obscene opera," penetrated the amusement halls of the foreign settlements in the form of mixed male and female performance. See Suwen Luo, "Gender on Stage: Actress in An Actor's World, 1895-1930", in Bryna Goodman and Wendy Larson, eds., *Gender in Motion: Division of Labor and Cultural Change in Late Imperial and Modern China* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers INC., 2005), 79.

[113] Suwen Luo, 84.

actresses in early Republican China not only reflected "gender divisions of labor but also social class."[114] Public accusations of obscenity and poverty hindered gentry women away from "showing faces [and bodies] in public" (*paotou loumian*), especially the public performance of theatre. Thus, although opportunities in the early 20th century for coed socialization in America offered by inter- and intra-university organizations, such as the Chinese Student Alliance summer conferences, weakened gender segregation and pushed female students into new realms of hetero-socialization,[115] "shared space," and a fluid social community, such hetero-social camaraderie became dangerous for female students' reputations if it implied traces of romantic/sexual intimacy.

Even more controversial for Chinese female students considering acting for *TWH* was that their performance, of both their "faces" and "bodies," would be judged by an audience consisting not only of Chinese, but of racial others. Chinese female students' onstage performance would serve as cultural exotica for the American audience offstage, leading to sexually charged interracial encounters where Chinese women were gazed at by the men (both Chinese and foreign) watching. Although interracial encounters between Chinese men and local women had long been an "accepted practice among Chinese male migrants, virtually wherever immigrant communities were to be found,"[116] encounters between Chinese women and foreign men, especially in a romantic and sexual manner, were regulated. Generally speaking, Chinese female immigration to the U.S.

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[114] Ibid., 75.
[115] Ye, 164.
[116] Wu Jingchao, *Chinese Immigration in the Pacific Area*, MA thesis, University of Chicago, 1926; cited in Teng, 49. As Emma Teng's study points out, "By 1900, an astonishing 60% of all marriages in New York's Chinatown were between Chinese men and European or Euro-American women." Emma Teng, 8.

was tightly restricted between 1875 and 1945,[117] which caused interracial marriage and heterosexual encounters to largely follow the model of Chinese male and non-Chinese female. Then, in the first decade of the 20th century with the rise of Han Chinese nationalism, hostility toward Chinese women marrying foreign men became heated, and interracial marriage/intimacy was perceived as a form of national and racial betrayal.[118] One may observe the extra "carefulness" and "sensitiveness" of this topic when reading the evolving Chinese legal acts regarding the interaction between Chinese female students and foreign males.[119] In face of such historical limitations and moral burdens, Chinese female students were understandably reluctant to contribute to the staging of *TWH*.

Fortunately, Hong Shen's aspiration to present a gender appropriate performance did not fall through, owing to his efforts in recruiting two Caucasian-American female students, Lorena Vogel and Madeleine Tobias, to play the roles of Miss Wang and the Maid. It is important to note that they did not perform their Chinese roles in yellowface. Thus, in April 1919, *TWH* not only made history within the field of Chinese theatre by staging a gender appropriate and mixed racial cast, but also within Sino-American interactions at large with its cross-racial spectacle of romantic/sexual intimacy.

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[117] Emma Teng, 8.
[118] Ibid., 46.
[119] Lin Zixun, *Zhongguo liuxue jiaoyu shi 1847-1945* (*History of Chinese Overseas Education, 1847-1945*) (Taipei: Huagang chuban, 1976); Wang Huanchen, *Liuxue jiaoyu: Zhongguo liuxue jiaoyu shiliao* (*Overseas Education: Historical Sources relating to Chinese Oversea Education*) (Taipei: Guoli bianyiguan, 1980), and Shu Xincheng, *Jindai zhongguo liuxue shi* (*History of Modern Chinese Overseas Education*) (Shanghai:Shanghai shudian, 1989).

The Wedding Scene

The most striking spectacle in the production of *TWH* was the wedding scene between Master Chen (C. C. Lin) and Miss Wang (Lorena L. Vogel) in Act II. Interestingly, advance publicity and reviews published after the performances uniformly chose to focus on the authentic materiality of the wedding while offering no comments on the "interracial couple." The promise that this scene will "give throughout a true picture of Chinese life and costume"[120] was echoed by a review that described the wedding scene as the embodiment of exotic Chineseness "in almost every detail":[121]

> Noticeable among the costumes will be the bride's dress of light red and her veil of crimson. Red, and its tints and shades, is the color used in China for all joyous occasions. Silks of intense red and green crossed over the chest of the bridegroom represent "happiness." The costumes are all products of the Orient having been brought to this country by members of the Chinese Legation, students at Vassar and members of the cast of the play.

Here, the noticeable lack of mention of the interracial aspect of *TWH*'s wedding scene should not be taken as reflecting the scene's lack of significance or commonness. Quite the contrary, it is the fact that Hong Shen was able to display an interracial marriage ceremony in 1910s America without it being signaled out for attention that is significant. Working within the temporal and spatial limitations of the theatre stage, Hong Shen was able to present a "subversive" pairing of nations and races in a manner that his predominately Western audience found acceptable.

Such acceptance was due in part to Hong Shen's foreshadowing of the wedding scene in Act I by introducing Miss Wang and the Maid on stage. Dressed in embroidery

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[120] Ohio State *Lantern*, April 1, 1919, LDA.
[121] Ohio State *Lantern*, April 11, 1919, LDA.

clothes and imitating the mannerisms of gentry women, the two Caucasian women performed an inner-chamber conversation regarding the grace and beauty of betrothal gifts:

> Maid.—Here is a golden hair-pin, wishing you every satisfaction in your marriage. Here are a pair of silver buckles, which will bring good fortune to both of you. Here are embroidered silk bags, for the prosperity of your family, filled with peanuts that greet you with joyful long life. And tea. Happiness in your marriage. Eggs. Painted red, you shall be much happier when you have a baby. Sugar, ah, yes, very sweet, very sweet. So beautiful, so graceful.[122]

The Maid's (Tobias's) monologue admittedly reads like a detailed invoice of exotic and luxury Chinese ornaments. However, Tobias' announcement and explanation in words, accompanied by her presentation of Chinese articles—golden hair-pin, silver buckles, and a jade thumb ring on stage—might arouse a desire for the refinement of Chinese culture and a shade of homesick sentiment among the Chinese within the culturally diverse group of spectators. In this manner, Hong Shen made "Oriental culture" visible, understandable, and desirable for a cross-racial audience. He also gave the audience space to become accustomed to the notion that Vogel, playing Miss Wang, was "Chinese," thus lessening the coming "shock" of the interracial wedding scene.

Aided by the enticing stage props, Hong carefully crafted the wedding scene into a spectacle to gracefully perform the interracial intimacy between the two leading actors, Lin and Vogel. According to Hong Shen's stage direction, Lin, dressed in elegant red and green, was first introduced to the audience with Chinese musical background. Differing from the stage direction calling for Master Chen's insane and comic performance in the previous act, Hong Shen demanded an elegant mannerism from Lin

[122] Shen Hung, 1921, 115.

and thus suggested the festive but solemn mood of the wedding. Standing stage front, Master Chen waited for his bride, who was dressed in red silk, to be introduced first to the audience and then to himself. With the help of his servants and maid, Master Chen walked backwards on the red carpet, holding one end of the red and green silk while the Bride held the other end, following the groom's lead. When the groom and bride finally reach center stage, Master Chen bowed while the bride stood still with neat composure. Interestingly, C. C. Lin, who in the 1918 photograph of Cosmopolitan Club officers was safely "segregated" from his Caucasian female peer, here stood next to a White woman in red/Chinese dress to share the symbol of wedlock (holding both ends of the red and green "happy-silk", *honglü duipa*). Thus, in the process of transforming script into performance, the use of a gender appropriate and mixed racial cast of *TWH* greatly complicated the theatricality of the scene in the text. What in reality was a cross-racial hetero-social interaction, depicting the interracial intimacy between a Chinese male student and his Caucasian-American female peer, was enveloped in a theatrical illusion of marriage between a Chinese gentry man and woman. Considering the increasing anti-Asian sentiment in American popular imaginations as well as Chinese students' racial and classical redefinition by 1919 as an "inferior race" in comparison to Caucasians but a "superior class" to Chinese laborers, one may find it hard to decide which "reality" was more theatrical, the staged Chinese wedding between Master Chen and his bride or the staged intimacy between Lin and Vogel.

Admittedly, Hong Shen also sought to employ *TWH*'s wedding scene to "seduce" his audience with an Oriental spectacle. Yet, Hong Shen's promotion of the wedding and *TWH*'s theatrical materiality went beyond a mere self-Orientalist ethnographic exhibition

and was done in response to the play's own dramatic logic. Structurally, the wedding scene deserved its "extravagant" visuality because it was in this scene that Miss Wang succumbs to the plague and the play's plot is diverted. Also, the wedding serves to connect the two previous debates over "love/*qing*" between Master Chen and Mr. Yang, and Master Chen and the Doctor, respectively. The alteration between scenes filled with monologues/dialogues and one exhibiting the spectacle of a Chinese wedding was, as Hong Shen planned, a pleasant change and served to quickly resolve the melodramatic conflict in what is a short three-act play.

Moreover, it is after the wedding scene that Master Chen transforms from a childish and comical "insane boy" to a sincere and devoted "wedded husband." Whereas the character of Master Chen was depicted by Hong Shen and portrayed by C. C. Lin as a comic role in Act I, he becomes noticeably elegant and mature during the wedding scene in Act II and later even problematizes the "scientific" reasons given by the Doctor for adhering to the quarantine with his "emotional" appeal toward "love/*qing*." In this manner, Hong Shen's depiction of Master Chen starts by following mainstream American theatre and Hollywood narratives' portrayal of Chinese men as insane (i.e. inferior/impotent) beings, but then skillfully subverts this stereotyped image by demonstrating Master Chen's cultural elegance and eloquent rhetoric.

Unfortunately, Hong Shen's attempts at reframing the character of Master Chen did not fully convince his audience. One detailed review recognized the play's efforts to transform Master Chen from being insanely comic to sentimentally refined. However, C.C. Lin, according to the review, delivered an uneven performance with excellent comical body gestures but poor delivery of dialogue due to his unsatisfying English

proficiency and untrained vocals.[123] If Hong Shen's attempt to subvert the stereotype of the comical "Chinaman" was only half successful, his acting talent stimulated the audience's sympathetic understanding of the relationship between Mr. Yang, played by Hong himself, and Miss Wang/Vogel. Mr. Yang was portrayed as a bitter but understanding lover-cum-friend in scenes bidding farewell to Miss Yang (Act I) and accepting of Miss Wang's decision to follow the customs of widowhood (Act III). After learning from the Doctor that Miss Wang was arranged to marry Master Chen in order to fulfill her filial piety to Lord Wang and to demonstrate her father's Confucian righteousness to Lord Chen, Mr. Yang chooses self-exile to Mongolia and to be remembered "as your [Miss Wang's] friend." Upon returning home to learn that Miss Wang would not marry him, Mr. Yang respects Miss Wang's adherence to "the most sacred tradition: a woman once wedded can never marry again." Now addressing Miss Wang as "Madam Chen," Mr. Yang shows that he values the "sacred love" between the "widowed wife" and "dead husband."

Noticeably different from the wedding scene in which Vogel was heavily ornamented with the wedding costume and remained nearly silent,[124] Miss Wang/Vogel talks to Mr. Yang/Hong in both Act I and Act III wearing everyday clothes and appearing far less exotic. Judging from the photo of the cast, Vogel's costume in Act I, despite being in accordance with her role as a Chinese gentry woman, did not conceal Vogel's physical features as a Caucasian woman.

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[123] Ohio State *Lantern*, April 16, 1919, LDA.

[124] Vogel, as the bride, only speaks once during Act II, yelling "help" before passing out from the plague.

Figure 2.3: Photo for the cast of *The Wedded Husband*. Hong Shen, “Xiju de yisheng,” in *Wukui qiao*, 1933

The English dialogue between Vogel and Hong Shen further made Vogel’s presentation as a Chinese gentlewoman unconvincing. These physical and linguistic features blurred the distinctions between the two female bodies represented on stage: the character of Miss Wang and the student actor Vogel. The theatrical illusion of a white woman’s impersonation of a Chinese gentlewoman was thus constantly at risk of being exposed as the reality of a Chinese man and a white woman acting. Yet, I would argue that Vogel’s performance should not be interpreted as a variant of yellowface—albeit, without the makeup—since the character she was portraying was depicted as neither caricatured nor humorous. Furthermore, when one is cognizant of the fluid crossing between the role Miss Wang and the actor Miss Vogel, the following *intimacy* between Mr. Yang and Miss Wang reads as even more sensually striking and culturally meaningful:

> Mr. Yang.—Is she? (*Turning he sees Miss Wang. There is silence between them*) (*The Maid withdraws quietly*)

> (*The two salute each other by half-knelling.*)
> Miss Wang (*Very slowly.*)—Very glad to see you, Mr. Yang.
> Mr. Yang—Very glad to see your ladyship. Are you well?
> Miss Wang.—Yes, thank you. (*Deep silence*) I heard that you are going away.
> Mr. Yang.—To Mongolia, the great North, the great desert, the land of hopes. Shall start tomorrow morning.
> Miss Wang.—Tomorrow, that's three days before my wedding. Why in such a hurry?
> Mr. Yang.—I don't mean to get away before your wedding. But, you know a broken hearted man is no decoration for a happy occasion.
> Miss Wang.—Do you call it a happy occasion?
> …
> (*It is as if they have a thousand words to speak to each other, but don't know where to begin.*)[125]

Both the dialogue and stage directions inform the spectators that the scene depicts a couple in a romantic relationship who, restrained by ethical and behavioral norms, bid farewell with no need to spell out their melancholy. The tension between the theatrical illusion and the reality of the actors perhaps caused the audience to shift their attention back and forth between the dramatic story and the real interracial intimacy. Hong Shen and Vogel performed interracial intimacy drastically differing from what was the norm in Hollywood and American mainstream theatres. On those two April nights in 1919, in the OSU Chapel, an audience of over 1,300 Chinese and Americans were presented with a memorable event: a potent and handsome Chinese man expressing his longings for a Caucasian woman in a manner that was deemed neither threatening nor comical.

Creating the "Grammar" for Chinese Modern Theatre

TWH was not simply a "fun diversion" for Hong Shen, but played a catalyzing role both for the transformation of his career from "a possible second or third class engineer" to "a

[125] Hong Shen, 1921, 118-19.

dramatist with an unbelievable promising future" and for the development of modern Chinese drama more generally.[126] The success of *TWH* prompted Hong Shen to pursue more training in playwriting under George Pierce Baker at Harvard University and to write four more Chinese plays in English. More important, the public staging process of *TWH* altered the trajectory of Chinese students' theatre activities in America. Prior to *TWH*, Chinese students either published scripts in journals for Chinese overseas students or practiced cold-readings, but never staged a performance for the general public. After the experience of staging *TWH*, Hong Shen asked himself and those Chinese overseas students who were devoted to theatre new questions, such as, what kind of Chinese theatre should be staged in America, and by extension, what kind of modern theatre could be staged in China? How to define a Chinese theatre for a cosmopolitan audience? What are the "grammars" that the writing and staging of Chinese drama should follow? For the remainder of this chapter, I examine Hong Shen's dramaturgic works and theoretical advances he made in the aftermath of *TWH* while he was still in America.

Soon after *TWH*, Hong Shen left Columbus for George Pierce Baker's class for playwriting—"Workshop 47" at Harvard University—and would later become involved with a professional theatre company in New York whose name remains unknown. Between 1919 and 1922, he was directly involved in the publication and/or production of the following English-language plays:

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[126] Hong Shen, 1934, 10.

Plays	Time	Troupes	Published Scripts	Location	Patronage	Hong Shen's Roles
The Wedded Husband	April 1919	The Ohio State University	*Poet Lure* (1922)	Chapel, OSU	Cosmopolitan Club; Chinese Students Club (OSU)	Playwright; Director; Prop manager; Actor (playing Mr. Yang)
Rainbow	Sept. 1919	The Ohio State University	*The Chinese Students' Quarterly* Vol. VII, No. 4, (December 1920)	Chapel, OSU	Chinese Students Club (OSU)	Playwright; Director; Actor
Return	1919	Not staged	Not published	NA	NA	Playwright
Romeo and Juliet: A Farcical Comedy in One Act	April 1920	Unknown	*The Chinese Students' Monthly* Vol. XV, no. 6 (April 1920)	Unknown	Unknown	Playwright
Mulan Joins the Army	Feb. 1921	Columbia University	Not published	Cort Theater NYC	Unknown	Playwright (co-operating with Zhang Pengchun); Actor (unknown role)

Table 1. English-language plays that Hong Shen either wrote or staged.

The publicly staged plays enabled Hong Shen to engage the cosmopolitan (student) audience regarding Chinese oversea students' concerns in both political and personal arenas. Specifically, *Rainbow* and *Return* illustrated Hong Shen's critical understanding of how World War I and the ensuing global political ideals of democracy and self-determination (as espoused by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's *14 Points*), influenced the political and social transformation in China; and *Romeo and Juliet* showed Hong Shen's flirtation with Shakespeare to express Chinese oversea students' understandings of love and marriage.[127] However provocative these works may have been among cosmopolitan intellectuals (i.e. university students in America), they gained far less attention and support from the general public than *TWH* and predominantly served as

[127] J. Meserve and Ruth I. Meserve, 28.

extra-curricular activities. Only with his successful production of *Mulan*, a play done in cooperation with Zhang Pengchun in New York in 1921 that raised funds for flood relief in northern China, did Hong regain the kind of public attention garnered by *TWH*.

Figure 2.4: Left: Ms. Li Hua, playing the title role, *Mulan*, was an honor student studying music and literature at Columbia University. Right: A poster used to raise funds for an unknown flood disaster. *Shenbao*, March 6, 1921.

In the view of a certain *Shenbao* correspondent, the successful two-night performance of *Mulan* in the Cort Theatre in New York was the most remarkable event in the "China life-saving" movement that was inspired by Herbert Hoover's (1874-1964) Relief Expedition for the 1921 European famine. In the news report, the script and the production of *Mulan* were both attributed to P. C. Chang (Zhang Pengchun, 1892-1957) and Hong Shen was only briefly mentioned as one of the two leading student actors.

However, Hong Shen played a much larger role in this theatre production than he is credited for. According to Hong's own account, he was the dominant author, writing

the first five acts and providing an outline for the final one.[128] Chang only finished the script for the sixth act and played an advisory role to the performance in March 1921. But because Chang was already established in New York and enjoyed a wide network with local and Chinese journalists, he was the one given credit for the play and the production. Further hindering Hong Shen's chance at recognition was the *Shenbao* journalist who reported on the work and who mistakenly transcribed Hong Shen's English name, S. Hung, into Shen Hong. Obscured by the towering shadow of P. C. Chang, the anonymous Shen Hong understandably raised little attention among domestic and diaspora theatre communities.

Fortunately, the controversial authorship of *Mulan* did not prevent it from being an artistic and commercial triumph. In 1921, *Mulan* was staged in New York and later in Washington D.C. eight times and made a net-profit of over $10,000.[129] What made Hong Shen particularly proud was that this profit was drawn not from VIPs who typically spent over $100 per night for a box-seat, but from commoners who only paid from 50 cents to $2.50 for their tickets.[130] Factoring the cheap price of tickets into the box-office take makes it clear that *Mulan* struck a responsive chord among a mass audience in 1921. The play's success likely paved the way for Mei Lanfang's sensational Peking opera tour in New York a decade later.

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[128] Hong Shen, "Shen Hong yu Hong Shen (Shen Hong and Hong Shen), in Hong Qian ed., *Hong Shen wenchao* (*Essays of Hong Shen*) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chuban she, 2004), 34.
[129] Hong Shen, "*Mulan congjun* zai meiguo" (*Mulan congjun* in America), in Hong Qian ed., *Hong Shen wenchao* (*Essays of Hong Shen*) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chuban she, 2004), 29.
[130] Ibid., 29.

The Scenario vs. Script Debate

Although not all of the scripts of Hong Shen's English plays have been preserved, it is clear that his theatre productions in America were centered on written scripts, and not performers' improvisation, as was the norm in China at the time.[131] In addition to writing English scripts for his plays, Hong Shen also published articles in English and Chinese discussing the proper dynamic among the playwright, actors, and the performative context when writing drama. These discussions reveal how Hong Shen's definition of writing and staging drama complicated "the scenario vs. script debate" (*mubiao yu juben zhi zheng*) that first appeared in Japan in 1889 and was rehashed in Shanghai in 1910s.

There were but few qualifiable scripts within Chinese drama circles in the early 20th century. Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and other scholars, disappointed by the paucity of plays and their poor quality, suggests that Chinese modern drama only truly came into existence in the 1930s and the 1940s, three decades behind other modern literary genres, such as fiction and poetry, whose origin can be traced to the late Qing period. Granted, anyone who briefly scans the voluminous scripts (*juben*/*benshi*) published in the sea of newspapers, literary magazines, and tabloids in the first decades of 20th century China would likely question the claim of "script hunger" (*juben huang*) put forward by both new theatre activists and modern scholars.[132] Yet, the harsh reality is that most published scripts were either crude imitations/literary translations of Western plays or elite literati *chuanqi*-style "closet dramas" that were not intended to be staged.

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[131] There is evidence that Hong wrote at least one script while at Tsinghua, *Maili ren (The Fruit Vendors*), a 1915 production that included specific dialogues and thereby required student actors to strictly observe the script and avoid improvising speech. The majority of Hong's Tsinghua theater productions, though, were scenario-based.

[132] Siyuan Liu, 100.

What enabled the smooth running of thousands of new theatres and hundreds of civilized drama troupes was not the unsatisfying "literary dramaturgy," but the scenarios that grew out of the domestic operatic theatres in the early 20th century.[133] Different from scripts, scenarios were collectively created by performers backstage prior to the performance. Usually scenarios only contained the dramatic plot outline, act divisions, and the assignments of entrances and exits of each character. The specific dialogues, monologues, and actions in each scene were determined by the performers' improvisation and not the playwright's script.

Siyuan Liu, in his detailed construction of civilized drama's "literary hybridity" explains the two sides of the "scenario vs. script" debate. Lu Jingruo and most Spring Willow members were opposed to scenarios/performers. Likely inspired by Mori Ogai (1862-1922), Osanai Kaoru (1881-1928), and Gordon Craig (1872-1966), Lu and Feng Shuluan (1883-?) argued for the supremacy of scripts, proposing that the theatre hierarchy should be as follows:[134]

> The script is the primary element of a play; the second element is scenery; and the third is costume…the actor is the puppet and the script represents the wires that control it. The person who can manipulate the wires to make the puppet talk and move is none other than the playwright.

The ideal relationship between script and actors, thus, should be like that of a single puppeteer and his puppets or marionette (*kuilei*).[135] However, Lu and Mori's radical reformation and flattering appraisal of the Western notion of individual authorship, while influential in Japan, did not succeed in establishing or changing norms in Chinese new

[133] Ibid., 103.
[134] Ibid., 99.
[135] Ibid.

theatres in the early 20th century. Instead of upholding the supreme power of the script/text, Feng Xizui (dates unknown), Xu Banmei (1880-1961), and other civilized drama veterans demonstrated the "indigenous theatrical perspective," diagnosing that Chinese new theatre realities until the late 1910s only allowed employment of the combined practices of scenario-writing and actor-centered performance, in part to free semi/illiterate actors from the burden of reading and memorizing wordy scripts.[136]

Hong Shen's ideas concerning the role of the script in dramatic performance contrast with these two contradictory opinions originating in Shanghai and Tokyo. These ideas are presented in an essay he wrote with Shen Gao (dates unknown), entitled "*Bianju xinshuo*" (*New Discussion on Script-Writing*), which was published in 1919 in the journal *Liu Mei xuesheng jikan* (*Students Abroad in America Quarterly*) soon after the success of *TWH*. There, Hong Shen and Shen Gao argue that a good drama should be a "theatrical dramaturge" fashioned via a democratic cooperation among script, actors, spectators, and performance space:

> Drama should be stageable for the spectators. A play will be doomed to fail if untalented actors can not express the playwrights' good intention. A play will also fail if the voice delivery is weakened in the performance space/theatre architecture, or the stage set is too troublesome to make and change. A play will be doomed to fail if the playwright's wording and plotting as well as actors' performance are opposite to spectators' psychology. For example, if one asks [Gai] Jiaotian to play the scene of *Kumiao* [Mourning in the Temple] in *Taohua shan* [The Peach Blossom Fan] written by Wang Xiaonong, the play will fail; if one stages the *Mulian jumu* [Mulian Saves His Mother] done by *Da wutai* [Grand Stage] in the theatre of *Minming she* [People's Voice Society], it will fail; if the play *Konggu lan* [Lonely Orchid] that is popular in Shanghai is moved to Taiyuan, it will be a disaster… Playwrights should not write without thinking of actors. Instead, one needs to carefully compare and calculate all different elements before writing, among which, three items are most important: (1) The actors' talent. Playwrights' first *zhiji* is the actor.... (2) Performance Space. Now

[136] For detailed analyses for Feng and Xu's argument, please refer to Siyuan Liu, 101-02.

> theatres are built with scientific perception, which greatly benefits performances... The electric lighting can make artificial sunshine and moonlight, sunset and storm. [But] new drama productions should carefully plan the costume and stage-set to be historically accurate…as spectators can all see clearly… (3) Spectators' psychology. As the tradition and education changes, the social psychologies also vary. For example, suicide in Oriental [plays] must be a virtue…but [in Western plays] it was only rendered as "lack of courage"….[137]

Peppering his verse with references to civilized drama and Peking opera, Hong Shen's meta-textual understanding of script writing reveals that the commercial and popular theatres of the 1910s were still a major source for his perception of realistic Chinese drama. I believe that it was precisely by synthesizing these "traditional" influences that Hong was able to arrive at his new conception of drama.

Script-writing rule No. 1 in this 1919 essay is to establish a *zhiji* relationship between playwrights and actors. This position sounds strikingly humble when read against Lu/Mori's master-puppet metaphor typical of the drama reformers' linking Spring Willow-Japanese *shingeki* (new drama)-modern European theatre discourse. In fact, what Hong and Shen imply here—an artistic and social fraternization with actors—is not substantially new in light of the rather long tension-charged relationship, both socially and erotically, that existed between elite literati/intellectuals and actors, who operated with an ambiguous social status since the 17th century.[138] Pointing out that "only if actors are able to grasp and express the goodness of a script will spectators discern the playwrights' intention and agenda,"[139] Hong also adds a unique touch when he further

[137] Hong Shen and Shen Gao, "Bianju xinshuo" (A New Account of Play-writing) in *Liu Mei xuesheng jikan* (*Students Abroad in America Quarterly*), vol. 1 no. 2 (Summer 1919).
[138] Volpp, 5.
[139] Hong Shen and Shen Gao, "Bianju xinshuo" (A New Account of Play-writing) in *Liu Mei xuesheng jikan* (*Students Abroad in America Quarterly*), vol. 1 no.1 (Spring 1919), 38.

points to the need for the fraternal relationship between actors and playwrights for the completion of a theatre piece:

> Playwrights' ideas and thoughts, of course, are more advanced than actors. However, actors' understandings [of the roles and plays] are derived from their life experiences. If actors do not believe in [the playwrights' narration] from the bottom of their hearts but are forced to act out, the effect will not be good. Thus, the actors' voice should also be taken into account. On another note, the playwright sometimes carefully composes the dialogue in order to perfect the plot. However, the composition is so overly talented and wonderful that actors could not truly understand and express it. In that case, even if the actors are shouting and exhausting themselves, neither the playwrights nor the audience will be pleased. Thus, the playwrights should calculate, in advance, the potential talents of the actors, and accordingly write the script to enhance their advantages and avoid the disadvantages. The playwrights are like the chief of staff, the actors are like soldiers and generals on the front. The chief can never forget the general and soldiers' strength.[140]

Notice how Hong and Shen employ the concept of *zhiji*, used to describe the ideal dramatic community where the playwright and the actors are united by common goals. Hong Shen's idealization of text/playwrights and performance/actors differs in nature from both ends of the spectrum in the "scenario vs. script" debate. Unlike Lu and Mori, Hong believes that the success of a play lies in the masterful calculation and democratic cooperation among actors, theatres, playwrights, and spectators. At the same time, although Hong argues that playwrights should write with their actors in mind, he does not advocate the direct input of actors in creating a script. Thus, neither script-centered nor actor-centered, Hong Shen bridges the two poles of the "scenario-script" debate. Hong writes to serve, not to rule, a stageable theatre.

[140] Ibid., 39.

The Theatre as a Democratic Institution

Hong Shen further developed his vision for Chinese theater in a 1920 essay he wrote for *Theatre Arts*, which, at the time, was the only magazine discussing theatre art in the U.S. This essay not only earned Hong a small sum of money (2 cents per word), it also provided him a platform from which he could elaborate on the ideal community to which modern Chinese drama should aspire. The focus of Hong's short essay is the transformation of the infrastructure behind Chinese theatre. "Everything in China is in a state of flux; so is the Chinese theatre," he states.[141] According to Hong, three types of theatres co-existed in China's metropolitan cities:

> Modern theatre, to be found only in such big cities as Peking and Shanghai, with its asbestos curtain, electric lights, concrete or steel fire escapes, and in one case, with a sanitary shower booth for patrons! Not only that, another modern feature was introduced in 1906—the revolving stage. Then there is the Imperial Theatre in the New Summer Palace near Peking. It contains three stages, one above the other. Important actions on the middle stage, which is therefore the main stage. Gods sit in the upper story as if to control the destiny of the people directly below them. While the lower and warmer region is represented by the lower stage to which the villains always fall after being slain by the heroes. Truly a model of perfection! In most parts of China, one finds the third type [of theatre] predominant, sometimes the only one existent… It is, in fact, the contemporary Chinese theatre, because it is so prevalent and still so popular with the great mass of people. Certainly it is Chinese, for it preserves the Chinese theatrical traditions.[142]

What I find most striking about this quote is that the type of Chinese theatre that Hong labels "contemporary" is not the first two theatres, with their lavish performative space exhibiting modernity and imperial power, but the third, which Hong goes on to call a

[141] Hong Shen, "The Contemporary Chinese Theatre," *Theatre Arts*, vol. 4 (1920), 237.
[142] Ibid., 238.

"democratic institution" that "is so prevalent and still so popular with the great mass of people."[143]

With its own bricks-and-mortar performance space, this third type of theatre was often staged by traveling companies and was therefore both seasonal and mobile. Usually a company was organized and founded by several experienced actors, including the roles of historical player, sword dancer, and cross-dressing male performer. Each of these actors mastered a repertoire of 20 to 100 plays that he could then act as the leading role.[144] As for the rest of the cast, companies would "loan" actors from other troupes and places. Such a composition was necessary for Chinese theatre since "the long run is unheard of in the East."[145] Commonly a program consisted of 8-9 plays that were given continuously from 7 in the evening to 1 in the morning. These prepared programs needed to be varied day to day, and needed to include the popular sub-genres of historical, family [melodramatic], and farce. Thus, only a variety of performers, able to adequately perform a range of roles, could ensure the survival of a theatre company. Comparing the Chinese mobile theatre to Western theatre culture, Hong Shen drew attention to the lack of rehearsals and regulation in Chinese theatre troupes. It was the leader of the theatre who selected plays, arranged programs, and assumed responsibility for the troupe.

Hong probably decided to highlight the particulars of this type of Chinese contemporary theatre because it was the most unknown to Americans and therefore, the most "theatrical." But another reason why Hong likely wanted to emphasize the Chinese mobile theatre was because he saw parallels between it and the ideals of American

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[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid., 240. The companies usually consisted of only same sex performers, unless, very rarely, mixed gender companies were founded with the municipal authorities' permission.
[145] Ibid., 241

democracy. Understanding theatre as a performance space and theatre culture as a microcosm of Chinese society in flux, Hong Shen's account indeed focuses less on dramas enacted onstage than on the performance of social roles offstage and the relations between actors and the audience. Writing that "the Chinese theatre has been a very *democratic institution*," Hong observes the interaction between the audience and actors, as well as the mutually permeable spaces between the "social (audience)" and the "representational (stage)."[146] Hong described the spontaneous actions of an audience (which he said was largely composed of middle-class merchants) to the performance as follows:

> When a good play goes wrong, the audience will demand the actors to act it over again. Under exceptional circumstances, stools and tea pots may be thrown to the stage and the return of the admission fee may be demanded… If a prince dares to utter a *hao* to show favoritism [when it is inappropriate], he is promptly *dao hao*ed by the rest, even including his own servants.[147]

True, Hong Shen could not afford an accurate elaboration of the evolving history of Chinese theatres within the limitations of a 4-page article for English readers. Still, it is necessary to point out the discrepancy between Hong's accounts of Chinese theatre in the late-Qing and early Republican transition and Joshua Goldstein's construction of the transformation "from teahouse (*chayuan*) to playhouse (*xiyuan*)" at the turn of the 20th century. In Goldstein's scheme, the transition of Chinese theatre, from being an institution that enhanced social rankings (teahouse) to a potential space of liberty (playhouse), was facilitated by the dramatic reformation of architectural design and seating arrangements in metropolitan theatres. The Qing teahouse "facilitated the

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[146] Goldstein, 73.
[147] Hong Shen, 1920, 243.

differentiation of social hierarchies: commoners, officials, and actors…each had their own spaces and standards of conduct." These enhanced social hierarchies were superseded in the Republican-era playhouse, which functioned as a space intended to facilitate the leveling of social ranks and the enacting of new forms of sociality, where, "customer-citizens were to be treated with equal respect in what was provisionally a universally accessible public space."[148] Goldstein thus underscores the importance of architecture in shaping modern Chinese theatre's democratic features.

In contrast, Hong emphasizes the native democratic spirit embedded in the Chinese performance space. He asserts that this democratic spirit sprung from a healthy dynamic between audience and performers, in an environment where the illusionary space (on-stage) and social space (off-stage) were permeable and congruous.[149] As Hong wrote, a performance could only be completed by spectators' spontaneous reactions of bravos and boos. Such a scenario differs from traditional Western dramas staged in playhouses, where the audience is expected to believe in and enhance the separation between illusions (performative space) and reality (audience space) by acting as quiet observers. It also differs from the "marketplaces with an array of items for sale" that Goldstein constructs as the environment for mobile dramas and teahouses and where spectators were easily distracted, seeing the performance simply as an "item" sold on stage.[150] Hong Shen considered the "sincere, sympathetic, and empathetic"[151]

[148] Goldstein, 56.
[149] One wonders to what degree Hong's observations about the permeability between theatrical illusion and reality were provoked by his experiences staging *TWH*, which, as we have seen, explored the tension behind interracial actors portraying a Chinese couple to dramatic effect.
[150] Goldstein, 69. Goldstein argues that the teahouse theatre of the late Qing not only evoked "popular anxieties regarding the social instability of the market place" as did seventeenth-century English theatre; but that it was indeed a market place.
[151] Hong Shen, 1920, 240.

participation of spectators to be an essential component of the overall performance. "Hundreds of *haos* and *dao haos* unified into one loud ejection!"[152] It was in the theatre that the audience obtained experiences to form a collective opinion, which sometimes even included the power to revise or even to cancel the performances.

At first glance, the community formed within the performative space Hong describes may appear to be a democratic or egalitarian one, where a "prince" could be booed if he *haoed* inappropriately. In other words, a "prince" and his servants obtained *equal* access to watch and *equal* rights to comment on performances despite the social distance between them outside of the theatre. However, such a subversion or even erasure of hierarchy was only illusionary. Within the audience, there still existed a "theatrical order" building on spectators' understanding and knowledge of performances and theatre culture in general that superseded the hierarchy derived from social rankings. If we were to understand the rhetorical conflation of imperial social hierarchy ("prince" and servant) and Republican class differentiation (middle-class) as a reflection of the hybrid culture in the late Qing-early Republican transition, it would not be a stretch for us to infer that middle-class patrons may "bully" an inexperienced "prince," but still needed to show respect to a sophisticated theatre-fan, even if that fan was a just servant.

Hong Shen's anecdotal stories describing contemporary Chinese theatre as a *democratic* institution thus reveal his true desire; namely, to build and defend within contemporary Chinese theatre an agreed-upon "theatrical order" that was permeable on- and off-stage. The ideal *zhiji* relationship that Hong espoused between playwrights and actors should thus be expanded to include informed theatre fans, as well. Theatre, in

[152] Ibid.

Hong Shen's imagination, not merely subverted the established social order (it was viewed by state authorities, whether late imperial or early Republican, with great suspicion); it constructed a new orderly community in which it was one's appreciation of drama that determined one's authority. However, if Hong Shen's wishful thinking about creating a new "theatrical order" suggests only a slight distinction between him and political pragmatists who viewed theatre chiefly as a means to carry out a political goal, when we view Hong's claims about a democratic theatre alongside comments he made the previous year with Shen Gao regarding the artistic nature, literary tactics, and sensibility of drama, we see that it was a new understanding, and not just a political hijacking, of theatre to which Hong Shen aspired.

Drama is a Sentiment-Based Genre

Previously we discussed how Hong and Shen, in their 1919 essays for *Liu Mei xuesheng jikan* (*Students Abroad in America Quarterly*) argued for a *zhiji* relationship between playwrights and actors. They reject Lu/Mori's script-centered approach to drama in part because they see drama and literature as being inherently different. Placing drama within the category of art, Hong and Shen stress that drama, in contrast to medicine and history which prioritize accuracy and clarity, brings forth "aesthetic perception (*ganmei de sixiang*) and a joyous poetic state (*yukuai de jingjie*)" among its audience by strategically "adding, deleting, reveling, and concealing" (*zeng jian xian cang*) information and stories at hand.[153] Observing the delineation between sense and sensibility that was established in the Western enlightenment, Hong and Shen, in a vein similar to other late Qing and

[153] Hong Shen and Shen Gao, Spring 1919, 38-39.

early Republican drama reformers,[154] first uphold that the power of drama does not stem from the "cold-headed" indoctrination of rationality but the "warm-hearted" moving of sensibilities.[155] Then, Hong and Shen go one step further, arguing that it is not merely a difference between art, science, and history that makes drama distinctive. Even within the category of art drama stands out, for it is drama alone that distinguishes itself by its leaps toward sensibility, which, considering the distinction between "spirit" (*qinggan*) and "structure" (*jiegou*), are more pronounced in the emotional pull of drama than in the textual citation and reasoning of fiction.[156] Briefly, Hong and Shen drew the following distinctions between drama and literature:

	Literature	Drama
Difference in Spirit	1. Can be joyously read alone. Thus readers could demonstrate individual favoritism. 2. It also can discuss philosophical theories; argues by reasoning.	1. Must be watched with others. Thus, it is the passions (pleasure, anger, sorrow, fear, love, and hatred) that need to be celebrated in order to strike a chord with the audience. 2. It must move the sentiments.
Difference in Structure	1. A narrator could appear when needed, giving credible accounts of the characters. 2. The materiality, printed on paper, ensures its permanent existence. Readers can always go back to the text if they did not understand it at first. Thus, fiction writers must not miss necessary description, but they do not need to repeat.	1. There is no narrator in a play. Playwrights do not have the privilege of mastering a commentary voice. Thus, all characters' thoughts and personalities have to be disclosed by dialogues and actions. 2. Drama is ephemeral. If the audience is confused at one place, it is likely to miss the whole point of the play. Thus, a play needs to constantly repeat the main theme and drama conflict.

Table 2. Distinction between literature and drama

[154] Liang Qichao (1873-1929), Chen Duxiu (1879-1942), and Wang Youyou (1888-1937), though coming from various political persuasions, all recognized that the power of theatre—as a form of "public school"—stemmed from the sentimental stimuli it provided to the masses.
[155] Hong Shen and Shen Gao, Spring 1919, 40.
[156] Ibid., 42.

What I find most significant about Hong's argument is that he defines drama as a sentiment-based collective experience. Drama for Hong is not a literary genre; it reaches its potential only when performed in the "democratic institution" of the theatre, where a *zhiji* relationship exists among playwrights, actors, and theatre fans. By the same token, drama—or what I call playmaking—could not be separate from society-at-large (i.e. "art for art's sake"); it required an active audience to shape, and be shaped, in return. There, in the "democratic theatre" that Hong described, a new community was formed, bounded by sentiment.

Conclusion

Following in the footsteps of the first generation of modern Chinese intellectuals, Hong Shen and his peers (the so-called "special generation") committed themselves to the cause of national development by studying in the U.S. and Japan. If Western modernity was only reimaged and reimagined via print and visual media and thereby remained "foreign" for Hong Shen before travelling abroad, the texture of modernity came to life, and became more complicated in the process, once he landed in the U.S. For Hong and his peers, "modernity" was not just an intellectual issue, but an "existential" one as well.[157] Living in a frontier where Western culture interacted with Chinese moralities and norms, these intellectuals generated numerous accounts about the exchanges between China and the West. Predictably, the most memorable narratives are those that are tension-charged and loaded with cultural shocks. Later, these personal experiences

[157] Wen-Hsin Yeh, *The Alienated Academy: Culture and Politics in Republican China, 1919-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 5.

became interwoven into a shared discourse of suffering, among which the most memorable is Lu Xun's (in)famous description of being an "observer and spectator" at the execution of a Chinese spy. In a similar vein, Wen Yiduo's account of humiliation in the United States was also well known. In contrast, Hong Shen's successful staging of *TWH* at OSU provides a far "happier" story. When we include *TWH* and Hong's early drama activities into our understanding of modern Chinese drama's creation, we are reminded of a time when modern Chinese drama was not only a "tool" by which "modern" Chinese could reclaim their national dignity vis-à-vis a "feudal" past and a "hostile" west. Rather, it was also a forum where modernity and tradition, China and the West could coexist. Considering that much of 20th century *huaju* was intended to serve "anti imperialist" and/or "anti feudal" goals, the distinct non-confrontational approach of *TWH* is all the more striking.

The present academic and theatre industry vogue of reading and staging modern Chinese drama "globally" suggests that we should cease viewing *huaju* solely, or primarily, as an imitation of the Western realist theatre tradition by May Fourth men of letters to instead highlight the genre's hybrid and cosmopolitan features. Unfortunately, current scholarship, though convincing in its analysis of overseas students' and drama reformists' cosmopolitan imaginations of Japan, the West, and the world on the *huaju* (and *wenmingxi*) stages in the first two decades of the 20th century, has fallen behind in studying the other direction of this cultural traffic—namely, how modern Chinese drama imagined and staged "China" before the world. Such a re-framing is necessary if we are to gain a fuller picture not only of *huaju*'s development, but also of the pursuit and participation of Chinese intellectuals in cosmopolitanism, which, subdued by nationalism

in the latter half of the 20th century, has come back to life in our present era under the rubric of "globalization."

In contextualizing Hong Shen's early drama activities at Tsinghua, OSU, and in New York, and giving particular emphasis to his writing and staging of *The Wedded Husband* in 1918-19, I have attempted in this chapter to fill in this scholarly void by telling the story of *huaju*'s cosmopolitan history from the other side of the globe. My construction of the textual, performative, and meta-textual aspects of *TWH* illustrates how the process of play/theatre-making enabled both Hong Shen (representing the first generation of twentieth-century Chinese intellectuals who studied abroad) and the Confucian structure of *qing* (Confucian ethical norms) to invoke cosmopolitan attention during the very early phase of cultural globalization that occurred in the late 1910s. Specifically, in the dramaturgic sense, *TWH*'s textual lineage to Bao Tianxiao's *A Strand of Hemp* as well as Hong Shen's negative appraisal of Nora's "home-leaving" in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* reflects Hong's sympathy toward traditional Chinese values and belief that the "authentic feelings" embedded in "loyalty," "filial piety," and other Confucian ethical norms could contribute, on an "equal footing" with the West, to the cultural cosmopolitanism of the post-World War I era. Placing Hong Shen's *TWH* amongst earlier adaptations of *Hemp* done by Mei Lanfang/Qi Rushan and Ouyang Yuqian/Lu Jingruo, my reconstruction of *Hemp*'s cosmopolitan "textual borrowing," meanwhile, offers a compelling case that blurs the boundaries of "radical," "reformist," and "conservative" players and casts doubt on the appropriateness of these terms, which have commonly been used to distinguish the key figures in modern Chinese drama's canonization. Far from an exclusive intolerance, the textual and intellectual intimacy

among these adaptations reveals the boundary between such labels to be surprisingly porous.

Looking at the performative aspect, this chapter has argued that, for a section of Chinese overseas students in America during the early 20th century, drama-related activities served as a conduit through which they could practice fraternal intimacy (off-stage) and romantic intimacy (on-stage) with racial and cultural others, and where Confucian ethical norms were granted the power to move and enlighten an international audience. In other words, the theatre stage of *TWH* was a site for Hong Shen and his dramatic cohorts to present Chinese intellectuals and Chinese culture on the "world stage" not as something exotic or inferior, but as respectable voices within the discourse of cosmopolitanism. *TWH*, despite being written in English, provides us with a unique lens to investigate the cosmopolitan origins of *huaju*, and also gives us the privilege of adding Hong Shen's counter-discourse example to the legacy of Nora and Nora plays in the canonization of modern Chinese drama.

Hong Shen's interest and training in, and practices of, playwriting, acting, and directing made his vision of modern Chinese drama not one of merely a literary genre but a collaborative art conducted by playwrights, actors, and spectators. In stressing the *zhiji* relationship between playwrights and actors, Hong Shen distinguished himself from both Japanese drama reformists and Chinese civilized drama veterans in the late 19th and early 20th century. For Hong Shen, neither playwrights (literature) nor actors (performance) should struggle for "power" to control and manipulate the other. Rather, the ideal relationship between playwrights and actors should be like that of intimate friends. Believing that the reciprocal understanding between playwrights and actors during both

on-stage production and off-stage reception would lead to excellent plays that would effectively actualize theatrical effects upon spectators, Hong Shen presented the theatre as a democratic space where multiple voices are heard and different perspectives are expressed. It was these initial forays onto modern drama's theoretical terrain that prepared Hong for his later definition of modern Chinese drama as a "collaborative" art in his 1935 "Introduction to Drama." Finally, Hong Shen viewed drama/theatre as a space for artists, intellectuals, and common audience members to participate in the process of play-making. In this way, Hong Shen no longer viewed modern Chinese drama as merely a newly developed minor subgenre within the field of modern Chinese literature; instead, he argued that modern Chinese drama constituted a significant part of Chinese literary and cultural modernity and was a genre in its own right—one with the potential to create and shape an ever-broadening community.

By the time Hong Shen returned to China in 1922, he had already developed a large part of the new grammar for modern Chinese drama and had played a major role in making "authentic" Chinese culture acceptable to Americans. Convinced that playmaking was a "substantial career" like science or technology, he was eager to begin his sentiment-driven "nation-building project" at home.

Chapter 2: When Huaju Met the Peasantry, or, Transforming the "Village Mob" into "New Citizens": A Comparative Reading of the Chinese Peasant Plays *Wukui Bridge* (1930), *Green Dragon Pond* (1934), and *Cross the River* (1935)

Introduction

In winter 1924, five years after Hong Shen introduced *The Wedded Husband* (*TWH*) to an audience made up of Columbus locals and Oriental Study scholars from New York, Maryland, and Washington DC, another overseas Chinese student theatre production, *Endless Sorrow* (*Cihen mianmian*), received a hearty welcome from its cosmopolitan audience when it was staged in the auditorium of the newly opened International House (aka I-House) of New York.[1] Conceived by Harry E. Edmonds (dates unknown)—a prominent YMCA official—and funded by John D. Rockefeller Jr. (1874-1960) and the Cleveland H. Dodge (1860-1924) family, I-House served as a community-oriented living and study center for international students to promote cross-cultural understanding in 1920s America.[2] According to the student-actor Huang Renlin (1901-1983),[3] the Chinese

[1] After meeting a Chinese student at Columbia University in 1909, Harry E. Edmonds realized that a community-oriented living and study center for foreign students could play a crucial role in promoting cosmopolitanism and mitigating the loneliness often experienced by overseas students. After funding was secured, a building at 500 Riverside Drive on the Upper West side of Manhattan was purchased. *Endless Sorrow* was staged as part of a performance by international students at I-House to present their cultures to the American public. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. was one of the guests in attendance. Following the success of the New York I-House, Rockefeller funded additional I-Houses in Berkely (1930) and Chicago (1932). Today, I-Houses can be found in Canada, the US, the Netherlands, France, the UK, South Korea, Taiwan, and Australia. See Michael R. Auslin, *Pacific Cosmopolitans: A Cultural History of U.S.-Japan Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 134-35.
[2] Ibid.
[3] In the 1930s, Huang Renlin (J.L. Huang), who maintained close ties with Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), played a leading role in the New Life Movement (*Xin shenghuo yundong*) as General Secretary of the Officers' Moral Endeavor Association. See Huang Renlin, *Huang Renlin huiyi lu* (*Huang Renlin's Memoir*) (Taibei: Zhuanji wenxue chubanshe, 1984).

students' English production of *Endless Sorrow*—which was adapted from Hong Sheng's (1645-1706) *chuanqi* play, *The Palace of Eternal Life* (*Changsheng dian*)[4]—delighted the audience with its touching love story, splendid costumes, and symbolic use of lighting and set designs.[5] Although *Endless Sorrow*, similar to *TWH*, was delivered in English and did not contain the musical and acrobatic elements featured in the Chinese operatic tradition, it differed from Hong's 1919 OSU production significantly. The play carried no "subversive" message suggesting that "China" was equal to the "West." Unlike *TWH*, which asserted the value of Chinese tradition in the contemporary world, *Endless Sorrow*—via its retelling of a classic tale from the Tang Dynasty (618-907)—presented a timeless and authentic "China" separate from the "world."[6]

The driving force behind *Endless Sorrow* was a group of young Chinese students of drama and art in New York—including Yu Shangyuan (1897-1970), Wen Yiduo (1899-1946), and Xiong Foxi (1900-1965)—all of whom would go on to play leading roles in China's *huaju* scene.[7] Prior to staging *Endless Sorrow*, these three dramatists had already gained valuable experience "translating" Chinese folk culture into the modern theatre by privately staging *The Cowherd and the Weaving Maid* (*Niulang yu zhinü*) in 1924 for students at the I-House.[8] They built on this playmaking experience to adapt *The*

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[4] Hong Sheng's *The Palace of Eternal Life*, finalized in 1688, was one of hundreds of works of art—including poetry, lyric poetry, dramas, narrative ballads, short stories, paintings, and ceramics—that depicted the love story between Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712-56) and his young consort Yang Yuhuan (aka Yang Guifei, 719-56).

[5] Huang Renlin, 28.

[6] It is also worth noting that unlike *TWH*, *Endless Sorrow* did not have a mixed-race cast.

[7] Wen Yiduo arrived in America in 1922 and studied fine arts and literature at the Art Institute of Chicago. The following year he went to Colorado College, and in 1924, he transferred to Columbia University, where he met the recently arrived Yu Shangyuan and Xiong Foxi, both of whom were studying art and theatre. Other members who participated in the production of *Endless Sorrow* include Zhao Taimou (1889-1968) and Zhang Jiazhu (dates unknown).

[8] Hong Shen, trans., "Niulang yu zhinü" (The Cowherd and the Weaving Maid), in *Yingwen zazhi* (*The English Student*), vol. 9 no. 6 (June 1923), 448-54; and vol. 9 no. 7 (July 1923), 529-34.

Palace of Eternal Life into a modern drama suitable for an international audience while also carefully preserving the *xieyi* (impressionistic) timbre of the Chinese operatic tradition. As Huang Renlin recalls, Yu, Wen, and Xiong often engaged in heated debates in Yu's I-House apartment regarding issues of translation and the synthesis of performance, lighting, and stage-set.[9] The participants likely did not realize it at the time, but in their debates laid issues that would be at the heart of the Chinese modern drama movement in the coming two decades: what plays to stage, for whom, and for what purpose.

In the early 1920s, when Hong Shen and other dramatists who studied and practiced student theatre productions in American universities came back to China, they encountered increasingly dramatic socio-political realities. The cultural shocks of industrialization, combined with the after-effects of the May Fourth movement, had resulted in a rising nationalism among urban residents and an increasingly critical engagement with traditional culture by students and intellectuals. The Chinese theatre could not help but be influenced by these renewed attempts at "modernization." Hybrid dramas, a commercial form of theatre begun in the 1890s that combined traditional Chinese opera with Western realist practices (such as displaying European furniture on stage), and continued into the 1910s and early 1920s by Mei Lanfang and Qi Rushan, was in sharp decline, being supplanted in popularity by civilized drama and, among students and intellectuals, by *huaju*.

Although not officially termed as such until 1928 when Hong Shen proposed, at least according to modern drama myth-making, the name "*huaju*" in a gathering that

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[9] Huang Renlin, 29.

included two other spoken drama pioneers, Tian Han (1898-1968) and Ouyang Yuqian (1889-1962),[10] amateur expatriate productions of Western-style theatre had been in existence in China since the 1850s, confined at first to international settlements before spreading in the 1910s to Shanghai's missionary schools and universities, and then to American preparatory schools, such as Tsinghua College.[11] The March 1919 special drama issue of *New Youth*, which introduced Henrik Ibsen to a broad audience, allowed *huaju* to begin to move beyond these Western-influenced enclaves and become a significant cultural force for China's modernization. Early *huaju* practitioners identified themselves not just by allegedly forgoing commercial interests, but by imbuing their works with a progressive message. Thus, when Yu, Wen, and Xiong staged *Endless Sorrow* in 1924, the Chinese conception of spoken drama (in terms of its role and purpose), and the Chinese conception of "China" (in terms of its relationship with its past and with the "world") were both considerably more contested than when Hong Shen had staged *TWH* five years earlier.

The careful preparation for *Endless Sorrow* and its immediate recognition as a quality production confirmed for Yu, Wen, and Xiong that staging traditional Chinese cultural characteristics could help to stimulate feelings of nationalism.[12] Their preliminary thoughts on "making national theatre and nationalism" drew upon the

[10] Siyuan Liu points out that Chen Dabei (1887-1944), a *wenming xi* veteran, also coined the term *huaju* in 1922. Chen proclaimed that "*huaju*, the equivalent of Western 'drama,' is a theatrical form that performs social life using the most progressive art of the stage." See Siyuan Liu, *Performing Hybridity in Colonial-Modern China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 8.
[11] As mentioned in Chapter One, Hong Shen was one such playmaker who cut his teeth with the student drama movement at Tsinghua.
[12] Yu Shangyuan, "Preface," in *Guoju yundong* (*The National Drama Movement*), ed., Yu Shangyuan (Beiping: Xinyue shudian, 1927), 2.

example of the Irish Dramatic Movement (1899-1901)[13] and, by extension, echoed the "stronger nationalistic feeling about folk literature" that began to emerge in China during the mid-1920s.[14] One year later in Beijing, the thoughts and discussions that had centered around *Endless Sorrow* in Yu's New York apartment were further developed by Yu and Xiong to launch the National Drama Movement (NDM, *Guoju yudong* 1925-1926)[15]—a short-lived attempt to shape Chinese drama by publishing drama theory journals, founding drama-training institutions, and establishing theatre-related museums and libraries.[16] Yu proclaimed that "drama for Chinese people should be Chinese theatre that is written by Chinese, based on Chinese materials and for Chinese audiences."[17]

At the same time that Yu was advocating his nationalistic view of Chinese drama, Xiong was establishing his own critical voice by publishing drama reviews and translations of drama theory in the Literature Supplement of *Beijing Morning* (*Beijing chenbao*). Echoing Yu, Xiong proclaimed the ideal of *guoju* as well as the proposed

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[13] The promotion of Irish culture through performance was an important means for asserting a sense of Irish identity among nationalist groups at the turn of the 20th century. Leaders of the Irish Dramatic Movement included William ButlerYeats (1865-1939), John Millington Synge (1871-1909), and Lady Augusta Gregory (1852-1932). Amid the heterogeneity of politics and aesthetics in the germinal years of the movement, the scholarly narrative most favored focuses on the Irish Literary Theatre (1899-1901) and the company that became the Abbey Theatre (1903-present). As Mary Trotter writes, the Irish Literary Theatre was "a society devoted to creating a body of Irish drama that would combine Ireland's rich cultural legacy with the latest European theatrical models." See Mary Trotter, *Ireland's National Theatres: Political Performance and the Origins of the Irish Dramatic Movement* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 1. Yu Shangyuan acknowledges the influence of the Irish Dramatic Movement on China's National Drama Movement in his "Preface" to *Guoju yundong*.

[14] Chang-tai Hung, *Going to the People: Chinese Intellectuals and Folk Literature, 1918-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 17.

[15] For a more detailed description of the National Drama Movement, see Song Baozhen, *Canque de xiju chibang* (*The Injured Wing of Theatre*) (Beijing: Beijing guangbo xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), 112-35; Joshua Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-creation of Peking Opera, 1870-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) 175-76; and Ruru Li, *Soul of Beijing Opera: Theatrical Creativity and Continuity in the Changing World* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 7-8.

[16] See Dong Baozhong, *Wenxue, zhengzhi, ziyou* (*Literature, Politics and Freedom*) (Taibei: Xielinyinshuguan, 1978), 80. Included among NDM's planned ventures was publishing a journal, *Kuilei zazhi (Puppet*), to propagate their dramatic theories and building a Beijing Art Theatre.

[17] Yu Shangyuan, 2.

future of Chinese modern drama as "dramas of, for, and by the Chinese." Although this vague manifesto failed to provide the theoretical grounding necessary for the movement's long-term development, these messages did reveal Yu's and Xiong's distrust of proposals then circulating in China that advocated the abandonment of traditional Chinese opera in favor of Ibsenesque "social problem plays" (*wenti ju*)—commonly referred to as "Nora-plays" (*Nala ju*) in which the iconoclastic "home-leaving" actions of the protagonist were meant to symbolize the rejection of tradition in favor of modernity.[18] Viewing such plays as a "misunderstanding of the Western 'master's' artistic essence" and a deviation from the "genuine art" of Ibsen,[19] these cosmopolitan student-playmakers, who had been part of overseas Chinese student communities, engaged with American peers, and made national culture for a global audience by staging "tradition" but not imitating the West, raised concerns regarding the popularization and nationalization of modern drama in China.

Specifically, they wondered whether or not Chinese playwrights' imitation of Ibsenesque theatre could fulfill the goal first advocated at the turn of the century by Liang Qichao (1873-1929): to renovate the masses via traditional theatre reform (*xiqu gailiang*) in order to foster the growth of Chinese nationalism. In 1902, Liang Qichao had published "Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi" (On the Relationship between Fiction and the Government of the People) and a new *chuanqi* play, *Xin Luoma* (*New Rome*) in

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[18] Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 123.
[19] Xiaomei Chen, *Acting the Right Part: Political Theatre and Popular Drama in Contemporary China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 22.

Xin xiaoshuo (*New Fiction*).[20] Liang stated that he wrote his play to raise the "heroic spirit" of the Chinese people in the face of foreign aggression.[21] In Liang's view, theatre was a tool for transforming the passive Chinese masses into "new citizens" (*xinmin*) who would take an active role in national affairs. Following Liang's proposal, *huaju* dramatists had become similarly motivated by their belief that the sentimental unity felt by an audience while watching theatre was in fact a prototype for the future shared sentiments that would bound together the "new citizens" of a "modern" China. But playmakers disagreed whether such "new citizens" could best be formed through iconoclastic "Nora plays"—which by nature held a confrontational view toward tradition—or through works that were not so didactic in their approach and could thus appeal to a large audience.

Whereas Yu, Xiong, and other American-trained cosmopolitan advocates of the National Drama Movement questioned the worth of Chinese Nora plays, it cannot be denied that playwrights who "imitated" Ibsen with their own Nora-like characters achieved popularity among urban educated youth. John Weinstein, in his close reading of Ding Xilin's (1893-1974) *A Wasp* (*Yizhi mafeng*, 1923), a "Nora play" with comedic elements that was staged among college-educated students of the May Fourth generation, argues that the play's success was primarily because the playwright, the characters, student performers, and spectators were all "cut from the same cloth"—meaning that the largely intellectual audience "easily identified with the protagonist, an educated young man who opposed arranged marriage, through clever dialogue with witty wordplay

[20] Liang Qichao, "Lun xiaoshuo yu quanzhi guanxi" (On the Relationship between Fiction and the Government of the People), in *Xin xiaoshuo* (*New Fiction*), vol. 1, no.1, 1902; Liang Qichao, *Xin Luoma* (*New Rome*), in *Xin xiaoshuo* (*New Fiction*), vol. 1., no.1, 1902.
[21] Xiaomei Chen, 2001, 93.

[written by the playwright and acted out by student performers]."[22] This "unity"—linking "spectator and playwright through the leading character"—was solidified through at least five productions within three years of the play's publication, and clearly achieved Ding's goal to "strike a responsive chord" and "evoke a smile."[23]

Although Weinstein analyzes only one dramatist's comedic *huaju*, the concern with "unity" reflects the general practice of an entire generation of pioneering playmakers. For example, I see similarities between the "unity" that *huaju* playmakers sought to create and the ideal *zhiji* relationship between director, actors, and audience that Hong Shen wrote about in 1919 and 1920, while he was still in America.[24] Telling his readers that the theater was a "democratic institution," Hong described an egalitarian environment of drama fans where "princes" and "servants" were free to comment on the events onstage.[25] The theatre was a site for a fraternal camaraderie that traversed barriers of class and custom. It was a "democratic" space where an alternative ordering of society could gestate. Thus, when playwrights such as Ding and Hong aspired to "strike a responsive chord," it was not just to invoke a positive reaction from their audience, but to harness the power of sentiment to aid in the social reordering of the Chinese nation.

The self-proclaimed link between *huaju* and societal betterment made the genre a natural fit for the "go to the people" (*dao minjian qu*) and rural reconstruction movement(s) (*Xiangcun jianshe yundong*) of the late 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s. "Go to the people" was a broad-based popular movement in which Chinese intellectuals and

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[22] John B. Weinstein, "Ding Xilin and Chen Baichen: Building a Modern Theatre through Comedy," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, vol. 20, no. 2 (Fall 2008), 94.
[23] Ibid., 95.
[24] Hong Shen and Shen Gao, "Bianju xinshuo" (New Discussion on Script Writing), *Liu Mei xuesheng jikan* (*Students Abroad in America Quarterly*), vol. 1 no.1 (Spring 1919), 39; Hong Shen, "The Contemporary Chinese Theatre," *Theatre Arts*, vol. 4 (1920), 240, 243.
[25] Hong Shen, 1920, 243.

students sought to share their knowledge with, and learn from, the masses.[26] Chang-tai Hung points out,

> In the latter part of the 1910s and in the 1920s, many Chinese intellectuals began to advocate 'going to the people'... The movement borrowed many of its concepts from the Russian Narodnik movement of the 1870s…The slogan 'going to the people' gradually became a clarion call among intellectuals in the 1920s as more young Chinese became worried that their own country was being torn apart by internal strife and imperialist aggression.[27]

Similarly, "rural reconstruction" was the umbrella term for a plethora of state sponsored and private ventures in the late 1920s and 1930s that aimed to bring "modernity" to China's countryside.[28] Perhaps the most well-know rural reconstruction project was the Mass Education Movement (MEM) led by James Yen (1890-1990) between 1926-37 in Ding County, a county of 400 villages with 400,000 people in Hebei province.[29] Focusing on the study of literature and art, economy, hygiene, and citizenship, MEM aimed to cure "the four root evils"—ignorance, poverty, disease, and civic disintegration—that Yen diagnosed as causing China's "rural crisis."[30]

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[26]The most famous *huaju* advocate of "going to the people" was Tian Han, whose 1927 film, *V Narod*, referenced both "go to the people" and the Russian Narodnik movement in its title. For more on Tian Han's career-long effort to "go to the people," see Liang Luo, *The Avant-Garde and the Popular in Modern China: Tian Han and the Intersection of Performance and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014).
[27] Chang-tai Hung, 1985, 10-11.
[28] For example, consider the rural reconstruction movements directed by Tao Xingzhi (1891-1946) in Xiaozhuang, Jiangsu (1927-1930), Liang Shuming (1893-1988) in Zouping, Shangdong (1931-1937); and the Communists' cultural and social practices in Yan'an (1937-1947). See Yu Zhang, "Visual and Theatrical Constructs of a Modern Life in the Countryside: James Yen, Xiong Foxi, and the Rural Reconstruction Movement in Ding Country (1920s-1930s)," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, 25, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 48.
[29] Scholars who have examined China's rural reconstruction movement, literacy and Chinese rural modernities have frequently turned their attentions to Ding County. Li Jingshen's 1933 sociological survey, *Ding xian shehui gaikuang diaocha* (*Ding County: A Social Survey*) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chuban she, 1933), laid a good foundation for later researchers to understand and historicize James Yen's efforts. Contemporary scholarship on Ding County will be discussed below.
[30] Charles Wishart Hayford, *To the People: James Yen and Village China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), x.

When discussing *huaju* playmakers' involvement with the "go to the people" and rural reconstruction movements, Xiong Foxi's *Guodu* (*Cross the River*, 1935; hereafter *Crossing*) stands out. Invited by James Yen to join the rural reconstruction project in Ding County in 1932, the Western-educated Xiong Foxi became head of MEM's Department of Literature and Visual Education (DLVE). After spending nearly three years in Ding County working with the local peasant drama teams, Xiong and his Theatre division felt ready to present *Crossing*—a play staged of, for, and by Ding County peasants—in East Buluogang's[31] Open-Air Theatre (*Lu tian juchang*) for over 2,000 villagers as well as VIP journalists and intellectual critics coming from Beiping, Nanjing, and Shanghai. Seen as epitomizing the rural reconstruction project of Ding County, *Crossing* and Xiong's related play-making efforts thereafter attracted generations of domestic and international scholarly attention. Some have even seen in "Ding Xian-ism" the inspiration for Mao Zedong's (1893-1976) "Yan'an Talks."[32]

How was *Crossing* able to solicit popular support and participation from Ding County peasants? Due in part to the sensational popularity that *Crossing* achieved domestically—which in turn has meant the preservation of a wealth of research materials, including photographs, staging notes, and memoirs—scholars have, to some extent, been able to answer this question. William Huizhu Sun in his 1990 dissertation provides a comprehensive overview of the Ding County theatre experiment. Sun situates theatre as

[31] East Buluogang was one of the two "experimental fields" selected among the 30 villages of Ding County to be a "model village" for Ding County's MEM.

[32] Edgar Snow visited Ding County in 1933, and proclaimed that "rural China is being made." Snow further invented the term "Ting Hsien-ism" (*dingxian zhuyi*) to describe what he saw. See Hayford, x.

an essential but late addition to MEM.[33] In addition to building on MEM's modernizing efforts, Sun sees the Ding County theatre experiment as a continuation of the reformation of "old scripts and old theatres" that was conducted prior to Xiong's arrival. Peasants were thus already familiar with some aspects of modern life and theatre reform before *Crossing* was staged. Siyuan Liu narrows down Sun's account of the entire Ding County theatre movement by focusing on a case study of *Crossing* and *Longwang qu* (*Dragon King Canal,* 1936). Liu highlights the sinicization of Western-style theatre in Ding County, and praises Xiong's achievement as "a miracle in the evolution of new Chinese theatre" and a "dramatic liberation movement."[34] While skillfully connecting the performative and theatrical aspects of Xiong's peasant plays with the local tradition and with the global theatre vocabularies, Sun and Liu have unfortunately missed a key ingredient: namely, how Xiong's efforts in Ding County were part of a broader trend among *huaju*-makers to create peasant plays. By over-emphasizing the unique success of "Ding Xian-ism," Sun and Liu have created a *huaju* narrative that presents Xiong as working in isolation.

A new generation of literary and cultural scholars has begun to draw influence from the works of Martha Nussbaum, Eugenia Lean, and Haiyan Lee regarding sentiment and emotions to examine how *huaju* specifically partook in the broader rural reconstruction movement.[35] Yu Zhang, for example, investigates how *huaju*, as "a

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[33] William Huizhu Sun, *The Peasants' Theatre Experiment in Ding Xian County* (1932-1937), (PhD. Dissertation, New York University, 1990), 20.
[34] Siyuan Liu "'A Mixed-Blooded Child, Neither Western nor Eastern': Sinicization of Western-Style Theatre in Rural China in the 1930s," *Asian Theatre Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Fall, 2008), 273.
[35] Briefly, this scholarship questions the appropriateness of the Enlightenment (1650s-1780s) dualism of reason and emotion, arguing instead that an (urban) modern public is bound together (and should be understood) at the intimate level. See Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Eugenia Lean, *Public Passions: The Trial of*

pedagogical tool and transformative vehicle," cultivated "compassionate members of their village and national community" who were constantly "learning, thinking and feeling"[36] in Ding County. Applying an urban cultural framework to the Ding County case and thereby recognizing *huaju*'s agency, along with other urban media, in building a rural modern public[37] is certainly inspiring, but because Zhang's study lacks a close-reading of Xiong's *huaju*-making "of, for, and by" peasants, it ultimately reduces *huaju* to a tool that enacts sentiment only through its plot. The question how *huaju,* as a specific cultural form, allegedly made Ding County peasants compassionate citizens who identified themselves and their community in ways parallel with the goals of the rural reconstruction movement remains unanswered. In short, the stress in extant theatre scholarship is on Xiong's endeavor to make *huaju* for the Ding County peasants, not how Xiong's *huaju* made these peasants into new citizens.

Hong Shen, one of the figures most responsible for *huaju*'s development, was also influenced by the rural reconstruction movement. Between 1930 and 1934, Hong composed his *Trilogy of the Countryside* (*Nongcun sanbu qu*)—consisting of *Wukui Bridge* (*Wukui qiao*, 1930), *Fragrant Rice* (*Xiang daomi*, 1931), and *Green Dragon Pond* (*Qinglong tan,* 1934)[38]—which depicted the contemporary struggles of peasants in

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Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

[36] Yu Zhang, 51.

[37] Ibid., 50. In addition to *huaju*, Zhang also engages illustrated primers and lantern slides, two other media that coalesced to create what Zhang calls the "cultural imaginary" in Ding County.

[38] When the *Trilogy* was published in 1936, the specific writing dates for each play were unmentioned, and have become subject to controversy. Scholars largely agree regarding the first two works: *Wukui Bridge* was written in 1930 and first staged in Shanghai by *Fudan jushe* (Fudan Drama Society) in May 1933 and by the *Nanzhong she* (Southern Bell Society) two months later in Nanjing; *Fragrant Rice* was written in 1931 and staged in 1934 by *Mofeng jushe* (Windmill Drama Society) and *Dazhong jushe* (The Mass Drama Society). Conventionally, it was believed that Hong Shen wrote *Green Dragon Pond* in 1932 and that the play was first staged in December 1936 by the National Drama School (*Guoli xiju xuexiao*). Recently,

Jiangnan rural society. The scholar Zhu Weibing ranks the *Trilogy* among "the most prominent achievements (*zui tuchu de*) of the left-wing peasant plays (*zuoyi nongmin ju*)."[39] However, unlike *Crossing*, Hong Shen's *Trilogy* has not provoked much scholarly interest, particularly in the Western world. It has only been recently that Xiaomei Chen has suggested that Hong's *Wukui Bridge* should not be read as advocating class struggle, but as demonstrating the merits of a "well-made play" (*jiagou ju*).[40] But for the most part, English-language descriptions of the *Trilogy* remain limited to entries in drama encyclopedias, explaining that while the work exemplifies Hong's efforts at making peasant-based *huaju*, they are overshadowed by Mao Dun's (1896-1981) "sensitive portrayal"[41] of a similar theme in fiction, his *Village Trilogy* (*Nongcun sanbu*; consisting of "Spring Silkworms" (*Chun can,* 1932), "Autumn Harvest" (*Qiu shou*, 1932), and "Winter Ruins" (*Dong can*, 1933)). Furthermore, Chinese scholarly attention to the individual components of Hong's *Trilogy* has been rather uneven: whereas *Wukui Bridge* is celebrated as the first and most mature representation of peasants' "innate" revolutionary spirit, *Green Dragon Pond* has received scant notice due to its depiction of peasants' "backwardness" and "fatuity." In the politically charged 1950s, some mainland

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scholars such as Zhu Weibing and Chen Meiying have argued that *Green Dragon Pond* was actually written between 1934 and 1936. See Hong Qian, *Zhongguo huaju dianying xianqu Hong Shen: Lishi bianian ji* (*Hong Shen: The Pioneer of Chinese Drama and Film*) (Taipei: Xiuwei, 2011), 162; Chen Meiying and Song Baozhen, *Hong Shen zhuan* (*Biography of Hong Shen*) (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe),1996, 142; Zhu Weibing, "Hong Shen *Nongcun sanbuqu* jiedu" (Reading Hong Shen's *Trilogy of the Countryside*), in *Wenyi zhengming* (*Debates on Literature and Art*), 2004 (03), 58.

[39] Zhu Weibing, 54.

[40] Xiaomei Chen, "Mapping a 'New' Dramatic Canon: Rewriting the Legacy of Hong Shen," in Peng Hsiao-yen and Isabelle Rabut, eds., *Modern China and the West* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 228.

[41] David Der-wei Wang, *Fictional Realism in Twentieth-century China: Mao Dun, Lao She, Shen Congwen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 56. For one such "encyclopedia-like" description of Hong Shen's *Trilogy*, see Gabrielle H. Cody and Evert Sprinchorn, eds., *The Columbia Encyclopedia of Modern Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 624.

critics, and even Hong Shen himself, went so far as to suggest that *Green Dragon Pond* be expunged from the *Trilogy* altogether.

Although PRC and Western-based drama historians' readings of Hong's *Trilogy*—and specifically of *Wukui Bridge*—as a politically inspiring showcase of irreconcilable struggle between the rich and the poor, or as an example demonstrating Hong's painstaking efforts at "structuring" and "revising" a "well-made play"[42] have their merits, I propose to read the *Trilogy*—with a focus on *Wukui Bridge* and *Green Dragon Pond*—against the broader intellectual and social scientific ethos of rural reconstruction in the 1920s and the 1930s. By doing so, insight can be gleaned not only into Hong Shen's status as a "left-wing writer," his view of the rural reconstruction movement, and the broader implications of the call to "go to the people"; we also see—particularly when we read Hong's *Trilogy* alongside the most well-known peasant drama, Xiong Foxi's *Crossing*—how *huaju* dramatists adapted their playmaking techniques to fulfill their self-appointed mission of forging "new citizens." The specific issue at hand is: what happens when *huaju* spectators are no longer cosmopolitans or like-minded intellectual youth? When *huaju* "goes to the people," how can playmakers create "unity"?

The few times that Hong's *Trilogy* has been compared to *Crossing*, it has been presented as a well-crafted but alienated depiction of rural China, or a "negative example" to reflect *Crossing's* transformation of *huaju* into a "space of attraction and empathy" for creating new citizens.[43] In contrast, I draw attention for the first time to the

[42] Xiaomei Chen, 2014, 228.
[43] Hong and Xiong's contemporary critic, Zhang Geng (1911-2003) implicitly provides such a reading. See Zhang Geng, "Hong Shen he *Nongcun sanbuqu*" (Hong Shen and the *Trilogy of the Countryside*), in *Zhang*

textual affinity between *Trilogy* and *Crossing*, reading *Crossing* as a re-writing of the "(re)construction" (*jianshe*) theme first developed in Hong's *Trilogy*. The *Trilogy* expresses Hong's grave doubts about the rural reconstruction movement in general and about whether the specific goal of building a "rural modern"[44]—assuming that such a goal was even achievable—was worth the price of destroying the native lyrical ideal. *Crossing*, on the other hand, marked the triumphant fulfillment of the rural reconstruction project, successfully involving its audience/performers in not just "constructing" a modern play, but in "constructing" a modern public.

My reading is three-fold. I first analyze how "(re)construction," in the textual level of these *huaju* plays, is ironically bound together with revolutionary (destructive) sentiment. The process by which the peasants' collective activities in these plays coalesce into revolt and even, to different degrees, carry out acts of physical demolishment, is also the process by which the peasant community (re)constructs itself into a rural public based on communal sentiment. Then, turning to the (meta)theatrical strategies, I compare how Hong and Xiong materialized "(re)construction" on proscenium stages in modern play houses and the open-air theatres built in Ding Country, respectively. In doing so, I demonstrate how these signature peasant plays with a rural reconstruction theme indeed formed communities in urban and rural contexts by means of fashioning professional and participatory *huaju* theatres. Finally, the chapter examines

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Geng zixuan ji (*Zhang Geng's Own Selection of His Works*) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2004), 7-12. Here I borrow the concept of "space of attraction and empathy" from Yu Zhang. See Yu Zhang, 52.

[44] The term "rural modern" was coined by Kathryn Alexia Merkel-Hess McDonald in her dissertation on the rural modernity of Republican China. As McDonald explains, she combines the concept of "rural modernity" first outlined by Margherita Zanasi in her essay, "Far from the Treaty Ports: Fang Xianting and the Idea of Modernity in 1930s China" (*Modern China*, 30.1, 2004), with the term "Shanghai Modern" put forward by Leo Ou-fan Lee. See Kathryn Alexia Merkel-Hess McDonald, "A New People: Rural Modernity in Republican China," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 2009), 26.

how peasants' participation in building the Open-Air Theatre in Ding County not only made *Crossing*'s sensational debut possible; more importantly, it was what enabled Xiong's success in creating new citizens out of rural peasants, and forming a modern public in Ding County. The case of cosmopolitan intellectuals' employment of *huaju*-making to construct a rural modern, I argue, is not only based on the narrative/theatrical effect of invoking emotions; but also the communal reality of making these theatrical effects. *Huaju*-making provides a fitting case study where stimulating emotion and disciplining reason are not divided, as in Western Enlightenment-based discourse, but work together to create new citizens in rural China.

The Troubled Relationship between Intellectuals and the Peasantry

Hong Shen: A "Leftist" Playwright?

Traditionally, the *Trilogy* has been seen as representing Hong Shen's development of a class consciousness under Chinese Communist Party (CCP) influence.[45] But unlike Tian Han, whose "veering to the left" has recently been re-read and re-contextualized,[46] Hong Shen's *Trilogy* has not benefited from a thorough critique and close reading. As Zhang

[45] Hong, in his preface to his 1951 *Selected Works*, affirms that *Wukui Bridge* reflects the ideological education he gained while a member of *Zuolian*. See Hong Shen, *Hong Shen xuanji* (*Hong Shen's (Own) Selections of His Works*) (Beijing: Kaiming shudian, 1951, 1957), 493.
[46] For example, Xiaomei Chen, echoing Dong Jian's reading (See Dong Jian, *Tian Han zhuan* [*A Biography of Tian Han*] [Beijing: Shiyue wenyi, 1996]) takes issue with the common view of Tian Han as someone "who veered to the left in the 1930s under the influence of the CCP." Instead, Chen argues that Tian Han "formed his multicultural and multi-ideological identities as a proletarian modernist" and should be viewed as an active pioneer in the promotion of "proletarian art," and an essential figure of the global socialist art movement of the 1920s and the 1930s. See Xiaomei Chen, "Reflections on the Legacy of Tian Han: 'Proletarian Modernism' and Its Traditional Roots," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, vol. 18, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 159. More recently, Liang Luo reads Tian Han's 1930 essay, "Women de ziji pipan" (Our Self-Criticism), as "Tian Han's self-promotion under the guise of self-criticism, and of exhibition under the guise of confession." Luo argues that the tension between the essay's pronounced intention to narrate the conversion of a petit bourgeois intellectual to Marxism and the confessional style positions Tian Han at the center of a "vibrant cosmopolitan intellectual network," but is not an example of "political conversion and radical transformation." See Liang Luo, 74.

Zhen and others have identified, the Nanjing Decade (1927-37) was a "leftist decade," where cultural figures drew inspiration from the Soviet techniques of realism and montage to create their own progressive works.[47] *Huaju*, like other genres at this time, began to more self-consciously espouse "radical" rhetoric for the sake of breaking China free from its "feudal" past, and to defend the nation against foreign encroachment. Reflective of this cultural "move to the left" was the formation of the League of Left-wing Writers (*Zuoyi zuojia lianmeng*, hereafter *Zuolian*) on March 2, 1930. Hong Shen, following Tian Han's suggestion, joined *Zuolian* in early 1930.

Given that the *Trilogy* is often cited as "proof" of Hong Shen's leftism, it is surprising to learn that Hong in fact attempted to distance himself from the left just before writing *Wukui Bridge*. In October, 1930—less than a year after joining *Zuolian*—Hong, in the face of considerable Nationalist pressure[48] and following the advice of the journalist Pan Gongzhan (1895-1975), made a public break with the left, via the rather "cowardly" act of publishing a "Hong Shen Announcement" (Hong Shen qishi) in *Shen bao* and *Xinmin bao* (New People's News). There, Hong stated that he had retired the previous month from all teaching and administration positions in the *Xiandai xueyi jiangxi suo* (The Training Bureau of Modern Learning of Art), the cultural institute cofounded by *Zuolian* and the *Zhongguo shehui kexuejia lianmeng* (League of Chinese Social Scientists) to which he had belonged, in order to move to Tianjin. Though not directly referring to *Zuolian* in his announcement, and attributing his decision to relocate

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[47] Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 246.

[48] In the early 1930s, when the Guomindang (GMD) was trying to wipe out the "Communist bandits" (*gongfei*), public support of "the left" carried with it certain risks. *Zuolian* was banned by the government in September 1930, and on February 7, 1931, five members of *Zuolian* – Li Weisen (b.1903), Hu Yepin (b.1903), Rou Shi (b.1902), Yin Fu (b.1909), and Feng Keng (b.1907) were executed by the GMD.

to ill-health, Hong Shen's voluntary withdrawal from the Shanghai political scene can nonetheless be read as affirming his independence from politics at a time when many of his peers were "veering to the left."

Despite such a public display of "resistance," Hong is still commonly depicted in PRC drama histories as making the "leftward" shift "from an experimental Western theatre to a realist theatre adapted to Chinese society, and from a lonely dramatist in search of a theatre to a leader of a collective group of artists."[49] Indeed, a quick look at Hong Shen's career development in Shanghai between 1922, when he came back from America, and 1930, when he became involved with the left-wing drama movement, predisposes drama historians to fixate on Hong Shen's "leftward shift" with the *Trilogy*, and especially with *Wukui Bridge*. Sharing the common dream of becoming a "Chinese Ibsen" with other intellectual youths who had practiced modern theatre in Japan, United States, and Shanghai during the 1910s and 20s, Hong developed a hybrid career in Shanghai as "a drama and film scriptwriter, a director, a critic, an educator, and a theatre entrepreneur."[50] Helping to spread his visibility across the "walls" separating amateur theatres, commercial cinemas, and universities was Hong Shen's "cosmopolitan" and "bohemian" persona, fostered in part by tabloid gossip about his intimate relationship with prostitutes and love of foreign erotic books. Yet, despite his notoriety, Hong Shen's most distinguished play-making achievements at this time, *Yama Zhao* (1923) and *Young Mistress's Fan* (*Shao nainai de shanzi*, 1924), were widely viewed as "only" translating and adapting, (read: "copying" or "plagiarizing") Western plays into the domestic

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[49] Xiaomei Chen, 2014, 227.
[50] Ibid., 224.

cultural context, and thus did not enjoy critical respect.[51] As Ma Yanxiang (1907-1988), Hong's good friend and loyal follower who tried to stand up for Hong in his 1930 essay, "Hong Shen lun" (On Hong Shen), complained, "Hong Shen was barely mentioned in the past five years or discussed as a member [of the Shanghai drama circle] with Bao Tianxiao, etc."[52] In contrast, *Wukui Bridge*, Hong Shen's first play that was not a translation or based on Western repertoires, did not depict bohemian life in the kaleidoscopic city but was centered on the bitter experiences of Chinese peasants during the political and economic transformations of the 1930s. It was also a critical success. Such a noticeable change in content and reception understandably inspired PRC drama histories to canonize the *Trilogy* as the pivotal moment for Hong Shen's political transformation. But an examination into the creation of the *Trilogy* and its immediate critical response reveals that the work was in fact not a sudden artistic departure, nor the work of a dogmatic leftist. *Trilogy* was a natural development in Hong's writing technique, building on skills he had learned at OSU. And while *Trilogy* appeared at the height of the "go to the people" and rural reconstruction movements, it maintained a curiously "conservative" favor for cautious, intellectual subjectivity over spontaneous mass action.

[51] Ibid.
[52] For more details regarding Hong Shen's connections with Bao Tianxiao and the Mingxing Studio, see Xuelei Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking: Crossing Borders, Connecting to the Globe, 1922-1938* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 119-25.

Cosmopolitan Attempts at "Going to the People"

Between 1922 and 1925, when Hong Shen and Xiong Foxi[53] made their home-coming from New York to Shanghai and Beijing, respectively, they quickly noted their domestic intellectual peers' growing "obsession" with the peasantry—conceived as "marginal, voiceless, and exploited"[54]—which was informed by the "go to the people" movement, the growth of a romantic attitude towards rural life, Communist activities in the countryside, the rise of Chinese nationalism,[55] and the rural reconstruction movement.[56] One such example of the growing intellectual obsession with peasants was Tian Han, whose *Huo hu zhiye* (*The Night a Tiger was Captured*, 1924) told a stereotypical May Fourth story of two young people (Lotus Girl and her lover, Huang Dasha [Huang the Big Fool]) fighting against arranged marriage against the backdrop of an exotic tiger-hunting folk custom in rural Hunan. At the same time that the "social problem" of free love versus arranged marriage nicely blended with the "the theme of metamorphosis through the tiger-human motif,"[57] the male protagonist, Huang the Big Fool, as Liang Luo reads him, conflated the personas of "the primitive peasant, the avant-garde artist, and the May Fourth revolutionary."[58] Tian's outlandish imagination of the peasantry, depicted in both characters and sets, captured the attention of modern students in the 1920s, and the play enjoyed several urban productions. In fact, *Tiger* was staged by at least thirteen school-affiliated amateur troupes (*xuesheng jutuan*) in 1926, the most successful of which was a

[53] Hong Shen settled in Shanghai in 1922. Yu, Xiong, and the other key members who staged *Endless Sorrow* in New York went back to Beijing to officially launch the "National Drama Movement" in 1925.
[54] Liang Luo, 17.
[55] Hung-tai Chang, 1985, 10.
[56] The rural reconstruction movement grew out of an amalgamation of seemingly competing ideologies, including Marxism, Confucianism, and Christianity. See McDonald, 15.
[57] Liang Luo, 77.
[58] Ibid., 80. For a detailed close-reading of the play, see Liang Luo, 76-81.

production put on by students from the Shanghai Art University (*Shanghai yishu daxue*) at a Youth Performance (*Qingnian huiyan*). As Tian Han recalled,

> The minimalist setting and make-up… as well as the naturally delivered dialogues and monologues were all appropriate… Most interesting, this production turned off all non-diegetic lighting and only kept the firewood on stage as the diegetic lighting source. Later, this same amateur troupe staged *Tiger* again with a very refined background [most likely a two-dimensional scenery background] borrowed from a certain film studio…However, it somewhat lost the theatrical effect.[59]

However, neither the exotic narrative of rural Hunan nor Tian's aesthetic ideas on lighting brought *Tiger* beyond the "circumscribed popularity" of urban youth. *Tiger*, an intellectual romanticization of rural China with realist, modernist, and expressionist shades, did not "strike a responsive chord" among the real peasantry.[60]

Around the same time that Tian's *Tiger* was published and staged between 1922 and 1924, Hong presented his first major *huaju* production in Shanghai, *Yama Zhao*, which to some extent reflects his engagement with the "go to the people" movement. Predominantly employing expressionist narrative and staging techniques, *Yama Zhao* "condemned the civil strife among the Chinese warlords and sympathized with the

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[59] Tian Han, "Women de ziji pipan" (Our Self Criticism), in *Tian Han Quanji* (*Complete Works of Tian Han*) vol. 15 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1983), 90.

[60] Between 1927 and 1928, Tian Han founded the Southern Art Institute (*Nanguo yishu xueyuan*) and organized a series of "collective West-expeditions" (*tuanti de xizheng*) to Jiangsu and Guangdong between 1928 and 1930, in order for his Institute to practice the intellectual pursuit of "going to the people." In these cultural or modern theatrical "expeditions," *Tiger*, despite its urban popularity, was staged only once when the Southerners were invited by Tao Xingzhi (1891-1946) to perform for peasant students at the Xiaozhuang Drama Society (*Xiaozhuang jushe*) that was attached to the Xiaozhuang Experimental Village Teachers' School (*Xiaozhuang shiyan xiangcun shifan xuexiao*) in 1929. Other than a photo of the Southerners standing in front of the Xiangzhuang Village School, there is no evidence revealing how the play was received by the peasant students. See Xiaoping Cong. *Teacher's Schools and the Making of the Modern Chinese Nation-State 1897-1937* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 114.

suffering of the peasantry," as the Meserves put it.[61] Driven by poverty, the protagonist, Zhao Da, turns from being an honest peasant to a soldier guilty of robbing officers and embezzling money. Escaping into the forest while loosing his mind, Zhao Da is eventually killed by the soldiers who are sent after him. The play "concludes with a swirl of expressionistic scenes that baffled [even urban] audiences."[62] Faring worse than *Tiger*, which raised little interest from rural peasants but passionate support from educated youth, the production of *Yama Zhao* at the New Stage in Shanghai in February 1923 gleaned nearly nothing but criticism, mis-interpretation, and misrepresentation.[63] The play is usually labeled as closely modeled on Eugene O'Neil's (1888-1953) *Emperor Jones* (1920);[64] or, in a more condescending tone, as a direct "plagiarism" of Western plays.[65] Hong Shen's experimental efforts at expressing his sympathetic concern with the suffering peasantry failed to reach the rural areas, baffled Shanghai theatre-goers, and, worst of all, is today barely remembered as a play with a peasant theme. Meanwhile, Hong Shen's acceptance of a script-writing job at the Mingxing Film Studio and a

[61] Walter J. and Ruth I. Meserve, "Hung Shen: Chinese Dramatist Trained in America," *Theatre Journal* 31.1 (March 1979): 29.
[62] Edward M. Gunn, "Introduction," in *Twentieth-century Chinese Drama: An Anthology*, ed. Edward M. Gunn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), xii.
[63] Tian Han and Ouyang Yuqian might be Hong Shen's only contemporary "*zhijis*" when it came to understanding Hong's intention with *Yama Zhao*. As Xuelei Huang puts it, "while the average audience found it [*Yama Zhao*] too odd and alien, the play helped him establish connectivity with like-minded dramatists, including Ouyang Yuqian and Tian Han." See Xuelei Huang, 92. According to the Meserves, the grim picture of Zhao Da's death was first praised by early leftist critics for "exposing the evils of the reactionary and feudal warlords," though for Hong Shen himself, "it was less a political propaganda than a play with a strong social thesis." Early leftist appreciation was rewritten by PRC drama critics in the 1950s who "consider it [*Yama Zhao*] unreal and superficial…an inadequate understanding of the communist view of revolution." See Meserves, 30. In contrast, David Der-wei Wang has a move favorable view of Hong's staging techniques in *Yama Zhao*, seeing them as "mixing elements drawn from both Western Expressionist theatre and traditional Chinese ghost imagery" to explore the protagonists' "heart of darkness." See David Der-wei Wang, *The Monster That Is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 275.
[64] Gunn, xiii.
[65] Yuan Changying, "Zhuangshi huangdi he Zhao Yanwang" (Emperor Jones and Yama Zhao), in *Duli pinglun* (*Independent Review*) no. 27 (November 1932), page no. unknown.

teaching position at the Mingxing acting school further promoted his public persona as being more "cosmopolitan" than "rural," especially when added to his American background;[66] and to depictions of Hong in the press as more a fan of urban hedonism than a devotee to enlightenment.[67]

Writing a Well-made Play

Ironically, Hong's "farewell" to Shanghai's left-wing intellectual and political vortex for rural Jiangnan itself bore progressive marks and echoed the "go to the people" movement that was influenced by the liberal intellectual and leftist political ethos. While living in the countryside of Jiangsu to write *Trilogy*, Hong did not alienate himself from rural conditions but chatted with fishermen, peasants, and workers as often as he could—albeit usually quickly interrupted by local policemen who were suspicious of his intent—to better grasp the reality of Jiangnan locals instead of the lyrical ideal imagined by cosmopolitan intellectuals.[68] But beyond the need to "go to the people," Hong was also driven by more pragmatic concerns. The *Trilogy*, clearly differing from the expressionist style of *Yama Zhao*, aimed to address social problems taking place in rural Jiangnan with realistic narrative strategies and staging techniques. Hong's supposed transformation

[66] Xuelei Huang, 94.

[67] Prior to its leftist utilization in the 1930s, the Chinese film industry was largely corrupt and commercially driven. For more information, see Zhen Zhang.

[68] Hong Shen, 1957, 472-73. In fact, Hong already practiced a similar approach to understanding the lives of commoners while writing "Poverty or Ignorance, Which is it?" (*Pinmin canju*) as early as 1916 as a Tsinghua student. Hong in the 1930s recalled, "Staying in Tsinghua for several years, I liked most to chat with those residents living in the West corner of Beijing. I have learned about their everyday life in detail, feeling that I am 'on the scene in person' (*shenlin qijing*). [Those poor people], like the donkey passenger-carriers, traveled between Xizhi Gate and Wanshou Mountain five to six times during the daytime…[The poor] residents' difficult livelihood and their suffering could be seen as this. One day, when I tried to persuade a poor child who was leading a donkey into studying, the child replied: 'You gentlemen read books and would get rich by becoming an official; but if we were to study and [not work], the whole family will starve to death!'" See Hong Shen, *Hong Shen xiqu ji* (*Selected Plays of Hong Shen*) (Shanghai: Xiandai shuju, 1933), 2.

from a "modernist" (*xiandaizhuyi de*) to a "realist" (*xianshizhuyi de*) was likely influenced in part by the lukewarm reception awarded to *Yama Zhao* by both Shanghai theatre-goers and intellectual readers of drama literature.

In fact, even prior to Hong's ill-fated *Yama Zhao*, Song Chunfang (1892-1938)—Hong's contemporary drama theorist, scholar, and sophisticated theatre fan—had already discerned the uncomfortable fit between "modernizing" China and the ever abundant "social problem plays" (*wenti ju*) that dominated *huaju*-making in the 1920s. Song deemed most social problem plays to be crudely written, stiff attempts at tackling "problems" that were lacking in plot and characterization. Accordingly, Song advised Chinese dramatists to redirect their attention to making a "well-made play" (*jiagou ju*),[69] by which he meant "a form of realistic drama emphasizing elaborate plot construction to generate excitement and suspense"[70] that would stand at the convergence between European realist theatre and Qing (1644-1911) *chuanqi* plays. Reading the work of Eugene Scribe (1791-1861)—the French dramatist who first coined the term—in tandem with Li Yu's (1610-1680) *chuanqi* play, *Fengzheng wu* (*The Mistake with the Kite*), Song finds in these two playwrights a similar talent for structuring seamless (*tianyi wufeng*) plots out of universal themes immediately accessible to a wide audience.[71] In a somewhat strange comparison, Song observed that the "swift and witty" (*guishi shenchai*) plots of these works unfolded like "messages and errands sent from spirits and ghosts."[72] Although Song's specific form of praise was perhaps anachronistic, his advice

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[69] Song Chunfang, *Song Chunfang lunju diyi ji* (*Song Chunfang on Drama Volume 1*) (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1922), 282.
[70] Gunn, ix.
[71] Song Chunfang, 273.
[72] Ibid.

for structuring a "well-made pay" was embraced and internalized by Hong,[73] who added to Song's suggestions his own cosmopolitan and scientific training in America.

At roughly the same time as writing *Trilogy*, Hong explained in several contexts how he thought one should structure drama in practice. Parallel with the publication of *Wukui Bridge* as a single play in Shanghai in 1934, Hong Shen reprinted his autobiographic narrative, "Xiju de rensheng" (A Life of Drama), where he cites play-making strategies that are similar to the skills he developed during his studies in the United States:

> My three-years training in the ceramic engineering program [at The Ohio State University] has rendered my scriptwriting process [rather] stark and dull. Prior to writing, I need to minutely examine and analyze all materials I plan to employ; were they not the materials I understand and have learned entirely, I would not dare use [them]—for the life that I am not familiar, I absolutely won't take the liberty to write. Before structuring and writing the play, I always hope that I have already decided the [dramatic] ending. Then I will carefully observe the scope [of the structure and the plot] and patiently search for the specific ways to write. I particularly worry about wasting [drama materials]; it is as if I were to make a chemical compound of which every piece of material needs to have its function—each character, every piece of plot, and all dialogues need to be necessary in the play. What is not benefiting [the play] indeed harms [the play]. I am also deeply worried that I may have neglected something; it is as if I were to manufacture a mechanical stove, thousands of strands and loose ends need to be placed and arranged. If I made one hasty and careless item, the plot-development of the entire play would appear to be inflexible. For a complete play, I have specific requirements regarding its "premise" and "answer," just like the requirements in geometry questions, responding to each other and fitting together logically. With regard to those far-fetched and uncanny "abrupt [plot] shifts," I am, after all, upset.[74]

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[73] Xiaomei Chen, in her recent rewriting of Hong Shen's legacy, also stresses that *Wukui Bridge* represents a "well-made play." Chen suggests that we should read *Wukui Bridge* as a case study showing Hong's interest in "structuring dramatic conflicts between various characters in a 'well-made play'" rather than as an example of "so-called class consciousness." See Xiaomei Chen, 2014, 228.

[74] Hong Shen, "Xiju de rensheng" (My Life of Drama) in *Wukui qiao* (*Wukui Bridge*) (Shanghai: Xiandai shuju, 1934), 10.

Although not mentioning the term "well-made play," Hong's meta-narrative regarding the writing process for *Wukui Bridge* clearly echoes Song's advice. What is different, though, is that Hong substitutes the "swift and witty" method that Song identified with "well-made drama" with painstaking intellectual labor that is built on rational analyses and calculation. Whereas an ideal *huaju* performance on stage would invoke sentiments among the audience, the process of scripting *huaju*, in Hong's case, was anything but a burst of spontaneous emotion. Comparing a play with a chemical compound, Hong prioritizes the quality of accuracy in his work and thereby places immense value on the playwright's preparation and structuring. Just as various chemical elements will interact with each other and form the compound, all characters and subplots, Hong believes, need to fulfill their obligation to the overall dramatic quality of the piece. Hong cites *Wukui Bridge* as a specific example,

> Thus, I have never "molded [a play] at one go" (*yiqi hecheng*) when it is still in the "white heat" (*baire*, the firing temperature for ceramic-making); instead I will always slowly accumulate. I will never "fly and scatter" (*feiyang*), instead I must have my feet planted firmly on the ground, step by step, making [my playwriting] rather slow and unwitty. For example, for the script of *Wukui Bridge*, I wrote it four times in total: the first time, I wrote a scenario guideline in which I arranged the major sections; the second time, I regulated the order of every small piece of plot in each major section and defined the emotional intensity; and as for the third and fourth times, I wrote dialogues and revised specific sentences, which was relatively easy. Scriptwriting, for me, not only cannot be hasty, it is a hard labor and extremely energy-consuming.[75]

Based on these recollections, it appears that *Trilogy*, written mostly at Hong's temporary residence in the "countryside" (more like a suburb) of Jiangsu province between 1930

[75] Ibid., 11.

and 1934, was more a painstaking effort at structuring a "well-made play" than a leftist polemic advocating class struggle.

The Trilogy*: Peasant Plays with a Left-Wing Burden*

Now that we have examined the creation process, let us turn to the plays that make up Hong's *Trilogy*. The first, *Wukui Bridge*, is set in a fertile Jiangnan village that is uncharacteristically suffering from a severe summer drought. The play dramatizes a heated confrontation between poor villagers and a rich gentry family over the existence of the titular bridge. Though the bridge had traditionally been seen as an auspicious *fengshui* locale that symbolically sheltered the gentry (Zhou) family and the local community, its usefulness has been cast into doubt, as the bridge blocks the only waterway along which a Western-made pump (*yanglong*) can be shipped to provide needed irrigation to the village. Accordingly, the poor villagers strive to demolish the bridge so as to rescue their rice fields, whereas the Zhou family seeks to guard it as a manifestation of their gentry status. Master Zhou, "the residual feudal force in the rural community,"[76] eventually flinches in front of the villagers' demands and Wukui Bridge is demolished. The violent confrontation between villagers and the gentry class, and the ultimate resolution in favor of the peasants, caused productions of *Wukui Bridge* in 1933 in Shanghai and Nanjing to be quickly banned by the Guomindang, who interpreted the play as giving off a "leftist" hue.[77]

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[76] Hong Shen, "Nongcun sanbu qu zixu" (The Preface to the Trilogy of the Countryside), in *Nongcun sanbu qu* (*Trilogy of the Countryside*) (Shanghai: Tushu chubanshe, 1936), 1.
[77] Chen Meiying and Song Baozhen, 137. *Wukui Bridge* was only performed twice before being banned.

Fragrant Rice, set in the same village and depicting events soon after the Wukui Bridge has been demolished, dramatizes the saying that "great harvests turn into disasters" (*fengshou chengzai*), an ironic but commonly faced scenario for China's peasants. The play focuses on the Huang family, a so-called "household of freeholders" (*zigeng nong*), who, along with the other villagers, have greatly benefited from the pump and their own hard labor to obtain their best harvest ever. However, the abundance of rice only leads the Huang family to bankruptcy, as governmental tax, usurers' interest, and rice businessmen all converge to reduce the peasants' projected profit. Even the demolition of the Wukui Bridge, which in the previous play signified the villagers' victory that would enable their future prosperity, has now become a financial burden that contributes to the hardships of the Huang family. Regretting their actions from the previous play, the villagers realize that they need a bridge after all, and must now share the cost and the burden of rebuilding the bridge on top of their other obligations.[78] Clearly, the villagers' pains and troubles in *Fragrant Rice* are more complicated than that in *Wukui Bridge*. Violent struggle may have been able to secure a great harvest, but it did not save the peasants. Consequently, any enthusiasm that remained in *Fragrant Rice* for demolishing the "feudal residual power" was greatly diluted. Perhaps that is why the play was allowed to be performed without GMD censorship.[79]

Progress on the final piece of the *Trilogy*, *Green Dragon Pond*, proceeded more slowly than the first two. Originally, Hong Shen viewed another work, *Red Silk Quilt*

[78] *Fragrent Rice* does not explain what causes the villagers' about-face regarding their town bridge.
[79] Interestingly, although Hong Shen believed that *Fragrant Rice* was never staged because the play was too literary, it was actually made in into a theatre production without Hong's knowledge in 1934.

(*Hongling bei*), as the “necessary development of the previous two plays,”[80] and he in fact attempted to write *Red Silk Quilt* twice. However, both times Hong felt so dissatisfied with the play’s first act that he stopped writing; the work was never completed. It was not until 1934, when Hong returned to Shanghai, that he finished his *Trilogy* with *Green Dragon Pond*, a five-act play that dramatizes the Chinese saying, “promises are words, but not deeds” (*kouhui er shi bu zhi*). Set during the same drought as *Wukui Bridge* but in a neighboring Jiangnan village, *Green Dragon Pond* further problematizes the rural reconstruction movement of the 1930s. Mr. Lin, an intellectual who serves as the village’s resident school-teacher/“enlightener,” calls upon the peasants to work together to solve the irrigation problem. But in Mr. Lin’s appeal, there is no specific gentry family, or “evil and residual feudal power,” that negatively impedes the peasants’ harvest and thus requires a violent resistance. Instead, Mr. Lin takes pains to convince the villagers to chop down their cheery trees to clear the way for a public road that will connect the village with the town and thus provide the means to transport the western pump in and, later, the harvest out. But the peasants’ self-destruction of their lyric homeland, represented by the imagery of the cherry orchard, does not win the “rural modernity” that the government, represented by the “enlightening” urban intellectual, promised. The delivery of the water pump is delayed. With the drought becoming desperately worse and the peasants facing an unavoidable disaster, the villagers who were previously “enlightened” by Mr. Lin return to their “superstitious ways” by planning a ritual sacrifice to pray for rain. Ironically, it is Mr. Lin himself who becomes the “sacrifice.” The teacher, who has continuously pleaded with the peasants to stop their

[80] Hong Shen, 1936, 1.

"superstitious" activities, is beaten to death by the villagers, including his former students. Significantly, out of the three plays, *Green Dragon Pond* was the only one to enjoy government support. It was staged on December 25-27, 1936 by the National Drama School (*Guoli xiju xuexiao*) in the World Grand Theatre (Shijie da xiyuan) as a major component of NDS' eighth gala performance.[81]

Critical Responses to the Trilogy

Wukui Bridge, at the time of its staging, enjoyed general critical support. What particularly drew critics' attention was Hong's approach to play-making—his methodology of writing and staging realist plays that aspired to reflect the everyday lives of the Chinese peasantry. When the Fudan Drama Society (*Fudan jushe*) first staged *Wukui Bridge* in Shanghai in 1933, Zhu Fujun (dates unknown), a drama society member, proclaimed the play to be "a successful dramaturge…that does not possess the failures that are usually featured in those so-called 'struggle literature charged only with slogans' (*biaoyu pai de douzheng wenxue*)."[82] Zhu praised the dramatic structure, characterization, and the plot of the play, stating that the work realistically represented the "liveliness" (*shengdong xing*) of a genuine social problem that affected peasants in 1930s rural China.[83] In a similar vein, a certain Dao Xi (dates unknown) who watched

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[81] The National Drama School was established under state patronage in Nanjing in 1935. *Green Dragon Pond* was performed by NDS students after two months' rehearsals, and with a budget of over 2,000 US dollars. The production was overseen by Hong Shen and Ma Yanxiang. See Ma Yanxiang, "Guanyu *Qinglong tan* de jidian shuoming" (A Couple of Explanations Regarding *Green Dragon Pond*), in *Guoli juxiao di ba jie gongyan ce* (*The Brochure of the Eighth Public Performance of the National Drama School*) (Nanjing: National Drama School, 1936), no page number. I will more closely examine the relationship between the Guomindang and NDS in the following chapter.
[82] Zhu Fujun, "Ping Hong Shen xiansheng de *Wukui qiao*" (Reviews on Mr. Hong's *Wukui Bridge*), in *Chenbao, Meiri dianying* (*Morning Post, Movie Daily*), May 13-14, 1933.
[83] Ibid.

the 1933 Fudan production applauded the distinguished theatrics (*xiju xing*) embedded in *Wukui Bridge*, especially when compared to other plays driven by the fashion of "rural reconstruction" and "going to the countryside."[84] Clearly, Hong's approach of writing a "well-made play" paid off—at least among contemporary critics.

Figure 3.1: Advertisement for *Wukui Bridge* by Fudan Drama Society (Fudan jushe) in Shanghai, May 1933. *Liangyou huabao* (*Liangyou Pictorial*), no. 77, 1933.

[84] Dao Xi "Lun *Wukui qiao*"([On *Wukui Bridge*] in *Chenbao, Meri dianying* (*Morning Post, Movie Daily*), May 20, 1933. Dao Xi does not specifically mention which of the other rural reconstruction plays he deemed unsatisfying.

Zhu and Dao's positive assessments[85] were counter-balanced three years later by Zhang Geng, who wrote a thorough critique of the *Trilogy* soon after it was published in Shanghai, and after the success of the peasant theatres in Ding County, led by Xiong Foxi, had already gained nation-wide publicity. Interestingly, Zhang was not surprised by Hong Shen's deep social concern for the Jiangnan peasants' sufferings, and wrote that *Trilogy* reflected Hong Shen's sincere and long-held sympathy for the downtrodden, shown previously by the character Zhao Da, the bankrupt peasant-cum-solder in *Yama Zhao*.[86] But while recognizing Hong Shen's progressive political stance, Zhang problematized Hong's "scientific" but "mechanical" methodology, charging that Hong only sought to resolve "social problems" in drama but failed to realistically portray the Jiangnan peasantry. The impression of a Jiangnan village that readers get from the *Trilogy*, in Zhang's reading, was "abstract" and only the product of "the playwright's unique skill of purifying and refining (*tilian*),"

> Thus, we arrive at a result contrary to [Mr. Hong's] original intention. Mr. Hong starts [structuring his plays] from the spirit of seeking authenticity (*qiuzhen*); when plays are completed, however, what his audience and himself acquire are no longer realities, but abstract and artificially man-made [social phenomenon]. We do not at all deny [the fact] that he interacts with and demonstrates many significant social problems in rural China, but, the methods [Mr. Hong] employs to interact with [these questions] and the audience's response [that Mr. Hong's plays arose] are no different than what an academic paper discussing the rural societal problem can do… This, in summary, is a result of the play's insufficient depiction with imageries (*xingxiang hua bugou*). The playwright handles the

[85] In addition to Zhu and Dao's favorable reviews, there were several other short reviews of the two productions—The Fudan Drama Society's performance in May 1933 and that of the Southern Bell Society, a Nanjing based progressive student drama society, in July 1933—which, while largely praising the artistic qualities and social values of *Wukui Bridge*, mildly questioned the characterization of the peasant protagonist, Li Quansheng, and the gentry antagonist, Master Zhou. One reviewer, a certain Chang Ren, believed the character of Li Quansheng was too heroic and Master Zhou's hypocritical dialogues were overly predictable. See Xu Zhiqiang "*Nongcun sanbuqu* yanjiu huigu" (A Review on the Research Materials of the *Trilogy of the Countryside*), in *Wenjiao ziliao* (*Reference Materials*), no. 3, 1997, 70.

[86] Zhang Geng, 7-12.

> materials in a rather mechanical manner, parochially understanding the connotation of "authenticity."[87]

Calling *Trilogy* "an academic paper" that mechanically understands and represents 1930s rural reality, Zhang takes issue with the claims of "liveliness" that previous reviewers attributed to *Wukui Bridge*. Instead, Zhang suggests that Hong's paramount concern of discussing and resolving social problems deviates from the goals of realist theatre/literature:

> What provokes a realistic writer's interest should not be a theoretical question, but real events and lively characters. By means of sharp observation and loyal characterization, he [the realistic author] delivers the events and characters [in theatre] …What first attracts Mr. Hong is not events or characters but a general social phenomenon. Starting from the general social phenomenon, Hong aspires to gain a scientific and correct resolution. "Before structuring and writing the play, I have always wished that I already decided and controlled the dramatic effect," in Hong's own words, "then I will carefully observe the scope [of the structure and the plot] and patiently seek for the specific ways to write." Thus, the plot development [in *Trilogy*] is not motivated by an event that invokes the writer's interest.[88]

Charging Hong with an overly theoretical and calculating approach that negatively influenced the *Trilogy*'s plot development and characterization, Zhang further argues that these fatal flaws are in fact reflective of the underlying alienation felt by the playwright toward his characters and reader-spectators. Specifically, the characters in the *Trilogy*, whether representing the poor peasantry or the feudal gentry class, are not "unforgettable shadows" that linger in the playwright's mind and inspire a form of affective writing, but are simply agents of a drama action:

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[87] Ibid., 9.
[88] Ibid.

> Isn't the enthusiasm that the playwright pumps into his characters, even those [relatively successful characters] such as Li Quansheng, thin and rare? …Isn't his [Mr. Hong's] sympathy with his characters a mere outcome of rational and righteous thinking?...The playwright does not dearly love his characters. Between the playwright and his characters lies a certain distance. Thus, he [the playwright] could not guide me, [and] the audience, to get close to his characters.[89]

Lying at the core of Zhang's critique, I read, is that Hong Shen fails to "seek authenticity." Here, "authenticity" refers to both the realistic representation of rural society in dramatic/theatrical form and the genuineness of the sentiments derived from the play. Hong's lack of life experiences with the Chinese peasantry, in Zhang's reading, compelled Hong to scrutinize scholarly discussions and sociological surveys regarding rural China to find materials to dramatize. Thus, the *Trilogy*'s portrayal of rural Jiangnan, though sharply and accurately depicting real problems, did not arise "organically" but as a result of Hong's dedicated research. Hong's "lack of authenticity" (*shizhen*) in realistic representation only highlighted his "rational"/"righteous" but disaffected pity (*tongqing*),[90] suggesting his alienation from—and not affinity with—his characters. This alienation meant, as Zhang emotionally charges, that Hong and his *Trilogy* could not develop a "deep love," or sincere sympathy, with either his peasant characters or his reader-spectators. *Trilogy*, in spite of being thoroughly researched, rationally calculated, and carefully structured, fails to create the sentimental authenticity that should ideally unite playwrights, characters, and reader-spectators into a community. Hong was thus not only inauthentic in the depiction of his subject matter, he was

[89] Ibid., 10

[90] Here, I am indebted to Marston Anderson's understanding and interpretation of *tongqing*. See Marston Anderson, *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 40, and 96-103.

depriving his audience of feeling the requisite "unity" that would mold them into "new citizens."

Zhang's essay, though predominantly a negative assessment of the dramaturgical flaws of Hong's *Trilogy*, is also tinted with politically inspired criticism. Namely, Zhang faults Hong for maintaining an air of intellectual "aloofness" or an "elitism" that refuses to allow the peasants to "speak" for themselves. Though ostensibly endorsing the Chinese peasantry's revolutionary activities against the oppressive gentry class, capitalists, and state government in the *Trilogy*, Hong only "researches" and attempts to "resolve" these rural social problems. The "distanced" intellectual authority that Hong reserved for himself, in Zhang's analyses, parallels what Marston Anderson has labeled the authoritative voice of the "disaffected intellectual."[91] Such a "conservative" viewpoint helps to illuminate the ending of *Green Dragon Pond*, where Hong Shen's dramatization of the peasant crowd's violent killing of Mr. Lin reminds one of the "dangerous and irrational crowds" that Anderson reads in 1920s fictions:

> The crowd instinct depicted in "The True Story of Ah Q," as well as in such works as "A Public Example," is dangerous because it is irrational and easily manipulated. Similarly, in Ye Shengtao's *Ni Huanzhi*, crowds form around the false revolutionary Tiger Jiang because the people "despite themselves" become "infected by the shouting." Even such authorially endorsed revolutionary crowds as appear in the 1920s fiction are viewed entirely from the perspective of the disaffected intellectual, who may be temporarily stimulated by the noise and bustle of the crowd but ends feeling profoundly alienated.[92]

By the 1930s, due in part to the rising "leftist" influence, such distance between an intellectual narrator's voice and the protagonist (here the peasant mass) had become

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[91] Anderson, 183.
[92] Ibid., 182-83.

increasingly rare in Chinese narratives. Instead, as Anderson suggests, "alienation" was replaced by a certain "theatricalization" where "the narrator steps aside to let his characters speak for him."[93] That is to say, fiction writers of the 1930s removed from their works the inner complexity engendered by the existence of an alienated intellectual narrator. Instead, the masses (the peasant crowd) directly communicated with readers through the "theatricalization" of their revolutionary acts, while the intellectual narrator's perspective was entirely avoided.[94]

Yet, at a time when typical left-wing writers, such as Ye Zi (1912-1939),[95] were incorporating "theatricalization" into their fiction in hopes of reducing the visibility of the intellectual narrator/writer, Hong Shen, by contrast, was "learning" from the narrative strategies of the 1920s, not only placing in *Green Dragon Pond* a character who functions like an intellectual narrator (Mr. Lin), but also dramatizing the tension between that figure and the peasant masses. The "irrational" and "dangerous" (peasant) crowd is vividly dramatized in *Green Dragon Pond*. Thus, while other writers were moving into the political vanguard by aligning themselves and their writings with the masses, Hong's stubborn insistence on the play-maker's authority to control his mass characters via the role of an intellectual character inevitably reads as politically "conservative." The death of Mr. Lin at the hands of the peasant mob at the end of *Green Dragon Pond* does not

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[93] Ibid., 188.

[94] As Anderson puts it, "In the early 1930s, in line with the 'literary massification' (*wenxue dazhonghua*) campaign, several authors began writing stories that purported to give a voice to the true crowd, the Chinese masses." See Anderson, 184.

[95] Xiaorong Han believes Ye Zi "might be the best representative of those left-wing writers who dealt with the revolutionary peasants in the 1930s. He devoted most of his short literary life to writing about the peasant revolution of the late 1920s and early 1930s." See Xiaorong Han, *Chinese Discourses on the Peasant, 1900-1949* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 65.

represent Hong's endorsement of "revolutionary justice," but suggests his skepticism of the entire rural reconstruction movement.

In short, from the perspective of Zhang's criticism, Hong Shen "sabotaged" both his progressive political stance and the communal sentiment that intellectual playwrights should formulate with their peasant characters and audience in *Trilogy* by writing the play like "writing an academic paper." But compared to "writing a play like writing an academic paper"—or what Hong Shen might call structuring a "well-made play"—what other options for creating peasant theatre were there? To answer that question, we need to look at the alternative example provided by Xiong Foxi in Ding County. A brief diversion to the staging and reception of *Crossing*—which took place several months before Hong's collected *Trilogy* was published and was widely publicized afterward—will help us to put Zhang Geng's criticisms of Hong's "academic" work in context.

One Night in Ding County

On the cold evening of December 21, 1935, over 2,000 villagers from East Buluogang and other neighboring villages in Ding County gathered for a night at the theatre. Even before the first line of dialogue had been delivered, several things signaled the uniqueness of the performance. First, the play to be staged was not the traditional *da yangge* (great rice-sprout opera) but a three-act *huaju* entitled *Crossing*, written by the American-trained dramatist, Xiong Foxi. Second, the cast was not the standard traveling company but was a hybridization of two kinds of *amateurs*—local villagers from East Buluogang and their teachers in the Theatre Division of the Mass Education Movement (MEM). Finally, the designated performance space was not the usual temporary stage surrounded

by crowds but an open-air theatre that had been renovated by the East Buluogang villagers themselves. Because of these innovations, the audience awaited *Crossing*'s debut with eager anticipation.

Perhaps even more excited than the local villagers and the cast were the VIP spectators, including Chen Yuyuan (1911-1955), Zhang Junxiang (1910-1996), and other prominent critics from Beiping and Nanjing, who had been invited to witness the event.[96] Having just arrived in Ding County that day—and thus spared from two months of rehearsals and a year's worth of theatre renovations—the VIPs were noticeably enthralled by the spectacle of peasants performing modern drama. By the mid-1930s, spoken drama had won significant audiences in urban China.[97] Yet, when it came to the peasantry, spoken drama was much less successful at "striking a responsive chord." Despite the plethora of discursive appeals for spoken drama to "go to the people" and the striving of dramatists to write for and about the peasantry, the results were largely disappointing. Peasants viewed *huaju* with suspicion, considering it to be foreign and even morally corrupt for its psychological explorations and depictions of modern love.[98] Thus, for both the VIP critics and their urban readers, peasant participation in *Crossing* as performers, stagehands, and audience seemed unprecedented.

In such a state of heightened expectation, *Crossing*'s opening was particularly striking. While singing the "Song of Crossing the River," an adaption of a popular local

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[96] National Association of Mass Education Movements (NAMEM), Guodu *yanchu teji*: *nongmin xiju shiyan yanchu zhiyi* (*The Special Issue of* Cross the River*: One Report on Peasant Experimental Theatre, part one*), (Beiping: Zhonghua pingmin jiaoyu cujinhui, 1936), 81.
[97] See Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 50; Weihong Bao, "Diary of a Homecoming: (Dis-)Inhabiting the Theatrical in Postwar Shanghai Cinema," in Yingjin Zhang, ed., *A Companion to Chinese Cinema* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 385. Bao and Zhang attribute spoken drama's success to the genre's level of artistic maturity, and to the development of sound in film.
[98] Chang-tai Hung, 1994, 55.

tune, peasant performers who played bridge-builders charged through the audience, "hauling rocks and lumber…pushing carts, or shouldering baskets," and then climbed on the stage where they unloaded their construction materials around the scaffolding that constituted the main set design. Audience members, who were not assigned specific seats, sat in a lower auditorium area that was connected to the stage by steps. In between the audience and the stage were ferry crossers and on-lookers, roles performed by male and female peasants, who wandered around and chatted as local villagers would likely do in their everyday lives. Watching their fellow villagers sing, dress, and act in such a realistic manner made it easy for the audience to identify with *Crossing*'s theatrical reality.[99]

Much of *Crossing*'s appeal to its village audience can be attributed to the play's content, which skillfully mingled peasants' anger and resentment against local oppression, their longing for collective resistance, and state guidance via the rural reconstruction movement of the 1930s. In the play, Zhang Guoben, an idealized intellectual character who has just returned to his hometown, organizes a group of young peasants to build a bridge across the local river. The community benefits that such a bridge would bring, however, threaten the status of the ferry owner Hu, a figure who enjoys a monopoly over river crossing. Hu's attempts to sabotage the project are eventually revealed; and before any permanent harm can be done, he is arrested by a local policeman. The new bridge is

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[99] Yuan Quanxin, "*Guodu* yanchu sumiao" (A Sketch of the Production of *Crossing the River*), in Guodu *yanchu tekan* (*Special Issue on the Production of* Crossing the River), ed., Xiong Foxi (Ding Xian: Zhonghua pingmin jiaoyu cujinhui, 1937), 38.

put into use and the peasant builders are paid for their labor. The play ends with Hu being collectively judged by both the performers and audience.[100]

Critics praised *Crossing* as "a mixed-blood child"[101] that skillfully combined western theatrical perceptions with the local flavor of Ding County peasant life. They also took note of the social functions of the performance, viewing the theatre as a public space that both transformed and accommodated a rural public. In this manner, their reviews contextualized *Crossing*'s relevance with the twin projects of drama popularization and rural reconstruction then taking place in China. Unlike Hong Shen's *Trilogy*, which was about the peasantry but performed by urban-based actors and for a limited cosmopolitan audience and concluded with a thorough questioning of the entire rural reconstruction movement, *Crossing* was a clear example of peasant theater in every sense of the word and was promoted in China's vibrant mediasphere as "proof" that the goals of rural reconstruction were achievable.

In Defense of Hong Shen

Notwithstanding the *Trilogy*'s shortcomings, Zhang Geng's criticisms of Hong's work were indeed a bit harsh. Like *Crossing*, *Wukui Bridge* also created a feeling of "unity" between performers and audience; albeit one of a different kind. When Hong Shen staged *Wukui Bridge* on proscenium stages in Shanghai and Nanjing, he "materialized" his portrayal of the Jiangnan rural community by bringing together into an organic whole the play's performative talents, props (i.e. the bridge), and lighting techniques,

[100] Xiong Foxi, Guodu *jiqi yanchu* (Crossing the River *and its Production*) (Shanghai: Zhongzheng shuju, 1937).
[101] Yang Cunbin, "Xu" (Preface), in Guodu *jiqi yanchu* (Crossing the River *and its Production*) (Shanghai: Zhongzheng shuju, 1937).

> [For] the debut of [*The Wukui Bridge*] in Shanghai, [I was] lucky to have Yuan Muzhi (1909-1978) play Master Zhou. His performance is outstanding. With the nice cooperation of other actors, [Yuan] made the performance perfect and flawless. Moreover, I had comrade Ouyang Shanzun (1914-2009) be in charge of the lightening design and stage-managing. All the lighting effects I made in the script regarding the stage lighting, from pitch black at night, to the dim of the daylight, then to the scorching sun high in the sky, are perfectly achieved. These works made the audience [of *Bridge*] all feel amazed by the marvelous potential of theatre art.[102]

Had Hong's *Wukui Bridge* been staged in the Open-Air Theatre of Ding County for a peasant audience, it would have been unlikely to earn the collective enthusiastic "wow" from its viewers that greeted *Crossing*. However, this should not lead one to immediately dismiss *Wukui Bridge* as a failure. In fact, staging the first part of Hong's *Trilogy* also entailed a form of "unity"—one made up of urban intellectuals, increasingly mature theatre professionals, sophisticated *huaju* fans, and even urban movie-goers who had by then gotten used to marvelous lighting tricks.[103] What Zhang perhaps did not understand was that the audience that Hong Shen was addressing was different than Xiong Foxi's.

Not only were Hong and Xiong writing for different "crowds," they were also writing with different intent. Yes, *Wukui Bridge* and *Crossing* were both "peasant plays" created in the context of rural reconstruction. But whereas Xiong—whose formative years were spent as part of the National Drama Movement—valued *huaju* first and foremost as a performance capable of shaping mass sentiment, Hong—who began his

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[102] Hong Shen, 1957, 494.

[103] In 1934, around the same time that Hong Shen staged *Wukui Bridge* and wrote *Green Dragon Pond*, he also published "[Dianying] Bianju ershi ba wen" (Twenty-eight Questions of [Film] Script-Writing) in *Zhongguo dianying nianjian* (*The Cinematographic Yearbook of China*), ed. Zhongguo jiaoyu dianying xiehui (Shanghai: Zhongguo jiaoyu dianying xiehui, 1934). See Hong Shen, ed., *Dianying xiju de bianju fangfa* (*The Methods of Writing Film Scripts*) (Shanghai: Zhengzhong shuju, 1946), 189-220. In my future project, I will explore the mutual influence between film script writing and Hong's writing and staging process in *Trilogy*.

career introducing Ibsen to the Chinese public and, while in America, was one of the earliest participants in the "script vs. scenario debate"—could not help but favor the "well-made play."

Hong's emphasis on deliberate, well-planned scriptwriting was not just a product of the 1930s. In fact, Hong Shen's faith in a good dramatic structure and preparation in play-writing remained until the very end of his life and drama career, as can be seen by his reaffirmation in 1951 of the writing strategy behind *Wukui Bridge*. That year, Hong, for the last time, selected his own works for publication, choosing *Wukui Bridge* and *Fragrant Rice* of the *Trilogy* while leaving *Green Dragon Pond* unmentioned.[104] Conceding that Zhang Geng's critical reading was "on the mark" (*jizhong yaohai*), Hong, nevertheless, still stubbornly defended his writing process for *Wukui Bridge*:

> His [Zhang Geng's] criticism might be most appropriate when applied to *Fragrant Rice*. *Fragrant Rice*, in short, "lacks real life" (*quefa shenghuo*). [However], I don't think it is absolutely not an asset when one, [writing a play], relies on and uses secondary documentation, records, or other indirect materials, like one does when writing an academic paper. I still believe that one can write in that way… I also believe "what causes a realistic writer's interest" might be first of all "events and lively characters." But this interest also could be oriented around a "theoretical problem." Strictly and scientifically speaking, in a real [artistic] creation, theories, events, and characters come together. One or two, in the prolonged process of writing might be slightly prioritized and appear to be brighter and more confirmed; however, these three factors should be constantly adapted and adjusted to each other.[105]

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[104] The other pieces that Hong selected for publication in his *Selected Works* were *Yama Zhao* and *Jiehou taohua* (*Plundered Peach Blossom*), a film script written in 1936. Interestingly, *Green Dragon Pond* was included in the second printing of Hong Shen's *Selected Works*, which was published in 1957, two years after Hong's death. Sections from *Green Dragon Pond* in the following close reading are taken from the 1957 edition.
[105] Hong Shen, 1957, 496.

Sounding at odds with the strident socialist rhetoric of the early PRC, Hong Shen reaffirmed his more cautious approach to playmaking, treasuring the skills he had learned decades before, at Tsinghua and OSU. Hong was forever the "distanced intellectual," either unwilling or unable to submerge his subjectivity into or for the spontaneity of the crowd.

Reconstruction is the Goal; Revolution is the Means: Imagining the Romantic Countryside, Building a Rural Modern, and Creating New Citizens

Remapping the Peasant Play Classics

By not including *Green Dragon Pond* among his *Selected Works*, Hong Shen seems to nullify his own *Trilogy*. Although Hong's bending to political pressure is perhaps understandable,[106] what is less clear is why scholarship has largely followed Hong's lead in casting *Green Dragon Pond* into oblivion. Even if we agree with Zhang Geng's criticism that the *Trilogy* represents an intellectual depiction of rural life rather than an "authentic" reflection of rural reality, it still begs the question as to why *Wukui Bridge* is rarely read together with *Green Dragon Pond*. The former, commonly labeled as either a reflection of Hong's class consciousness or his craft in structuring a "well-made play," is a "masterpiece" that expresses peasants' collective passion. The latter, on the other hand, represents the "distant" voice of the intellectual trying to educate and enlighten the masses. *Green Dragon Pond's* "conservative" ending—where the peasant masses kill

[106] On top of expunging a politically inappropriate work, Hong also highlighted his "correct" inspiration for *Wukui Bridge* and *Fragrant Rice* in his "Self-Preface," writing "I had been living in cities for a long time, but during those years [1930-1934], I moved to the suburb close to my hometown due to some personal reasons. I had already read books regarding social science. Because of my joining the Left-Wing League, friends continuously taught and guided me, and my personal ideology, my own understanding of politics, thereby underwent several changes. The [political] attempts expressed in these two plays are accordingly more obvious." However, as we have seen, Hong had already left *Zuolian* before writing *Wukui Bridge*. See Hong Shen, 1957, 493.

their educator and return to their "superstitious" ways—profoundly problematizes the rural reconstruction movement of the 1930s. Besides casting doubt on the basic premise of rural reconstruction—that peasants are willing to embrace the "modernity" brought to them by urban intellectuals—*Green Dragon Pond* also asks if the "price" of rural reconstruction is indeed worth the "cost," as shown by the chopping down of the village cherry orchard that is meant to symbolize the native ideal.

It is exactly because of this "interference" that I suggest we not only bring *Green Dragon Pond* back to the *Trilogy*, but read it as a development of themes begun in *Wukui Bridge*. Why did Hong Shen at one point consider *Green Dragon Pond* to be a satisfying end to his *Trilogy*? What does *Green Dragon Pond* reveal about Hong's attitude toward rural reconstruction, and how do Hong's views of rural reconstruction compare to those of Xiong Foxi? Instead of placing Hong's *Trilogy* and Xiong's *Crossing* at opposite ends of the spectrum of 1930s peasant plays, the following close reading of *Wukui Bridge*, *Green Dragon Pond*, and *Crossing* seeks to highlight the ways in which these works converge and are in dialogue.

In what follows, I examine how a popular (re)construction theme that grappled with revolutionary spirit expressed itself in the following three elitist cultural vocabularies of the 1920s-1930s: (1) urban intellectuals' romanticization of rural life as a lyrical and innocent alternative to an urban cesspool; (2) building and incorporating the concept of a "rural modern" into projects of modern nation-building; and (3) transforming the "suffering" peasants—who often appeared "unconcerned" about such suffering—into "new citizens" striving for national sentiment, interest, and identity. My reading will demonstrate how in *Wukui Bridge* the peasant community achieves its

reconstruction by revolutionary means. The first part of Hong's *Trilogy* presents the transformation of a Jiangnan village, albeit not without interruption, through the acquisition of three assets: mechanical modernization with the arrival of a western water pump; the casting off of superstitious restraints with the demolishment of the Wukui Bridge; and finally, forming previously scattered villagers into a rural public made up of rational agents building their community. The conclusion of Hong's *Trilogy*, in contrast, shows how villagers' attempts to acquire the same three assets in *Wukui Bridge* have all ended in failure, despite their better preparation in terms of intellectual and governmental support. *Green Dragon Pond* is thus the mirror image to *Wukui Bridge*, and its unsettling ending calls into question the entire rural reconstruction project. *Crossing*, on the other hand, appears to represent that project's triumphant fulfillment. Xiong Foxi unintentionally recycles the plot, theme, and optimistic political message of *Wukui Bridge* to make *Crossing* a masterpiece of experimental theatre in Ding County and the chief example of *huaju* by, of, and for the peasantry.[107] In its plot, staging, and performance, *Crossing* affirms that the goals of rural reconstruction are indeed possible. A comparative reading of Hong's and Xiong's plays will therefore shed light on the evolution of the play-makers' imaginations and practices regarding both rural reconstruction and *huaju*; the former sought to bring "modernity" to China's countryside and the latter shifted its attention from intellectuals to the masses.

[107] Despite the many similarities between *Crossing* and *Wukui Bridge*, Xiong maintained that the inspiration for his work came from his personal observations of the Ding County peasantry, and not Hong's earlier play. The similarities between these two works, as well as Xiong's creative process for imagining and staging *Crossing*, will be discussed later in this section.

Wukui Bridge: The Village as a Lyrical Ideal

Any close reading of *Wukui Bridge* should begin with the bridge itself. In his lengthy introduction of the stage-set, Hong describes the stone Wukui Bridge as having an overly low and inconvenient arch but otherwise indistinct from other bridges in rural Jiangnan. Although the bridge is a physical obstruction for the shipping of a mechanical water pump, it is the second character in the bridge's name, *kui* 奎, "usually viewed by superstitious rural countrymen as controlling human fate,"[108] that makes it a cultural symbol for preserving the continued existence of "superstition, ignorance, the stubborn old system, feudal forces, the special privilege of landlords, and the authority that the gentry deploy over the peasants."[109] Understandably, this conflation of the "feudal" and "superstitious" cultural tradition with the oppressive gentry/landlord class has been used by critics to validate Hong's promotion of the progressive ideology of rural reconstruction. But along with the playwright's enunciation of progressive ideas and social struggles are troubling doubts: namely, the tension between intellectuals and peasants. Rather than explicitly dramatize this tension, Hong employs the story of the Wukui Bridge to suggest the contradiction. Hong explains in his stage directions that a locally prominent gentry family, the Zhous—who produced one *zhuangyuan* (the principal graduate) and four *juren* (elevated men) during the Qing dynasty—were the dominant patrons to build and continuously renovate the bridge. Now that their own social status is indelibly linked with that of the bridge, the Zhou family is opposed to seeing it demolished. Thus, while explicitly dramatizing the tension between feudal

[108] Hong Shen, 1934, 37.
[109] Ibid.

tradition vs. rural modernity, and the gentry vs. the peasant classes, Hong also builds an implicit tension between the literati/intellectual and the peasant masses over the existence of Wukui Bridge. Accordingly, Hong's most progressive and optimistic peasant play, *Wukui Bridge*, already hints at the tension between intellectual enlighteners and the peasant masses, the very theme that was to be explicitly and violently staged in *Green Dragon Pond*.

For the key characters in *Wukui Bridge*—Li Quansheng, the educated peasant who proposes to demolish the bridge in order to ship the water pump, his fellow villagers as well as the oppressing force, the Zhou family—the ultimate goal of rural reconstruction—transforming the rural masses into the core of China's new citizenry[110]—appears irrelevant to their lives. More urgent than becoming "citizens" is the struggle over the Wukui Bridge and whether or not a timely irrigation project will be enough to save the village's 400 acres of rice fields. The bridge, viewed as protecting the Zhou family's *fengshui* and prosperity for generations, has, due to its inconveniently low arch, become a physical obstacle for Li's plan to bring in a Western-made pump by boat to save the village's withering crops. Hong, providing a description of the bridge, writes,

> What kind of bridge is [the Wukui Bridge]? Usually, you may think you can take a boat and go by river under the bridge archway—No. You can't. The archway is narrow and low. A slightly bigger boat, say one that usually accommodates two passengers, could not go by…You may want to walk over the bridge—well, it is still difficult for anyone to tell the difference between this bridge and others often seen in the countryside. The bridge is not tall at all. It only has four-to-five stone steps on each side. In the middle of the bridge is a path made by narrow rock strips, but not stone steps. That is more convenient for peasants to push a wheelbarrow up and down the bridge.
> Well, when taking a particularly careful look at the bridge, you might observe that the structure of the bridge is slightly more refined than others; the trimming is

[110] McDonald, 1.

slightly more exquisite; the decoration is slightly more artistic…and that is what it all adds up to.[111]

Though more artistic and with a special power to protect the Zhou family's prosperity, the bridge does not distinguish itself from other man-made vernacular architecture of the area. The convenience that Wukui Bridge usually provides, as a passageway for casual walkers, wheelbarrows, and the rural life style, is quickly "overwritten" by the fact that it is an obstacle to modernization.

Throughout the play, Li alternates between patient reasoning and passionate instigation in his interaction with his fellow peasants concerning the demolishing of the bridge. Unfortunately, although the drought affects the entire village, it does not do so evenly; instead of helping to solidify a community, the dire situation only pulls residents apart by intensifying class differences, generation gaps, and trivial but tangible favors. To keep those villagers whose crops are suffering the most from demolishing the bridge, the Zhou family pays several farm laborers to stand guard day and night. The hired hands, aware that by defending the bridge they are blocking the arrival of the water pump and thus ensuring that their village will face another year of scarcity, devise ways to alleviate their guilt while still maintaining a "distant" sympathy for the villagers' plight,

> Farm laborer A—This is the so-called "getting others' payment, removing others' ill fortune." (*deren qiancai, yuren xiaozai*). [As] we are relying on the Zhou family's offering, working as the Zhou's farm laborers, doing the night-watch for them should be our duty.
> …
> Farm laborer B—You and I are tenants on Zhou's lands that are located by the river on the west side of the bridge. By committing our labor to watering without rest during the entire summer, we merely tended our crops. But look at

[111] Hong Shen, 1934, 37.

> those [villagers] whose lands are on the east side of the bridge. They only have a small pond. Those 400-500-acre lands on the east side of the village all rely on that small pond. Men and women, the old and children, make full use of the three rows of waterwheels and work everyday before dawn, exhausting themselves with aching backs and dark sunburns. But their crops are getting even more parched. How worried they must be![112]

The hired hands are in fact doubly exploited by the Zhou family: they rent the Zhou's land and serve as their running dogs. However, it is the tangible benefit of their position, being able to irrigate some crops without having to rely on the water pump, which aligns them with the landlord class rather than with the young protagonist. As the play progresses, Li's attempts to bring "modernity" to the village are successively challenged along three axes: the ritualism and "superstition" of the Daoist monks; Master Zhao's questioning of Western technology to protect the village; and finally, by the law itself, as symbolized by Master Wang, who serves as the local court officer (*chengfa li*).

Hong highlights the villagers' reliance on Daoist monks to illustrate the gap between urban intellectuals' education agendas and real social and cultural practices in rural China. Just as Li is imploring his fellow villagers to remove the Wukui Bridge, eight Daoist monks walk onto the bridge and bow toward the four directions, performing "odd prayer rituals."[113] Even though the Daoists have already been praying in vain for a week, the majority of the peasants choose to side with their explanation: that seven days' of prayer is not long enough to move heaven to bless over 400 acres of land. From the peasants' perspective, the monks should expand the scale and scope of their rituals to cover 49 days. Aside from Li, Da Bao, a student at the city school, is the only one to question such logic. Da Bao understands the Daoist rituals to be nothing more than an

[112] Ibid., 43.
[113] Ibid., 62.

entertaining form of theatre, where loud chanting is accompanied by the lively playing of instruments. Da Bao thus ridicules the irrational behavior of his fellow peasants. Calling them "superstitious," he faults his fellow-villagers for their faith in "heaven," but not in modern technology. He points out that instead of responding to Li's call for modern irrigation, the peasants have exhausted their efforts and money to implore the Daoist monks to perform useless rituals. Da Bao's earnest persuasion, similar to Li's, does not produce results. Farm Laborer A, "speaking in a solemn and dignified manner," rebukes Da Bao's view by citing the difference between themselves, who rely on the wind and rain for a good harvest, and those "others," who study in foreign schools in cities.[114] Thus, although the folk religious practices do nothing to relieve the villagers of their drought, the villagers do not turn against the Daoist monks. Ironically, their failure only causes a split between the peasants who have received modern education and the rest of the community that is still to be "reconstructed." At a time when the rural reconstruction movement was in full swing, Hong reminds his audience/readers that the ritual performance of the Daoist monks is only understood as "superstition" by the educated minority, but among the peasants at large, such practices are considered the only way to gain heavenly blessings for the harvest.

The conflict between "scientific/technical modernity" and "superstitious tradition" is further intensified by the eloquent rhetoric of Master Zhou. While Li gives a public speech espousing the miraculous power of mechanical modernity (symbolized by the water pump) and again calling on the peasants to take apart the bridge, Master Zhou reminds the villagers of their emotional attachment to the traditional rural community that

[114] Ibid., 85-87.

is land-based, reliant upon human labor, and blessed by the proper *fengshui*. Acting as if he wants to have a casual conversation with a middle-aged peasant, Master Zhou reminds the peasant that his son, who used to sell fish in the village, now rarely comes home because of his engineering work in Shanghai. Implicit within Master Zhou's comment is an uncertainty whether mechanical modernity can really save the crop and rebuild the rural community, but is explicit is the notion that the younger generation is being pulled away from the land by machines.[115] Master Zhou then switches his talk to the issue at stake—what the village should do to confront the drought:

> Master Zhou—(*Turning his look away from Li Quansheng toward the crowd of countrymen*) If the land is short of water, I assume it is because we don't have enough rain. We should then conserve our food for purification (*jiezhai*) and pray for the rain. The era of the Legendary Emperor Yu[116] also encountered severe drought. "If there is no rain for three years, [one should] practice the dancing [ritual] in the forest." This is so-called "detaining the heaven's will" (*wan tianyi*).
> (*He gives the speech in such a mysterious and solemn manner that the crowd feels confused and stands there speechless*)
> Master Zhou—If we have already prayed for the rain but are not getting any, you all have waterwheels. You have plenty of human laborers, oxen, and buffalos. You ought to do the watering job everyday from early morning to late at night. Do take the water with a little bit more diligence and a little bit more hardship. This is another way, the so-called "exhausting human efforts" (*jin renshi*).
> (*Several old peasants nod*)
> …
> Li Quansheng—(*can not tolerate anymore*) Mr. Zhou, you ought to know…
> Master Zhou—(*speaking in a serious and severe manner*) Wait until I finish.
> One Middle-aged Peasant—Wait until Mr. Zhou is finished.
> Master Zhou—You just mentioned you want to demolish the bridge to make passage for the foreign dragon (*yanglong*) for irrigation. In our Chinese tradition, we have relied on waterwheels for irrigation. This has been well established since our ancestral sages, upon which arose our Chinese agriculture and the Chinese land-based culture. You can all go ahead and ask the older generation in the village. Why now do you suddenly want to use a foreign dragon?
> (*A few old peasants feel his words make sense*)

[115] Ibid., 100.
[116] Yu was the last of China's legendary Five Emperors. He is credited with developing flood control and starting the Xia Dynasty (c. 2070-1600 BCE)

> …
> Master Zhou—Since I resigned from office and moved back to the village, I have witnessed the young fellows swarm into teahouses and gamble in those villages where foreign dragons have replaced human labor. Is this a so-called "merit" brought by foreign products?
> (*More old peasants agree with Zhou. Some even leave the crowd*)[117]

Critics have typically read Hong's shaping of the antagonist as a way to conflate the Chinese countryside's "feudal," "traditional," and "superstitious" culture with the oppressive gentry/landlord class. Such a reading is used to validate Hong's intention to promote the progressive ideology of rural reconstruction. But, as these scenes show, Hong does not reduce the conflict to such a simple "black" and "white" dichotomy. The older generation of peasants' endorsement of Master Zhou, to Li Quansheng's surprise, stems from Master Zhou's ability to evoke a communal affect rooted in the memories and traditions of running the rural community. Zhou's reverence for the established tradition of farming in rural China, which includes reliance on human-labor and resistance against mechanical modernity, though a form of sophistry, reflects the cosmopolitan intellectuals' romantic take on the lyrical and vital countryside.[118] Although the "peasants" in *Wukui Bridge* are not the "imagined people" "inscribed with the imprints of self-writing" by the "self-centered, sensitive, performative, and populist young romantic avant-gardists"[119] that Liang Luo describes in her study on Tian Han, the longing for an idyllic world remained a powerful trope among some cosmopolitan intellectuals. In Master Zhou's efforts to convince the peasant crowd not to demolish the town's *fengshui*

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[117] Hong Shen, 1934, 101-03.
[118] Though far less explicit, Master Zhou's description of peasant life echoes Mao Dun's *Spring Silkworm* in that both portray traditional rural labor with a certain "religious fervor otherwise reserved for ritual." David Der-wei Wang, *Fictional Realism in Twentieth-century China: Mao Dun, Lao She, and Shen Congwen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 51.
[119] Liang Luo, 80.

symbol and thus not to embrace mechanical modernity, Hong presents an image of the "traditional" and "superstitious" village that, on the one hand, needs to be reconstructed and, on the other, represents a lyrical ideal.

If the true hero of *Wukui Bridge* is "modernity," and the villains thus far the rather predicable (from a May Fourth perspective) "superstition" and "tradition," Hong's final choice for antagonist is more surprising: law. Although Master Zhou's speech convinces half of the village crowd to disperse, many of the younger peasants who remain still hope to see the bridge destroyed. Finding it difficult to form a bond with the younger generation, Master Zhou brings onstage Master Wang, the local law official, who reads from a pocket-size *Liu fa quanshu* (The Complete Book of the Six Laws).[120] Unlike Master Zhou who questions the morality of disturbing the village's *fengshui*, Master Wang makes a juridical charge against the crowd, declaring them to be an illegal mob that is violating the Zhou family's private property:

> Old Master Wang—Um! (*standing up and facing the masses*) I have watched you for a while. You all have your own reasons, I understand. But I am also an official from the local court. I can only speak for the law. (*Li Quansheng and the masses have to stop and listen to him*)
> Old Master Wang—The law is fair! Um, what is "fairness"? That is to say, if one commits a certain crime, there must be a punishment. There is no negotiation, no politeness…Like you all, you are afraid of the dead crops, so you want to forcibly demonstrate on the bridge. This is the crime you have committed…what you have done today has violated all sorts of laws. You are all just countrymen and don't understand the law. (*Then takes out a small copy of* Liufa Quanshu) First, you should not meet together as a mob on the bridge! According to the Constitution No. 156…[121]

[120] The Six Codes (*liufa*) originally referred to the Constitution, the Civil Code, the Commercial Code, the Civil Procedure Code, the Criminal Code, and the Criminal Procedure Code. Later, it became general usage to refer to these six texts as the collective body of statutes of the Republic of China. Likely, the *Liufa quanshu* (Complete Book of the Six Codes) mentioned in this play refers to the one that was published in Shanghai in 1932. See Philip C. Huang, *Code, Custom, and Legal Practice in China: The Qing and Republic Compared* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 225.
[121] Hong Shen, 1934, 113-14.

Representing Republican China's juridical authority, Master Wang goes on to predict that the peasants will be put in jail for over five years if they demolish the bridge. This information causes the remaining young peasants to vacillate, wondering if the cost of destroying the bridge is too high.

Still, the power of the law only manages to delay the peasants' actions. When Master Zhou beats up an old villager in front of the community for not obeying his order—and thus publically violating the law as well—the so-called "law" reveals itself to be arbitrarily enforced. In the process, it looses its authority, thus making it easier for the peasants to transgress it. In addition to the multiple confrontations already discussed, Hong addresses the discrepancy between modern societal infrastructure (law) and the rural reality. Just as educated villagers (Li and Da Bao) are unable to persuade the peasants to disregard their "superstitious" folk practices, the representative of the modern law (Master Wang) cannot prevent the peasants from acting out their collective passion incited by witnessing Master Zhou's unjust treatment of the old villager. Unable to restrain their kindled passions, the young peasants, led by Li and Da Bao, start to demolish the bridge. Li's exclamation, "We countrymen have our own outlet to live,"[122] inspires the villagers to assert their own agency, while the growing din of taking apart the bridge attracts more peasants to join in. The play abruptly ends with the demolition of the bridge. The bustling commotion in the final scene seems to promise that the parched crops will soon be irrigated; the village will be reconstructed with the arrival of the water

[122] Ibid., 127.

pump; and the peasants will be united by their revolutionary anger against the authority of the gentry class.

Within the one-act *Wukui Bridge*, Hong thus closely ties together several different threads: confrontations between peasants and the gentry class, native lyricism and mechanical modernity, debates about the optimal way for peasants to work together for their common benefit, and the effectiveness of law, or governmental attempts at disciplining the masses. The richness of these conflicts testifies to *Wukui Bridge*'s status as a "well-made" play, but it also means that each of these dramatic confrontations be rendered in a sketchy manner. The play's abrupt ending is another example of the work's structural shortcomings. From this regard, Zhang Geng's criticism of the *Trilogy* is well deserved. Perhaps Hong, too, felt that *Wukui Bridge* was not fully developed: after he failed twice at completing *Red Silk Quilt*, the intended conclusion to the *Trilogy*, Hong decided to rework and fully develop the implicit tensions in *Wukui Bridge* through *Green Dragon Pond*. Prominently, *Green Dragon Pond* rewrites the "construction" theme Hong skillfully selected and embedded in *Wukui Bridge*, casting into doubt the feasibility of creating a Chinese "rural modern."

Green Dragon Pond*: Questioning the Feasibility of Building a Rural Modern*

In *Green Dragon Pond*, the peasants of Zhuang village—who are experiencing the same drought that affected the characters in *Wukui Bridge*—face a host of concomitant problems that extend the rural irrigation issue of the earlier play into a problematic relationship between urban and rural modernization, and urban intellectual educators and the rural masses. The Zhuang villagers, like the peasants in *Wukui Bridge*, urgently need

the township's financial and technical support to secure a western water pump that will relieve their drought. In this play, the water pump is to be delivered on a proposed road that will connect the village—along with its famous tourist attraction, the Green Dragon Pond—to the nearby town. The Town Chief (*xianzhang*) believes that the road will promote urban-rural modernization by attracting urban-dwellers to the scenic pond. The Chief's plan is endorsed by Lin Gongda, an urban intellectual who moved to the village six years prior to promote mass education, and who asserts that a public road will foster greater union between "rural products" and "urban capital."[123] The road, in Mr. Lin's view, will also facilitate the popularization of new knowledge regarding modern agriculture, medicine, and economic development.[124] Unfortunately, becoming "modern" requires destroying the villagers' communal cherry orchard, which lies in the future road's most suitable path. Rural "reconstruction," if it is to occur, must come about through the "deconstruction" of the native land.

Clearly, the similarities between *Green Dragon Pond* and *Wukui Bridge* are many, but if anything, the peasants' sentimental attachment to the land in *Green Dragon Pond* is expressed even more forthrightly. The "native land" is embodied in the cherry orchard, which is collectively owned and accordingly taken care of by the Zhuang villagers on a voluntary basis. Hong, in his stage description, writes:

> Growing in the orchard are all cherry trees. More than twenty cherry trees are here in the orchard, not belonging to one particular household. These trees [collectively owned by the community] are crucial for the livelihood of the entire village.
> This is the early summer season. The top of the trees are laden with clusters of red cherries. Most likely birds will come to peck and people passing by will pick

[123] Hong, 1957, 408.
[124] Ibid.

> [the cherries]. Everyday, villagers take turns to watch the orchard, from the earliest light of the day to the time when the sun sets and birds return to their nests.[125]

In stating that the peasants' collectively own and tend the orchard, Hong highlights the communal quality of the space. Unlike the Wukui Bridge, which was built by the Zhou (gentry) family and suggested a class-oriented difference between it and the peasants, the communal cherry orchard appears more native and romantic.

Further setting this opening scene, Hong designates two country girls—Zhuang Liumei and Zhuang Yinzi—to blend in with the lyrical background of the cherry orchard. Hong describes these two innocents as feeling rather confused over the rumor that the cherry orchard is to be chopped down to make room for the public road:

> Those two, feeling that there is not much to say about the topic anymore, are silent—now the sun rises, shining on the top of the cherry trees, making the green leaves and red cherries exceptionally lovely.[126]

As the above scene implies, the chopping down of the cherry orchard promises to usher in a much greater change for the Zhuang village than the destruction of a *fengshui*-aligned Wukui Bridge. The public road will connect, geographically and physically, the "reconstructed" Zhuang village with its neighboring town (a modern urban space) and with the Green Dragon Pond (a natural reservoir that serves as a space for folk religion). Ideologically, the reconstruction of the Zhuang village will be further incorporated in the broader project of nation building. Compared to *Wukui Bridge*, the "rural modern" being

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[125] Ibid., 345.
[126] Ibid., 348.

offered the villagers in *Green Dragon Pond* is more encompassing, but it also comes at a higher price.

Whereas the emotional and cultural bonds that the peasants feel toward Wukui Bridge and their accompanying fear of mechanical modernity are arguably secured through Master Zhou's rhetorical manipulation, the Zhuang villagers' sentimental attachment to their land and their cherry orchard arises organically. The proposed chopping down of the cherry orchard thus illustrates the destruction of the "lyrical ideal" in a more complete way than explored in the earlier play. The arrival of the public road will forever tear Zhuang village from its communal roots. By making the "backward" object fated for destruction the collectively-own village cherry orchard, Hong Shen asks his audience to question the foundations of the rural reconstruction movement.[127]

Notwithstanding their attachments to the land and suspicion of urban life, the peasants in *Green Dragon Pond* decide to take the initiative and chop down their tress for the sake of the public road and the promise of modernity. However, when the water pump arrives, "modernity" does not exert its magic charm; it neither alleviates the drought, nor makes the villagers more eager to embrace advanced knowledge. Instead, when the villagers learn that the drought has already depleted all of the water sources that the "foreign dragon" (water pump) could draw from, they fall into an even deeper despair. Seeing no other options, they are inclined to turn toward the "Green Dragon King" (*qinglong dawang*)—the folk spirit allegedly dwelling in the Green Dragon Pond—for help.

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[127] Although never explicitly stated, it is apparent that the communal cherry orchard draws its inspiration from Anton Chekhov's (1860-1904) *Cherry Orchard* (1904). In Chekhov's famous play, the "cherry orchard" is an image of the vanishing native land increasingly subsumed by the modern world.

Differing from the farm laborers in *Wukui Bridge* who are only observers/spectators of the Daoist prayer rituals, the Zhuang villagers decide to perform the ritual prayer for the Green Dragon King on their own. In the following scene, one of the peasants shares their plan with Mr. Lin, a respected intellectual who, ironically, has spent the past six years practicing mass education in the village.

> Wang Tongshun—all of us, from nearby villages, gather together. The more the better. It is best if we can assemble hundreds and thousands of people. You all ought to bring the various weapons secretly hidden in every household. Both the old ones, like swords and spears, and the new ones, like foreign guns and riffles. Bring them all out. Tie red silk on the weapons. Oh, (pointing), the waist knife and peasant-made guns on the wall are also included.
> Lin Gongda—(*Listening carefully*) En.
> Wang Tongshun—Right, we also need to bring all the banners we left home. All colors are needed. The National Flag, the Five-Color Flag, the Yellow Dragon Flag, the Eight Diagrams Flag; all flags are to be brought out. Each of us carries one flag, lining up with those who carry weapons. We march forward like we were going to a meeting, but in a way so that our procession looks like a wandering dragon. On our way, of course, we need to play gongs and drums, walking and playing until we walk to the Green Dragon Pond.
> Lin Gongda—En.
> Wang Tongshun—upon arrival, we need to place the incense table (*xiang'an*) and light firecrackers, and submerge a jar down to the bottom of the pond; the assembling masses will together kneel down, performing the ritual of knocking their head three times on the ground. Afterwards, we pull the jar out of the pond, wrap the jar with a piece of red cloth, hang it on the gun arm, and ask two boys to lift [it]. Then, the Dragon King should stay in the jar.
> Lin Gongda: En.
> Wang Tongshun: On our way to bring the Dragon King back, we should pay even more respect. Firecrackers, drums, and gongs, all need to be continuously fired and played without a moment's interruption. Villagers who carry foreign guns and foreign rifles need to fire three times into the sky when passing by water. Other villagers who can dance need to dance with swords and spears. Whenever the parade passes a village, all the residents need to step out their homes and offer incense for the parade. Once the Dragon King causes it to rain, everyone here, we can all be blessed with the rain.
> Lin Gongda: En.[128]

[128] Hong Shen, 1957, 410.

The local peasants' respect of and reverence for Mr. Lin arose from the literacy and popular science classes he offered. Lin's relationship with the peasants is thereby premised upon a unidirectional transmission of modern knowledge. However, the abovementioned dialogue exchange, between Wang's passionate and detailed accounts and Lin's passive response, flips this pedagogical dynamic, making Mr. Lin the one without discursive power. Accompanying the reversal of the teacher-student hierarchy is the return of "superstitious" content supposedly banished from the knowledge realm of these new citizens. However, in Wang's speech, it is these "feudal" and "ignorant" beliefs and practices that make their way back into the everyday life of Zhuang village and become the "knowledge" that Lin is asked to learn. By showing the futility of Lin's six-year experience teaching peasant youth, Hong Shen expresses his doubts regarding the feasibility of the Chinese intelligentsia's attempts at rural reconstruction.

To further complicate the issue, Wang's detailed account reveals that the ritual practice of "greeting the Dragon King" is in essence both a mass performance and an example of mob violence. Wang's demands for a massive crowd ("hundreds and thousands of people") and weapons ("all weapons hidden in your houses"), while achieving the scale and splendor needed for greeting the folk spirit, is also a mass crowd infused with masculine and collective energies. Once the parade of people successfully acquires and carries the Dragon spirit with it, Wang insists, residents of the entire region (Zhuang and the neighboring villages) should show their subjugation to the "throne" of the Dragon King. Through the process of performing rain-prayer rituals, the solemn spirit of the Dragon King and the bodies of the crowd merge.

Hong does not loose sight of the visual quality of the ritual performance, even if the performance is only narrated by a character in the play. A mosaic of color is added to the narration of the procession thanks to Wang's urge for the peasants to carry and manically wave the various national flags as performative banners. Here, political emblems of sovereignty for the past Qing empire (Yellow Dragon Flag), warlord China (Five-Color Flag), and Nationalist China (National Flag) only have value as "stage props" for bringing back the Dragon King Spirit. Hong's convenient and improvisational "borrowing" of national flags (political emblems) as performative aides suggests a symbolic "cleansing" of the reformist and enlightening ideologies that Lin and the rural reconstruction project strove to impose on the peasants. Moreover, with the aural effect of the firecrackers and gun-shooting, the playful depoliticizing of "national flags" and the unpacking of the goals of rural reconstruction immediately becomes repackaged with the boiling revolutionary energies and the surging power of the rural masses. A careful reading of Hong's depiction reveals parallels between the Zhuang village's folk ritual and political performances.[129] Ironically, although among the three plays in Hong's trilogy *Green Dragon Pond* has received the most criticism and the fewest staging inquiries from PRC *huaju*-makers since the 1950s, the play's depiction of the rural mass parade is, to some degree, a prophesy (*yuyan*) and a rehearsal (*yuyan*) of the grandiose tradition of Tiananmen street theatre.[130]

[129] Xiaomei Chen persuasively argues that Mao Zedong's announcement of the PRC's foundation on October 1, 1949 can be understood as both "celebrating and challenging the mainstream ideology of various historical and cultural contingencies." She further argues that this "performance" at Tiananmen by Mao and his audience inaugurated the tradition of Tiananmen street theatre. Xiaomei Chen, 2001, 196.
[130] Ibid.

Compared to the sketchy account of the peasants' demolishment of the bridge in *Wukui Bridge*, Hong's detailed description of the peasants' ritual performance in *Green Dragon Pond* is much richer in content. Wang's narration unfolds a portrayal of collective and masculine bodies (carrying phallic-like weapons) that is infused with group energies ready for release. However, unlike the spontaneously assembled crowd in *Wukui Bridge*, the peasants of *Green Dragon Pond* have not knowingly gathered for a destructive purpose. Through which ideological filter does Hong Shen hope his audience will "read" the collective energy assembled in the final section of his *Trilogy*: as a revolutionary mass movement, a reformist (re)construction project, or as an expression of disillusionment with the rural reconstruction movement and an admission of the intellectual's deeply rooted fear of the mob? The answer, it appears, is the latter. *Green Dragon Pond* ends with the Zhuang villagers' communal energies erupting into mob violence. The victim of the violence is, sadly, Mr. Lin, the intellectual figure who strived to build the Zhuang villagers into a modern pubic.

After being informed of the villagers' plans, Mr. Lin maintains his view that rain is a natural phenomenon caused by the wind and not the result of "superstitious ritual practice."[131] But his advocacy of modern knowledge, no matter how sincere and authoritative, no longer carries influence among the village. One of the peasants, Zhuang Shunwen, confesses to Mr. Lin, "even if you are right, even if the ritual is superstitious, even if the ritual cannot call on the Dragon King, cannot bring raindrops to the land, so what? We need to do something together, after all."[132] Although Zhuang's argument does little to persuade Mr. Lin, it does inspire thousands of his fellow peasants, who

[131] Hong, 1957, 412.
[132] Ibid., 413.

assemble with flags and foreign guns to greet the Dragon King Spirit. *Green Dragon Pond* reminds its audience that collective action can often be futile.

On their way to the Green Dragon Pond the marchers stop by the town's elementary schoolroom, which also serves as Mr. Lin's home, and which was originally a local temple. Unnamed peasants knock the temple/school door open, streaming into the main classroom where folk idols used to be placed and where teaching equipment and decorative banners that proclaim "all worship is useless superstition" are now found[133] After a quick consultation with a Daoist monk, the peasants decide that the schoolroom will be the ideal location to house the Dragon King Spirit. Before the assembled crowd goes on to conduct their planned rituals, they first take apart the schoolroom and return it to its original temple appearance. The designated space for the intelligentsia's "enlightening" project is thus restored to an area where "superstitious" ritual practices are performed.[134] Mr. Lin's stubborn defense of his schoolroom and continued appeals for the peasants to abort their plans only feeds the chaos. Inevitably, physical jostling and an accidental gunshot are added to the mêlée.

> The crowd inside—Beat him up, knock him down, beat, knock, beat this son of a bitch! (*peasants A, B, C, D all come and knock Lin Gonda down. Mrs. Lin rushes out from the bedroom, trying to save her husband*)
> The crowd outside—Pull him out! Don't just beat him yourselves. Let's beat him as well. Let's take our anger out on him!
> …
> (*The crowd standing outside suddenly calms down*)

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[133] Ibid., 419.

[134] The peasants' return to "backward tradition" reads as even more devastating when we situate *Green Dragon Pond* within the discourse of theatre reformation that had been started by Liang Qichao and others in the early 1900s with the goal of "renovating the people." The theatre reformist rhetoric of turning "performers" (*xizi*) into "teachers" (*xiansheng*), and "theatres" (*xiyuan*) into "classrooms" (*xuetang*), is, in *Green Dragon Pond*, literarily and theatrically violated.

> Peasant D (*reporting by the door*)—Someone's gun accidently fired. Mr. Lin is down.
> …
> (*Mrs. Lin cries loudly.*)
> *The rest of the crowd feels wild and extravagant, in a chaotic and ecstatic mood. The crowd charges [out the temple] to greet the Dragon King. Just one person is killed. No one really minds it.*[135]

Mr. Lin thus serves as the "sacrifice" for the Zhuang villagers' ritual practice, after his earlier proposal to build the public road to transport technological and scientific modernity to the village had been heeded. In a bit of supreme irony, the curtain falls on the peasant crowd marching on their new road to greet the Dragon King Spirit. Unfortunately, no visual or textual archival materials have to date been found to reveal how these final scenes were staged. But, for contemporary scholars and general readers, perhaps the seminal four-and-a-half minute prayer sequence in *Yellow Earth* (*Huang tudi*, d. Chen Kaige; 1984),[136] offers a convenient rubric through which to imagine the spectacle of *Green Dragon Pond*'s horrific conclusion.

Crossing*: Harnessing Masculine Energy for Rural Reconstruction*

At the same time that Hong Shen—who by 1934 was back in Shanghai—was reshaping the (re)construction theme he had cautiously developed in *Wukui Bridge* into an expression of disillusionment for the rural reconstruction movement in general, Xiong Foxi—settling down in Ding County—was seeing with his own eyes what fruits rural reconstruction could bring. For Xiong, the most "marvelous miracle" was that "peasants

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[135] Hong Shen, 1957, 441.
[136] Much like the conclusion of *Green Dragon Pond*, *Yellow Earth* ends with hundreds of peasants assembling before a spirit-tablet of the Dragon King to pray for the rain after the Communist-led enlightening project has failed.

felt excited to watch our *huaju* plays and actively planned to organize their own troupes."[137] Hoping that the peasants' passion for *huaju* would not quickly vanish, Xiong sought to create a work that would both capture and magnify the villagers' enthusiasm. *Crossing* was the culmination of Xiong's efforts.

Despite some clear differences, the textual affinity between *Crossing* and *Wukui Bridge* is easy to find. Instead of facing a scorching drought as in *Wukui Bridge*, the peasant community in *Crossing* is confronted with the problem of traversing a flooded river. Accordingly, instead of "demolishing" the Wukui Bridge, the peasants in *Crossing* struggle to "construct" a bridge. In addition, both plays feature an intellectual protagonist (Li Quansheng and Zhang Guoben) who aspires to unite the peasant community, and an upper-class antagonist (Master Zhou and Ferry-owner Hu) who unsuccessfully attempts to destroy such "unity." Finally, both works offer notable appearances of the "law"—embodied by a local official in *Wukui Bridge* and a local policeman in *Crossing*. While taking note of these similarities, the following textual analysis[138] is not meant to suggest that Xiong simply "copied" *Wukui Bridge* for his production. Instead, I hope to reveal the tangible ways in which *Crossing* diverges from its peasant-play prototype. I want to investigate how the image of rural China, the project of rural reconstruction, and notions of a peasant community are narrated and displayed in a work that not only has "the peasantry" as its theme, but is in fact performed "of, for, and by" the peasantry.

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[137] Xiong Foxi, "*Guodu* de xiezuo jiqi yanchu" (The Writing and Performance of *Cross the River*), in Guodu *yanchu teji: Nongmin xiju shiyan baokao zhiyi* (*The Special Issue on* Cross the River *and Its Production: The Report of Peasant Experimental Theatre, part one*), ed. Xiong Foxi (Beiping: Zhonghua pinmin jiaoyu zujinhui, 1936), 4.
[138] I will offer a staging and performative analysis of *Crossing* in the following section.

In Xiong's own account of his writing and staging strategies for *Crossing*, he reveals that the play's theme of (re)construction and its specific story of building a bridge arose from the sociological surveys he conducted in Ding County. While doing social surveys for inspiration for his rural plays, Xiong often witnessed the striking masculine power and collective efforts that the villagers demonstrated in their construction works. Inspired by what he saw, Xiong decided to dramatize the peasants' collective labors outdoors in an actual construction setting. Xiong's first choice was to set a play in the Liaodi Pagoda (276 ft. tall), arguably China's tallest pre-modern pagoda, which was built in 1055 during the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and located in Ding County. After a few informal drafts, Xiong was forced to give up this idea because using the pagoda would likely cause it irrevocable harm. Nor did MEM have the economic and technical support necessary to build a stage-prop pagoda. After consulting with other MEM departments, Xiong decided to pursue his theme of "mass rural reconstruction" by staging a play about building a bridge to cross a river.[139] In other words, the idea for *Crossing* arose from Hong's personal observations, and not his romantic imagination of an idyllic countryside. *Crossing* thus does not present the pure and utopian agricultural world that Master Zhou manipulatively imagines in *Wukui Bridge*; nor does it contain a romantic trope like the cherry orchard in *Green Dragon Pond*. Its emphasis on peasants' labor and their strength in building the bridge reflects Xiong's own viewing and then (re)constructing of the vital masculinity of rural China.

[139] Yang Cunbin, 5.

Crossing's masculine focus is especially clear when the workers collectively sing while building the scaffolding that will become their bridge "to the future."[140] As Huizhu Sun and Siyuan Liu point out, "Song of Crossing the River" played a major role in attracting the local peasant audience and evoking a shared sentiment. Interestingly, while Sun and Liu disagree about whether the melody is borrowed from a popular local tune or newly written by "a composer from the city,"[141] neither have paid much attention to the lyrics,

> (Solo)—Let's build a bridge on the Daliu River!
> (Chorus)—Pound! With strength!
> (Solo)—One person's strength is not enough!
> (Chorus)—Pound! With strength!
> (Solo)—Let's build a bridge on the Daliu River!
> (Chorus)—Pound! With strength!
> (Solo)—By pulling everyone's strength together we can do it!
> (Chorus)—Pound! With strength!
> (Solo)—Rise up! Do it hard!
> (Chorus)—Try harder! Sweat! Sweat! Do it hard!
> (*Under the leadership of Guoben, the peasant laborers continue to sing and to work. The ferry owner is outraged, walking back home*)[142]

"Sweating," "pounding," and "working hard," these chanted phrases are simultaneously embodied and delivered by the laborers' dynamic movements. Given that the laborers on stage were performed by local peasants, the "vitality" that Xiong aspired to deliver appeared to organically grown. A later fight scene between the laborers and "misguided ferry workers" highlights *Crossing*'s "masculine force" in a similar vein:

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[140] Huizhu Sun reads *Crossing*'s bridge as a "symbol for 'transition' to bring peasants from this side to the other, from the past to the future." Huizhu Sun, 191.

[141] Siyuan Liu writes that, "The play's theme song 'Song of Crossing the River" used a popular local tune in order to encourage the peasants to sing with the actors." In contrast, Huizhu Sun maintains, "The idea of having a 'Song of Crossing the River' might have derived from Ding Xian people's love for *yangge*, yet its tune was not *yangge* but created by a composer from the city." See Siyuan Liu, 2008, 287; Huizhu Sun, 213.

[142] Xiong Foxi, 1937, 21.

Laborer A—You want to run away? Stop! There is no such easy thing!
Guoben—No need to be mean to them. Just ask them, ask them why they sabotage our construction work. Who put you up to do such a thing?
Laborer C—Right. Why were you sabotaging? Who asked you to do this? If you don't confess, I will beat you up and break your bones.[143]

Compared to *Green Dragon Pond*, the violence in *Crossing* is for a "just cause."

Figure 3.2: The fighting scene from Act II of *Crossing* by the East Buluogang Village Peasant Theatre Troupe in East Buluogang Open-Air Theatre, December 1935. From Guodu *yanchu teji: Nongmin xiju shiyan baokao zhiyi* (*The Special Issue on* Cross the River *and Its Production: The Report of Peasant Experimental Theatre, part one*), (Beiping: Zhonghua pingmin jiaoyu cujinhui, 1936).

Somewhat problematically, based as it is on a single stage shot of this minor scene, Huizhu Sun believes he can spot the "only discernible tradition" that Xiong employed in *Crossing*,

[143] Ibid., 29.

> The only discernible tradition used in the production was martial arts in the fighting scene. When the bridge builders defended their work from the misguided ferry workers' sabotage, they all fought using the traditional skills of Chinese boxing. This was a minor scene in the script but a major attraction for the audience.[144]

While I am not convinced by Sun's extrapolation from such a limited source, I am also not overly concerned with what fighting techniques Xiong employed. Instead, what interests me is the fact that both the long bridge building scenes and short fighting scene were carefully choreographed. Tong Fengren (dates unknown), a member of Xiong's DLVE, recalled how these scenes were intensively rehearsed with the peasant performers.

> Every morning, we research our materials, organize meetings, and discuss the daily agendas. In the afternoon, we take turns to conduct one-on-one actor training, either with other theatre workers or with peasant actors. At night time, we will assemble to rehearse in the Open-Air Theatre. We first briefly talk about the sketches of each scene, then focus on drills and training the nuanced body movements. For example, the "mass brawl" scene [the scene between laborers and a saboteur] only lasts 5 minutes on stage, but we specifically spent two nights to rehearse the scenes. In total we have over 10 actors on the stage. Everyone's gesture was individually regulated and designed. When the fighting scene is performed, although it looks like the actors are fighting without a regular pattern (*mei guilü*) [without choreography], their body movements are touched with an aesthetic hue. Moreover, every time when the peasant actors perform, they all fight in the exact same manner.[145]

Such collective efforts at making peasant *huaju*—which were a vital means by which the Ding Country peasant community became a rural public[146]—reveal that the kinetic, bustling, and masculine qualities of the characters presented on stage indeed arose from

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[144] Huizhu Sun, 215.
[145] Tong Fengren, "*Guodu* pailian jingguo" (The Process of Rehearsing *Cross the River*), in Guodu *yanchu teji: Nongmin xiju shiyan baokao zhiyi* (*The Special Issue on* Cross the River *and Its Production: The Report of Peasant Experimental Theatre, Part One*), ed. Xiong Foxi (Beiping: Zhonghua pinmin jiaoyu zujinhui, 1936), 77.
[146] I will discuss this in greater detail in the following section.

Xiong's careful disciplining work with his actors. Sadly, these behind-the-scenes disciplining strategies remain largely unknown.

Figure 3.3: The public condemnation of Ferry-owner Hu. Scenes from Act III, *Guodu* (*Cross the River*) by East Buluogang Village Peasant Theatre Troupe in East Buluogang Open-Air Theatre, December 1935. From Guodu *yanchu teji: Nongmin xiju shiyan baokao zhiyi* (*The Special Issue on* Cross the River *and Its Production: The Report of Peasant Experimental Theatre, part one*), (Beiping: Zhonghua pingmin jiaoyu cujinhui, 1936).

By contrast, an example of *Crossing*'s on-stage sentimental manipulation and disciplining of its audience—the public anger against the antagonist, Ferry-owner Hu—

has been well discussed in the scholarship.[147] At the end of the play, when Ferry-owner Hu stirs up public resentment, a local police inspector appears. Profoundly different from Master Wang, who is a symbol of an impotent legal system in *Wukui Bridge*, the police inspector, representing state power, enables a public trial against Hu to take place in front of the recently formalized "rural public" that consisted of both angry peasant characters (playing the role of spectators within the play) and the peasant audience. Significantly, the public anger that arose from his innovative production model[148]—and which challenged binaries between on- and off- stage—did not result in an act of mob violence as depicted in *Green Dragon Pond*. Instead, the peasant actors and audience members alike join forces in "legally" condemning Ferry-owner Hu. Xiong, unlike Hong, saw rural China as a vital, forceful, and powerful community that, by means of textual and performative disciplining, could contribute wholeheartedly to the rural reconstruction movement.

As these examples have shown, *Crossing* and *Trilogy*, despite dealing with similar subject matter, differed considerably in their delivery. The remainder of this chapter will look in more detail at the process of creating and staging *Crossing*. A case study of the imagination and materialization of *Crossing* is an appropriate lens to investigate the formation of a Chinese rural modern public. Compared to the *Trilogy*, where Hong Shen maintained an intellectual distance from the "mob," *Crossing* stands out because of Xiong Foxi's immersion in, and internalization of, peasant life. Furthermore, attention to *Crossing*'s script revisions reveal that Xiong turned against the

[147] Yu Zhang, 83-84.
[148] Both Siyuan Liu and Huizhu Sun have offered detailed analyses of the effectiveness of Xiong's new production model of staging *Crossing* in an open-air theatre. See Huizhu Sun: 148-52; 191-203; Siyuan Liu, 2008, 282-94.

trend of producing "Nora-like characters" in Chinese settings to instead devise dramatic themes able to invoke peasants' collective agency to pursue their shared interests in building a rural modern public. *Crossing* is thus significant for presenting an image of the collective "peasant mass," rather than an individual, as the impetus for positive social change. With its ephemeral but sensational spectacles and its long-term literary and artistic preparations, *Crossing* helped to formulate an imagined community that was fraught with "public passions."[149] More important, it formed a real peasant public centered upon playmaking in East Buluogang village that was destined to become, rather than a one-time audience, performers and builders in China's modernization.

Spoken Drama of, for, and by the Peasants:* Crossing the River *and Ding County Experimental Theatre

Laying the Groundwork for Crossing

Ding County's transformation from a rural community (located 128 miles south of Beiping and crossed by the Beiping-Hankou railroad) to the home of China's first "experimental theatre" stemmed from the combined efforts of the Mi family, local gentry who had promoted village reconstruction since the early 1900s, James Yen, who cofounded MEM in 1923, and Xiong Foxi, who became head of MEM's Theatre Division in 1932. As early as 1902, Mi Jianshan (dates unknown) proposed founding primary schools for boys and girls in Ding County to raise the literacy and civic levels of his fellow villagers. His son, Mi Digang (dates unknown), who had traveled to Japan,

[149] Here, I borrow Eugenia Lean's term, "public passions," to highlight theatre's function for providing space for public exploration of real-life matters in the rural community. See Eugenia Lean, 63.

further strove to promote "village self-government" by following the Japanese model.[150] In many ways, the goals of the Mi family predated the fashionable obligation felt by many Chinese intelligentsia in the mid-1920s to bring "modernity" to the countryside.

James Yen was one such Western-inspired modernizer. Yen, who had studied at Yale and Princeton and briefly helped organize Chinese laborers in Bondues, France, cofounded MEM in 1923 in Beijing to promote mass education, aiming to "eliminate illiteracy and make new citizens."[151] Proving that he was more than just an idle dreamer, Yen successfully secured several big grants from individual and organizational donors in America, and employed over a dozen Western-educated Chinese intellectuals to realize his project. Yet, impressive as Yen's recruitment of human resources and fund-raising was, he could not find a suitable laboratory to achieve his dream until 1926, when the Mi family invited MEM to come to Ding County to participate in rural reconstruction.[152]

Soon after arriving in Ding County, MEM established a Department of Literature and Visual Education (DLVE), which conducted several surveys and investigations regarding the popular performance forms of *da yangge* and *dagu* (big drum). Qu Junong (1901-1976) and Sun Fuyuan (1894–1966), DLVE's directors, quickly noted that the rural theatre relied heavily on thematic motifs with strong local characteristics. Furthermore, they saw that the local peasants not only enjoyed watching but also sometimes were inspired to imitate these performances. Grasping the medium's potential for social transformation, MEM decided to reform and employ local theatre techniques in

[150] Huizhu Sun, 30.
[151] Pearl Buck, *Tell the People: Talks with James Yen about the Mass Education Movement* (New York: John Day, 1945), 69.
[152] Ibid., 58. MEM was sometimes jokingly referred to as the "Foreign PhDs Down to the Countryside" program, which involved, as Buck puts it, "the most magnificent exodus of the intelligentsia into the country that had taken place in Chinese history to date."

pursuit of "modernization."[153] However, until Xiong's arrival in 1932—when he was asked by James Yen to head DLVE's new Theatre Division—MEM's agenda of theatre reformation remained within the realm of research but not practice.

Scripting in the Fields: Social Surveys and Play-Writing in Ding County

Arriving in Ding County by donkey cart on New Year's Day, Xiong Foxi quickly set to work. In Xiong's view, spoken drama was a theatrical art and community activity more appropriate than *da yangge* and *dagu* for MEM's goal of making new citizens and for the national project of rural reconstruction. During the next seven years (1932-1937), Xiong and his Theatre Division, which grew to include Chen Zhice (1894-1954), Yang Cunbin (1911-1989), and others, made great strides in the realms of writing new spoken dramas and translating Western classics for peasants, organizing peasant spoken drama troupes, and reconstructing village open-air theatres. Their accomplishments can be attributed to Xiong's successful engagement with the same three issues that he had originally pondered with Yu Shangyuan and Wen Yiduo in New York: what plays to stage, for whom, and for what purpose.

Xiong's preparation of a spoken drama repertoire for MEM actually started in late 1931 while he was still in Beiping. Having first been approached by Yen in 1928, Xiong was aware that Qu Junong and Sun Fuyuan held positive views of Ding County's local performative arts; in fact, Yen's intention of putting new wine (materials for curing the "four root evils") into old wine bottles (extant rural theatres) also revealed an appreciation for tradition. In contrast, Xiong was more skeptical toward the "outdated"

[153] Jinghan Li, ed., *Ding Xian shehui gaikuang diaocha* (*A Survey of Ding County Society*) (Beiping: Zhongguo pingmin jiaoyu cujinhui, 1933).

themes and entertainment modes of the rural theatres, worrying that tradition alone was unable to cultivate the modern and patriotic citizens that China needed when facing the threat of Japanese invasion. Thus, in 1931, Xiong took the daring path of mixing the traditional with the modern by composing the historical play, *Lie on Thorns and Taste Gall* (*Woxing changdan*, 1931). Drawing on a popular historical subject, Xiong not only made explicit allusion to China's present crisis; by designating the King of Yue (r.496-465 BCE) to directly recite messages from a MEM pamphlet, Xiong further expressed his optimism that spoken drama could work, alongside schools, radios, books, and lantern slides, in spreading cultural modernity to Ding County.[154]

Ironically, in spite of his preparations, Xiong's theatre plan for Ding County changed almost as soon as he arrived. Seeing that the immediate concerns of the local peasants lay with specific domestic and communal issues related with MEM's rural reconstruction projects rather than with the looming national crisis, Xiong suspended his practice of staging historical plays and instead designated *Trumpet* (*Laba*, 1929), a play addressing the relationship between a trumpet performer (i.e. an outsider) and the rural community, to be MEM's first *huaju* for the rural masses. Performed two nights in a row in MEM's "Demonstration Theatre," *Trumpet*'s rural setting, "natural acting," and humorous dialogue not only won it a full-house but also favorable reviews from the peasants.

Trumpet's success ensured that Xiong would continue to write and stage spoken dramas that took local peasants' everyday lives as their subject. To do so effectively, Xiong adjusted his writing style from two perspectives. First, when choosing appropriate

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[154] Xiong Foxi, *Xiju dazhonghua zhi shijian* (*Experiment in Theatre Popularization*) (Beiping: Zhengzhong shuju, 1937).

themes, Xiong and the Theatre Division conducted social surveys and investigations to learn how the rural community worked and lived. Such direct contact spared Xiong from the pitfall of simply imagining rural realities from secondary research, which is what had arguably marred Hong's *Trilogy*. Xiong's efforts at uncovering the rural *mentalité* brought results. From 1932 to 1937, Xiong wrote several plays that enjoyed great popularity among his Ding County audience, such as *A Strong Son with Hoe* (*Chutou jian'er*, 1932), which dealt with the theme of "superstition," *Butcher* (*Tuchu*, 1933), which explored the conflict between landlords and peasants, and, of course, *Crossing*, which had (re)construction as its subject.

Secondly, Xiong realized that plays with down-to-earth peasant themes actually left little room for the psychological nuance, plot subtlety, and modern love that were popular in urban theatres. Accordingly, he preferred to highlight dynamic and masculine actions as well as the collective spirit over the enlightening structure of modern love. For example, when contemplating the plot of *Crossing*, Xiong first intended to include a young woman in love with the lead, which would have been a stock character prevalent in Xiong's early plays as well as various other Ibsen-inspired Nora plays. Ultimately, however, Xiong decided to forgo the romantic relationship between the male protagonist (Zhang Guoben) and the daughter of the antagonist (Ferry owner Hu), fearing that this rather clichéd melodramatic sub-plot would weaken the peasants' "group dynamics," from which the "major power" of the play derived.

Xiong's adjustments to dramatizing rural realities and staging peasants' "group dynamics" effectively aroused local passions, particularly when it came to plays that depicted conflicts between a peasant community and abusive "others" who were either

treacherous hooligans or the uncaring rich. Classic scenes of similar subjects, such as the communal trial against ferry owner Hu in *Crossing* and the public's resentment toward the hooligan Kong in *Butcher*, struck a responsive chord among spectators. In several performances, audiences were so sympathetic with the peasant characters' miseries and their struggling spirit that they shouted encouragement and shook their fists in anger against the abusive "others" on stage. Clearly, the sentiment that Xiong and MEM wished to inspire was the yearning for collective action. Unlike Hong Shen, Xiong Foxi believed that the power of the "mob" could be channeled in a progressive direction.

From Off-stage Onlookers to On-stage Performers: Peasants' Rehearsals and Performances in Crossing

Soon after *Trumpet*'s debut, performed by the staff of the Theatre Division in early 1932, Ding County peasants began acting under the Theatre Division's direction. The spoken dramas written and performed "of" and "for" the local peasants thus took their ideal trajectory, evolving into spoken dramas "by" the peasants. At the end of 1932 and the beginning of 1933, the Theatre Division received frequent requests from villagers to expand their spoken drama repertoire to a level comparable with the local troupes that performed *da yangge* and *dagu*. During 1933 and 1934, thirteen villages, under the supervision of the Theatre Division, formed their own spoken drama troupes composed of both men and women to perform spoken dramas in their own villages and to tour in others.[155]

East Buluogang was among the first villages to have a performance troupe. During the 1933 New Year, Theatre Division staff members performed *Lanzhi and*

[155] Huizhu Sun, 130-32.

Zhongqing, a one-act play based on *Southeast Flies the Peacock* (*Kongque dongnan fei*)[156] that Xiong wrote while he was still in Beiping. After learning that three woman characters (Lanzhi, Mother Jiao, and Lanzi's sister-in-law) were played by peasant girl students from the neighboring village of West Pingzhugu,[157] thirty-two local theatre talents in East Buluogang requested the Theatre Division's assistance to form their own performance troupe. As He Shuowen (dates unknown), a cultural worker in the Theatre Division recalled, "we all felt so surprised when they [the East Buluogang villagers] asked us for help…Local peasants who used to look down on us [the urban-style actors] started nodding to us. Moreover, they even got suspicious of and annoyed by the *great yangge* they used to often practice."[158] The community that MEM and *Crossing* helped to gestate made use of preexisting ties, but reconfigured them with new values and aspirations.

Fully aware of the performative traditions of Ding County as well as the natural talent and enthusiasm of the peasants, Xiong did not want to completely surrender quality control of *huaju* to peasants' hands. Instead, with full support from Yen, he planned to not only bestow on them modern drama literature but the entire process of modern

[156] For a detailed discussion of "textual-borrowing" between the following plays, see Man He, "The *Peacock* on Stage and in Print: A Study of the 1920s New Drama Adaptations of *Southeast Flies the Peacock*," (M.A. Thesis, The Ohio State University, 2009). The "texts" and plays examined in He's study include the anonymous ballad, "Kongque dongnan fei" (Southeast Flies the Peacock) (aka. "Jiao Zhongqing qi" (Jiao Zhongqing's Wife) textualized in *Yutai xinyong* (*New Songs from a Jade Terrace*)); Xiong's *Zhongqing and Lanzhi* (1927-1928); *Southeast Flies the Peacock* (1922) in a "civilized drama" version collectively created by Chen Dabei and the female students from the Beijing Women's College of Higher Education (Beijing nü gaoshi); and the Freudian spoken drama, *Southeast Flies the Peacock* (1929) by a female playwright, Yuang Changying (1894-1973).
[157] This performance, though only staged once on one day, marked the beginning of Ding County female peasants' participation in public performance.
[158] He Shuowen, "*Guodu* de paiyan" (Rehearsals for *Crossing the River*), in Guodu *yanchu teji*: *nongmin xiju shiyan yanchu zhiyi* (*The Special Issue of* Cross the River*: One Report on Peasant Experimental Theatre, part one*), ed. by National Association of Mass Education Movements (NAMEM), (Beiping: Zhonghua pingmin jiaoyu cujinhui, 1936), 94.

theatre-making (the rehearsal system, directorship, and technical design, etc.) to the peasant performers. The Theatre Division's supervision took the form of rehearsal workshops that were usually held every night 2-3 months before the performance. Xiong's aide, Tong Fengren, recalled,

> The formal rehearsal of [*Crossing*] started in mid-November…One week later, some of our Theatre Division fellows went to East Buluogang village to train the peasants to read lines and sing the theme song. Meanwhile, the Theatre Division fellows were self-trained and prepared the sets, costumes, and lighting…At the end of November, Mr. Yang Cunbin came to advise our rehearsals. …finally, Mr. Xiong directed our rehearsals several times. Those could be considered as preliminary tech-rehearsals… From the beginning to the end, we spent six weeks to rehearse. In fact, our schedule was tight.[159]

In these workshops, peasant performers learned about the plot and sentiments of the play; practiced cold readings and group recitation of designated lines; engaged in making stage props; and expanded their technical skills, which remained at a low level. Another DLVE member, Gong Shutian (dates unknown), explained,

> They [the peasant actors] are all very busy with their own labor….Thus, when having the play script, they must occupy their regular working time to read. The only time they can find is on the big cart, and in front of sewing machines. One can see they are reciting one sentence after another while holding the scripts.[160]

Xiong and MEM's engagement with the peasants thus yielded several results. For the local community, play-making was a fun and novel activity,[161] for MEM in general, such activities reinforced the goal of literacy training; and for Xiong and the Theatre Division

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[159] Tong Fengren, 77.
[160] Gong Shutian, "Jieshao Dong buluogang shiyan nongmin jutuan de yanyuan" (Introduction of the Actors of the Peasant Experimental Theatre Troupe in East Bulugogang Village), in Guodu *yanchu teji: Nongmin xiju shiyan baokao zhiyi* (*The Special Issue on* Cross the River *and Its Production: The Report of Peasant Experimental Theatre, part one*), ed. Xiong Foxi (Beiping: Zhonghua pinmin jiaoyu zujinhui, 1936), 52.
[161] Tong Fengren, 78.

specifically, this learning process helped to "modernize" Ding County's theatre traditions and guaranteed the artistic quality of their works.

Importantly, such engagement was not only "top-down," but also involved instances where Ding County peasants instructed MEM staff. Although Xiong originally envisioned *Crossing* to be a large-scale performance with 50 performers, he was only able to recruit 25 peasant performers, who were supplemented by cultural workers in the Theatre Division to make 35 actors in total. Before starting the rehearsals, as local resident Zhang Fengren (dates unknown) remembers, Xiong brought the peasant performers and the designing team to Qing River, located to the north of Ding County, to envision, rehearse, and learn about bridge-building. The East Buluogang villagers, at first, did not realize that Xiong's request was intended as an artistic exercise in imagination; they carefully explained the necessary materials and labor it would require to build a bridge, and instructed the cultural workers from the Theatre Division to form groups and prepare for heavy lifting. Zhang claimed that "the work we did together was just like a [rehearsed] scene, and their [peasants'] everyday labors were just like well-trained actors."[162] With the erosion of traditional hierarchies and the blending of theatrical and actual realities—in effect, creating a *zhiji* relationship between director, actors, and stage hands—a new community with shared sentiments was born. Sustaining this community, however, would need more than sentiments alone.

[162] Ibid.

Building a Theatre, Making a Public

A crucial step for turning plays about Ding County peasants into modern theatre for a peasant audience was to find the appropriate performance space. When Xiong introduced the first spoken drama to Ding County, the Theatre Division converted part of the Civil Examination Hall (Gongyuan) into a "Demonstration Theatre," for a reason similar to why "Demonstration Schools" and "Demonstration Farms" were also established; namely, to introduce "modern" culture to the local peasants.[163] The Theatre Division's selection of the Examination Hall was significant. When MEM first arrived in Ding County in 1926, the Mi family suggested that Yen take the Examination Hall as the mass education headquarters to direct literacy classes, prepare radio broadcasts, and make popular print and visual materials for the rural masses. In this manner, the Examination Hall, which until 1905 had been guarded as imperial property and closed to all but potential scholar-officials, opened its doors to farmer-students. Then, when Xiong staged *Trumpet* in the Examination Hall in 1932 and attracted over 1000 spectators, this imperial-cum-Republican education center was further transformed into a public space accommodating on-stage performances and off-stage public assemblies. The architectural structure of the Examination Hall (walled boundaries, grand examination room, and open-air court) as well as other associated solemn and authoritative cultural symbols not only brought into life a new theatre art but also provided an innovative performance space that the open-air theatres common to the rest of rural China could not match.

[163] When Su Fuyuan reviewed how Chen Zhice made use of the open-air space in the Civil Examination Hall to accommodate the ending of *Trumpet*, he pointed out the important role played by the performance space in luring the rural peasants to the theatre. See Sun Fuyuan, "Ding xian nongmin lutian yanchu" (Open-Air Theatre Productions by peasants in Ding County), in *Minjian* (*Folk*), vol.1 no. 3 (1936), page number unclear.

Nonetheless, there was but one Examination Hall in Ding County. When the spoken dramas that were successfully staged in the "Demonstration Theatre" began to tour local villages, the production team was forced to abandon the comforts of a theatre for the hardships of a make-shift stage. While such low-tech performances were common for most of rural China, the crowds that such public spectacles tended to attract were hard to control or influence. As the American sociologist Sidney D. Gamble's (1890-1968) survey records,

> New Year's time, especially at the occasion of the Lantern Festival, the fifteenth of the first moon, the spring and autumn festivals, the temple fairs, and after the harvest, were generally the times when the plays were given. If the village had no permanent stage, a temporary one was easily and cheaply erected. It usually was about thirty feet square with the back third curtained off as a dressing room. There was no scenery and only simple properties were used. Sometimes a mat shed, thirty by sixty or forty by eighty feet, with a ceiling of twenty feet or more, costing about $15 for the rent of equipment and installation, was added to cover the audience, most of whom stood in the open space in front of the stage. No seats were provided; through sometimes carts would be ranked along the side of the mat shed to provide an advantageous position for some of the women spectators. [164]

The lack of clear boundaries between the performance area and its surroundings made it easy for spectators to come and go, just as the lack of an architecturally defined "center" made it difficult for the performers to maintain the audience's attention. These limitations did not matter much for *da yangge* or *dagu* performances, since those traditional genres demanded little from its audience. However, when it came to

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[164] Gamble in the late 1920s assisted DLVE in collecting, recording, and compiling the repertoires of local operas as well as observing and documenting Ding County peasants' engagement and participation in rural theatre. See Sidney D. Gamble, *Chinese Village Plays from the Ting Hsien Region* (Yang Ke Hsüan) (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1970), xx.

propagating MEM's goal of creating "new citizens," the traditional open-air "stage" that Gamble described appeared to be at a distinct disadvantage.

In order to overcome this hindrance, MEM's Theatre Division in late 1932 proposed organizing Ding County peasants to build their own modern theatres. Nearly two years later, East Buluogang was selected among the 30 villages of Ding County as one of two such "experimental fields" (the other being West Jianyang). Of course, the local villagers' previous participation in MEM's theatre experiments played an important role in the Theatre Division's decision. As mentioned, East Buluogang villagers had requested guidance from the Theatre Division in 1933 to form their own spoken drama troupe. In addition to the villagers' enthusiasm, the communal solidarity and advanced educational and social development of East Buluogang made it an attractive candidate for MEM's plans. Nearly all of the 230 households, which owned evenly distributed plots of land and engaged in weaving to supplement their domestic income, had a standard of living higher than other local villages. It was this relative prosperity that allowed them the leisure to renovate a theatre on top of their regular work. Finally, the extant architectural structure of Puduan Temple in the center of the village rendered MEM's mission of building an open-air theatre feasible. The temple's dilapidated status stemmed from an incomplete campaign of "Destroying Temples and Building Schools," launched by Mi Jianshan in the mid-1910s. Remaining in a rectangle shape, five *zhang* in width and 15 *zhang* in length, the temple was renovated into a "theatre" that contained a separate auditorium that was surrounded by temple walls and then by peach, plum, and apricot trees. In Xiong's view, these trees, whether blossoming or wilting, would add a distinct visual spectacle throughout the four seasons to the performances inside. Once

East Buluogang was selected, 35 peasant-performers, relying on the wholehearted support of the village and the supervision of the Theatre Division, began to spend their days in theatre-building and their nights in performance workshops. After nearly a year of on-and off- construction and rehearsals, East Buluogang's Open-Air Theatre was ready for use, just in time for *Crossing*'s debut.

Although no feedback about *Crossing* written by peasant performers or audience members has been preserved, VIP reviewers all highlighted the collective spirit that *Crossing* produced on the cold night of December 21, 1935. Zhang Junxiang contrasted the "dynamic, collective, and roaring" theatrical scene in the night's performances with the bleak natural scenery he saw in the morning right after arriving in Ding County.[165] The demonstration of rural masculinity through the peasant performers marching together into the open-theatre in the beginning scene, according to Chen Yuyuan, interestingly echoed the final scene in which performers on-stage and audience off-stage united to wave their fists in accusation against ferry-owner Hu.[166] There, in that performance of *Crossing*, a crowd of peasants was transformed into a community that not only bore similar hardships of life, but also engenderd a shared "public sympathy" (*tongqing*) and then a "public passion," to borrow Eugenia Lean's term, both of which were endowed with an unmistakable collective connotation. Jointly created by Xiong and the local peasants in Ding County, *Crossing* demonstrated the collective agency of the "masses"

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[165] Zhang Junxiang, "Canguan dingxian Dong buluogang cun nongmin yanju ji" (A Journal on Viewing the Peasants' Performance in East Buluogang Village in Ding County), in Guodu *yanchu teji: Nongmin xiju shiyan baokao zhiyi* (*The Special Issue on* Cross the River *and Its Production: The Report of Peasant Experimental Theatre, Part One*), ed. Xiong Foxi (Beiping: Zhonghua pinmin jiaoyu zujinhui, 1936), 68-69.
[166] Chen Yuyuan, "Dingxian de nongcun huaju: *Guodu* gongyan canguan ji" (The Peasants' Spoken Drama in Ding County: A Journal on Watching the Public Performance of *Cross the River*), in Guodu *yanchu teji: Nongmin xiju shiyan baokao zhiyi* (The Special Issue on *Cross the River* and Its Production: The Report of Peasant Experimental Theatre, Part One), ed. Xiong Foxi (Beiping: Zhonghua pinmin jiaoyu zujinhui, 1936), 62-63

rather than the individual interiority of the "distant intellectual" in rural China in the 1930s.

Conclusion

In the early 1920s, at a time when iconoclastic "home-leaving" dramas were acted out by various Chinese Nora-like characters in print and on stage in the metropolises of Shanghai and Beijing, Hong Shen and Xiong Foxi, departing from their own cultural experiences in New York, embarked on their respective homecomings. Drawing on their privileged educational experiences in Columbus, Cambridge, and New York, Hong and Xiong brought with them a shade of confidence and pride to their high-profile play-making activities. With their Chinese theatres delivered in the English language, be it "realist" or "traditional," Hong and Xiong did not merely seek—but had experienced—fairly happy lives in the cosmopolitan centers of post-WWI America. The world of Chinese theatre carefully orchestrated by Chinese overseas students, in turn, sheltered them from racial discriminations and even served as a public space to further unite Chinese students abroad and stimulate nationalist sentiments. If making Chinese plays had been so easy in America, then why not in China?

Hong and Xiong's high-flying ambition regarding theatre making and nation building was forced to make a hard landing when it encountered China's increasingly politicized reality. Between the 1920s and 1930s, the broader intellectual inspirations of "going to the people" and the governmental and private agendas of building a "rural modern" converged to view China's peasant masses as subjects in need of "enlightenment" and potential "new citizens." *Huaju*, carrying on its late Qing mission

to "renovate people" and the May Fourth-inspired "social problem" plays, was forced to reorient itself away from cosmopolitan intellectuals and toward the peasantry in order to remain relevant. Hoping to stand at the crossroads between popular culture and mass politics, Hong, Xiong, and their *huaju*-making peers strove to incorporate the peasant masses into the world of modern drama by writing peasant plays, performing in front of peasant audiences, training peasant *huaju*-actors, and, eventually, extending the theatre world into a rural public where peasants would "learn, think, and feel" as "new citizens."

Given the salient elitist and urban temperaments in *huaju* in the 1920s and early 1930s, the goal of using *huaju* to enlighten, educate, and unite the peasants was easier said than done. Although their professional theatre training, cosmopolitan intellectual charm, and vital energies in performative culture empowered Hong and Xiong to assert themselves through theater in the West, none of these "merits" were particularly useful when it came to "going to the people." Peasants, who often had no familiarity with spoken drama, viewed *huaju* as "morally corrupt" due to its use of a mixed-gender cast and "unintelligible" because it was not staged in a "native language" (*xiangtu yu*).[167] *Huaju* by the mid-1930s had yet to achieve the idealist goal that Yu Shangyuan and Xiong had set for it a decade earlier during the National Drama Movement: that through spoken drama every Chinese person would "feel some sense of common ground, a shared past, and an interrelated future."[168] The frustration felt by intellectual dramatists to

[167] Chang-tai Hung, 1994, 54-55.
[168] Trotter, xi.

orchestrate *huaju* appropriate for peasants and therefore fulfill their "obligation" for the "suffering masses"[169] was only alleviated when Xiong Foxi staged *Crossing* in 1935.

Understandably, the theatre experiments in Ding County orchestrated by Xiong Foxi between 1932 and 1937 have become the epitome of peasant plays in scholarly surveys. Unfortunately, such scholarship, while sympathetic with *huaju*-makers' difficulties making peasant plays and "wowed" by the success of the Ding County experience, has tended to coalesce around two observations that only heighten the "invisibility" of peasant *huaju*. Either *Crossing*'s hybrid use of traditional, folk, and western theatrical techniques is emphasized, in which case the work's inherent connection with other peasant plays that were practiced in an urban context (such as Hong's *Trilogy*) is glossed over, or the Ding County peasant theatre experiment is presented as but one of several textual and visual modernities that were used to stimulate public sentiment, and the specific features of practicing and adapting *huaju* to rural conditions is overlooked. Thus, peasant *huaju*, due to the intense focus on the Ding County experience, remains either a theatrical miracle untenable outside of the Ding Country context, or a pedagogical tool useful for building a rural public but irrelevant to the discourse of *huaju*-making.

With the aim of understanding the "bigger picture" and gleaning the natural trajectory of cosmopolitan *huaju*-makers' imagination of—and encounters with—the Chinese peasantry between the 1920s and mid-1930s, this chapter has engaged Xiong Foxi's experiences making *Crossing* and other peasant plays in Ding County alongside a textual and critical analysis of Hong Shen's *Trilogy*, which Hong wrote while in rural

[169] As Liang Luo states, "the woman, the people, and the child are the three obsessions of modern Chinese intellectuals." See Liang Luo, 17.

Jiangnan and urban Shanghai. Hong's *Trilogy*, though ranked in PRC narratives as one of the dramatist's signature achievements, was actually criticized by contemporary critics for being too academic and distant from its subject matter; and today attracts little scholarly attention because of its perceived stereotypically "leftist" content. But, by reading the exchanges between Zhang Geng's criticism and Hong's meta-narratives of making peasant plays, I lift away these "academic" and "leftist" labels, to insert *Trilogy* back into Chinese drama, literary, and cultural studies.

After peeling off the layers of discursive (mis)labeling and going back to the plays themselves, surprising textual similarities between Hong's *Wukui Bridge* and *Green Dragon Pond* and Xiong's *Crossing* become apparent. Both *Green Dragon Pond* and *Crossing* complicate the themes—intellectuals' (romantic) views of rural China and the feasibility of conducting rural (re)construction through mass action—that are first developed in *Wukui Bridge*, where the intertwined goals of bringing technical modernity to the backward countryside and transforming "superstitious" peasants into "new citizens" is—through the demolishment of the bridge—ostensibly formed. However, in *Green Dragon Pond*, the tensions between "mass action" and "(re)construction," and "modernity" and the "rural ideal," explode into irreconcilable conflict. At fist, the peasants in *Green Dragon Pond* destroy their "rural ideal" (symbolized by the cherry orchard) for the sake of (re)construction and modernization. But when these actions do not deliver the expected results, they exert their collective energy against the very symbols of modernity itself—the village schoolroom and mass educator—before joining together in a "superstitious" ritual to pray for rain. The peasant community formed at the end of *Green Dragon Pond* is therefore the opposite of the rural reconstruction goal of

creating "new citizens." By staging peasants' disillusionment with "enlightenment," Hong Shen is in fact expressing his own doubts regarding the feasibility of China's rural reconstruction project. Hong reveals an unwillingness to let go of his rural ideal and discomfort at submerging his intellectual voice into that of the crowd.

Crossing, written and staged at roughly the same time as *Green Dragon Pond*, takes an alternate path. As if sensing the potential danger of expressing peasants' collective labors and vital energies though irrational destruction, Xiong bases *Crossing* on the theme of construction, building a bridge that is symbolically akin to building the nation. Mass vitality, at the textual level, is first channeled into bridge-making, but then develops into a public sentiment prevailing on- and off-stage between peasant-actors and audience members, thanks to *Crossing*'s innovative performative and theatrical techniques, such as incorporating rousing songs and asking for the audience's input in condemning Ferry-owner Hu. *Crossing*, unlike *Green Dragon Pond*, affirms that the kinetic energy of the rural masses can be used as the driving force behind China's rural reconstruction efforts.

Finally, moving beyond textual close-readings, in this chapter I have also examined the behind-the-scenes stories of making *Crossing*. Unlike *Wukui Bridge* and *Green Dragon Pond*, which were first and foremost literary works—or "well-made plays"—created by Hong Shen, *Crossing* can best be understood as a collaborative process between Xiong Foxi and his actors and stage hands that culminated in a Dionysian-like performance. More than a "simple" case of forming a rural public by means of sentiment, *Crossing*'s success was also due to the daily, physical work of training the cast and building the Open-Air Theatre in East Buluogang village where the

play was staged. Peasants in Ding County encountered *huaju* not merely by watching performances that invoked compassion, but through their sustained involvement in *huaju*-making. That is to say, sentiment alone was not enough to build a rural republic out of peasant crowds. Only a *zhiji* relationship built out of sentiment plus action—and formed within the "democratic institution" of the theatre—could produce the "new citizens" appropriate for modern China.

Chapter 3: Made in the Academy:
National Theatre, Student-Actors, and World-Class Plays in the National Drama School, 1935-1943

Introduction

Whereas *huaju* "superstars" in the 1930s such as Hong Shen and Xiong Foxi were able to enact their play-making principles through their drama networks centered on the Fudan Drama Society and the East Buluogang village performance troupe, respectively, other metropolitan dramatists, such as the Shanghai-based Ying Yunwei (1904-1967),[1] were struggling to gather a qualified body of actors and stage personnel, or what I call "performative laborers," for their *huaju* projects. True, the student drama (amateur) tradition continued to attract educated youth who made *huaju* for ideological and aesthetic purposes, as shown by the many drama societies founded in Chinese metropolises in the first half of the 1930s. But amateur dramatists—a group which by definition was highly unstable—lacked the "commitment" to fully develop their play-making skills. Most student actors, upon graduation, assumed careers and withdrew from their (amateur) theatrical activities. Only a minority of college (or high-school) gradates had the ambition to become full-time practitioners on the *huaju* scene and live like the cosmopolitan dramatists depicted in the press. Unlike Hong Shen, who forsook a career in ceramic engineering for the uncertain future of play-making, most Chinese educated youths in late 1920s and early 1930s, feeling pressure to support their families, took the

[1] Ying Yunwei, the leader of the Shanghai Theatre Association (*Shanghai xiju xieshe*), was another active play-maker in the 1930s *huaju*-scene. Ying's career will be closely examined in Chapter 4.

more pragmatic path of "giving up drama (literature)" (*qiwen*) for a "substantial business" (*shiye*).

Apart from the immediate problem of expanding the *huaju* scene in the face of student-actors' long-term unreliability, *huaju*-making—as part of the broader progressive discourse that was endorsed by intellectuals' mass enlightenment ideology and the political persuasions of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Guomindang (GMD)—felt obligated to branch out beyond the "circumscribed popularity" of like-minded youth to become a social-educational project that would "liberate" another type of suffering victims: paid performers. So-called "professional" (*zhiye de*) performers, who carried the centuries-old stigma of being defined as sexual commodities and the foci of a public's voyeuristic gaze,[2] were ideal "potential subjects" for the reformist discourse to "enlighten." At the frontier of social-educational mass politics since the theatre reform of the late Qing, *huaju* was an ideal site for transforming commercial entertainers into art workers, incorporating sexual "bodies" into the vanguard of a modern public, and creating "new citizens" out of those suffering victims who had scraped by at the bottom of the social hierarchy for centuries. Thus, for both practical and idealistic reasons, by the 1930s metropolitan *huaju* dramatists were beginning to open their arms to the world of performers, especially those who were performing the "low-brow" "civilized drama" (*wenming xi*), which by the Nanjing Decade was more commonly known as "new drama" (*xinju*).

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[2] Jin Jiang argues that confusion between actresses and courtesans was particularly strong in the Republican period. While agreeing with Jiang's point that the plight of being a professional performer was more severe for actresses than actors, I would nevertheless emphasize that performers of both genders were viewed as sexual commodities, though in different degrees. See Jin Jiang, *Women Playing Men: Yue Opera and Social Change in Twentieth Century Shanghai* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 63.

The *xinju* performers of the 1930s, in fact, had already departed significantly from the hybrid *wenming xi* traditions practiced by the 1910s Spring Willow generation—which Siyuan Liu has described as a hybrid of Western realist and naturalist theatre, Japanese *shinpa*, and the Chinese operatic tradition[3]—to veer toward money-driven variety shows that were grounded on improvisations, slapstick, and obscene dialogue.[4] Although these sorts of "pandering" qualities were greatly despised by *huaju* practitioners, *xinju* was still stylistically similar to *huaju* in that both emphasized speaking and acting more than other facets of performance. Viewed by *huaju* practitioners as residing outside of the genealogy of Spring Willow-style *wenming xi*-cum-*huaju*, these "new drama" actors were also separate from the established operatic troupes because of their lack of training in singing, dancing, acrobatic tricks, and, most important, their lack of familiarity with operatic repertoires. Thus, it was these "new-drama" actors, unclaimed by both *huaju* and operatic troupes, who were the most obvious target for reformist transformation. In an ironic twist of fate, the *xinju* actors supposedly "cleansed" from the *huaju*-making project found themselves to be an "imagined public" of victimized performers waiting for their "liberation."

Xinju's laggard status was already apparent in 1930, when the Hankou Education Bureau conducted one of the earliest state registrations of commercially driven performative cultures and actors. With the intention of expanding state control over the theatre world, policing the potentially subversive energies generated from entertainers, and gaining extra tax revenue, the Hankou city government stipulated that only those who

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[3] Siyuan Liu, *Performing Hybridity in Colonial-Modern China* (New York: Palgrave, 2013), 33-57.
[4] Although the terms *wenming xi* and *xinju* were used interchangeably in the 1930s, for clarity's sake I use the term *xinju* to describe the more commercially driven drama performances of the Nanjing Decade, and reserve *wenming xi* for the early spoken-opera experiments of the 1910s that Siyuan Liu describes.

passed the city's official examination and registered could gain acting licenses. According to the preserved archival materials, entitled *The Process of Drama Actors' Registration* (*xiju yanyuan dengji zhi jingguo*), the exam consisted of 40 "common sense" (*changshi*) questions about current events (*shishi*) and (self) cultivation (*xiuyang*), such as explaining the concepts of "national revolution" (*guomin geming*) and the "Three Peoples Principles" (*sanmin zhuyi*), and identifying Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925).[5] Other examination questions raised issues regarding actors' self-identification, their understanding of the social-educational role of drama, and the relationship between drama and national revolution,

> 3. As a drama actor, what specific responsibilities [do you] need to assume?
> 4. Why is drama part of social education?
> 9. The ideal drama actors should be teachers for the masses. But how to achieve such a goal? Do you aspire to become the masses' teacher?
> 34. If the government places an order forbidding singing on the [modern] theatre stage, do you think such an order is correct? Why?
> 35. Is there any relationship between drama and revolution? What relationship specifically?
> 39. Do you think that an actor training class offered by the government would serve as a necessary means to reform drama?[6]

As these questions show, the Hankou government viewed drama as a potentially formative tool for mobilizing the masses to participate in social and political

[5] Hankou jiaoyu ju disanke minzhong jiaocai gu, ed., *Xiju yanyuan dengji zhi jingguo* (*The Process of Drama Actors' Registration*) (Hankou: no publisher, 1930), 123-25. These materials are also mentioned in Ma Junshan, "Lun Guomindang huaju zhengce de liangqixing jiqi weihai" (On the Paradox and Compromises in the Nationalist Party's Policies on Spoken Drama), in *Jindai shi yanjiu* (*Study on Modern History*), no. 4, 2002, 116-17.
[6] Hankou jiaoyu ju disanke minzhong jiaocai gu, ed., 123-25. I plan to further develop my reading and analysis of this important historical evidence in a future project in which I will translate and interpret all 40 questions in greater detail.

transformation.[7] However, *xinju* actors—the group who came closest in technique to *huaju*—only accounted for a miniscule 5.24%, or 31 men and 5 women, of the 687 actors who passed the exam.[8] As for how new drama actors answered the questions, the *Process* unfortunately does not elaborate. But, the report does specify that, as a group, *xinju* actors were even outscored by the dancing girls, who acquired their knowledge of social-political issues through their interactions with educated patrons.[9] Although we do not have archival records of subsequent tests, this 1930 exam gives a clue to just how far *xinju* performers lagged behind their *huaju* peers both artistically and ideologically. Not only commonly seen as less technically skilled than student actors in amateur drama societies, *xinju* actors were deemed to be morally and ideologically inferior to the peasant actors who by the early 1930s were acquiring knowledge and sympathy of *huaju* in rural reconstruction bases such as Ding County.[10] Training future *huaju*-makers, not in the sense of the leading architects of the *huaju* world but in the sense of *huaju* performative laborers working on- and off-stage, would not be easy.

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[7] The GMD's Zhejiang Provincial Executive Committee's Propaganda Department was also aware of *huaju*'s potential for political use at this time. In October 1929, a year before the Hankou government carried out its registration, Zhejiang's Propaganda Department issued a textbook entitled *Essentials for Propaganda Workers* (*Xuanchuan gongzuo renyuan xuzhi*), which stressed the need for party-run drama troupes that would perform plays that depicted "the realities of the revolution and China's national humiliation." See Christopher A. Reed, "Propaganda by the Book: Contextualizing and Reading the Zhejiang GMD's 1929 Textbook *Essentials for Propaganda Workers*," in *Frontiers of History in China*, vol. 10 no.1, 2015, 121.

[8] Hankou jiaoyu ju disanke minzhong jiaocai gu, ed., 33-118. Among seven recognized performative cultures, new drama was ranked fourth by the Hankou education bureau, after Beijing Opera, Han Opera, and Chu Opera but prior to "song-drama" (*zaju*), song and dance (*gewu*), and magic shows (*moshu*). Also listed, but not officially "recognized," were performers of Han local operas, folk arts (*quyi*), acrobatics, martial arts, dancing girls, and musicians. Since at the time of the test there were no professional *huaju* troops in Hankou, *huaju* was not listed.

[9] Ibid., 120.

[10] As described in Chapter 2.

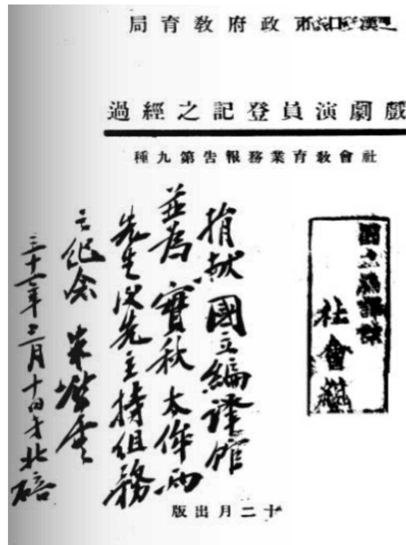

Figure 4.1: The cover page of *Xiju yanyuan dingji zhi jingguo* (*The Process of Drama Actors' Registration*) issued by the Hankou Education Bureau in December 1930. Courtesy of Chongqing Library.

The lack of qualified *huaju* personnel became even more apparent by the mid-1930s, when professional dramatists who were simultaneously making *huaju* as a commercial culture to be consumed by the urban masses (*dazhong*) and an artistic form to be savored by like-minded intellectuals faced a new challenge: how to shape spoken drama into a tool for raising patriotic sentiment. As part of the broader "resistance culture" (*kangzhan wenhua*) that blossomed in Chinese cities and reached its height after the outbreak of the Second Anti-Japanese War in July 1937, educated youth, led by leading dramatists, sought to expand *huaju* into a participatory culture inviting people's (*minzhong*) involvement (and often for a political purpose) in the countryside and hinterland.[11] Traveling "from Carlton [Theatre] to the street" (*cong Kaerdeng dao*

[11] My distinction of *huaju*'s popularization between *minzhong*-oriented and *dazhong*-oriented is inspired by Richard Torrance's analysis of the two concepts of *minshu* and *taishu* that were found in Japanese popular culture before WWII. As Torrance clarifies, by the 1920s, there was a clear cultural distinction between *minshu* and *taishu* in Japan. "*Minshu* connotes the people involved in participatory culture, often for

jietou), these passionate youth, "armed with poor and simple tools but full of enthusiasm and energy," inevitably encountered hardship in their transition from serving a metropolis *dazhong* to a hinterland *minzhong*. As a result, the passionate aspirations that were infused with *huaju*'s attempted nationwide popularization since the mid-1930s typically bore disappointing results. Consequently, metropolis-based *huaju* practitioners—who were often viewed as alienated strangers by people in the hinterland (rural) communities—were inclined to withdraw from the *huaju*-making circle. Their training and experiences allowed these *huaju* "veterans" to be "new blood" for script-writing, acting-training, and stage/scene designing for sound cinema and other local operas.[12]

Thus, by the mid-1930s, the issue of seeking available *huaju*-making practitioners—due to the abovementioned historical impediments—needed to be reframed. If there were few available performative laborers for *huaju*-making and *huaju*-making veterans were increasingly diverging to other media, the task most important for the leading dramatists who remained was training new practitioners. Among the various efforts directed toward this goal, this chapter focuses on the National Drama School

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political purposes, and *taishu* connotes the people as passive consumers of commercial culture." However, despite the apparent lucidity of this opposition, in truth, "modern Japanese popular culture has consisted of both tension and considerable mutual influence between 'popular arts' (*minshu geijutsu*) and 'mass literary arts' (*taishu bungei*)." I deem Torrance's depiction of Japanese pre-War culture to be particularly applicable for the course of spoken drama's development in China for at least two reasons: 1) between the 1920s and the 1930s, dramatists often employed *minzhong* and *dazhong* as interchangeable terms when envisioning their imagined audience and enticing real spectators; and 2) the practices of staging spoken drama in China, unlike polemic debates, constantly juggled balls of political use, artistic questions, and commercial concerns. Thus, it is necessary to simultaneously recognize the popular and political nature of spoken drama as well as respect the fluidity between them. See Richard Torrance, "Pre-World War Two Concepts of Japanese Popular Culture and Takeda Rintaro's Japan's Three Penny Opera," in *A Century of Popular Culture in Japan*, ed. Douglas Slaymaker (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 19.

[12] Weihong Bao views the reciprocal development between sound film and *huaju* in the 1930s in a positive light. "The sound cinema also spurred the popularity of spoken drama, with the film industry borrowing not only performance techniques and vocal and language (Mandarin) training but also actors and playwrights from the spoken drama." See Weihong Bao, "Diary of a Homecoming: (Dis)Inhabiting the Theatrical in Postwar Shanghai Cinema," in Zhang Yingjin, ed., *A Companion to Chinese Cinema* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 385. Although Bao's observations are insightful, the leaving of mature *huaju* laborers for cinema would have undoubtedly exasperated the problem of *huaju*'s lack of hands.

(*Guoli xiju xuexiao*, hereafter NDS), which was founded by Yu Shangyuan (1897-1970)—another American-trained cosmopolitan dramatist—and operated partly under Nationalist state patronage from 1935 to 1949. I first analyze the rationale of founding NDS in Nanjing by examining the level of the Guomindang's involvement. In addition to satisfying pedagogical demands, I insert the founding of NDS back to the century-long dream of building a National Theatre that was begun by late Qing diplomats inspired by the grandeur and nationalistic function of the Opéra de Paris, continued under the Guomindang, and was fulfilled during the early stages of PRC state-building. Next, this chapter reconstructs student theatrical activities—such as the renovation plan of turning a Confucian Temple into a performative space—employed by NDS after it became one of China's many "war refugees" and migrated from Nanjing to Jiang'an, a small town 120 miles away from Chongqing, in 1937.

Finally, I examine how NDS laid the groundwork for two major student productions: Cao Yu's (1910-1996) *Metamorphosis* (*Tuibian*) in Chongqing in 1940; and the first scripted performance of Williams Shakespeare's (1564-1616) *Hamlet* in China, which took place in Jiang'an in 1942. In a comparative study of these two productions, I demonstrate how NDS served as a haven for *huaju*-making practices in the war period, able to alleviate somewhat the tension caused by *huaju* serving as both a politicized "site" and professionalized "stage." Undoubtedly, NDS promoted the duel goals of "national-defense" (*guofang*) and "state-building" (*jianguo*) among its teacher-student body and the Jiang'an local community. But rather than being a "top-down" example of "modernization," or an instance of state-sponsored playmaking that sacrificed aesthetic values for political concerns, NDS formed an organic relationship with its community

that nurtured the creation of high-quality works. In the process of pivoting the "(re) construction" of the Jiang'an community toward play-making activities, NDS lowered the resentment of Jiang'an locals toward the urban/elite refugees who "occupied" their town. NDS play-making practices further increased communal affect between faculty, students, and local residents, as well as nationalistic sentiments felt between characters who lived in (propaganda) plays, student-actors and faculty-directors who made the play, and the local audience who watched the play. Moreover, due to the war, an increasing number of established cosmopolitan intellectuals, as well as play- and film-makers, joined the NDS-Jiang'an community. Thus, the aesthetic qualities and professionalization levels of play-making in NDS were carefully pursued despite the material hardship of the war period just as a bond—formed between prominent dramatists and common *huaju*-making practitioners—was established and consolidated. In other words, *huaju*-making by NDS in Jiang'an was both politically inspiring and aesthetically vitalizing. An examination of NDS therefore provides a good counterpoint to the Yan'an model established by the CCP and leftist culture workers that has up to now been far more sufficiently studied.[13]

The "Hardware" and "Software" of Theatre

Dream of a National Theatre Continued

On October 18, 1935, Yu Shangyuan, recently returned from a trip to the Soviet Union and Western Europe as the associate chair of Mei Lanfang's cultural delegation, delivered a presidential speech at the opening ceremony of NDS in the Qu Yuan Temple

[13] For example, see David Holm, *Art and Ideology in Revolutionary China* (London: Clarendon Press, 1991).

(*Quzi ci*) located in the southeast corner of the Nanjing Drum Tower. Facing 60 students selected out of 567 candidates from Nanjing, Shanghai, Beiping, Wuchang, and elsewhere,[14] Yu passionately promised to "make everyone of you China's next Mei Lanfang" and inspired both the faculty and students to diligently "research modern dramatic art, train practical theatre talents, and assist in social education."[15]

Yu's calls came just as *huaju* was reaching its artistic maturity. During its short time in Nanjing, NDS drew upon renowned dramatists with various backgrounds to offer interdisciplinary classes (on literature, citizenship, drama history and theory, acting, scripting, tech design, directing, etc.) and regularly staged both student productions and public performances.[16] However, at a time when China itself was threatened by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and the likelihood of war, the promise of cultural icon-making was quickly replaced by the more urgent need for training practitioners who could fully exert the social-educational function of *huaju*, linking the dramas that unfolded on stage with China's national crisis.

With the establishment of Chongqing as the wartime capital in 1939,[17] NDS, which was both affiliated with the Nationalist Propaganda and Education Ministries and deployed as a semiprofessional drama network connecting established dramatists with young theatre talents, was sent to the hinterland. After briefly staying in Changsha and Chongqing, NDS settled in Jiang'an, where it remained from 1939 to 1945. During this

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[14] Guoli xiju xuexiao, ed., *Guoli xiju xuexiao xunyan shouce* (*The Pamphlet of the National Drama School's Tour*) (Nanjing: Guoli xiju xuexiao, 1935), 27.
[15] Yu Shangyuan, "Women yinian ban yilai de gongzuo" (Our Work in the Past One and a Half Year) in Guoli xiju xuexiao ed., *Guoli xiju xuexiao yilan* (*A Quick Review of the National Drama School*) (Nanjing: Guoli xiju xuexiao, 1937), 11.
[16] Ibid., 9.
[17] Official letter issued by Yu Shangyuan, the president of the National Drama School (*Guoli xiju xuexiao gonghan*), March 8, 1938, 0120-1-57, CMA.

time, NDS, while facing economic hazards and cultural backwardness, was, thanks to its remote status, spared from Japanese bombardment.

The students and faculty of NDS staged over 144 plays, either in the makeshift school theatre—which was transformed from Jiang'an's local Confucian Temple—or on streets and in teahouses for the Jiang'an locals as well as in Chongqing's Guotai (Cathay) Theatre where NDS' student productions, other *huaju* productions with an all-star film cast, and cinema productions shared scripts, a common space, and an audience made up of that city's migrant community.[18] By means of frequently staging mobilization events such as street plays and parades, holding local drama festivals in the local Confucian Temple, and participating in Chongqing's annual Drama Art Festival (1937-1941) and Fog Season Art Festival (1941-1945), NDS played an active role in immersing performances in "creatively formed public spaces"[19] and thus further intensifying "the theatricalization of public life"[20] in both Jiang'an and Chongqing.

Although neither the inauguration of NDS in the Qu Yuan Temple in Nanjing nor its temporary residence in the Confucian Temple in Jiang'an struck contemporary viewers as historically significant, the founding and development of NDS in fact constitutes one fleeting episode of the long-term dream of building a national theatre that can be traced back to the end of the 19th century. Siyuan Liu cites Japanese and Chinese diplomats' visits to the Opéra de Paris in the 1870s as direct inspirations for creating

[18] Elites, bankers, scholars, artists, and members of other social classes who could afford to move all converged and stayed in Chongqing during the war era.
[19] Weihong Bao, 385.
[20] Ibid.

national theatres out of traditional theatrical forms in Meiji Japan and late-Qing China.[21] Noting how two "policy-minded" ambassadors—Guo Songtao (1818-1891) and Zeng Jize (1839-1890)—were confused over the Opéra's construction date,[22] Liu argues that these ambassadors were very impressed by France's national theatre, believing it to be a magnificent monument—even grander than the Palais-Royal—that was completed shortly after France's calamitous national humiliation in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871). Guo and Zeng's implicit agenda, as Liu argues, was to use the example of the Opéra to call for Qing imperial patronage for building a national theatre that would legitimize theatre as a force able to "inspire (the) depressed and defeatist morale"[23] in China, which had by the 1880s suffered repeated military humiliations at the hands of European powers.

Building upon Siyuan Liu's construction, Sun Bai further consolidates the connection between the inspirational power of the Opéra and the dream of a Chinese national theatre with the specific example of the establishment of the National Opera Music Institute (*Zhonghua xiqu yinyue yuan*, or NOMI) that was proposed by Li Shizeng (1881-1973) in 1926 and established/operated mainly by Cheng Yanqiu (1904-1958) in 1929 in Beiping.[24] Different from the late Qing diplomats who revered the "majesty" embodied by both the Opéra's architecture and the French imperial regime's ability to provide the Opéra stable funding in spite of its recent military defeat, what most

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[21] Siyuan Liu, "Paris and the Quest for a National Stage in Meiji Japan and Late-Qing China," in *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 26 no. 1 (Spring 2009), 54-77.

[22] Ibid., 57. Although Li Shuchang (1837-1897), one of Guo Songtao's attachés, correctly noted the starting date for the building as 1861 [i.e. before the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871)], Guo and Zeng were "buying into the Parisian vindication myth of construing the Opéra as a republican project."

[23] Ibid.

[24] Sun Bai, "Cong Bali geju yuan dao zhonghua xiqu yinyue yuan: lishuo xiandai xiju de guojia xiangxiang" (From Paris Opéra to National Opera Music Institute: A Case Study on Modern Drama's National Imagination), in *Xiju* (*Drama*), no.3, 2011, 8-19.

impressed Li and Cheng about the Opéra was its organizational level. When drafting the "Manifesto for Constructing the National Opera Music Association and Institute" (*Choujian Zhonghua xiqu yinyue xuehui ji yinyue yuan zhi xuanyan*), Li stipulated that NOMI should use the Opéra as a reference point to establish academic and performative departments at NOMI's proposed branch in Nanjing.[25] "[NOMI] will have a branch in Nanjing that needs to include two departments: the Academic Department will be centered on scholarly achievements [on opera]; and the Performance (*yanzou*) Department should be focused on the theatre."[26] Although unrealized, Li's plan for building such a "theatre" in Nanjing underwent serious consideration. Soon after proposing the NOMI branch in Nanjing, Li Shizeng and Wei Daoming (1899-1978), the Mayor of Nanjing in the 1930s, agreed to lay the foundation for the Nanjing (National) Theatre nearby the city's Drum Tower (*Gulou*).[27] But the plan was scrapped because of GMD financial troubles and the Marco Polo Bridge Incident the following year.

Although most of Li's *Manifesto*, especially concerning the "hardware" construction of NOMI in Nanjing, only *reads* promising but was never enacted, the GMD's state funding for Cheng Yanqiu's two six-month tours of Europe, under Li's powerful budget management, did prove to be fruitful for nationalizing (Peking) opera,

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[25] According to Li's proposal, NOMI planned to establish branches in Beiping, Nanjing, Shanghai, and Shenyang. However, only the Beiping branch was developed. See Hui Lu, "Nanjing Xiqu yinyue yuan chengli zhi jingguo" (The Process of the Establishment of the Nanjing Opera Music Institute) in *Juxue yuekan* (*Theatre Studies Monthly*) vol. 1 no. 1, 1930, reprinted in *Zhongguo zaoqi xiju huakan* (*Early Chinese Drama Gazettes*) (Beijing: Quanguao tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2006), 17: 7; Li Shizeng "Choujian Zhonghua xiqu yinyue xuehui ji yinyue yuan zhi xuanyan" (Manifesto of Constructing the National Opera Music Association and Institute), in *Juxue yuekan* (*Theatre Studies Monthly*), vol. 1 no. 3, 1930, reprinted in *Zhongguo zaoqi xiju huakan* (*Early Chinese Drama Gazettes*) (Beijing: Quanguao tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2006), 17: 344;.and Sun Bai, 16.

[26] Li Shizeng, 344.

[27] Sun Bai, 16.

developing "actor-scholars,"[28] and specifically reforming the pedagogical and performative mechanisms of Peking opera.[29] In examining the process of rebranding Peking opera into "national drama" (*guoju*) in the 1930s, Joshua Goldstein charts two "competitive" routes in practicing what he calls "Nationalization through Iconification." On the one hand, Mei Lanfang performed—according to what Goldstein calls "tactical orientalism"—as an "authentic" Chinese feminine beauty on stage and a modern masculine citizen off stage in his international tours in the 1930s; on the other hand, Cheng Yanqiu chose to further Peking opera's nationalization by promoting the innovative duel-identities of "actors" and "scholars," thereby grounding Peking opera at the junction between intellectual and performative labor. Although Cheng's route, in Goldstein's construction, was largely overshadowed by Mei Lanfang's international fame, Cheng's observations—derived from his visit to the Opéra—served as the model for constructing NOMI in Beiping, particularly when it came to connecting theatre with the academy in a way that allowed student-actors to practice what they learned in the classroom (theories, skills, and techniques of playwriting, acting, stage-designing, etc.) on a real stage for a real audience.

The policies of NOMI's founders would greatly influence the operation of NDS. When Yu Shangyuan assembled the 1935 class of NDS students at the Drum Tower (the location chosen earlier by Li Shizeng and Wei Daoming for the Nanjing Theatre), his passionate speech suggested that NDS' mission was to emulate the model of Mei

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[28] Here I borrow the term used in Goldstein's construction of Cheng Yanqiu. See Joshua Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-creation of Peking Opera, 1870-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 286.

[29] For more studies on Cheng Yanqiu's European tours and his achievements in reforming and transforming Peking opera into China's national theatre, please see Joshua Goldstein, 280-89; A. C. Scott, "The Performance of Classic Theatre," in *Chinese Theatre: From Its Origins to the Present Day*, Colin Mackerras, ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1983), 120-23; Sun Bai, 16-17.

Lanfang, making unknown student-actors into theatre icons. In practice, however, NDS was more aligned with Cheng Yanqiu's route, though with a more urgent and explicit nationalistic tone: to create "actor-scholars" capable of performing *huaju* to move an audience, researching *huaju* to refine the art of modern theatre, and using *huaju* to teach the masses national culture. Before examining the everyday life of the faculty, student-actors, and the community where NDS resided, let us first look at how GMD patrons *prescribed* NDS' functions in the years before the Sino-Japanese war.

Rationale for Founding NDS

That NDS was able to operate at all, let alone with government support, was quite remarkable. While China was in the middle of a serious national crisis, developing an infrastructure for *huaju*, which for most GMD policy-makers meant nothing more than entertainment, was deemed by officials to be a "less urgent task" (*buji zhiwu*).[30] In fact, the few government officials who did recognize *huaju*'s potential political power were more likely to view the genre as a subversive threat deployed by leftist intellectuals than as a constructive tool to buttress GMD political authority. Indeed, one of the first actions the Republican government took after purging itself of the Communists in 1927 was to shut down the theatre department of the National Beijing Art Academy (*Guoli Beijing yishu zhuanmen xuexiao*), which was then the flagship for spoken drama, because they suspected a connection between the spoken drama movement and Communists.[31] Some

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[30] Zhang Daofan, "Guoli xiju xuexiao zhi chuangli" (The Founding of the National Drama School), in Guoli xiju xuexiao, ed., *Guoli xiju xuexiao yilan* (*A Quick Review of the National Drama School*) (Nanjing: Guoli xiju xuexiao, 1937), 1.

[31] Ge Yihong, *Zhongguo huaju tongshi* (*A History of Modern Chinese Drama*) 2nd edition (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1997), 33.

institutions and networks with links to *huaju,* such as the *Xiandai xueyi jiangxi suo* (The Training Bureau of Modern Learning of Art), were also forced to shut down because of their loose connection with left-wing culture and the CCP. Since that time, *huaju*—simultaneously deemed as politically irrelevant to nation-building and too politically dangerous for the GMD—had remained conspicuously absent from the government's cultural policies.

It was in the face of such precedent that Zhang Daofan (1897-1968)—who was a major architect of the GMD's propaganda and education programs as well as an amateur playwright himself—initiated a petition for state support for the founding of a National Drama School in Nanjing.[32] In his proposal, Zhang explained the rationale for positioning spoken drama within the nation-building project at a time when China was facing foreign invasion. Three points of Zhang's proposal are worth noting. First, Zhang believed that spoken drama, if "deployed appropriately," could generate a powerful response in propagating pro-GMD ideology among the masses. In fact, Zhang ranked *huaju* first, higher than explicit propaganda and other cultural undertakings, in terms of its power to generate vigilant and patriotic citizens because "it produced [propaganda] through spectators' eyes, ears, emotions, and finally carved profound understandings and faith in their hearts."[33] Zhang's first point was thus to make proper use of *huaju*'s agitating effect, claiming that *huaju* was the most effective medium to transform spectators into loyal and committed citizens.

Zhang's second point was to praise *huaju* for its ability to intervene into and shape the masses' everyday realities. Zhang argued that *huaju*'s transformative effect

[32] Zhang Daofan, 1937, 3.
[33] Ibid., 1.

was due to the genre's dialogue-centered, realistic norms and theatrical spectacles, which were all the more striking when compared to the features of operatic theatres. Peking opera, Zhang argued, apart from being viewed as a pure theatrical art, could not influence its audience because its sung lyrics were "either too elegant to understand or too vulgar to bear."[34] Moreover, Peking opera's "unrealistic/surrealistic" performances rendered even basic plot-comprehension problematic, let alone the goal of mass enlightenment. In contrast, *huaju*'s popular usage of the National Language (*Guoyu*), with local dialects if needed, promised a clear interaction between everyday reality and staged theatricality. This meant that staged *huaju* could not only be understood by a mass audience, but also imitated by one.

It was *huaju*'s "imitable" feature that most attracted Zhang and other GMD propaganda cultural cadres to the genre. According to Zhang's optimistic appraisal, the "national language" and "realistic" performative norms of *huaju* would allow the propagation of ideological messages in a more efficient manner than what Peking opera could offer. Moreover, as *huaju* was with adequate coaching easily imitable, the idea of building a drama school to spread ideological views and train more *huaju*-cum-culture workers was both tantalizing and feasible.

True, Zhang's description of spoken drama in terms of its rejection of singing and stylized performances appeared hasty or simply incorrect when judged against the growing incorporation of operatic stocks (narrative, performative, and theatrical strategies) into the development of spoken drama since the 1930s, as seen in the *huaju*

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[34] Ibid., 3.

blockbusters, *Sai Jinhua* (1936) and *Wu Zetian* (1937).[35] Despite this shortcoming, Zhang's points provide insights, particularly when it comes to understanding the political investigation/manipulation of Chinese drama's teleological development in a way that reinforced the self-definitions of both operatic and spoken dramatic culture. Peking opera had by the 1930s been transformed from a vulgar entertainment into a "pillar of national culture" that gained artistic value by institutional means (e.g., *Zhonghua xiqu yinye xueyuan*), and making performer-scholars (Cheng Yanqiu) and idols (Mei Lanfang) at home and abroad; whereas *huaju* had (d)evolved from being emblematic of a high-class culture that drew upon a cosmopolitan audience to being a down-to-earth theatre that found it easy to communicate with the common people even while facing economic hardships and political turmoil.

Finally, Zhang made clear that he envisioned NDS would cultivate gifted students by means of strict academic training into various theatre talents (writers, directors, actors, and stage technicians); stage public performances and establish the foundation of a modern drama movement in order to further assist in nation-building; and finally, engage in the canonization of modern drama and the documentation of old operas. Zhang intended NDS to be a drama network that linked together established dramatists, student-actors, and mass audiences to build the pedagogical, performative, and political aspects of *huaju*'s infrastructure. In fact, Zhang worried that while the GMD central government was so fully engaged in building the "hardware" of cultural representation (e.g. Central Radio Broadcasting, China's Film Studio, and National Art Museum) very little remained to invest into the "software" of China's cultural undertakings, such as NDS, that

[35] I will further discuss these two plays in Chapter 4.

demanded less investment but would exert greater influence. Zhang reminded the GMD state that "software"—in this case *huaju* and *huaju* practitioners—would consolidate the nation by means of promoting "national language" and staging "imitable" patriotic norms. In this regard, Zhang echoed Cheng Yanqiu's pragmatic advice about modeling NOMI after the Opéra in 1930s China,

> As for the grand architecture of [the Opéra], the complete facilities stored back stage, I am afraid that our country could not catch up at all, not even two or three decades from now.[36]

As Cheng recognized that the gap between the Chinese theatre world and the Opéra would be exceedingly difficult to close, the goal of stretching state patronage to build grand and majestic theatres (hardware), for Cheng, would be less feasible than reforming the performative and pedagogical mechanisms of Peking opera (software). Echoing Cheng, Zhang's proposal suggests that investing in the pedagogical aspects of *huaju* would directly raise the genre's overall performance level and further assist in propagating the Nationalist's political message.

Zhang's proposal, which carried with it thirteen endorsements—including that of Chen Lifu (1900-2001), who directed the Confidential Section of the National Military Council in the 1920s and would soon be promoted to Minister of Education in 1938, and Luo Jialun (1897-1969), a prominent May Fourth veteran and member of the GMD who served as President of National Central University (Guoli zhongyang daxue)—eventually won government permission to launch NDS in July 1935, with an initial founding grant

[36] Cheng Yanqiu, "Zhi bensuo tongren shu" (To the Peers in Our Institute), in *Juxue yuekan* (*Theatre Study*), vol.1, no. 4, 1930, reprinted in *Zhongguo zaoqi xiju huakan* (*Early Chinese Drama Gazettes*) (Beijing: Quanguao tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2006), 17: 365-66.

of 3000 *yuan* plus a 3600 *yuan* subsidy every month. This amount was far from sufficient; indeed, it was embarrassingly little, especially when compared to the 50,000 *yuan* provided by the government for Li Shizeng's management of Mei Lanfang's American tour and the founding of NOMI. Conversely, this limited support did grant NDS an air of official legitimacy, and also tied the school into the long-deferred dream of building a national theatre.

National Drama in China's Hinterland

Setting-up NDS in Jiang'an

Despite the fanfare of the school's launch, the Qu Yuan Temple at the corner of Nanjing's Drum Tower did not accommodate NDS for long. When the war broke out in 1937, NDS' faculty and students joined China's other war refugees in migrating to the hinterland. After a brief stint as an itinerant troupe in Hunan, NDS settled in Jiang'an, a small town which in Yu Shangyuan's view possessed a pleasing "archaic style" (*gufeng*). Upon NDS' arrival, both the Jiang'an government and local gentry families provided assistance and hospitality. NDS, in return, expended great efforts to participate in local affairs benefiting the town. In this manner, NDS and the local political powers formed an extremely harmonious relationship, as "inseparable as water and milk" (*shuiru jiaorong*).[37]

Although NDS never abandoned its goal of building a grandiose national theatre, the institution first had to find an appropriate space to accommodate their pedagogical

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[37] Yu Shangyuan, "Benxiao zujin yinian zhi gongzuo" (Our School's Work in the Recent Year), in *Guoli xiju xuexiao xiaoyou hui huikan* (*Alumni Booklet of the National Drama School*), no. 2, 1939, reprinted in *Zhongguo zaoqi xiju huakan* (*Early Chinese Drama Gazettes*) (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2006), 37:3.

needs, stage public performances, and provide shelter for both the established dramatists (faculty) and student-actors. The major assistance that NDS gained from the Jiang'an local government and gentry families was permission to use the Confucian Temple (*Wenmiao*). Yu Shangyuan recalled the effect that their new residence played upon the school,

> When first migrating to Jiang'an, we used the Confucian Temple as our school-building. Everyday, faculty and students ascended the hall and entered the temple (*shengtang rumiao*), the sound of reading (*xian song zhi sheng*) never stopped. As for our Ultimate Sage and First Teacher [Confucius], we especially felt [we might] cause certain offense. Moreover, faculty and students studied next to scholars of the past, looking up to the high mountains, and increasingly strove with a more determined effort to study. Based upon all these factors, [we] felt the necessity to perform the ritual of "reporting to the Temple." Thus on May 5 [1939], [I] led all faculty and students to perform the ceremony of worshiping Confucius. Officials from all disciplines, senior gentry men, and established erudite scholars all participated.[38]

Much like the harmonious relationship between modern drama and Chinese tradition that Yu Shangyuan had earlier advocated in the National Drama Movement, NDS strove to immerse itself within the local customs of its new community.

[38] Ibid.

Figure 4.2: The Jiang'an Map with the Confucian Temple located at the right corner. *Jiang'an xian zhi* (*Gazetteer of Jiang'an County*), vol. 1, Minguo ban (1927), 16. Courtesy of the Lu Zhou library.

With the permission of local elites, the temple was made to serve different functions—performances, rehearsals, classrooms, and library. At the same time, NDS also used the temple as a dormitory. Within the temple itself we thus see the conflation of varying purposes: public and domestic, performance and pedagogical, entertaining and political. The "shrine-theatre" served as both an "architectural stage" for performances and an "allegorical space" for NDS:

> At the end of this April, the Jiang'an county government received the order [sent from the central national government] to build a local stadium. Due to a lack of funds, the government consulted with our school for staging public performances to raise money. But the problem here is that there are no modern theatres in town. Plus, all other makeshift stages used for temple affairs were either not in shape or not appropriate. In order to work around the situation, we decided to transform the yard in front of the Front Hall of the Confucian Temple by building a roof and paving tiles, using the back of the East and West Wing as a room for costume and stage props. After the renovation, our [temple-theatre] looked even broader than Cathay Theatre in Chongqing. The front yard was then turned into audience seats. Finally, starting from April 29, we staged *Phoenix City* (*Fenghuang cheng*) for

> three nights in our theatre and raised over a thousand *yuan* for Jiang'an local construction… During the performances, we substituted the electronic lighting system with gas lights, which turned out to add more theatrical effects… Since moving to Jiang'an, we used the Front Hall of the Confucian Temple as an office, the big yard in front of the Hall of Great Achievement as a theatre, the East and West Wings as classrooms, and the Back Hall as a library. [39]

According to Yu Shangyuan, such an unusual stage design lent vitality to their performances by forcing them to make ingenious use of space. But more important, it was the "allegorical space" of being a Confucian Temple that made this theatre significant for the Jiang'an locals and the actor-students of NDS. Since the temple was invested by the locals with a scholarly air, NDS gained legitimacy when performing their social-education functions, especially after NDS' ritual performance of worshiping Confucius. Furthermore, the Confucius temple served as the traditional gathering space in the town. The fixed location of the temple gave NDS a level of stability—and even reliability—that touring troupes were unable to enjoy. Adopting the local Confucian Temple as their residence was thus an extremely significant step for NDS' immersion into Jiang'an culture.

Probably because Yu Shangyuan was aware that his annual report would play a crucial role in securing the yearly allowance that the GMD national government had promised, as well as in maintaining faculty and student optimism for play-making during the war, his written accounts of NDS' settling in Jiang'an are surprisingly free of any problems. But considering that the members of NDS must have suffered from refugee anxiety, were used to an urban lifestyle, and promoted a national cultural rhetoric, and that Jiang'an was a hinterland town where an "archaic style" prevailed, the harmonious

[39] Ibid., 2.

union that Yu describes was probably too good to be true. Even if the architectural renovation of the Confucian Temple proceeded with the endorsement of local gentries and government officials, the transformation of the Temple space (which was both scholarly and ritually charged for the Jiang'an locals) into a space conflating pedagogy, performance, and students living quarters could not have been an easy task. Although descriptions of the likely misunderstandings and disagreements were conveniently omitted by the politically minded Yu Shangyuan in his report, the content of one NDS *huaju* production suggests that the living and working environment in Jiang'an was less rosy than what Yu depicted: Cao Yu's *Metamorphosis*.

Metamorphosis*: The Theatre as a Chaotic Space*

Cao Yu wrote *Metamorphosis* while he was teaching courses on writing screenplays and acting at NDS, as well as serving as its Head of Instruction. Originally written act-by-act in order to compile teaching and staging materials for the Class of 1937-38, Cao Yu finalized the script by April 1940, right before NDS' was scheduled to put on a performance in Chongqing.[40] One of the many means by which NDS invoked patriotic sentiments, acquired performance opportunities, and engaged in intensifying "the theatricalization of public life" was to stage performances for "raising the morale among

[40] This timeline is based on interviews with Lü En (1920-2012) in 2010. Lü En was enrolled in NDS in 1938 and graduated in 1941. In fact, several of the circulating stories regarding Cao Yu's writing process for *Metamorphosis* vary. Combining Cao Yu's written words and the time registers in Act IV of the play, Qian Liqun hypothesizes that Cao Yu rushed to finish the script between January and February 1940 but did not have the final script until April 1940. Xu Xiao (dates unknown), a NDS alumnus and the director of the 1985 version of *Metamorphosis*, describes Cao Yu's composing process based on her interview with the author. According to Xu, both the protagonists and the antagonists in *Metamorphosis* were originally inspired by Cao Yu's experiences in Changsha in 1937 where he had joined NDS. See Qian Liqun, *Daxiao wutai zhijian: Cao Yu xiju xinlun* (*Between the Grand Stage and the Small Stage: A New View of Cao Yu's Drama*) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chuban she, 2007), 123; Xu Xiao, "Cao Yu tan *Tuibian*" (Cao Yu's View of *Metamorphosis*) in *Chongqing ribao* (*Chongqing Daily*), October 18, 1985.

military personnel (*laojun*)." Between April 15 and 18, 1940, NDS students, invited by the Nationalist Education Ministry's Women Working Team, staged *Metamorphosis* as the final play for a series of performances for military personnel at the Chongqing Cathay Theatre.[41] Although previously rehearsed and staged in Jiang'an,[42] this performance is commonly recognized as the public debut for *Metamorphosis*, which Hong Shen praised as one of the must-read "resistance plays" (*Kangzhan ju*).[43]

Metamorphosis delivered a clear political goal of kindling patriotic and optimistic spirits during the war. Cao Yu depicted the "metamorphosis" of a wartime hospital—which transforms from a chaotic environment where corruption, inefficiency, and despair are rampant to a front-line hospital where not only wounded soldiers are cured but patriotic spirits are raised—as a way to share his confidence with readers and spectators, and to echo what Zhang Daofan promised: "the bright future would come to China through the persistent resistance against Japan."[44] Alongside the transformation of this wartime hospital, Cao Yu shapes three categories of characters by ridiculing the old and corruptive forces, exposing the indecisiveness of the "fence-sitter," and establishing two selfless heroes: a warm-hearted and caring female intellectual (Dr. Ding) and an upright official (Inspector Liang). Thanks to Inspector Liang and Dr. Ding's perseverance, this

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[41] Prior to *Metamorphosis*, NDS performed *Yue Fei* [scri. Gu Yiqiao (aka Gu Yuxiu, 1902-2002); dir. Yang Cunbin)] with 10 shows and *Joy of Joining the Army* (*Congjun le*) (scri: Yu Shangyuan; dir. Yang Cunbin) with 4 shows. "Chongqing shi shehui ju guanyu zhidao mujuan gongyan gongzuo shiyi de han" (The Official Letter issued by Chongqing Social Affair Bureau regarding the Guidance of Fund-Raising Public Performances), March 27, 1940, 0060-0001-468, CMA.

[42] In Qian Liqun's contextualization of *Metamorphosis*' scripts, Qian states that by 1941 there were at least three editions of *Metamorphosis* of which the earliest was NDS' rehearsal script (*pailian ben*). Unfortunately, the rehearsal script has yet to be uncovered. See Qian Liqun, 132.

[43] Ma Junshan, *Yanju zheyehua yundong yanjiu* (*The Professionalization Movement of Performance*) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2007), 201.

[44] Zhang Daofan, "Zhonghua minguo diyijie xiju jie de yiyi" (The Meaning of the First Drama Festival of the Republic of China), in *Zhongyang ribao* (*Central Daily News*), October 14, 1938.

wartime hospital undergoes two successive "metamorphoses," dismissing the corruptive force and reorganizing the hospital, and prompting the new staff to be more active and conscientious. Meanwhile, Dr. Ding also evolves from being a devoted but weak intellectual into a brave mother and first-rate surgeon who even successfully operates on her son. The curtain falls with Dr. Ding's passionate utterance, "China, China, you should be strong," delivered directly to the audience.

Although the least studied of Cao Yu's plays in English scholarship, *Metamorphosis* has enjoyed abundant discussion by Chinese scholars, with a focus on three aspects. First, they have delved into the play's textual history, including Cao Yu's protracted negotiation with Nationalist censorship, revisions made under Yu Shangyuan's guidance, and the process of the script's publication, first being banned, and then eventually winning a literary award from the Nationalist Propaganda Ministry. As Zhang Junxiang (1910-1996), the director of NDS puts it, the Nationalists enacted a so-called "double censorship" (*shuang shencha*) on both the published script and staged performance of *Metamorphosis*.[45] Scholarly documentation of *Metamorphosis*' script revisions—as well as the political investigations embedded therein—therefore carry meaning for Nationalist cultural policies in general. Second, scholars have carefully reconstructed the popular and political reception of *Metamorphosis* when it was staged in the differing locales of war capital (Chongqing), Communist base (Yan'an), rear area (Guilin), and orphan island (Shanghai) during the 1940s. Particular attention has been cast upon the *Zhongguo wansui* troupe's (Long Live China Drama Troupe, hereafter, *Zhongwan*) performances in 1942 at the Cathay Theatre that were directed by Shi

[45] Qian Liqun, 131.

Dongshan (1902-1955), since it was these performances that led directly to the Nationalists' tighter censorship of the script and generated enthusiastic support for the play from liberal intellectuals and Communists. Third, though less pronounced than the above two, the Chinese scholarship has also debated the artistic merits and shortcomings of *Metamorphosis*. Current Chinese scholars, like Cao Yu's contemporary critics and reviewers,[46] still ask whether *Metamorphosis* is a realistic depiction of a military hospital or an idealistic "dream-making" of the Chinese spirit during the war. Another debated topic among Chinese scholars is how to understand and evaluate the play's stereotypical characters. While critics like Situ Masen feel reluctant to forgive the "flat" characterization, specifically in the cases of Dr. Ding and Inspector Liang, Qian Liqun positions *Metamorphosis* at the juncture of the politicization and popularization of spoken drama. Reading with historical sympathy, Qian argues that the seemingly "flat" characterization is actually more accessible to and therefore could invoke direct emotions from the rural audience who were not yet familiar with *huaju*. Comparing Cao Yu's theories in *Screenplay Technique* (*Bianju shu*) with his script-writing practices in *Metamorphosis*, Qian further argues that the "typicalization of characters" (*renwu dianxing hua*) reflects Cao Yu's conscious tilting toward "the open-air theatre" (*guangchang ju*) that had the rural masses as its imagined audience.[47]

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[46] Most criticism of *Metamorphosis* converges on Cao Yu's characterization of Inspector Liang as "Judge Bao's reincarnation" or "the embodiment of authority." Cao Yu's over reliance upon an honest and upright official, as Cao's contemporary critics Gu Hong (dates unknown) and Hu Feng (1902-1985) put it, is a kind of "dream-making" that dodged historical difficulties by presenting an unrealistically easy solution. See Qian Liquan, 136.

[47] Cao Yu, "Bianju shu" (Techniques of Play-writing) in *Zhanshi xiju jiangzuo* (*Lectures on Drama during the War Time*), ed. Guoli xiju xuexiao (Changsha: Zhengzhong shuju, 1940), 36-50. Cao Yu points out, "if we are going to perform in the countryside where the audience had fewer opportunities for contact with spoken drama, their comprehension of spoken dramas are accordingly weaker. Thus, 'typification' (*dianxing hua*) would be a good approach." Also, see Qian Liqun, 124. Moreover, considering the nation-

Strangely, amidst such scholarly attention to the script revisions and staging processes of *Metamorphosis,* the significant transformation of the "hospital" and its likely connection with NDS' reconfiguration of the Confucian Temple in Jiang'an has largely been left unaddressed. In Act I, prior to introducing any characters, Cao Yu takes his audience to the chaotic hospital, a world where corruption and inefficiency are rampant, and war refugees' domestic lives, disordered bureaucratic offices, and supposedly hygienic and efficient hospital wards converge into a single space:

> The county town is small. It is very difficult to find a residence [for the hospital]. The hospital staff and their families, who had been used to the city life, found it rather difficult to adjust to the [county town]. Thus, they just mingled together and lived in the hospital ward (*jiguan*) which was accommodated in an old house owned by a local landlord. Later, when wounded soldiers arrived in succession, staff and their families had to empty out the front yard and yield it to wounded soldiers. So, within a two-floor building in the back yard, a minority of staff members and their families who somehow are connected with the hospital president were packed together. Man and woman, old and young, about 20-30 people filled this small building, just like a sardine can.[48]

Although never directly connecting the hospital to NDS' use of Jiang'an's Confucian Temple, Cao Yu did claim in an interview he gave to Xu Xiao—a NDS student-actor involved in the 1940 *Metamorphosis* production and the director of the 1985 revival—that his inspiration for the chaotic world of the hospital came from NDS itself when it was migrating from place to place.[49] Cao Yu's stage notes describe the hospital's chaos in greater detail:

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wide success of *Crossing* in the open-air theatre in East Buluogang, it is not far-fetching to think that Cao Yu intended to bring the Ding County experience to *huaju*-making in Jiang'an.

[48] Cao Yu, *Tuibian* (*Metamorphosis*), 3rd edition (Shanghai: Wenhua shenghuo chubanshe, 1946), 13.

[49] Xu Xiao, "Cao Yu tan *Tuibian*" (Cao Yu's View of *Metamorphosis*) in *Chongqing ribao* (*Chongqing Daily*), October 18, 1985.

> Were [you] to call this an office, it would be absolutely untrue. The bamboo-made boxes for holding archival materials are scattered in all corners. Piled on top of the archival boxes are bowls, kettles, soy sauce bottles, foreign tin cans, car parts, etc. Also, Old Fan's—the footman of the office—bedding lies in the middle. The room is cluttered with needles, hats, and the toys left by several little masters who occasionally use the office as their "guerrilla battle fields" [playground], bits and pieces, here and there, higgledy-piggledy….
> ***
> Actually, this room is just an enclosure. Lifting the cotton curtain on the left door (based on the stage left and right), walking out of the right door, climbing on the shaky stairs, [one] can walk into the President's bedroom, which was one of the wooden rooms built together with other staff bedrooms. People all like to walk through this hallway to avoid the rain. Of course, the transportation within this small building does not solely rely on this hallway. By the left door is pulled up one piece of white curtain. In front of the curtain stand a pseudo-foreign desk and an armchair borrowed from the landlord. That is the place, existing in name only, for the President to work. In fact, most of the office work is handled privately by the President's bed…On the wall hang statistics tables and letter holders. Also, on top of the President's desk is posted an illustration of emergency treatment for intoxication in the air aid. The illustration's faded color and distorted likeness (*shishen baise*) echo the worn-out atmosphere. In a word, the room impresses anyone who enters with a sense of being feeble, sloppy, crowded, chaotic, and even absurd. What is particularly striking is the colorful woman's clothes and stockings hanging on two bamboo sticks.[50]

Cao Yu's detail-oriented set design accurately and economically presents a disordered hospital that—as a microscopic representation of both NDS and China during the war—is in need of spatial reconfiguration and bureaucratic transformation. The materialization of "corruption" and "inefficiency" is especially clear when it comes to depicting the hospital's bedroom-centered domestic space which is used as an office, and where women's silk stockings and colorful clothes—sexually charged props—eroticize the spatial intrusion by highlighting the bureaucratic inefficiency and GMD cadres' suggested moral corruption. In addition to such stage props, Cao Yu fleshes out the intrusion further by incorporating spatial descriptions into specific plot developments.

[50] Cao Yu, 1946, 13-14.

Kong Qiuping, the character who receives the most ridicule from his colleagues, delivers a long monologue describing the inappropriate mixing of office and residence, or public and domestic space:

> It has not been four months yet since the beginning of the war. We already moved to this small town. Even though it is a private hospital, it still should have an official demeanor. After all, the hospital receives state subsidization. What a mess. [The office] is neither an office nor a private mansion! Young masters, young mistresses, madams, hospital president, office chairs, young and old maids, even the cooks in the kitchen, the bastard foot men…everyone is a refugee, everyone is equal. Files and papers, people who were shoveled together upstairs, stuff that is piled downstairs. This same room, used as an office in the daytime, a bedroom at night. On someone's birthday, the room is for playing *mahjong*; other times, it is the young master's playground. After a few days' rain, now this room is used for drying madam's clothes. Nothing can be found here. Is this a hospital? How can this be a hospital? How can this serve in the resistance war? [51]

Near the end of Act I, the unsatisfying conflation of the public (the hospital office in the first floor) and the private (the hospital head's mistresses' bedroom on the second floor) is interrupted by a farce-like scene: the hospital head's mistress misappropriated an iron bed that was supposed to be used for wounded soldiers to satisfy her demands for a material life comparable to what she had in Shanghai.[52] Once the only devoted doctor, Dr. Ding, finds out, she forcefully asks the staff to move the bed back. The mistress gets extremely upset and, to retaliate, she publically humiliates the hospital head with implicit charges of his sexual impotence and lack of power.

Considering that most extant archival materials regarding NDS were compiled by Yu Shangyuan and NDS students for either yearly reports to the GMD or to further stimulate the reformist message of training artist/cultural workers, any immoral and/or

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[51] Ibid., 25.
[52] Ibid., 43

sexualized impressions that NDS made to the Jiang'an public would most likely be "conveniently" omitted. Thus, according to Yu's account, NDS' immersion in the Jiang'an community was enthusiastically embraced by both local cultural and political authorities; and their residence in the Confucian Temple symbolized student-actors' respect for tradition more than an intrusion. However, given that *Metamorphosis* was written and staged when Cao Yu closely worked with NDS in Jiang'an, it would not be much of a stretch to hypothesize that the chaotic spatial configuration depicted in the first act of *Metamorphosis* provides an account of NDS' settling in Jiang'an that was not allowed to be expressed in official records.

The Stage Set for Metamorphosis

Metamorphosis not only offered a kind of déjà vu for NDS faculty and student-actors who lived the chaotic life of war refugees, it also provided a site for student-actors to team up with established play- and film-makers to hone their performative labor and technical skills. Compared to the unreserved praise awarded to the script and the 1942 *Zhongwan* production of *Metamorphosis* as, respectively, a "must read script" and the best performance of Chinese spoken drama thus far, the response given to the NDS production was rather lackluster.[53] Aside from some praise concerning one actor's delivery of a short monologue, there was little positive mention of the NDS performance in the press.[54] The few scholarly inquiries into or interviews with NDS' students and junior faculty who participated in the first production that exist have predominantly

[53] Duan Li, "Cong Shi Dongshan *Tuibian* kan Sitanni tixi zai Chongqing jutan de shijian" (A Study of the Practices of Stanislavsky System in Chongqing's Drama Scene: A Case Study on Shi Dongshan's *Metamorphosis*), in *Xiju yishu* (*Drama Art*) no. 3 (2011), 27.
[54] Ibid.

served as emotional touches for biographical studies of Cao Yu. Yet, in contrast to this public indifference, records reveal that the process of preparing and staging *Metamorphosis* was nonetheless extremely exciting for the students and dramatists involved. Here, by reconstructing relevant materials from Cao Yu, Zhang Junxiang, NDS' alumni-cum-junior faculty members, as well as the NDS 1939 class in making this play, I would like to (1) complete the missing piece of the performance history of *Metamorphosis* in the 1940s; and (2) illuminate the negotiations regarding artistic pursuits between dramatists who received intercultural and interdisciplinary dramatic training in the West, student-actors who were still at the infancy of turning from drama fans into theatre talents, and the urban mass audience in Chongqing.

From the beginning, Cao Yu intended *Metamorphosis* to clearly highlight a change from "the old" into "the new." The director, Zhang Junxiang, who had recently come back to China after graduating from Yale University, enthusiastically endorsed Cao Yu's plan and made sure that every facet of his production reflected this process of "metamorphosis." We can see such progression in the play's stage directions, choreography, stage props, and lighting. For example, in the early acts, when the hospital was represented as a chaotic world, the furniture and other stage props were arranged haphazardly in the back of the stage, a mise-en-scène that highlighted not only the crowdedness but also the conflation between different rooms, public space and domestic space, and so on. In later acts, Zhang had the actors perform mostly in the front of the stage, while making sure that each act had its own unique stage sets. Such changes in stage-design further required actors to change their gestures, control of dialogue volumes, and overall choreography. For example, Zhang stipulated that in the early acts the actors

should carefully observe the “fourth-wall” in order to realistically create the impression of a chaotic war hospital for the audience. However, when the play progresses to its later acts and the hospital is reformed, Zhang directed his actors to break down the fourth-wall by increasingly addressing the audience with colloquial rallying calls for resistance. In short, Zhang—who envisioned that as the play progressed, the actors would interact more with the audience than with each other—tore down the illusionary (old and chaotic) world built within the box-like frame of the hospital, and agitated the audience to echo the passion of renovating the “hospital” by participating in the metamorphoses that was taking place both on the stage and in reality. Although performed on the proscenium stage at the Cathay Theatre, Zhang’s direction, echoing Cao Yu’s playwriting strategies, was clearly influenced by the open-air peasant theatre model and the “street play” (*jietou ju*) that relied more on action than didactic harangues to engage “facial expression and fist-clenching histrionics.”[55]

While incorporating the simple plots, archetypical characters, and agitating performances that typified street-plays—and assisted *Metamorphosis*’ call for a participatory spirit for national defense—Zhang asserted his “professional” and aesthetic qualities in designing a complex stage set. Unfortunately, the disjuncture between high-tech stage design and street-play performance norms made *Metamorphosis* a not-too-successful hybrid. *Metamorphosis*’ stage design was not popular with its Chongqing audience, and was even criticized by one reviewer as relying too much on an “American style.” Still, the experience of designing the stage set was extremely important for the

[55] Chang-tai Hung specifically discusses the performative norms of “newspaper plays” and “street plays.” See Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China*, *1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 56-63.

students who worked under Zhang's direction. In fact, thanks to this experience, some even changed their major from acting to set design because the "spectacle" of set design gave life to the play in a way that was more tangible to them than acting. Zhang also taught his students how to build stage props from scratch, draw blueprints, employ easily assembled materials, and so on. Such team work was important for training NDS' own stage technicians as well as new talents for stage designing and play-making in general.

Particularly impressive was that during the public performance of *Metamorphosis* in Chongqing in 1940, students were able to figure out a way to put a roof on top of the hospital. This was the first time a complete house was displayed on a Chinese stage. As Li Naichen (1921-2012), a NDS student actor who was directly involved in making the stage-set, recalled:

> Under Zhang Junxiang's direction, we decided to add a ceiling on top of the indoor stage scene. This would not be a problem at all for today's playhouses and theatres. Neither was it a big deal for Zhang who had just come back from America. However, the Cathay Theatre in 1940s Chongqing, originally used for displaying film only, had its built-in roof and therefore largely reduced the stage space. This caused tremendous troubles for us to change the stage-set… But that was the first time that an entire house was presented on the spoken drama stage. [56]

While an unnecessarily luxury, and thereby unfitting for the immediate purpose of political agitation, Zhang's focus on the stage set, in my reading, makes sense in light of Cao Yu's script. As my previous analysis of Cao Yu's thorough description of the "hospital" suggests, *Metamorphosis* potential success was largely premised on whether the unhygienic, chaotic, and misarranged atmosphere of the hospital could be materialized on stage. There are ample similar examples throughout Act I when Cao Yu

[56] Interview with Li Naichen, a NDS student who participated in the 1940 *Metamorphosis* production, 2010.

ridicules both the corrupt administrators and indecisive fence-sitters. Both the exaggerated gestures of these figures as well as the absurdity of the plot are centered on the crowded and disorderly arranged architectural space of the war-time hospital. Thus, it was understandable for Zhang to pay such close attention to the stage-set, since the architectural space not only accommodated the characters; it was the most essential character for the existence of such a chaotic world.

Although not yet given sufficient scholarly attention, the development of *huaju* heavily relied on the talents who practiced stage-design and stage-building. This was true even in its earliest phase, during the 1900s-1910s when modern drama was still better known as civilized drama. Early student drama societies in Japan and America, such as the Spring Willow Society in Tokyo and the New York I-House-based dramatists, always incorporated art (oil painting) majors in their production teams because their familiarity with painting, sculpture, and art materials qualified them to make stage tableaux and stage architecture. But during the war period, *huaju*-making's reliance on stage design was overlooked by the reformist discourse, which saw *huaju* solely as a tool to enlighten the masses and liberate performers. Moreover, because of the difficulty of getting construction materials, stage designs were generally downplayed in wartime drama. NDS, in contrast, did not abandon this important realm of *huaju*-making. Whereas other itinerant and temporarily organized (semi) professional drama troupes largely turned to "street-plays" and abandoned the concern of theatre space, NDS positioned itself as a training school and took seriously not only its political mission, but its obligation to provide pedagogical and performaitve opportunities for student-actors. Thus, Zhang's emphasis on building the "house" and a theatre space for students—while deemed

unnecessary by some cultural critics—was nonetheless significant for the NDS community and the trajectory of *huaju*-making.

Zhang's emphasis on the stage design was likely further influenced by the fact that there were few experienced actors in NDS at that time. Because the student performers were only in their second or third year, their training thus far consisted mostly of note-taking and practice rehearsals. Although students were exposed to training methods such as the "Stanislavsky system," their implementation was by no means comparable to that in *Zhongwan* and other professional drama troupes composed of film stars. With the veteran filmmaker Shi Dongshan's use of the "Stanislavsky system," the *Zhongwan* production of *Metamorphosis* in 1942 could stimulate the eyes, ears, and emotions of the Chongqing audience. The inexperienced student-actors of NDS could never achieve such goals.

Aware of their lack of professional experience, some of the NDS student performers expressed their fear of performing in Chongqing, which had become a center of drama production during the war. In response to their fears, Cao and Zhang helped students prepare by asking them to emulate the routines in two other plays, *The Inspector* (*Shicha zhuanyuan*, 1936), and *Do It Even if It is Impossible* (*Bugan ye dei gan*, published in 1931), which were used to train the students to act in a comedic fashion. Significantly, both plays were written by Chen Zhice, who had worked alongside Xiong Foxi in the Ding Country peasant theater (1932-1935). Chen was very experienced at using only a minimum of materials to aid the layman in obtaining performance skills. Because of the relative simplicity of the plays, the students at NDS were also able to quickly grasp the materials and enjoy themselves in their acting preparations. Hence,

though NDS was an "academy" that boasted of its curriculum and achievements, the acting level required for *Metamorphosis* was relatively "low-tech" and akin to peasant or open-air theater. Zhang's determination to create innovative stage sets thus stands in contrast to his employment of traditional acting techniques.

Transforming Local Residents and Student-actors into Sophisticated Theatre Fans

Presenting Hamlet

The "place-making" transformation of a Confucian Temple not only inspired Cao Yu's vision of the war-time hospital and Zhang Junxiang's rather controversial materialization of the "house" in the Cathay Theatre in 1940. Two years after *Metamorphosis*' mixed reception in Chongqing, the fifth class of NDS students again used the Confucian Temple to prepare their graduation production. In this instance the director was Jiao Juyin (1905-1975), a French-trained director, who joined NDS in 1942 and would become a key figure in fulfilling the dream of a National Theatre by building the Beijing People's Art Theatre in the 1950s. For this round, the Confucian Temple served not merely as an inspiration for envisioning new plays, but also was the physical make-shift stage for the play. In this manner, the Confucian Temple in Jiang'an became one of the most famous make-shift stages in Republican China; namely, the stage that accommodated the 1942 performance of the "Confucian Hamlet," which was the first scripted and not improvised performance of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in China.[57]

Alexander Huang, in his construction *Chinese Shakespeares*, aptly investigates how Jiao Juyin "wed the foreign setting to the allegorical space of the temple and the

[57] Alexander Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 130-38.

historical exigencies of the time."[58] Different from Inspector Liang in *Metamorphosis,* the perfectly upright (but flat) hero who embodied the agency to both fight the war against Japan and transform the corrupt bureaucracy, Hamlet's famous "negative traits" (i.e., indecisiveness and hesitation) made NDS' 1942 production a trickier vehicle propagating the political messages of resisting Japan and building China. However, as Huang shows, this wartime Hamlet had a progressive and revolutionary spirit and was full of patriotism and filial piety,[59] which constituted merits that the "Chinese people need during the Anti-Japanese war."[60] At the same time, Jiao Juyin did not deny the Danish prince's procrastination in his production. Instead, he turns Hamlet's negative trait, which directly led to his own destruction, into a warning call for "immediate and synchronized actions by all the [Chinese] people."[61] Revealing the play's political intent, Jiao declared that the direct impetus for staging *Hamlet* was to arose Chinese people's immediate actions (national defense and state building, *kangzhan yu jianguo*), and that "the success of [the troupe's] performing skills is secondary."[62]

Such claims aside, neither Yu's nor Jiao's politically-driven, post-production talks could conceal the aesthetic success of NDS' *Hamlet* in the Confucian Temple. As Huang aptly argues, during a time that witnessed a deteriorating economy, intensified conflicts between the CCP and GMD, and major setbacks in the war,[63] Jiang'an's *Hamlet* was particularly significant:

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[58] Ibid., 3.
[59] Ibid., 133.
[60] Ibid., 131.
[61] Ibid., 137.
[62] Jiao Juyin, "Guanyu *Hamuleite*" (About *Hamlet*), in *Jiao Juyin wenji* (*Collected Works of Jiao Juyin*) (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1988), 2: 167-68; Huang, 137.
[63] Huang, 3

> Much of the production's vitality lies in its ingenious use of the temple as an allegorical space under poor conditions, including frequent power outages. It was staged on the balcony in front of the shrine to Confucius, with seated audiences in the courtyard looking up to the balcony at the end of a stone staircase…The stage had a startling colossal depth of nearly two hundred feet, with twenty-four-foot curtains on each side hanging between the pillars as decoration. The curtain concealed or revealed a combination of pillars and scene depth to dramatize the twists and turns and haunted atmosphere in "the sinful and perilous Danish court"…The ghost entered from the deep and dark end of the path lined with the pillars and curtains. The minimalist stage design—two chairs, a bed, and a table—worked well with the dim open space in creating a sense of mysteriousness.[64]

Building on observations and understandings of *Hamlet* gleaned from Yu, Jiao, and Huang, I examine NDS' *Hamlet* as a site to develop student-actors' production skills and their consciousness of acting like cultural workers, and a site where a communal bond among leading dramatists, student-actors, and, to some extent, Jiang'an local villagers was grounded. Even if it is true that the success of the NDS' production of *Hamlet*, as Jiao Juyin puts it, was "secondary" in importance to the play's call-to-arms agenda, the communal bond grown from preparing, making, and staging *Hamlet* was nonetheless significant and profoundly felt.

Although Huang highly praised Jiao and his team's ingenious reconfiguration of the Confucian Temple as an "allegorical space" for *Hamlet* and emphasized that Jiao's choice was the result of the director's insistence on "the primacy of the locality,"[65] Jiao's production location appears to me more like a "compromise" between the traditional staging of Shakespeare's plays on the one hand, and the material hardship that NDS faced, on the other. In Jiao Juyin's itemized notes of the production, he lists his choice for such a make-shift stage as his seventh concern,

[64] Ibid, 135-36.
[65] Ibid., 3.

> 7. If we want to rapidly change the scenery [between scenes], we have to adapt the traditional setting of Shakespeare's theatres. [However] we could not realize the "semi-thrust stage" (*ban tuchu taikou*). The best way to do this within a proscenium stage should be [Georges] Pitoëff's semi-permanent setting (*ban guding zhuangzhi fa*), but we still could not get it done based upon our current [material] situation. Thus, we have to install and use all permanent settings within the [stage] frame. We only change the wool curtain, in conjunction with the lightening, to generate the sense of time, location, and tragic atmosphere.[66]

Different than "localizing" the theatre space, Jiao insists on adhering to the "foreign" sentiment in terms of both script-translation and dialogue delivery,

> 3. The dialogue throughout the play fully preserved the foreign sentiment. This is the result of our deliberation. The dialogue delivery is also based on a mixed methodology of poetry recitation and "matter of fact" (originally in English) reading. We did so in order to create a new (performing) style. Such an experiment might be a failure.[67]

Jiao's worries about Hamlet's "authentic" foreign sentiment coexist with the director's own strong belief in the quality of the play and pride in being able to train and work with the NDS students to present a "real" version of *Hamlet* despite the war. The final item in his explanatory notes, while showing his humbleness in assuming the director's role for such an important play, demonstrates the "boldness" and pioneering spirit imbued in NDS students for this collective remaking of *Hamlet*,

> 10. Both my own experiences and abilities [of directing plays] are rather limited. This time, when I was asked to direct Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, I particularly felt my own shallowness and superficiality. Meanwhile, my class [the fifth class] only contains young student actors who are still learning [to make

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[66] Jiao Juyin, "Guanyu '*Hamuleite*' de yanchu" (About the Production of *Hamlet*), in *Guoli xiju zhuanke xuexiao xiaoyou tongxun yjekan* (*Alumni Monthly Newsletter of the National Drama School*), vol. 3, no. 7 (May 18, 1942), reprinted in *Zhongguo zaoqi xiju huakan* (*Early Chinese Drama Gazettes*) (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2006), 37: 105-06.
[67] Ibid., 105.

plays] but not mature actors. Moreover, this is really the first time that we worked on this kind of script. Although they were all very focused and worked diligently, still certain difficulties show when they felt rather uncomfortable and not used to this kind of acting. However, we still make all experiments with a sense of bold ambition. This kind of bold ambition is our primary goal. We hope that we can use our own [possible] failure to inspire others' success. We shall appreciate all criticism and [constructive] suggestions with great respect.[68]

It seems that Jiao need not have worried, considering that NDS' 1942 *Hamlet* sold out three nights in a row.[69] Unfortunately, based on extant archival materials, we can only assume that *Hamlet* was popular among its audience, as there is only one "drama review" written by Fu Xiangmo (dates unknown), a Jiang'an local resident who used to study journalism in Japan and worked as a reporter for the *National Gazette* (*Guomin gongbao*) in 1942. True, as an "urban educated youth," it is questionable if Fu can speak as the real voice of the Jiang'an local audience. However, Fu's account of the play—his attention to particular aspects of the plot, and his sincere appraisal of NDS students' performance of "sentiments"—reveals that, despite its "foreign" characters and Western-style acting, the play succeeded in generating through an intimate relationship between audience and performers a sense of shared grief:

The reasons why this production is so touching and able to move people's hearts lie partly in the success of the script; and partly in actors' passion and humbleness.
In Act I Scene 5, on stage and against the gloomy lighting and sorrowful background, the ghost spirit of the old Danish King (played by Yu Liude), talked to his prince. [Yu's dialogue delivery] sounded long and grieved, which already imbued a tragic sentiment into the audience's minds. The Danish Prince understood that his father's death was caused by his uncle's (the current king) scheme. [Hamlet's] uncle not only killed his own brother, but also married his

[68] Ibid., 106.
[69] Huang, 130. In a future study, I will question why and how *Hamlet* in a Confucian Temple attracted its local audience. Moreover, what constituted a "local" audience in the case of NDS and Jiang'an?

> sister-in-law. Prince Hamlet decided to take revenge. Thus, one after another great tragic scenes unfolded. From [the scene] Hamlet pretended to be mad until his eventual rejection of his lover, the actors delivered all the scenes well.
>
> Until Act III Scene 11, when the Prince entered the Queen's bedroom, feeling uncontrollably grieved and indignant. Mother and son meet, but their talks are just like sharp swords. Every sentence stabs into the Queen's unchaste heart. At that time, the facial expressions of the Prince (played by Tang Xiying) and the Queen (played by Peng Mojun) demonstrated a heightened nervousness and reliable reality. These [performances] might not reach the supreme good (*zhishan*), but are already qualified to be supremely beautiful (*zhimei*). One loathes his uncle and resents his mother; the other loves her son and regrets hurting her husband. Five emotions and seven types of grief (*wuqing qibei*) converged into one moment. The Queen's wailing and the Prince's rage both rank as the most complicated and most grievous scene in human life![70]

Fu's review intriguingly mixes his experiences of (modern) theatres, a "popular" knowledge of *huaju*, and an intuitive sense of a good (sentimental) play. Considering his overseas study background and journalist profession, Fu represented the "ideal audience" that NDS' strove to impress, but not necessarily enlighten. Notably, Fu described *Hamlet* as a "world-class tragic play" that revealed "aspects of life and society" (*rensheng mian yu shehui mian*), and not as a propaganda play (*xuanchuan ju*).[71] Although both Hamlet's positive and negative traits are carefully framed in Yu Shangyuan and Jiao Juyin's post-production writings that explain the rationale for staging *Hamlet* and call for a continued spirit of resistance against Japan, Fu presented a much more intimate take on the performance, the play, and the message. Namely, Fu asserted that *Hamlet* is a great, sad, and tragic story. Fu traced the source of the tragedy to the Danish imperial scandal of "killing brother and marrying sister-in-law" (*shaxiong qusao*). The appearance of the old

[70] Fu Xiangmo, "Guan Sha weng de shijie da beiju" (Attending a World-Class Tragedy by Shakespeare) in Guoli xiju zhuanke xuexiao tongxun yuekan (Alumni Monthly Newsletter of the National Drama School), June 18, 1942, reprinted in *Zhongguo zaoqi xiju huakan* (*Early Chinese Drama Gazettes*) (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2006), 37: 105-06.
[71] Ibid.

King's ghost further framed *Hamlet* as a revenge story that the son was determined to carry out for the sake of his father. Thus, a combination of revenge story and sexual scandal greatly echoed the common plot devices that prevailed in all forms of vernacular culture. Again, despite the lack of direct evidence of audience's views of the play, Fu's description of *Hamlet* with tints of eroticism and vengeance, in my hypothesis, would not be too askew from what was felt by "ordinary" Jiang'an audience members.

As Fu's review stresses, Jiao's production did not exploit the themes of eroticism and revenge for sensational effect. With its "long and grievous" dialogue, intense but natural facial expressions, gloomy lighting, and bleak background, the production elevated the Danish royal family's scandals into the "supreme beauty"—albeit not the "supreme good"—of human life. The Prince's outrage, the Queen's regret, and the Old King's (ghost) indignation were interwoven with a powerful grief that stirred the hearts and minds of the audience through the quality of the acting and the production's ingenious use of the space of the Confucian Temple. Accordingly, Fu was deeply moved by the production and it is safe to assume that it touched other audience members as well.

Within the play, the fictional characters wept out of their personal feelings of gratitude and resentment; NDS' students put into practice acting knowledge and set-design techniques learned from their lectures[72] to assist a natural and moving cry; and in the audience, Fu and other spectators responded to the grief displayed onstage and likely shed tears of sympathy for the characters in the play, the war in particular, and humanity in general. Thus, by means of *Hamlet*, the Jiang'an audience, NDS students, cosmopolitan play-makers, and those foreign characters who lived in the fictitious world

[72] In my future study, I will study the lectures given by established play-makers, such as Yu Shangyuan, Cao Yu, Hong Shen, and Chen Zhice, while they taught and lived with students in Jiang'an.

of the Danish inner court met and formed a sentiment-based community. Whether such a bond smoothly transformed into a collective impetus for acting and fighting for the nation—as Jiao Juyin and Yu Shangyuan hoped—cannot be proved. Nevertheless, a sentiment-based bond was quite clearly formed by NDS' fifth class' graduation production in which the "bold" and ingenious use of theatre space in the Confucian Temple, students' expanding performance skills, and students' understanding of world-class literature as well as their knowledge of *huaju*, all reinforced each other.

Creating a Theatre-Based Community

Whether the "popularity" of *Hamlet* was due to the charming locale of the Confucian Temple, the patriotic spirit that prevailed in Jiang'an and nationwide, or stemmed from a collective catharsis, it is important to keep in mind that both NDS student-actors and the local audience could not have been able to enjoy the play without previous preparation. Central to these preparations were initiatives sponsored by NDS explaining how (and why) to celebrate Shakespeare. Yu Shangyuan, the school principle, clearly underlines Shakespeare's importance as a global cultural figure:

> Those countries that produce the most high-quality Shakespearean productions are the counties with the highest cultural prestige…Performing Shakespeare is a crucial step for our country to catch up to and join the countries with world-class cultural achievements.[73]

Yu's comments, in some contemporary scholars' views, might sound strikingly colonial. Although I agree with such a critique, I also want to align Yu's comments with the dream of building an Opéra-like national theatre, which had long been a part of NDS' ambition,

[73] Huang, 131.

as it was for political regimes from the late Qing to the PRC. While a national theatre existed only in blueprint, the ambition to stage a world-class play was a more feasible one. In order to share that importance with their students, the directors of NDS made student involvement in at least one Shakespeare production a requirement for graduation. NDS also translated the scripts of different Shakespeare plays, which teachers frequently used in class. Then, in order to spread an appreciation of Shakespeare to the wider Jiang'an community, the school made use of money from the Nationalist government, as well as donations from other countries, to stage a Shakespeare festival, where they performed Shakespeare plays and had a Shakespeare exhibition that displayed stage props that were used in different Shakespeare productions. As a certain student recalled, before the debut of *Hamlet* in June,

> [On April 23, 1942] our school held the commemoration for Shakespeare's 378th birthday. We organized lectures, performances of Shakespeare, and an exhibition of Shakespeare materials. Scenes of selective Shakespeare plays were either read cold or staged by the students in costume. The exhibition demonstrated all different versions of Shakespeare's plays, other books relevant to Shakespeare's performances, statues, residence and stage props, blueprints, and costume design prints. [74]

In addition to promoting Shakespeare, the school also celebrated the anniversary of its founding, turning the occasion into a synthesis between Western theater aesthetics and the Jang'an local culture. Cai Jianke (dates unknown), an NDS alumnus, recalled that every year NDS held an entertaining public event during the school anniversary, when Yu Shangyuan, the school principle, delivered a "drama cake" (*xiju bing*)—the top

[74] *Guoli xiju zhuanke xuexiao xiaoyou tongxun yuekan* (*Alumni Monthly Newsletter of the National Drama School*) vol.3, no. 7, (May 18, 1942), reprinted in *Zhongguo zaoqi xiju huakan* (*Early Chinese Drama Gazettes*) (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2006), 37: 109-10.

of which was made to look like a Greek drama mask—to the students in a ceremonial manner. For Cai, receiving the drama cake was an act of solemn significance. He exclaimed, "The images on the drama cake signified Dionysus, the god of the theatre arts, our lord! Our drama lord, we shared the drama cake and believed that you are already part of us. We will commit to theatre, devoting ourselves to the dramatic art!"[75] The implied religious similarities between sharing the "drama-cake" and partaking in Holy Communion are readily apparent. In this ritual of sharing the drama cake, the activities of play-making and the actors' commitment to theatre acquired a certain religious hue. More important, such a religiously informed ritual, in Cai's account, suggested that committing to the theatre was tantamount to a religious conversion, the seriousness of which preempted the unwanted personnel mobilization that was common to other amateur student drama troupes that only temporarily existed and were loosely organized in Shanghai, Chongqing, and other metropolises.

[75] Cai Jianguang, "Xiju bing" (Drama Cake), in *Guoli xiju zhuanke xuexiao xiaoyou tongxun yuekan* (*Alumni Monthly Newsletter of the National Drama School*) vol.5, no. 2, (November 18, 1943), reprinted in *Zhongguo zaoqi xiju huakan* (*Early Chinese Drama Gazettes*) (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2006), 37: 397-98.

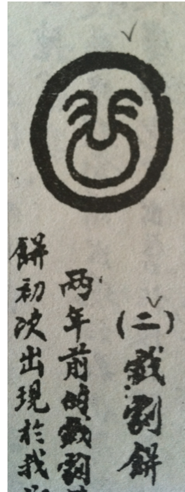

Figure 4.3: An image of the "drama cake" delivered from President Yu Shangyuan to NDS students, and further circulated among local Jiang'an residents as festival food.[76]

Afterwards, slices of the cake were sold on the street as a sort of sweet candy, reminding Jiang'an locals of their popular "moon cakes" (*yuebing*). Unfortunately we do not know how local people responded to the drama cake, but according to student letters, the cake served as both good food and as a symbolic offering transmitted from the principle to the students. While passing around the drama cake to the Jiang'an locals, NDS students explained the stories of the masks imprinted on the cakes to their audience. The symbolic meanings of these "masks" then took on more meaning when the local audience went back to the shrine-theatre to watch public performances that included Greek tragedies, such as *Medea*.

Directed by Chen Zhice and staged by NDS students on November 19, 1943, *Medea* was the major production for the public performance connected to the celebration of NDS' 8th anniversary. A student actor, Wang Menghuang (dates unknown), wrote of the performance:

[76] Ibid., 397.

> On the 18th, [*Medea*] was supposed to start at 3 o'clock. I entered the theatre [the Confucian Temple] at 2:30 and all was quiet. I only saw five doors on the stage that were made with grey curtains. It seemed that the stage for the performance was rather narrow. Nearby the two doors downstage was the entrance for the chorus. At the front center of the stage there were stairs, which served as the path for actors on stage and the chorus off stage to communicate with and echo each other… Amongst the audience seats, prior to the show, there was a certain solemn air, as it would have been in Ancient Greece before performing a sacrifice to the gods. …The most touching scene of the play was Medea's speech to her two children when she was ready to kill them. I saw a spectator who sat next to me wipe away tears. The entire theatre was enthralled with a strong and sincere motherly love. Until I left the theatre, I still felt that Medea's face and shadow were lingering in front of me. The play was over. Then someone passionately yelled, "Long life Mr. Chen Zhice!" Only then did we come back from the tragic play and the fate of tragic characters to the norms of everyday life.[77]

Here, Medea inherited and hybridized the performance conventions that Chen Zhice brought with him from the Ding County open-air theatres and the tradition of *Hamlet* constructed in the Confucian Temple by NDS members themselves. Interestingly, such a hybrid production that referred to both *Hamlet* and Ding County open-air theatre also echoed the ancient Greek theatre tradition. NDS student productions therefore connected Jiang'an with Ding County, China with the world, and the contemporary war with the wars of ancient Greece. Moreover, Wang's observation of the solemn and quiet atmosphere in the Confucian Temple/theatre is striking. Different than the Ding County peasants who maintained a bustling off-stage community while watching *Crossing* in their open-air theatre, spectators for *Medea* in NDS were already "enframed" as a *huaju* audience that could be at once emotional and disciplined within the theatre space.

[77] Wang Menghuang, "*Meidiya* shiyan yanchu canguan xiaoji" (A Short Journal of Watching the Experimental Performance of *Medea*), in *Guoli xiju zhuanke xuexiao xiaoyou tongxun yuekan* (*Alumni Monthly Newsletter of the National Drama School*) vol.5, no. 2, (November 18, 1943), reprinted in *Zhongguo zaoqi xiju huakan (Early Chinese Drama Gazettes)* (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2006), 37: 401-02.

These sorts of theatrical activities prepared the Jiang'an audience to appreciate *huaju* on stage. Needless to say, *huaju*—as a "foreign" art form—was still "exotic." But it was an exoticness that attracted—and did not repel—its audience. Also, it is important to remember that by 1942, the Jiang'an audience would have already become used to the genre of resistance plays and the theatricalization of parades to save the country. *Huaju* was thus not only "exotic" when compared to traditional forms of Chinese opera; it was also a novel approach to national salvation propaganda that was more attractive—because of its uniqueness—than the typical street plays and parade plays of the era. In this manner, NDS was able to turn the Jiang'an community into a receptive audience.

Conclusion

The drama network of NDS provided both dramatists and students with ample opportunities to practice their goals. As judged by the experience of Cao Yu's *Metamorphosis*, established dramatists and directors attempted to explore the intermedial possibilities between words, stage settings, and performance. Yet, despite such opportunities, *Metamorphosis* still did not earn much of a response from its Chongqing audience. This failure was likely due to a number of factors. In Chongqing, where the school had to compete with productions showcasing famous film stars, the amateur status of the students prevented them from gaining much attention. Also, the students were only in Chongqing for a short time, and did not have an established rapport with their audience. In this regard, their performance in Chongqing was like a fancier version of a typical tour performance. On the other hand, the students stayed in Jiang'an and, to some extent, put into practice some of the ideas of building an Opéra-inspired "national

theatre" that accommodated the connected mechanisms of performance and pedagogical training. Moreover, from the few archival materials available, we can see that the NDS productions of *Hamlet* and *Medea* achieved a certain goal of forging a bond between performers and the audience. It was students' long-term residence in Jiang'an and their active participation in making plays and transforming the Confucian Temple into an effective theatre space that allowed them to gain popularity among the locals and enjoy a higher and more respected profile than they received in Chongqing. NDS, although perhaps not "good enough" for Chongqing, was thus able to serve the needs of its regular audience.

By further comparing the lukewarm reception of NDS' *Metamorphosis* in Chongqing and its acclaimed production of *Hamlet* in Jiang'an, I have traced NDS' success at simultaneously training NDS students as cultural workers and putting on good plays with high aesthetic qualities back to three factors: its fixed location, the innovative types of drama it produced, and the balance it maintained between theatrical and political pursuits. NDS' fixed location in Jiang'an allowed it to gain the trust of the local population and slowly accustom them to the standards of spoken drama. Local appreciation of *huaju* was further won by engaging in activities that fostered community building, staging productions that relied upon ingenious creation of theatre space, and masterful delivery of authentic sentiments in performance. In all of these endeavors, a careful balance was maintained between theatrical and political pursuits. As a government-funded entity, NDS was not only responsible for professionalizing *huaju*; it was also expected to promote the GMD's message of national resistance and assist state-building efforts such as the spread of *Guoyu*. An examination of NDS thus does more

than reveal cosmopolitan dramatists' (such as Yu Shangyuan and Jiao Juyin) practices of building national theatre and a national drama school during wartime; it also provides insight into how a government-affiliated drama network settled in hinterland Sichuan and serves as a useful comparative example to the better-studied Yan'an model of the 1940.

Chapter 4: Dramatizing the "Left-Wing" / Canonizing the "Back-Stage": *Annals of Theatre* (1943) and the Politics of Making Drama History in 1930s Shanghai and 1940s Chongqing

Introduction

Between November and December 1943, two national newspapers, *The Impartial (Dagong bao*) and *New China Daily (Xinhua ribao*), issued by non-party intellectuals and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), respectively, ran a series of unique advertisements to promote a five-act, seven-scene spoken drama, *Xiju chunqiu* (*XJCQ*, *Annals of Theatre*). Collectively written by Xia Yan (1900-1995), Song Zhidi (1914-1956), and Yu Ling (1907-1997), the three leaders of the *Chinese League of Left-Wing Dramatists* (*Zhongguo zuoyi xiju lianmeng*),[1] *XJCQ* dramatizes the real life stories and struggles of Chinese *juren* (men of theatre)[2] from the 1910s to the 1930s, a time when drama—as a modern cultural medium—and the drama field—as an intellectual-performative-commercial social network—enjoyed its greatest development despite the disruptions of revolution, civil war, and foreign invasion. The play was staged by *Zhongguo yishu jushe* (China Drama and Art Society, *Zhongshu*) in Chongqing's "fog season," the time during winter when the wartime capital was so blanketed by fog that it earned a respite

[1] The Chinese League of Left-Wing Dramatists was established in 1931 as a subgroup of the Chinese League of Left-Wing Writers (*Zhongguo zuoyi zuojia lianmeng*) that was founded in Shanghai in 1930. See Xiaomei Chen, "Modern Chinese Spoken Drama," in *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, ed. Victor H. Mair (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 860.

[2] The *huaju* theatre was no longer a gendered space in the 1940s. While actresses (e.g. Wang Ying 1913-1974) and women playwrights (e.g. Bai Wei 1894-1987 and Zhao Qingge 1914-1999) still constituted a sensational locale for gossip and controversies, the contribution of women of theatre to *huaju* was neither invisible nor deniable. However, following the translation of *wenren* (men of letters), I translate *juren* into "men of theatre," which is not intended to be gender-specific.

from Japanese bombardment. Although the use of newspaper ads to promote theatre and cinema productions in 1940s Chongqing was in itself nothing new, *XJCQ*'s use of the ads to highlight the production's artistic, entertainment, and social significance is striking for its effective market packaging, as well as for revealing the cultural and historical importance attributed to China's first meta drama, a *huaju* about *huaju*-making.

The first advertisement for *XJCQ* appeared in the politically independent *Impartial* to coincide with the play's debut in the *Yinshe* (Silver Society), a theatre in Chongqing, on November 14, 1943.[3] Highlighting the all-star cast and Zheng Junli's (1911-1969) directorship,[4] the advertisement in *The Impartial* underscored the play's unique intertwining of the history and fate of Chinese drama with the lives and struggles of those who were themselves immersed in China's drama movement. Designating *XJCQ* as reflecting the lives of drama workers (*xiju gongzuozhe*)—or *juren* in Chinese dramatists' self-referential term—the advertisement in *The Impartial* labeled the play as "the glory of the blood and tears in the drama movement of the past 30 years; the epic of the faithful struggling of thousands of drama workers!"[5] Three days later, a second advertisement in *The Impartial* promoted the publication of the script, detailing the time frame and main theme of the play,

This play depicts the drama history that initiated from civilized new drama in

[3] Following its successful debut, *XJCQ*'s producers quickly scheduled 20 more performances to take place that month. Shi Man, *Chongqing kangzhan jutuan jishi* (*Chronicles on Chongqing Wartime Theatre*) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chuban she, 1995), 140.
[4] Zheng Junli was well respected in the 1930s and 1940s as an actor and director. During the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45), Zheng joined other established film and theatre stars to move to Chongqing. There, Zheng was especially prominent among the screenwriters and directors responsible for "the astonishing surge of creativity that swept through the Chinese film world." Paul G. Pickowicz, *China on Film: A Century of Exploration, Confrontation, and Controversy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2012), 124.
[5] *Dagong bao*, November 14, 1943.

> the May Fourth Movement up to the New Drama movement taking place around the August 13th Anti-Japanese resistance. The script is charged with many blood-soaked and tear-inducing stories, and loaded with revolutionary thoughts supporting resistance against warlords and imperialists. This play is a historical document of Chinese drama! Readers of this play are indeed reading the history of Chinese drama![6]

In this manner, the advertisements for *XJCQ* in *The Impartial* presented the play as more than just "entertainment" for a war-weary populace, but as an authoritative summary of modern Chinese drama's development, which, much like the war against Japan, was a heroic and glorious struggle.

XJCQ's success in November quickly promoted a second round of performances (24 in total) starting on December 9. During this round of productions, the Communist-run *Xinhua ribao* printed three different ads: the first focused on the play's continued run in Chongqing that December and included excerpts of positive reviews published in other newspapers, affirming that *XJCQ*, "as a history drama," should be watched by "all drama workers, drama fans, and every single Chinese man and woman."[7] The reviews mentioned in the ad specifically linked *XJCQ*'s undeniable success with its artistic qualities, i.e., its dramatic structure (graceful dynamics, touching interludes), excellent performance, and the director's painstaking organization and vision.[8] The second ad claimed that *XJCQ*'s new round of performances was initiated by the Chongqing city government to raise money for building the Huaxiang Airport, which was to be used for both civil and national defense purposes. With a clear eye toward box-office revenue, the second ad presented two pairs of couplets, packaging *XJCQ* as a melodrama capable of

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[6] Ibid., November 17, 1943.
[7] *Xinhua ribao*, December 5, 1943.
[8] Ibid.

giving its audience both laughter and tears,

> The intertwining of love and hatred,
> The mixed drink of laughter and tears;
> Entrusting feelings on the ebb and flow,
> Placed in sorrow and joy, separation and reunion.[9]

Finally, the third ad focused on *XJCQ*'s reception off-stage, stating that certain dialogues in the play had already become fashionable in Chongqing's everyday usage. According to the third ad, *XJCQ* was discussed heatedly "in offices, on campus, at home, and generally in all public [spaces]."[10] Thus, if the first series of ads from *Dagong bao* presented *XJCQ* as a heroic story worthy-in-itself, those from *Xinhua ribao* relied on external sources to testify for the play's value—the views of drama critics, the social benefits of building the Huaxiang airport, and the eager adoption of phrases from the play by Chongqing locals.

The ads' claims were not hyperbole. By all intents, *XJCQ* struck a responsive chord among audiences and critics alike. Positive word-of-mouth and an impressive box-office take resulted in *XJCQ*'s final run being extended for two weeks, from December 12 to December 28.[11] By the time of these final performances, Zhou Enlai (1898-1976), himself a sophisticated theatre fan and civilized drama veteran during his youth in Tianjin in the 1910s, definitively proclaimed, albeit through the mediation of Zhang Ying's

[9] *Xinhua ribao*, December 10, 1943.
[10] *Xinhua ribao*, December 12, 1943.
[11] Although *Xinhua ribao* initially stated that December 12 would be the final performance, *XJCQ* ran for another two weeks. On December 25, 1943, *Xinhua ribao*'s advertisement pointed out that the performances scheduled for December 26-28 would be the final three shows. The ad also promised that "after these three days' performances, absolutely no other shows." See *Xinhua ribao*, December 25, 1943.

(1923-) drama review,[12] "among the many *huaju* productions staged this year, [I may say] that *Xiju chunqiu* is the one that is best scripted and most worth watching."[13] Judging from the advertisements, box-office revenue, and favorable reviews, the play-makers behind *XJCQ* appear to have discovered the "sweet spot" that allowed their production to reap its maximum in popular, aesthetic, critical, and political returns. Just what was *XJCQ* and why was it so successful?

Aside from being one of the blockbusters of the "fog season" drama festival, *XJCQ* stands out for being the only example of Chinese "meta-theatre" in the first half of the 20th century. With this genre, dramatists reflected on the theatre, and constructed and canonized the discourse of modern drama as both an art form and a form of mass media. Situated predominantly on the "back-stage" (*houtai*), i.e., the literal back-stages of a run-down tea garden *(chayuan*) and a modern play house as well as the residences of Shanghai men of theatre, *XJCQ* presents an alternative perspective of drama history by foregrounding the stories and activities that heretofore were known only by those behind the curtain. *XJCQ* is thus the most mature artistic demonstration of the individual subjectivities and collective agency displayed by Chinese *juren* not only in building modern drama as a genre but also in employing that genre to form a historical account of its own development.

Two dates, important to history in general and to Chinese modern drama

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[12] Zhang Ying (張穎) graduated from the Lu Xun Art School (*Lu Xun yishu xueyuan*) in Yan'an. Between 1940 and 1943, she worked as a journalist for *New China's Daily* and as Zhou Enlai's secretary. Using the penname Zhang Ying (章罌), she published several long and influential drama reviews and works of drama criticism in the *Supplements* for *New China Daily* (*Xinhua ribao fukan*). Zhang Ying later revealed that most of her drama essays published during that period came directly from Zhou Enlai who was then serving as the official CCP representative in Chongqing.

[13] Zhang Ying, "Tan *Xiju chunqiu*" (On *Annals of Theatre*), in *Xinhua fukan* (Supplements of *New China Daily*), December 27, 1943.

specifically, frame the play: the May Fourth Movement in 1919, when new culture and modern drama emerged due to the spread of radical intellectual and political discourse; and the August 13th Incident in 1937 when the outbreak of war terminated the promising "Year of Spoken Drama" in cosmopolitan cities and (semi-) professional drama troupes were encouraged to provide traveling performances across the nation. Following a chronological order, *XJCQ* covers twenty years of history within the drama field in five acts, depicting civilized drama in the late 1910s (Act I), Amateur Drama (*aimei ju*) in the 1920s (Act II), the formulation and fraction of the drama field under the pressures of Japanese invasion, economic retrenchment, and professionalization in the 1930s (Acts III and IV), and finally, the reunion of China's *juren* to fight against, on both the theatre and world stage, Japan's full-scale invasion of China in 1937 (Act V).[14] Against the political context established in each act, while restaging selective excerpts of signature civilized dramas, amateur dramas, and large-scale performances, *XJCQ* predominantly foregrounds the "back-stage" anecdotes, gossips, and behind the scenes activities of its leading characters: Lu Xiankui (based on Ying Yunwei 1904-1967), Jiang Han and his *Dongfang yishu xiao juchang* (Oriental Art and Small Theatre; based on Tian Han and the Southern Society (*Nanguo she*)), and Tang Qianqian (the archetypal degenerate woman star). *XJCQ* thus creates a complex three-layered theatricality through its representations of the historical background, its reproduction of excerpts from signature plays, and, most important, its depiction of the "back-stage" preparations for these "front-

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[14] *XJCQ*'s dramatic structure was well promoted. In addition to the advertisement in *Dagong bao*, the postscript written by Xia Yan and Song Zhidi as well as a contemporary drama review—interestingly written in the Japanese language—introduced *XJCQ* in a similar fashion. See Xia Yan, Song Zhidi, and Yu Ling, *Xiju chunqiu* (*Annals of Theatre*) (Chongqing: Weizhi chubanshe, 1946), 161; and Xiao Yi, "Xiju chuqiu suo gan" (Thoughts of Annals of Theatre) in *Gaizao zhoubao* (*Reformation Weekly*) (1946, no. 12), 26-28.

stage" performances.

XJCQ's prioritization of play-making over play-staging, the back-stage over the front-stage, and behind-the-scenes struggles over canonized episodes celebrated in "official" narratives—or, as James C. Scott calls it, "the hidden transcript" over the visible performance[15]—allows me to align the play with the "back-stage discourse" that Scott first developed in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, his study on the encounters of and the confrontations between the powerless and the powerful.[16] Klaus R. Scherpe develops this concept, arguing that the "backstage discourse" is constituted by gestures, words, and tales that cannot be performed in the face of power.[17] Unlike other attempts at *huaju* canonization, such as compiling drama anthologies, writing drama histories, or building drama archives,[18] all of which relied on published written materials, *XJCQ* focused on the staging of performances and gossip to present its drama history. By "canonizing the backstage"—or prioritizing the spoken over the written, and the preparation for a performance over the performance itself—*XJCQ* challenged the extant meta-narrative of *huaju* history.

Why and how did men of theatre employ *huaju* to make their version of modern drama history? How did *XJCQ*'s multiple-layered theatricality, staging a *huaju* about *huaju*-making, diverge from the way in which drama history was usually told? Specifically, how did *XJCQ*'s "theatrical" self-referentialities complicate the historical construction of "men of theatre," especially *left-wing men of theatre* and their pursuits of

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[15] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), xii.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Klaus R. Sherpe, "'Backstage Discourse': Staging the Other in Ethnographic and Colonial Literature," in Gerhard Fischer and Bernhard Greiner, eds., *The Play within the Play: The Performance of Meta-Theatre and Self- Reflection* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2007), 27.
[18] The details of these specific forms of canonization will be discussed later in this chapter.

art, money, and politics? Guided by these questions, this chapter first examines play makers' evolving self-identity from the 1920s to the 1940s, and then turns to previous attempts at creating a "backstage discourse" during this time, such as Tian Han and Wu Zuguang's (1919-2003) "theatre of dramatists" and the drama archives compiled by Song Chunfang (1892-1938) and Shu Weiqing (1908-1942). I argue that it was Chongqing dramatists' growing identification with the term *juren*—as opposed to *wenren*—coupled with these previous attempts at creating a backstage discourse and a canonization reflective of *juren*'s role as arbiters between commercial, aesthetic, and political concerns, that prompted Xia, Song, and Yu to present their own *juren*-centered canonical narrative of *huaju* history: the metadrama *XJCQ*. I further posit that in the politically charged environment of wartime Chongqing, staging a *huaju* about *huaju*-making was not only a clever way to bypass Guomindang (GMD) censorship and earn needed income; it was also the means by which a group of left-wing *juren* produced a work that effectively fulfilled the three pressing—but often contradictory—goals that had driven the *huaju* movement since the 1920s: professionalization (*zhiyehua*), popularization (*dazhonghua*), and politicization (*zhengzhihua*). A case study of *XJCQ* provides a vista unto the development of Chinese modern drama in the first half of the 20th century more broadly. Finally, I focus on three significant yet controversial "episodes" in *huaju*-making history, as well as how *XJCQ* depicts and canonizes these episodes on stage. Namely, I examine (1) the substitution of "gender appropriate casting" for "man playing woman," which was *huaju*'s performative norm in the 1920s; (2) the divergence between bohemian-cum-revolutionary left-wing dramatists and Shanghai-style cultural entrepreneurs that arose while making *huaju* in 1930s Shanghai; and (3) the uniting of the modern drama field in

1937 for the goal of national defense. Here, I argue that Ying Yunwei, a dramatist famous not for his dramaturge but for his networking skills and pragmatic approach to fundraising, was the "ideal candidate" upon which Xia, Song, and Yu could base their lead character, Lu Xiankui, and deliver their back-stage account of the history of Chinese modern drama. Not only was Ying reflective of the left-wing *juren* that Xia, Song, and Yu wished to promote; he was also capable of winning the audience's sympathy. Ying's backstage efforts to balance the demands of money, art, and politics would remind Chongqing viewers of their own struggles to eke out a living in the wartime capital.

I assert that by turning its look to the back-stage, *XJCQ* canonizes not signature plays and their creators, but the negotiations between art, money, and politics integral to *huaju*-making. The canonization of *huaju* put forward by *XJCQ* thus casts into doubt dominant teleological narratives of *huaju* as being predominately a literary genre and the public persona of men of theatre as bohemian playwrights. Instead, *XJCQ* presents a performance-centered understanding of *huaju* where men of theatre are cultural entrepreneurs forced to navigate commercial, artistic, and political fields. This new, "revisionist" perspective allows us to place Chinese modern drama alongside fiction and film, genres whose "official" histories were also shaped by May Fourth discourse but have since been rewritten to better reflect the lived realities of key players.[19] Faced with hegemony, *XJCQ* reminds us of the right for the silenced to be heard.

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[19] As Michel Hockx puts it, "It is time, in short, to remove the 'May Fourth' paradigm from the study of modern Chinese literature, or in Kirk Denton's words, 'to liberate modernity from its own discourses and reveal it in more historically complex ways' (Denton 1998: 7)." Hockx also points out several other examples of studies that "have moved in similar direction," including Lydia H. Liu's *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity-China, 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); and Charles Laughlin, *Chinese Reportage: The Aesthetics of Historical Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). See Michel Hockx, *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911-1937* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 5-6.

Why Stage *XJCQ*?

Levels of Identification: Juren*; Left-wing* Juren*; and Left-wing* Juren *in Chongqing*

Xia, Song, and Yu's collective attempt to place *juren*'s account of *huaju* within the canonical history of modern drama in 1943 required, first and foremost, an agreed-upon portrait of *juren* themselves, both in their archetypal leadership roles among the entire drama community, and in their everyday approach to play-making in 1940s Chongqing. Along with presenting a backstage-centered retelling of Chinese modern drama history, *XJCQ* is notable for revising the terms used to refer to those "drama workers" (*xiju gongzuo zhe*) devoted to *huaju*-making. Unsurprisingly, the condescending term *xizi* (show people), which was widely used to describe drama workers during the initial age of theatre reformation in the late Qing (1644-1911), appears in the play only when referring to "reactionary forces," such as 1920s policemen belonging to warlord governments and 1930s philistines who monopolize the Shanghai entertainment market. What is more striking is that the play rarely employs the terms *xiju jia* (dramatists) or *wenren*. Instead, *juren* is the preferred term for characters' self-reference. This updating of terminology was due to two factors. First, as a play that aspired to present the "blood and tears" history of the drama movement, *XJCQ* was duty-bound to observe the norms of self-reference within the drama field (*xiju jie*). Although the term *xiju jia* was still commonly used in public for discussing drama literature and productions, people who worked in the drama field felt that the term *juren* was better suited for their profession.[20] By the early

[20] In my 2010 interview with Hu Dao (1915-2013), a *huaju* director active in the left-wing drama field of the 1930s and 1940s, Hu confirmed that "*juren*" was the common term used by Shanghai dramatists. When

1940s, *huaju*-making and its accompanying discourse had already gone through a long, fruitful, yet difficult process of professionalization. During the two decades prior, under the influence of modern dramatists' efforts as well as market demands, the understanding of "writing *huaju*" (*xie ju*) gradually became subsumed to the conception of "making *huaju*" (*gan xi*). This resulted in a growing recognition in drama circles that *huaju*-making demanded collaborative work from playwrights, directors, performers, technicians, and other intellectual, performative, and manual laborers. Compared to the terms *xiju jia* and *wenren*, *juren* was more embracing in its reach, able to include all types of labor conducive to *huaju*-making. The change from *wenren* to *juren* thus represented a crucial step in the professionalization of the drama field, showing that *huaju*'s self-identity had moved from being a literary genre to a theatrical production, and that playwrights were but one type of play-makers.

Accompanying the shift from *wenren* to *juren* was Shanghai intellectuals' "turn" to left-wing culture in the 1930s, a period commonly referred to as a "left-wing" or "red" decade (*zuoyi de shinian*; *hongse de shinian*).[21] Influenced by Japan's left-wing drama

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referring to himself, his peers, and the one who inspired him to enter the theatre profession—Jin Shan (1911-1982), one of the most well-known left-wing drama activists—Hu Dao insisted on using the term "*juren*." In the interview, Hu Dao also emphasized that his engagement with *huaju* was, in his own words, "doing/making *huaju*" ("*gan*" *qi xi lai*). From 1940 to 1941, Hu Dao, as a member of the *Shanghai juyi she* (Shanghai Theatre Art Association), spent nearly every day acting, doing set-designing, and directing works on stage (*gan huaju*). Hu Dao held similar positions regarding *juren* and making *huaju* in his written memoire. See Hu Dao, *Ganxi qishinian zaji: shang shiji sansishi niandai Shanghai de huaju wutai* (*The Miscellaneous Memories of My Seventy-Years' Experiences Making Plays: The Shanghai Spoken Drama Stage in the 1930s and 1940s*) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2006). In addition, Ge Fei employs the term "*juren*" in his significant study of Shanghai's left-wing theater culture in the 1930s. See Ge Fei, *Xiju, Geming yu dushi xuanwo: 1930 niandai zuoyi juyun, juren zai shanghai* (*Drama, Revolution and the City: The Left-wing Drama Movement, and Men of Theatre in 1930s Shanghai*) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008).

[21] Ge Fei, "Xiangzuo zhuan: Boximiya shi yishujia zai 1930 niandai zhi shanghai" (Turn Left: Bohemian Artists in 1930s Shanghai), in *Hainan shifan daxue xuebao* (*Journal of Hainan Normal University*), vol. 25, no. 122, 2012, 33.

movement, *Huaju* also gained a "red" hue.[22] China's left-wing drama movement began in 1929 with the establishment of the *Shanghai yishu jushe* (Shanghai Art Drama Society), an organization founded by Xia Yan allegedly under the leadership of the CCP.[23] The movement expanded in the early 1930s after the Shanghai Art Drama Society was joined by Zuo Ming's (1902-1941) radical *Modeng she* (Modern Society), which had separated from Tian Han's Southern Society, and Zhu Rangcheng's (1901-1943) *Xinyou jushe* (Xinyou Drama Society). Collectively, these three groups formed the initial leading force behind left-wing drama.[24] Also, the Chinese League of Left-wing Dramatists was officially founded in 1931 under the supervision of the CCP, with the goal of influencing Chinese society to move in a "progressive" direction. Accordingly, *juren* affiliated with this organization gained the prefix of "left-wing" and were frequently (mis)represented as prioritizing political pursuits above everything else. Although the image of left-wing *juren* "going amongst the urban proletariat masses" and "raising the class consciousness of workers through their dramatic production"[25] is certainly romantic, it does not reveal the range of political, commercial, and artistic

[22] Ping Liu, "The Left-Wing Drama Movement in China and Its Relationship to Japan," in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, 14.2 (2006), 452. As Liu makes clear, the Japanese left-wing drama movement was deeply inspired by Russia's October Revolution. The movement began when the worker-activist Hirasawa Keishichi (1889-1923) formed the Workers' Drama Troupe in 1921 to propagate socialist causes among the laboring class. In 1925, two years after Hirasawa was murdered and the Workers' Drama Troupe was forced to disband, the Japanese League of Left-Wing Writers and Artists was formed and its drama unit was responsible for organizing the activities of the League of Left-Wing Drama.

[23] Bo Bin, *Zhongguo huaju shigao* (*The History of Chinese Spoken Drama*) (Shanghai: Shanghai fanyi chuban gongsi, 1991), 119-30. Early activities by the Shanghai Art Drama Society included translating and staging Western plays that "had less explicit political color but insisted on a certain political stand," such as Lu Märten's (1879-1970) *Bergarbeiter* (1908) that was first translated into Japanese and then Chinese. See Tian Han, Ouyang Yuqian, etc., eds., *Zhongguo huaju yundong wushinian shiliao ji* (*Historical Materials on the Chinese Drama Movement of the Last Fifty Years*), vol.1, (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1958), 308-09.

[24] Ge Fei, 2008, 40. Other *juren* that contributed to the left-wing drama movement included members of *Chuangzao she* (the Creation Society), *Taiyang she* (the Sun Society); Ying Yunwei's *Shanghai xiju xieshe*, and *Nanguo she*.

[25] Ping Liu, 461.

pressures that such men of drama faced.

Thankfully, recent scholarship has begun to address the ways in which leftwing cultural workers juggled such concerns. Although Leo Ou-fan Lee's *Shanghai Modern* made a truly significant contribution to scholarly understanding of Republican Shanghai's urban culture, the undue absence of the flourishing left-wing movement in Lee's 1999 work has been questioned, challenged, and, in the past decade, revised.[26] Tackling the issue of left-wing cinema, Zhang Zhen argues against the problematic view of left-wing films as an "isolated radical movement within the predominantly commercial Shanghai film industry."[27] Instead, the movement "emerged and thrived in a moment in Chinese and international film history when multiple ideological and aesthetic inclinations coexisted and commingled as much as they collided."[28] Shanghai left-wing cinema became "a subsegment of a multifaceted cultural movement, while the political exigencies pushed many to adopt a receptive attitude toward a progressive social and aesthetic orientation."[29] In a similar vein, Liang Luo, in her recent study on the intersection of "the avant-garde" and "the popular" through the lens of Tian Han, revisits and challenges the "widely accepted rhetoric of radical conversion, a move from 'aesthetic' school to the 'proletarian' camp among Chinese intellectuals around the year 1930."[30] Tian Han's "turn," in Luo's reading, appears to be more toward himself than to the "left." Luo further argues that the interpenetration between the avant-garde (artistic

[26] Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
[27] Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema 1896-1937* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 247.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 248.
[30] Liang Luo, *The Avant-garde and the Popular in Modern China: Tian Han and the Intersection of Performance and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 61.

pursuits) and the vanguard (political goals) was not only "possible" but actually common in the Nanjing Decade (1927-37). Luo's configuration of the political with the artistic—along with the commercial and the popular—in 1930s Shanghai reverberates with the scholarship of Ge Fei, who situates that decade's left-wing drama movement within the Shanghai mediasphere and the "mosaic" of urban culture. In Ge Fei's construction, Shanghai's left-wing drama movement included bohemians, revolutionaries, and money-makers. Left-wing dramas of the 1930s could be either "conventional" ones that aroused (or sought to arouse) political agitation among workers or "controversial" ones that earned a substantial profit but were criticized by other *juren* for not being sufficiently political. Ge Fei's work thus problematizes the easy association of "left-wing drama" with aesthetically lacking propaganda and low-tech performance.[31] Here, in my analysis of *XJCQ*, I press the questions raised by the abovementioned scholars and examine how "left-wing *juren*" situated themselves in the "real world" of Shanghai and Chongqing in the 1930s and 1940s where commercial, political, and artistic demands were ever-present.

Xia, Song, and Yu's efforts at self-identification and self-fashioning via dramatic literature and performance were undoubtedly subject to the nationwide (and global) war climate, on the one hand, and to the coming-to-shape of performative cultures in Chongqing during those "grim years" (1942-1944)[32] when war weariness had taken root in the temporary capital, on the other. While the GMD maintained the optimistic goal of defeating Japan in the international arena through the support of its foreign allies—the

[31] See Ge Fei, 2008 and 2012.
[32] Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation 1937-1945* (New York: Cambridge Press, 2010), 112.

United States, Britain, and the USSR[33]—its alliance with the CCP in the domestic context of national resistance was less assured. The leadership of the GMD was increasingly questioned by Communists and liberals who criticized the government for its bureaucratic and military corruption and indecisiveness. At the same time, the GMD became more suspicious of left-leaning literature and enacted more stringent controls over publishing and performative culture in Chongqing. Meanwhile, the worsening economic situation, including inflation, commodity shortages, and graft by compradors (*maiban*), turned Chongqing into a nightmarish city where the future could not be imagined. Facing both political and economic pressures, the authors of *XJCQ*, in order to get their play to the stage and the page, needed to strategically negotiate with the GMD's circumscribed tolerance of the left as well as with the despondent public spirit. It was in the light of such concerns that Song Zhidi first proposed to stage "*juren*" writ-large by reflecting upon Ying Yunwei's life story and his enduring dedication to *huaju* over the past three decades.

The "Birth Story" of XJCQ

The manner in which *XJCQ* was proposed and written testifies to the established drama network in wartime Chongqing. As mentioned, the playwrights Xia Yan, Song Zhidi, and Yu Ling drew a connection between *XJCQ* and Ying Yunwei's remarkable contribution to wartime spoken drama. Ying, the leader of *Zhonghua juyi she* (China Dramatic Society, *Zhongyi*), the first civilian drama troupe in Chongqing, was responsible for staging over 30 spoken dramas and more than 80 performances, mostly

[33] Ibid.

progressive, in Chongqing, Chengdu, Wuhan, and Shanghai.[34] Plays that caused both an artistic sensation and political controversy, such as *Qu Yuan* (1942) and *Shengguan tu* (1946), were part of *Zhongyi*'s repertoire under Ying's leadership. Originally recommended by Yang Hansheng (1902-1993) and Zhou Enlai in 1941 to be the "official" founder of *Zhongyi* because of his "neutral" political stand, established reputation in the drama field, and previous experience running the *Shanghai xiju xieshe* (Shanghai Theatre Association, STA) in the 1920s, Ying took his leadership role seriously and became responsible for raising funds, recruiting theatre talents, finding plays that were stageable ideologically and artistically, and negotiating with GMD censorship and unscrupulous middlemen in the theatre market.

Ying's achievements impressed *juren* of different political persuasions while his excellent networking skills and optimistic spirit earned him respect and empathy from the drama field in general. Soon after theatre and cinema talents in Chongqing celebrated Ying's 40th birthday at the *Zhongyang qingnian jushe* (aka *Zhongqing*, *The Central Youth Drama Society*) in September 1943, Xia Yan made the following comment, published in the *New People's Newspaper* (*Xinmin bao*): "If the history of the newly developing modern Chinese drama were to be told via the biography of a particular dramatist, Yunwei would be the ideal candidate." Enthusiastically echoing Xia's suggestion, Song Zhidi proposed transforming Xia's casual recognition of Ying's play-making activities into a theatrical venture capable of bringing both economic capital to *Zhongshu* and cultural capital to the drama field,

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[34] Wu Bin, "Zhonghua juyi she 'lianyan zhi' yu zhongguo huaju de chengshu" (The 'Ferris Wheel' of China Dramatic Art Society and the Maturation of Chinese Spoken Drama), in *Xiju yishu* (*Drama Art*), no. 4 (2010), 56.

> We have glorified the fields of journalism and education since the outbreak of the Resistance War because they contributed unimaginable efforts to war propaganda and education. But how about our drama field? We don't want to complain that no one credits our work; however, we should look back on our journey these past two decades and see all we have suffered and gone through. Let's write a play, we can name it *Annals of Theatre*…the Chinese Drama and Art Society [*Zhongshu*] has no plays to produce [because of the censorship]…let's work on this drama, such a theme will easily raise everyone's interest to write.[35]

Song's proposal received Xia's immediate support. Recognizing that Ying's legendary life dovetailed nicely with the course of China's drama movement in the 1910s to the 1930s, Xia designated Ying to be the ideal archetype for writing the history of modern Chinese drama based on the life stories of left-wing *juren*.

Interestingly, although Xia, Song, and Yu often struggled to complete their plays in time to satisfy the various (semi) professional drama troupes' hunger for stageable scripts,[36] their collective efforts at writing *XJCQ* were surprisingly smooth and the script was completed in just a month. Song recalls: "we all felt that we had a lot to contribute to this theme [*juren*'s engagement in *huaju*'s development]."[37] Apart from the passion these three dramatists shared for the theme and their familiarity with the materials, their agreement regarding *XJCQ*'s theatrical presentation—namely, that it should foreground the back-stage *huaju*-making activities of Ying and other men of theatre—was another

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[35] Xia Yan, Song Zhidi, and Yu Ling, *Xiju Chuqiu* (*Annals of Theatre*) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chuban she, 1981), 183.

[36] According to Xia, several of his signature plays, including *Shanghai wuyan xia* (*Under Shanghai's Eve*), *Faxisi xijun* (*The Fascist Germ*), and *Fuhuo* (*The Resurrection*), were only completed because of Ying's forceful insistence: "The summer of 1942 was unbearably scorching hot. I slept on the floor with my door open. It was around midnight when I was in a deep sleep that I felt a man suddenly fall on top of me, giving me a great shock. It was Ying Yunwei. He said, 'We don't have any plays to stage for this year's fog season festival; you have to write something for me.' Ying forced me to turn in a play by the end of August and insisted on sitting on my bedroom floor until I agreed." See Xia Yan, "Xia Yan huainian Ying Yunwei" (Xia Yan Remembers Ying Yunwei), in *Xin wenhua shiliao* (*Historical Materials of New Culture*), no. 4, 1990, 53.

[37] Xia, Song, and Yu, 1981, 185.

reason for the play's easy birth. Different from drama anthologies that mainly served to build *huaju*'s repertoire, or book collections and archival materials that aimed to document on-stage performances, *XJCQ* was an attempt at canonization that turned its gaze to the back-stage, the space central to the process of play-making but physically segregated from the presentation of plays. *XJCQ*'s focus on the activities taking place back-stage, or what I call "canonizing the back-stage," was not merely a convenient choice and staging tactic to accommodate plot development; this turn backwards also provided Xia, Song, and Yu—and by extension, all Chinese men of theatre—a new vantage point from which to address the three persistent but often frustrating ideologies that had guided *huaju*'s development for the past three decades: professionalization, popularization, and politicization. Instead of prioritizing one above the other two, the writers of *XJCQ* demonstrated the intricate relationship that existed among these three ideologies. *XJCQ* sought to expand the focus of audiences and critics from "judging" *huaju* solely as drama literature and/or performance to include an appreciation of the efforts made by Chinese *juren* to negotiate artistic, popular, and political concerns in *huaju*-making.

Earlier Examples of "Canonizing" the Back-stage

XJCQ was not the first *huaju* to turn its focus on the backstage and the process of playmaking. In this regard, *XJCQ* echoed earlier dramatic works, which Xiaomei Chen defines as the "theatre of dramatists,"[38] that highlighted the lives, social relations, and environment of performers. Perhaps the best embodiments of such "theatre of

[38] Xiaomei Chen, ed., *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 386.

dramatists" are Tian Han's *Mingyou zhi si* (*The Death of an Actor*, 1927)[39] and Wu Zuguang's *Fengxue yegui ren* (*Return on a Snowy Night,* 1942).[40] These plays, which dramatize the suffering of Peking opera performers who face declining careers and increasing exploitation and disrespect from patrons, depicts the embattled life, or a life charged with "tears and blood," that both types of *juren*—the performers/characters selling art (*maiyi*) in the illusionary plays and the modern dramatist making the plays in reality—shared. *Death*, Tian Han's most mature and successful play in the 1920s, stemmed from his fascination with a purported poem by Baudelaire (1821-1867) about "the heroic death" of a master actor, as well as the true story of Liu Hongshen (?-1921), a Peking opera *laosheng* master, whose floundering career led to his sudden death back-stage.[41] Guided by Tian Han's philosophical but melancholic inquiry into the illusionary nature of performance as well as his sympathetic understanding of Liu's life, *Death* strikes a harsh contrast between Liu Zhensheng's (the male protagonist modeled on Liu Hongshen) potent performances of heroic Peking opera figures on stage and the hardship of his life back-stage where he had to sacrifice his dignity, art, and eventually his life because of financial pressures. Considering that Tian Han by the late 1920s was likewise troubled by a series of financial burdens incurred through running the Southern Drama

[39] First performed in winter 1927 during the Dragon and Fish Art Festival (*Wenyi yulong hui*) in Shanghai, *Death*, despite not having a complete written script, was Tian Han's most accomplished rendering of performers' lives and remained one of the most frequently staged plays of the Southern Drama Society Theatre Movement (*Nanguo she xiju yundong*, 1927-1930). See Xiaomei Chen, "Tian Han and the Southern Society Phenomenon: Networking the Personal, Communal, and Cultural," in Kirk A. Denton and Michel Hockx, eds., *Literary Societies of Republican China* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 251.
[40] Tian Han's *Guan Hanqing* is a post-1949 example of "the theatre of dramatists."
[41] Xiaomei Chen, 2008, 253.

Society, the Shanghai Art School, and aborted film projects,[42] it is easy to read Liu Zhensheng's sorrowful laments and tragic death as reflecting Tian Han's own suffering.

Staged fifteen years later in Chongqing, Wu Zuguang's *Return* employs the same source material of Peking opera performers' bitter lives to stage a sensational *huaju* blockbuster at a time when life in the temporary capital, in both material and spiritual senses, had fallen into dire straits. Hoping to explore "the flesh and bones beneath the glamorous allure" of stardom, Wu depicts the "blood and tears" story of a famous *dan* singer, Wei Liansheng, who goes from being a celebrity to an old man who dies alone outdoors on a snowy night. The play is a meditation on the fleetingness of fame.

Return particularly dramatizes the friendship and romance between Yuchun, a government official's concubine, and Wei, the cross-dressing Peking opera star, both of whom are Chief Justice Su's "playthings for their youthfulness and physical attractiveness."[43] *Return*'s focus on the relationship between these "two most pitiable people" reveals, as Xiaomei Chen reads it, an inverse of the traditional gender order, shown most clearly when Yuchun bursts the "vanity and ephemerality"[44] of Wei's stardom by encouraging him to abandon the stage to pursue genuine self-fulfillment.

Yet, apart from its progressive depiction of gender roles, psychological nuance, and formalistic innovativeness,[45] Wei's on-stage cross-dressing performance and off-stage romance with Yuchun demonstrates a strong "mandarin duck and butterfly" flavor

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[42] As Liang Luo puts it, Tian Han obtained "stabilized income from China Books, the newly formed cultural network of which he was the nexus, and the financial support he received from Tang Huaiqiu…provided him with the opportunity to realize a long-harbored 'silver dream.'" However, Tian's goal of running a leading film studio was unfulfilled. "Tian Han's privately funded *Nanguo she* soon found itself competing for students with an official rival, the government funded *Xihu yishu xueyuan* (West Lake Art Institute)." See Liang Luo, 83-89.
[43] Xiaomei Chen, 2010, 18.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid., 19.

and strongly echoes the plot and theme of Qin Shou'ou's (1908-1993) *Qiu Haitang* (*Begonia*), considered to be "the first and foremost Butterfly romance novel in Republican China."[46] Published in *Shen bao* in 1941—a year before Wu Zuguang wrote *Return*—*Begonia* quickly attracted interest from practitioners of Shanghai opera (*huju*) and *wenming xi* due to its melodramatic narrative as well as the story's frequent allusions to the male protagonist Qiu Haitang's *dan* performances on-stage and the homo-/hetero-eroticism pervasive in the relationships between performers and patrons off-stage. Although Wu never openly remarked on the similarity between his play and Qin's story, it is clear that both Qin's "Butterfly romance" and Wu's "theatre of a dramatist" positioned the "back-stage" of Peking opera and "off-stage" network of opera performers as the social milieu that housed the tragic life stories of traditional performative artists. The two works also reveal that the boundaries between *huaju* and Mandarin Duck-inspired *wenming xi* were not distinct. In fact, even Tian Han's *Death* employs exaggerated sentiment. Whether it be the tragic hero in Tian Han's drama or the melodramatic protagonist performing a life of "blood and tears" in Wu's play, these two works of "theatre of dramatists" invoked playmakers' melancholic reflection on the tragedy of performance and provoked empathetic tears from performers and sympathy from the audience.[47]

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[46] Bonnie S. McDougall and Kam Louie, eds., *The Literature of China in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 230.
[47] The glaring disjuncture between the downtrodden life of operatic performers back-stage and their spectacular on-stage performances also provoked the interest of 1930s film-makers, who made use of the newly developing sound technology to better deliver their melancholic content to the masses. In fact, operatic performances, or *xi*, were never far removed from early Chinese shadow plays (*yingxi*). The very first Chinese film, Ren Jingfeng's (1851-1930) *Dingjun shan* (*Dingjun Mountain*), was a filming of an act of Peking opera performed by the famous actor Tan Xipei (1847-1917) at Ren's photography shop in Beijing. See Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, "Chinese Cinemas (1896-1996) and Transnational Film Studies," in

These successful *huaju* productions likely contributed to Xia, Song, and Yu's decision to use *huaju* to tell a story about *huaju*. Furthermore, *Zhongyi*'s successful staging of *Return* in Chongqing in 1942, in which Ying played a supporting role, also confirmed for these three writers the potential box-office success that awaited a work with a self-reflexive theme. Yet, despite these precedents, *XJCQ*'s shift in focus from individual operatic celebrities to *huaju*-makers' off-stage networking actually subverted existing *huaju* canonizations.

Previous examples of "theatres of dramatists," while eliciting sympathetic feelings for those operatic performers, did not directly challenge the political promotion and manipulation of *huaju*-making or the established intellectual narratives of *huaju* as an integral modern literary genre. However, Xia, Song, and Yu's dramatization of the *huaju* movement criticizes GMD and warlord interference while bringing previously unknown backstage preparations for *huaju* productions to the foreground. With its construction of *huaju*-making's recent history, *XJCQ* thus does not align with the "invented" tradition of operatic performative culture; instead, it directly critiques the newly established *huaju* myth predominantly composed by Tian Han, Hong Shen, and Ouyang Yuqian in the 1930s and aspires to present an alternative canonization of modern drama. It boldly puts forward a reconfigured structure of the drama hierarchy, where the impetus lay not with playwrights and their intellectual peers, but with back-stage producers, directors, and stagehands capable of balancing artistic, commercial, and political demands.

Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, ed., *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 4.

XJCQ*, the Discourse of "Blood and Tears," and the Politics of War-time Chongqing*

XJCQ's thematic concerns about the "blood and tear" struggles of *juren* made the play instantly distinguishable from the plethora of propaganda-driven dramas that highlighted the nationalist government's dual agendas of "defending the nation" (*guofang*) and "building the state" (*jianguo*). However, one should not take this difference to mean that *XJCQ* was apolitical. By the early 1940s, the tradition of delivering political content in *huaju* plays via historical allegory or other seemingly non-political themes was well established. In 1942, Guo Moruo's (1892-1978) five-act historical play, *Qu Yuan*, was successfully debuted by Ying Yunwei's *Zhongyi* in Chongqing. Although *Qu Yuan*'s plot was based on events that took place in the Chu Kingdom (1030-223 BCE), Chongqing spectators "knew that King Huai of Chu referred to Chiang Kai-shek" and that "Qu Yuan represented the common fate of the revolutionary cultural workers at the time."[48] A seemingly "historical" play could thus offer subtle critiques of contemporary issues. Inspired by the success of *Qu Yuan*, Zhou Enlai proposed the organization of another drama troupe for the sake of further consolidating the progressive drama movement in Chongqing: *Zhongshu* was founded by Xia Yan, Song Zhidi, Yu Ling, and others in December 1942.

XJCQ, *Zhongshu*'s most well-known production, delivered social commentary on two interrelated "problems" caused by the GMD's governing and war policies. First, the frequent interruption of *juren*'s *huaju*-making endeavors by political powers (warlords and Japan) is the play's primary good vs. evil conflict. *XJCQ*'s portrayal of *juren*'s

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[48] Rudolf G. Wagner, *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama: Four Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 14.

furious complaints against—and creative negotiations with—political powers was a way to depict the realities that Chongqing *huaju*-makers, including the members of *Zhongshu,* faced in their everyday struggles against the Nationalist government's cultural censorship of *huaju* literature and production. In other words, ridiculing and criticizing the intrusion of the old (warlords) and the foreign (Japanese) into the theatrical space was a way for *XJCQ* to expresses *juren*'s intolerance toward the Nationalist government's political heavy-handedness. Second, from Act 2 to Act 4, *XJCQ* constructs its drama history based on the split within the drama field between bohemian-cum-revolutionaries, on the one hand, and Shanghai-style cultural entrepreneurs, on the other. However, for the sake of national salvation, these two polarized groups unite in the final act to resist the Japanese. Making the reunion of the drama field *XJCQ*'s climax was a not-too subtle way for *Zhongshu* to show its political sympathy for the CCP. Although the CCP and GMD were still technically allied in the war effort, cooperation between the two parties had ceased following the New Fourth Army Incident of January 7-13, 1941. By highlighting the importance of the United Front, *Zhongshu* indirectly criticizes the Nationalists, who, in Communist discourse, were to blame for the Front's *de facto* collapse. In this regard, *XJCQ*'s narrative about spoken drama's history and factionalism illuminated both the war effort and the political struggle between the Communists and Nationalists. *XJCQ*'s presentation of *juren*'s struggling history, despite being set in the past, would thus have resonated with the real lives of *huaju*-makers and *huaju*-audiences in wartime Chongqing.

Even before the play began, clever audience members would have been able to grasp *XJCQ*'s intended link between the fate of *juren* and that of the Chinese nation. A

dramatic understanding and depiction of historical reality; mythical allegory; and historical struggling were all alluded to in *XJCQ*'s *Preface*, and in *juren*'s play-making endeavors. Xia, Song, and Yu, speaking in a sentimental and poetic voice, employ the martyr image of Saint Christopher to depict the selflessness of playmakers:

> *To one person,*
> *To a group of people,*
> *To those who still stand up,*
> *To those who already fell,*
> *We sing,*
> *We weep,*
> *We annalize (chunqiu) our saints.*
> *The dawn is coming,*
> *We glorify our heroes.*
> *It has been a long run,*
> *Saint Christopher, exhausted, turns back and looks at the child on his back,*
> *Ah, you, the tiring,*
> *forthcoming tomorrow!*[49]

Drawing parallels between Saint Christopher, a legendary figure who carried the Christ-child on his back across a hazardous river,[50] and the similarly exhausted *juren* who had by that time trudged through three decades' worth of difficulties making plays, the *Preface* depicts *juren* as China's "future-bearers" who sacrificed on behalf of their still-fragile nation. *XJCQ*'s *Preface*, serving as the prelude (*kaipian*) for the play, offers a boundary-crossing between historical, mythical, and theatrical realities.

Ever since the drama reformation (*xiqu gailiang*) of the late Qing, a conscious self-elevation and repositioning of performers—from (sexual) laborers to artists and

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[49] Xia, Song, and Yu, 1946, 1.

[50] According to legend, St. Christopher was instructed to serve God by assisting people to cross a dangerous river. One day, when taking a child on his back, Christopher felt the child became such a heavy burden that he could barely continue. Turning around, Christopher asked, "O, child, how heavy thou art! It seems I bear the weight of the world on my shoulder." The child was Christ. Http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com Accessed September 10, 2014.

performative intellectuals—was intertwined with a Western-inspired enlightenment discourse that saw drama and theatre not as commercial entertainment, but as social education.[51] By affirming that *juren* were directly engaged in making histories and preparing for China's future, *XJCQ* expanded upon this enlightenment discourse. The *Preface* linked the rhetoric of documenting history—*chunqiu* in the Chinese sense—with Saint Christopher's service to Christ to make new metaphors for performers and theatrical undertakings. *Juren* and their play-making, in *XJCQ*'s canonization, were "saints" according to both Chinese (recording history) and Western (enabling the future) understandings. In this manner, *XJCQ* boldly elevated *juren* from being associated with traditional performative artists and the suffering poor—which is how they were depicted in Tian Han and Wu Zuguang's sympathetic understanding and self-identification—to "saints" whose play-making activities were "histories" worthy of documentation and annalization (*chunqiu*). No longer were *juren* mere performers who "entertained" their audience. They were recorders of history and prophets of the coming age.

This sensationalized depiction of *juren* finds echoes with the "literature of blood and tears" that was strongly promoted by Mao Dun (1896-1981) and Zheng Zhenduo (1898-1958) in the 1920s to compete with the "comfort" (*anwei*) literature of "Butterfly writers."[52] *XJCQ* in its *Preface* promised to "sing" and "weep" for Ying Yunwei and his generation of progressive *juren* who had similarly "sung" and "wept" on stage and off for the aesthetic and structural development of *huaju*. It was precisely this double

[51] For example, late Qing reformers such as Liang Qichao (1873-1929), May Forth radical intellectuals such as Chen Duxiu (1879-1942), and traditional performers such as Xia Yueshan (1868-1924) all espoused theatre as a "school" and performers as "teachers."
[52] Christopher G. Rea, "Comedy and Cultural Entrepreneurship in Xu Zhuodai's *Huaji* Shanghai," in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture,* vol. 20, no. 2 (Fall 2008), 45.

dramatization of "singing" and "weeping" that was promoted as *huaju*'s "history of blood and tears" (*xuelei shi*) in *XJCQ*'s commercial advertising in 1943. By believing that the dramatic "realities" performed on-stage and *juren*'s play-making activities conducted backstage should both be *chunqiu*-ed as history, Xia, Song, and Yu inserted *juren*'s efforts into the established "blood and tears" discourse, which itself could be read as the *history* of modern Chinese sentimental subjectivity.

The discourse of "blood and tears," as Perry Link, Haiyan Lee, Christopher Rea, and Jiang Jin all argue, became established at the turn of the twentieth century when educated men who were denied entry into the government bureaucracy turned to writing melancholically charged literature for a living.[53] The much quoted preface of Liu E's (1857-1909) novel *Lao Can youji* (*Travels of Lao Can*, 1903) best manifests the prominent place that the discourse of "blood and tears" enjoyed in the late Qing literary field.[54] Liu writes that "weeping" (*wawa*) and "wailing" (*haotao*) do more than simply mark the beginning and end of a man's life. Weeping is the measurement for "the quality of a man" because it is "the expression of a spiritual nature."[55] Ironically, these "weeping" sentiments in *XJCQ* would likely remind readers and the audience, especially those who migrated to Chongqing from Shanghai, of the "weepie" romances and slapsticks that were popular in Shanghai but supposedly anathema for left-wing *juren*. In this regard, *XJCQ* would appear to be part of the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly literature,

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[53] Ibid. Also see Perry Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); and Jiang Jin, "Chinese Salomés on the Modern Stage," in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, vol. 23 no. 2 (Fall 2011).

[54] Liu Tieyun, who wrote under the penname of Liu E, had worked in flood control and famine relief for the Qing government before being dismissed for rice speculation during the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901).

[55] Liu Tieh-yun, *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*, trans. Harold Shadick (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 1; Rea, 45.

a type of melodrama that Peter Brooks believes was less a genre than "the contours of a coherent mode of imagining and representing."[56]

Rather than showing a lack of aesthetic rigor, I believe that *XJCQ*'s use of such "low-brow" conventions was deliberate. *XJCQ*, despite being written and staged by left-wing men of theatre and featuring a substantial leftist bent, aspired to stage and accommodate a "structure of feeling"[57] with tragic, sentimental, and funny modes.[58] In other words, it sought to lift the public's war-weary spirit at the same time that it educated them about the history of *huaju* and the role of *juren*. This blending of the popular with the didactic helped to make *XJCQ* palatable for the masses, and kept the work from being a dry piece of propaganda.

In sum, *XJCQ* belies easy understandings of an intrinsic autonomy between popular and intellectual, art and market, and leftist/Communist and Nationalist. Xia, Song, and Yu skillfully delivered their political agenda within the play's avant-garde drama structure and multiple-layered theatricality, which were then made palpable through an infusion of sentimentality and graceful performances. Threading political, literary/dramatic, and personal histories together to form an overall progressive trajectory—such as mapping the transition from individual pursuits of "art for art's sake" and the dramatic achievements of the "small self" to collective fighting for the goal of national defense and the realization of the "larger self"—*XJCQ* combined "proletarian

[56] Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), vii.
[57] Rea, 43.
[58] Ibid.

culture" with an arty temperament.[59] It was a politically motivated work that enjoyed mass appeal while remaining aesthetically satisfying.

Untangling the Motivations behind Writing XJCQ

Beyond wanting to tell the "blood and tears" history of the drama movement, Xia, Song, and Yu were further motivated by the urgency they felt to legally publish and stage a play that could pass through the tightening GMD censorship. Since 1937, with the flood to Chongqing of politically-progressive theatre talents, and with spoken drama's increasing popularity as both a propaganda weapon and a mass medium, the Nationalist regime had issued and revised a series of legal acts to regulate the running of drama troupes and their public performances. The party-state aimed to "tame" the political activism of spoken drama and make spoken drama and the drama network in general its own political weapons. However, as Ma Junshan's archival work has shown, the GMD's vision and definition of drama remained ambiguous and constantly shifted between that of "political tool" and "entertainment commodity."[60] While allowing traditional theatre troupes to freely perform in Chongqing, spoken drama troupes were subject to regulation and supervision from both local GMD party branches and the central GMD headquarters. Therefore, many of the early drama troupes that performed in the Chongqing area, such as *Zhongqing*, *Zhongdian* (*Central Film Studio*), and *Zhongzhi* (*China Film Studio*), ran

[59] Of course, echoing scholarly observations and arguments made in the fields of left-wing cinema and woodblock prints, one may find the concerns, efforts, and frustrations in combining progressive ideology and artistic creativity in the writing and staging of *XJCQ*. For more information, see Xiaobing Tang, *Origins of the Chinese Avant-garde: The Modern Woodcut Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); and Zhang Zhen.

[60] Ma Junshan, *Yanju zhiyehua yundong* (*Theatre's Professionalization Movement*) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2007), 243.

under state supervision.[61] This monopoly of state-supervised drama troupes was briefly challenged by the emergence of civilian drama troupes in the early 1940s, such as Ying Yunwei's *Zhongyi*, but with the issuing of "Measures for Censorship of Plays' Publication and Performance" (*Juben chuban ji yanchu shencha jiandu banfa*) in 1942, all plays' scripts and performances published and staged in Chongqing were subject to review by the Central Books and Journals Censorship Committee (*Zhongyang tushu zazhi shencha hui*).[62]

Zhongshu, which leaned left, had felt the effects of government censorship directly.[63] Although their initial production, *Calling from the Homeland* (*Zuguo zai zhaohuan*), directed by Hong Shen in December 1942, was staged without incident, *Zhongshu*'s two proposed follow-up plays (names unknown) were both aborted because of GMD bowdlerization, and the company did not stage another work until September 1943.[64] For the sake of maintaining their troupe, a play was needed that could not only evade GMD censorship, but also strike a responsive chord among a mass audience. In light of such demands, an "objective" play about the history of the drama field and drama

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[61] During the war period, it was not uncommon for film studios to also stage *huaju* via their own drama troupes. *Zhongdian* and *Zhongzhi* each had their own troupes that performed regularly in the Chongqing region (sometimes as far away as Chengdu and Kunming) to popular acclaim. See Weihong Bao, "Diary of a Homecoming: (Dis)Inhabiting the Theatrical in Postwar Shanghai Cinema," in Zhang Yingjin, ed., *A Companion to Chinese Cinema* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 385.

[62] Ma Junshan, 248. As Ma Junshan states, the Nationalist government's evolving censorship policies represented a strengthening of central authority. Previously, the power to censor had rested with various local bureaucratic organizations. With the establishment of the Central Books and Journals Censorship Committee (CBJCC) in 1942, however, the GMD began to exercise its centralized power (*jiquan*). Also see "Chongqing shi xiju jiancha shishi banfa" (The Methods of Drama and Theatre Censorhip in Chongqing), April 25, 1942, 0060-0001-00384, CMH.

[63] In fact, Xia Yan was already well acquainted with GMD censorship before co-founding *Zhongshu*. A decade prior, his Shanghai Art Drama Society was forced to disband by the Public Security Bureau of the Municipality of Shanghai on April 28, 1932, due to the troupe's promotion of "proletarian drama" (*wuchan jieji xiju*). See Tian Han, Ouyang Yuqian, etc., eds., *Zhongguo huaju yundong wushinian shiliao ji*, 308-09.

[64] Xia, Song, and Yu, 1981, 182.

activists, in Xia, Song, and Yu's minds, would be easier to stage than an overtly political work.

Presenting an accurate view of *juren* and relieving *Zhongshu*'s financial burdens only constituted the obvious reasons for writing and staging *XJCQ*. What I believe fundamentally motivated Xia, Song, and Yu's collaborative reflection of the *huaju* movement, or as Song framed it, "the difficult path we have trudged," lay in three intriguing and bewildering paradoxes of the 1930s and 1940s drama field: (1) *huaju*'s high visibility in both metropolitan and rural China combined with the increasing difficulties faced by left-wing *juren* when it came to achieving *huaju* popularization and professionalization; (2) the intellectual and political endeavors of taking control of *huaju* discourse combined with the still ambiguous understanding of *huaju* and *juren* by the general public; and (3) the dilemma of commercialism,[65] or the difficulty of creating a popular yet politically relevant form of *huaju* that would be accepted by both the masses and critics. In short, *XJCQ*'s intent to promote an "insider" view of *huaju* and *huaju*-making did not conflict with the *huaju* popularization, professionalization, and politicization projects that had, for nearly three decades, been the focus of *juren*'s creativity and endeavors.

[65] As mentioned, the difficulty in striking a balance between political and commercial interests was not a problem exclusive to left-wing *juren*. Indeed, the "dilemma of commercialism" was felt throughout left-wing cultural circles at large. In contrast to the paucity of scholarly discussions regarding the left-wing drama field, studies on left-wing cinema have sufficiently detailed the historical context and cultural debates regarding such concerns. See Laikwan Pang, *Building a New China in Cinema: The Chinese Left-wing Cinema Movement 1932-1937* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 141-63; and Zhen Zhang, 244-97.

The Three Paradoxes of *Huaju*

One: How to Combine Popularization with Professionalization

Scholars such as Xiaomei Chen, Chang-tai Hung, and Liang Luo have persuasively argued that *huaju* experienced its formative development in the 1930s and 1940s. The 1930s saw *huaju* change from being a modern cultural practice born out of intellectual elitism with only limited popularity among urban and educated youth to being a popular art form that thrived in Shanghai's cultural mediasphere.[66] In Shanghai, during the second half of the decade, "large-theatre" (*da juchang*) blockbusters, such as *Leiyu* (1936), *Sai Jinhua* (1936), and *Wu Zetian* (1937), ran full-house "Ferris Wheel" (i.e. marathon) performances averaging over 30 days each.[67] In fact, the solid profits made by *huaju* performances in the Shanghai entertainment market and the considerable public recognition that the genre enjoyed forced the Carleton—the city's most famous cinema—to accommodate drama performances in 1937,[68] which tellingly illustrates *huaju*'s thriving status in the city's cultural space. *Huaju*'s public visibility further expanded geographically from metropolitan cities to rural China after 1937 thanks to the traveling performances provided by (semi) professional drama troupes and units organized by both political parties (the CCP and GMD) and intellectual-students. According to Chang-tai Hung's overly modest estimation, more than 2,500 units organized traveling performances of *huaju* in rural areas during the war period.[69] By the 1940s, *huaju* had

[66] Xiaomei Chen, 2001, 848-77 and Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 49-93.
[67] Respectively, *Leiyu* ran over 44, *Wu Zetian* ran over 28, and *Sai Jinhua* ran over 40 performances in a row. See Ge Fei, 2008, 223.
[68] Weihong Bao, 385.
[69] These performances involved some 75,000 participants. Chang-tai Hung points out that since it remains impossible to calculate the total number for spoken drama's audience, this figure remains an underestimate. See Chang-tai Hung, 50.

become a staple in the modern play/cinema palaces of the metropolitan areas as well as the make-shift stages found in rural communities.

Nevertheless, underneath the promising trends regarding *huaju*'s broadening appeal lay left-wing men of theatre's confusion regarding how to uphold and practice "popularization." In line with the avant-garde call of the 1920s to "go to the people" (*dao minjian qu*),[70] drama "popularization" remained the dominant agenda of *huaju* discourse, especially among *juren* who self-identified as "left-wing." However, the actual practice of left-wing drama ironically departed from this ideal when it left student campuses and factory floors for the "larger theatre" to embrace a broad urban audience in Shanghai. Left-wing drama activities, following the lead of other left-wing cultural movements (such as film and literature), changed course after the January 28th Incident, a five-week war between China and Japan in 1932, turning away from political activities that predominantly served the purpose of (underground) political agitation among workers and students to being a mass medium competing with cinema, opera, and local/folk performances for popular patronage. Prior to 1932, left-wing *juren*, affiliated either to the CCP or to bohemian communities (such as the Southern Society), put on *huaju* performances in festivals and political assemblies that were free of commercial concerns. After 1932, however, both the amateur features in *huaju* productions and the bohemian network of left-wing *juren* were transformed by drama professionalization. As their dramas began to be staged in modern playhouses and cinema palaces as cultural products for sale, the majority of left-wing *juren* joined commercially run drama troupes and cultural institutions. In the face of profitability concerns, the minimalist tech-design

[70] Liang Luo, 38-39.

(lightening, costume, set, etc.) and unregulated rehearsals that sufficed when *huaju* performances were underground affairs no longer functioned. Left-wing *juren* were thus confronted with new challenges in shaping their strategies and ideals for writing, staging, and marketing plays.[71]

Market pressures became particularly acute. Different from folk performances (such as story-telling, *xiangsheng*, etc.) whose budgets only covered individual performers, *huaju* performances in large theatres demanded collaboration from a host of talents. Although left-wing *juren* were consciously hostile toward market-oriented commercialism, one still had to accept that a *huaju* production's budget needed to cover, at a minimum, the rent of a cinema palace or modern play house, the expense of designing and making stage sets and costumes, and providing actors' living expenses for rehearsals that often lasted a week or more.

Such high production costs made for expensive tickets. For example, in the early 1930s, an average *huaju* ticket in Shanghai cost around 1 *yuan* compared to 0.5 *yuan* for a film ticket.[72] Spoken drama's higher ticket prices meant that its patrons were predominantly drawn from individuals belonging to financially comfortable households, or in Ge Fei's term, "middle-class households" (*zhongchan zhijia*), and not the urban poor.[73] *Huaju* was thus too expensive and too elitist for proletarians to consume. As a result, the popularity of *huaju* in Shanghai (and other metropolitan centers), ironically excluded the intended objects of *huaju* popularization—the underrepresented masses of urban China—from its audience.

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[71] Ge Fei, 2008, 126.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 137.

Even among the audience that could afford *huaju* tickets, the agenda of popularization did not go smoothly. Noticeably, the demographics of the large-theatre *huaju* audience included three sub-groups each possessing their own distinct cultural identities: students and intellectual elites; urban citizens who remained aloof to the enlightenment discourse and upheld a "low" taste in cultural consumption (the so-called "petty urbanites," *xiao shimin*); and those who had received middle-higher education but were no longer students, yet did not share the "low" taste of petty urbanites.[74] As one might expect, these different cultural identities generated distinct inquiries about and understandings of spoken drama, which in turn prompted more difficulties for left-wing *juren* in terms of adjusting their strategies of selecting drama literature and their vision of spoken dramas' social and commercial function. The diverse cultural expectations of the "middle-class" audience made it difficult for left-wing *juren* to maintain their artistic radicalism and cultural elitism.

XJCQ's meta-discourse of canonizing drama history was therefore directly situated in *juren*'s personal experiences of the problems associated with *huaju* popularization. As a public record of left-wing *juren*'s "blood-and-tear" dedication to the drama movement and *huaju* history in general, *XJCQ* was intended to be the gateway for left-wing drama veterans (Xia, Song, and Yu) to address these concerns. In particular, by focusing on the play-making experiences of Ying Yunwei, the writers of *XJCQ* presented the example of a successful *juren* who had demonstrably solved the dilemma of the first paradox—how to boost *huaju* professionalization while keeping the genre within the reach (both aesthetically and financially) of the broad masses.

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[74] Ibid.

Two: How to Form a Juren-*centered Canonization of* Huaju

The second paradox centers on the conflict between attempts at *huaju* canonization in the second half of the 1930s, which consisted of efforts at collecting historical materials of the *huaju* movement and the writing down of *huaju*'s historical development, and the still ambiguous understanding of *juren*'s contributions to intellectual and popular discourse. Although dramatists since the late Qing and early Republican era had been engaged in writing new plays and defining literary and theatrical grammars, building both the genre and the repertoire in the process, *huaju* only began a conscious effort at canonization in the 1930s. Hong Shen's "Introduction to Drama," the most recognizable attempt to narrate *huaju* history and set the yardstick for drama literature with selected plays, represents but one such effort. Roughly at the same time that Hong's essay was published, other significant though less mentioned efforts at canonization—relating to drama book collections and the acquisition of archival materials—were taking place in Qingdao and Hankou.

In 1931, Song Chunfang,[75] one of China's earliest dramatists and dramatic theorists, invested over 4000 *kuai* to build his personal drama library, Hemu lu (Coramo) —which took its name after three 17th century French dramatists, Pierre Corneille (1606-

[75] Song Chunfang might be better known today as Wang Guowei's (1877-1927) cousin and a child prodigy who earned the academic degree of *xiucai* at the age of 13. Song's pioneering role in introducing European and American drama to Chinese intellectuals from the 1910s to the 1930s has only recently been addressed in scholarship. Graduating from Shanghai's St. John's University in 1912, Song went on to study political science, sociology, and drama in France and other European countries. Song's expertise with multiple foreign languages and his passion for theatre aided his exposure to European dramatic cultures. In 1918, Song was appointed by Cai Yuanpei (1868-1949) to the French department at Beijing University, where he offered the first Western theatre course in a Chinese university. Those wishing to learn more about Song's dramatic leanings should consult W. Somerset Maugham's (1874-1965) *On a Chinese Screen* (London: W. Heinemann, 1922), which includes the author's conversation with Song Chunfang regarding Chinese drama and dramatists.

1684), Jean Racine (1639-1699), and Moliere (1622-1673)—in a private house near Hong Shen's residence in Qingdao. Revered by his contemporaries as a "world drama book collector," Song preserved over 7,800 copies of plays, drama theories and criticism, drama histories, journals, and Chinese opera scripts that he had gathered during two trips to Europe in 1912-1916 and 1920, respectively.[76] Such a rich collection not only gave Song the clout to inscribe drama into the popular discourse of the "literature revolution" and "literature reformation" of the late 1910s[77] and introduce expressionism, futurism, and other European-American theatre styles to the Chinese dramatic community in the following decades;[78] the library also served as a salon where contemporary dramatists and culture figures such as Hu Shi, Hong Shen, Liang Shiqiu (1903-1987), and Li Jianwu (1906-1982) could consolidate their drama network in the 1930s, and it even continued to be a place of inspiration and refuge for dramatists who stayed in Shanghai during the "Orphan Island" period (1937-1941) when the city was not yet fully occupied by the Japanese.[79] Between 1932 and 1938, Song compiled and/or published *Hemu lu cang xiqu shu xiemu* (Catalogue: Opera Scripts Collected in the Coramo Library) and *Hemu*

[76] For specific categories and volumes, please refer to Song Chunfang, *Hemu lu cangju mu* (*Catalogue: The Coramo Library*) (publisher unknown, 1934) and Xu Yajuan, *Guojia tushugan cang hemu lu cangshu zhenben juyao* (Summary of *Coramo Library Catalogue* Reserved in the National Library of China), (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan, 2010).

[77] In a special issue of *Xin qingnian* (*New Youth*) published in 1918, *Xiju gailiang zhuanhao* (*Special Issue on Drama Reformation*), Song Chunfang's drama catalogue, "Jindai mingxi baizhong mu" (The Catalogue of A Hundred Modern Signature Plays), was published next to proposals on drama reform written by Hu Shi and Fu Sinian (1896-1950). Unlike Hu's and Fu's politically charged calls for drama reform and their introductory translation of Henrik Ibsen, which have come to mark the start of *huaju*'s participation in the New Culture Movement, Song's efforts at collecting drama books have been overlooked in the narratives of modern drama history.

[78] Song published the first volume of *Song Chunfang lunju* (*Song Chunfang on Drama*) in 1923. The other two volumes, *Song Chunfang lunju Vol. 2* and *Kaisa dadi dengtai* (*Julius Caesar on Stage*) were published in 1936 after the construction of Hemu lu.

[79] In September 1940, *Juchang yishu* (*Theatre Art*) had a special issue memorializing Song Chunfang's contribution to the development of modern Chinese drama as a drama theorist, translator, and collector of drama-related books and archival materials.

cangshu jumu (Catalogue: The Coramo Library), and began to compile *Ouzhou xiju shi* (History of European Drama) but was forced to stop due to ill-health.

Song's efforts undoubtedly contributed to Chinese dramatists' knowledge of world theatre in the 1930s. Yet, his private collection understandably wore an elitist coat. Song's cosmopolitan taste and large volumes of original books and journals in Western languages predominately attracted intellectuals who shared with him similar interests, language skills, and study-abroad experiences and consequently remained removed from readers/spectators who lacked such background and were more familiar with the development of modern Chinese drama as a native manifestation than as part of the world theatre scene. Shu Weiqing, in Hankou, echoed Song's efforts at building a drama library/archive and cataloguing drama materials, but he did so with the agenda that such a collection would be more popular and less elitist, more performative and less theoretically-oriented, and more representative of Chinese than European trends. Shu made his encyclopedia-like collection of drama-related materials available to the public in Hankou by opening his Drama Library (*Xiju tushu guan*) in 1932 under the patronage of the Hankou Bank.[80] Shu collected play scripts, posters, programs, tickets, and reviews of all available *huaju* performances, as well as the manifestos, reports, and special issues published by drama troupes and schools.[81] One year later, on October 10, 1933, Shu organized the first public exhibition of modern Chinese drama-related materials, The First Modern Drama Cultural Relics Exhibition (*Di yijie xiandai xiju wenwu zhanlan*

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[80] Su Xuelin, "Shu Weiqing jiqi xiju shukan" (Shu Weiqing and his Drama Books and Journals), in *Qingnian jie* (*The Field of Youth*), vol. 6, no.1, 1948.

[81] Ibid. According to Su, Shu Weiqing's collection embraced all kinds of drama-related books and materials. Shu's collected drama scripts were both "erudite and elegant" and "vulgar and coarse," and consisted of lithographic, typographic, or mimeograph printings from the full spectrum of publishing houses.

hui), in Wuhan's *Hansheng xiaojuchang* (Small Voice Theatre).[82] A special volume dedicated to this exhibition was reportedly published and circulated in Wuhan.[83] Unfortunately, this open-to-the-public exhibition led to the loss of over 200 works, which prompted Shu to embark on a second round of collecting.[84] Shu's attempt to rebuild his collection was cut short due to his poor health and Japan's occupation of Wuhan in 1938. Luckily, one year earlier, Shu had sold a small portion of his collection (at the price of 50,000 *yuan*) to the Ministry of Education and it became the foundation for the National Drama School (*Guoli xiju xuexiao*) library. Although many invaluable archival materials were lost, Shu recorded some of his holdings in the catalogue *Xiandai xiju tushu mulu* (Catalogue: Books of Modern Drama), published by the Modern Drama Library (*Xiandai xiju tushu guan*) with the endorsement of Zhang Daofan (1897-1968) in 1938.[85] From the catalogue, we see that Shu's bibliophilia went beyond drama literature to encompass pictures, books, and directors' notes regarding the techniques of play-making (directorship, performance, costume, lighting, etc.); Western and Chinese drama histories; drama reviews on both Western and Chinese plays; descriptions of extant modern theatres and modern drama companies; as well as a plethora of stage shots that

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[82] Shu's innovative endeavors at making drama-related materials available to the public won further support from Tian Qin (1907-1984), who, three years later, on June 14, 1936, organized the Second Modern Drama Cultural Relics Exhibition in the Bright Orient Theatre Troupe (*Dongming jutuan*) in Baoding. See Shu Chang (Shu Weiqing), *Xinadai xiju tushu mulu* (*Catalogue: Books of Modern Drama*) (Hankou: Xiandai xiju tushuguan, 1938), 181.

[83] Ibid. This significant historical material has sadly not been preserved in extant archival collections. An entry of this Special Issue is listed in *Xiandai xiju tushu mulu* (*Catalogue: Books of Modern Drama*).

[84] According to Su Xuelin, Shu attempted to replace his lost copies by first turning to his network of publishing houses and bookstores (World Books, Commercial Press, Modern Books, Liangyou Company, Life Bookstore, etc.). For those pieces rarely sold in publishing houses and bookstores, Shu then published advertisements in Tianjin's *Gaishi bao* (*Cover the World Newspaper*), *Chenbao* (*Morning Post*), and Hankou's *Wuhan ribao* (*Wuhan Daily*), offering to pay high prices. Su Xuelin, 1948.

[85] Zhang Daofan also asked Shu to write the *Zhongguo xiju shigao* (*History of Chinese Drama*) in 1939. However, Shu, suffering from his poor health, could not complete this work. See Shu Weiqing, "Wo zenyang shoucang xiju shukai" (How Did I Collect Drama-Related Books), in *Wuhan wenhua* (*Wuhan Culture*), May 1, 1947.

Shu had searched for and preserved in the 1930s.[86] In this regard, the scope of Shu's collection was reflective of the broadening of *huaju*-makers' self-identity in the 1930s from *wenren* to *juren*.

Categories	Items			Content		Publishing Years	
Scholarly Works on Drama	Edited Books	7		Chinese Drama in General		Edited Books	Single Author
	Single Author	11				1927-1932	1923-1934
Book Catalogues	2			Chinese Drama in General		1935-1938	
Drama Synopsis	3			Chinese New Theatre	1	1919-1931	
				Modern World Drama	1		
				Western Opera	1		
General Introductions on Drama	18			Chinese Works	16	1922-1937	
				Translations	2		
Specific Discussions on Drama	One-Act Plays	1		Chinese	24	1923-1937	
	Comedy	1					
	Tragedy	1					
	Student Theatre	4		Translation from English	1		
	Children Theatre	4					
	Peasant Theatre	4					
	War Theatre	3		Translation from Japanese	1		
	Western Operas	4					
	Theatre Companies and Organizations	4					
Works on Drama Divisions	Introduction	2		Translation	2	1920-1937	
	Script	9					
	Directing	4					
	Acting	8					
	Make-up	5					
	Costume	1		Chinese	29		
	Stage Set	1					
	Lighting	1					
Drama Histories	Western Drama History	Western World	1	Translation	2	1916-1935	
		Russia and Soviet Union	3	Chinese	5		
		Ireland	1				
		Europe	2				
	Chinese Drama History	5		Chinese	5		
Works on Dramatists	Chinese Dramatists	4		Chinese	4	1913-1935	
	Western Dramatists	15		Chinese	15		

Table 3: Summary of Shu Weiqing's collection, as listed in the *Xiandai xiju tushu mulu*

Intellectual proclamations about making Chinese drama available to the public

[86] Shu Weiqing, 1938.

had thus been put into practice via several means during the 1930s.[87] Song Chunfang's *Hemu lu* served as a salon for modern drama elites, a place where they could discuss in private the genre's ties with the West and its future development. Shu Weiqing, by contrast, opened his extensive drama collection to the public, which, while literally making *huaju* "available to the masses," also put his collection at great risk. In both cases, the goal of preserving key documents relating to the origins of modern drama had been achieved, but *juren*'s own contribution to the genre's development was still not sufficiently clear. Although Hong Shen had written a series of important essays from 1919 and 1920 detailing the role of the script and the director in modern Chinese drama, these had been published while he was in America and had not made an impact on the Chinese theatre-going masses, who still tended to view the genre through the prisms of traditional and civilized drama, both of which did not require the role of an active director. Likewise, the written efforts of Hong and other leading *huaju* practitioners to promote and develop the genre doing the 1920s and 1930s were, for the most part, confined to intellectual journals that did not influence popular perceptions of *huaju*. If left-wing *juren* were to make their contributions to modern Chinese drama's development widely known, they would need to devise more effective paths for self-promotion. The best way to teach the Chinese masses about *huaju*-making would be through *huaju* itself.

[87] According to Shu, in addition to Song Chunfang's and Shu Weiqing's drama-related collections, six more drama libraries operated in China in the 1930s: the *Guoli xiju xuexiao* (National Drama School) in Nanjing, the *Yifeng xiju tushuguan* (Ants and Bees Drama Library) in Shanghai, *Nahan jushe tushuguan* (Call to Arms Drama Society Library) in Changsha; the *Zhongguo yinyue xiqu yuan* (China's Music and Opera Institute) in Beiping; the *Guoju xuehui* (Association of National Drama) organized by Qi Rushan (1877-1962) in Beiping that only archived opera-related materials, and the *Juyuan xiju tushuguan* (Juyuan Drama Library) in Hankou. However, it appears that only Song and Shu catalogued their collections. See Shu Weiqing, 1947.

Three: How to Make Huaju *Politically Pertinent* and *Profitable*

The third paradox lies in the difficulty of creating a *huaju* that would be embraced by the masses while remaining "politically correct" in the eyes of critics. In fact, Xia, Song, and Yu's attempt to chart the historical narrative of *huaju* in a leftist fashion through the dramatization of Ying's theatrical activities intriguingly echoes two of Xia's and Song's early historical plays, the blockbusters *Sai Jinhua* (1936) and *Wu Zetian* (1937), which created media storms when they were staged in Shanghai. They received scathing critiques from left-wing dramatists due to Xia's and Song's sensuous characterizations of these controversial historical figures as well for these plays' abundant visual "gimmicks" (*xuetou*), a feature common for civilized drama but scolded by *huaju* practitioners.

Sai Jinhua, often referred to as the first "great harvest" (*weida de shouhuo*) of "national defense drama" (*guofang xiju*) and endorsed by the CCP, was Xia's first major play. Via a dramatization of Sai Jinhua's (1874-1936)[88] alleged liaison with the German field marshal Count Waldersee (1832-1904) and her contribution to defending Beijing against the allied foreign occupation after the Boxer Rebellion, Xia not only transformed Sai Jinhua from "sensuous vixen to saintly (if underemployed) goddess;"[89] more important, the heroine's troubled—both sexually and morally—story empowered Xia to reflect on the political scene of 1936 China and satirize the weak response of the Nationalist regime to the increasing threat of Japan. Unfortunately for Xia, his satire of the GMD via his sympathetic characterization of a patriotic courtesan was quickly

[88] As one of the most memorable courtesans in the late Qing and early Republican era, Sai Jinhua first gained public attention by marrying the scholar-diplomat Hong Jun (1840-1893). For a detailed analyses of Sai Jinhua, her "larger-than-life" persona and the many literary treatments of her, see David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction*, *1849-1911* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); and Ying Hu, *Tales of Translation: Composing the New Woman in China, 1899-1918* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).
[89] David Der-wei Wang, 101.

deciphered by government censors. In early 1937, after a performance in Nanjing, *Sai Jinhua* was banned for its "defaming Chinese characters."[90] Ironically, the leftist position of Xia and *Sai Jinhua*—confirmed by Nationalist censorship—did not spare the author or his play from being criticized within left-wing cultural circles. By August-September 1936, when *Sai Jinhua* was only published as a script but not yet staged, it had already became a contested terrain for literature debates and power struggles within the League of Leftist Writers, sparking ideological rows between the "National Defense Literature" campaign led by Xia and the other "four scoundrels" (*sitiao hanzi*)[91] and the "Mass Literature of Nationalist Revolutionary War" faction led by Lu Xun (1881-1936). In Lu Xun's sarcastic reading, Xia's greatest accomplishment was turning Sai Jinhua from being a courtesan who slept with Count Waldersee during the Boxer Rebellion to being "the Goddess of the Ninth Heaven" (*jiutian niangniang*);[92] in other words, Xia made the story of a prostitute his work's "most central theme" (*zui zhongxin de zhuti*).[93] Xia's efforts to inspire popular sentiment for national defense by making Sai Jinhua a larger-than-life figure, for Lu Xun, only echoed tricks employed by popular magazines whose trivial contents, such as "Wonderful Tips for Cosmetology" and "Secrets in Nunnery,"

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[90] Ke Ling, "Cong *Qiu Jin zhuan* shuodao *Sai Jinhua*" (From The Biography of *Qiu Jin* to *Sai Jinhua*), in Xia Yan, Hui Lin, and Shao Wu, eds., *Xia Yan xiju yanjiu ziliao* (*Research Materials on Xia Yan's Dramas*), vol. 2, (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1980), 72.

[91] Lu Xun coined the term "four scoundrels" to refer to Xia Yan, Yang Hansheng (1902-1993), Tian Han, and Zhou Yang (1908-1989). See Lu Xun, "Da Xu Maoyong guanyu kangri tongyi zhanxian wenti" (In Answer to Xu Maoyong's Question Regarding the United Anti-Japanese War), in *Lu Xun quanji* (*The Complete Works of Lu Xun*), vol. 6, (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chuban she, 1981), 534.

[92] Lu Xun, "Zhe yeshi shenghuo" (This is also Life…), in *Lu Xun quanji* (*The Complete Works of Lu Xun*), vol. 6, (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chuban she, 1981), 602.

[93] This refers to Zhou Yang's claim that "the theme of 'national defense' should be the most central theme of all non-traitor writers' works." Zhou Yang, "Guanyu guofang wenxue" (On National Defense Literature), in *Zhou Yang wenji* (*Works of Zhou Yang*), vol. 1, (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubans she, 1984), 170-77.

were masked by revolutionarily charged cover stories.[94]

Lu Xun's criticism that Xia employed the theme of "courtesan plus national defense"—though framed as a polemic to ridicule Xia and his National Defense literature campaign—was not entirely groundless. In fact, from a purist perspective, it is debatable if *Sai Jinhua* should be considered a *huaju* at all. Defying the genre's tendency for economical usage of scenes and characters, Xia's 7-act work demanded both grand stage-sets and numerous characters to tell its sensuous story. Moreover, Xia inserted a large number of sarcastic dialogues that mimicked the pronouncements of Li Hongzhang (1823-1901) and other historical characters; a practice that echoed the vulgar (*su*) and popular (*dazhong de*) temperaments common to civilized drama and other commercial theatres more than reflecting the elegant (*ya*) and revolutionary (*geming de*) artistic pursuits of left-wing *huaju*. When the play was staged for a Shanghai audience in late 1936, the use of marvelous costumes, theatre lighting, stage-sets, and even real guns and swords (which reflected the "realism" of civilized drama) suggested that Xia saw little value in adhering to the rigid distinctions between *huaju* and civilized drama then put forth by left-wing drama critics. Xia not only borrowed from civilized drama staging conventions by inserting short slapstick exchanges in between regular scenes, he also copied the "rival genre" by projecting images of a battle on a film screen in front of the stage curtains while firing yellow smoke from behind the curtain in order to enhance the "spectacle" of the play's war scenes.[95] *Sai Jinhua*'s embrace of civilized drama conventions provoked skepticism from within the national defense literature group.

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[94] Lu Xun, "Zhe yeshi shenghuo," 602.
[95] Zhou Xuliang, "Sai Jinhua juben de xieshixing" (The Realism of the Play of *Sai Jinhua*), in *Wenxue zazhi* (*Literature Magazine*), vol. 1 no.1, 1937, 5.

Zhang Geng (1911-2003), the critic who proclaimed *Sai Jinhua* to be the first "great harvest" of national defense literature, also issued the warning that "satire, once overly exaggerated, will render [a *huaju* play] into a civilized drama and [a part of] the Saturday School."[96]

Xia's inclination to use entertaining features in *Sai Jinhua*, though at odds with the conventional understanding of left-wing *huaju*, was consistent with the practices Xia had previously developed during his engagement with left-wing cinema between 1933 and 1936; especially his work with the Mingxing Studio, one of the most commercially successful of Shanghai's many progressive film companies. During those years when Xia concentrated his energies on progressive films,[97] his amiable and tolerant personality not only won him friendships with Shanghai filmmakers of varying ideological persuasions; more important, it put Xia in a position where he could absorb and even hybridize filmmaking tactics employed in Hollywood melodramas, the progressive films of the Soviet Union, as well as the formulaic or traditional storytelling conventions of civilized dramas. From this perspective, the sensuous themes, satirical handling of characterizations, and staging gimmicks employed for commercial concerns in *Sai Jinhua* were reflective of Xia's already established practice of crossing of boundaries between

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[96] Zhang Geng, "Sai Jinhua zuotan hui" (Seminar on *Sai Jinhua*), in Xia Yan, Hui Lin, and Shao Wu, eds., *Xia Yan xiju yanjiu ziliao* (Research Materials on Xia Yan's Dramas), vol. 2, (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chuban she, 1980), 48-49. In addition to Zhang Geng, other leftist critics who attended the seminar included Shi Linghe (1906-1995) and Zhang Min (1906-1975). One of the key issues that solicited controversy among attendees was the use of sarcastic expressions in new plays such as *Sai Jinhua* and *Roar China*.

[97] Thanks to the research of film scholars such as Zhen Zhang in the past decade, the myth of left-wing cinema has been challenged and retold. In fact, the very term "left-wing cinema" is a latter-day construction put forth by the Association of Chinese Film Culture (Zhongguo dianying wenhua xiehui). The actual progressive filmmaking of the 1930s was not "an insular political group with a uniform doctrine" but "a broad democratic forum of patriotic filmmakers and other cultural workers who shared the desire to join forces and create a socially concerned and economically viable domestic cinema." See Zhen Zhang, 248.

"entertainment" and "national defense," civilized drama and *huaju*. Indeed, although Xia and *Sai Jinhua* both received disparaging remarks from left-wing cultural critics, they won sympathetic support from left-wing dramatists and filmmakers aware of the difficulty of staging *huaju* in Shanghai's materialistic and sensation-driven climate. *Sai Jinhua*, a resurrection of the "rouge-faced" (*hongyan*) beauty on the modern stage, marked left-wing drama's turn to the entertainment market, winning both audiences and profit.

Song Zhidi was one of the first left-wing dramatists who saw in *Sai Jinhua* the potential to surmount the pressures of popularization and minimal budgets that had plagued Chinese modern drama since the early 1930s. One year after Xia published his script for *Sai Jinhua*, Song wrote and staged *Wu Zetian* in Shanghai. Song's positive depiction of China's only empress (r. 690-705)—who allegedly killed her husband and sons to secure the throne and was typically depicted as a blight on the political and social integrity of the Tang Dynasty (618-907)—immediately became a commercial hit and provoked another round of controversy. More than just a "copy" of *Sai Jinhua*, Song's rereading of Empress Wu as an "exceptional human being whose beauty connotes not only physical attractiveness but moral courage,"[98] was directly related to the far-reaching influence of Oscar Wilde's (1854-1900) artistic philosophy in China, best embodied in the Salomé craze, that was widely practiced among the pioneering generation of Chinese dramatists in the 1920s and the 1930s.[99] But if *Wu Zetian* was in fact keeping abreast with intellectual and artistic trends, why did the play draw such ire from left-wing drama

[98] Jiang Jin, 176.
[99] Ibid. Another well-known resurrection of an historical beauty on the *huaju* stage was Ouyang Yuqian's *Pan Jinlian* (1928).

critics? In what ways did Song's transvaluation of a "rouge-faced" historical figure lean "too far" toward civilized theatre?[100]

The core criticism against *Wu Zetian* was that, like *Sai Jinhua*, its embrace of commercial theatre rendered the work distasteful. Following Xia's example, Song freely borrowed from the production tactics of civilized and other commercial theatres. To publicize *Wu Zetian*, Song endorsed advertisements that highlighted the play's expensive costumes and stage sets, and drew attention to how it depicted a woman's sexual-driven revenge in a male-dominated political world.[101] But in the eyes of left-wing critics like Mao Dun, such "realism"—in both the civilized drama sense and the implied erotic sense—simply catered to, without trying to elevate, mass "vulgar" tastes, which ran counter to the enlightening agenda of left-wing *huaju*. In his review of the play, Mao Dun expressed his anger and disappointment over the similarities between a slapstick scene in Song's play in which Wu Zetian powdered white the face of her male official, and the clichéd plots of popular dramas performed in the foreign zone (*yangchang huaju*) where "playful women molested their kept men" and "young mistresses teased their aging patrons."[102] Had *Wu Zetian* been staged in the 1920s, before the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, its "feminist agenda" might have been praised as ideologically progressive. In 1937, however, Song's sensuous dramatization of Wu Zetian was condemned as frivolous and not serving the goal of national defense.

Xia and Song disagreed with the charges made by their left-wing peers that they "betrayed" *huaju* and left-wing culture. In essays explaining their motivation for these

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[100] Jiang Jin, 192.
[101] Wagner, 87.
[102] Mao Dun, "Guanyu *Wu zetian*" (Regarding *Wu Zetian*), in *Song Zhidi yanjiu ziliao* (*Research Materials on Song Zhidi*) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan wenxue yanjiusuo, 2010), 163.

works, Xia and Song defended *Sai Jinhua* and *Wu Zetian*, respectively, by highlighting the theatrical power of dramatizing these troubled, controversial, and potentially threatening (toward the establishment) figures on the *huaju* stage.[103] Moreover, they argued that their selective employment of commercial theatres' production strategies constituted a necessary negotiation with the demands of the entertainment market.[104] It was their awareness of financial pressures—both in terms of the budget and the box-office—as well as the political realities of wartime Chongqing that later persuaded them to consider writing a history of modern Chinese drama based on Ying Yunwei's play-making stories.

The Lived and Staged History of Chinese Modern Drama

An "Undesirable Other" or An "Ideal Candidate": Ying Yunwei's Life of Drama

Xia's and Song's theatrical experiences in Shanghai in 1936 and 1937 were circumscribed by box-office success and the harsh dismissals of left-wing critics. These experiences made these two cultural leaders eager to explore the degree to which left-wing dramatists should incorporate commercial concerns and popular taste in their daily practices. Although his career, which was heavily oriented toward performative, directorial, and production activities rather than toward drama literature, has caused him to be either overlooked or entirely absent from canonized narratives of modern drama

[103] Song Zhidi, "Xiezuo *Wu Zetian* de zibai" (The Confession of Writing *Wu Zetian*), in *Song Zhidi yanjiu ziliao* (*Research Materials on Song Zhidi*) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan wenxue yanjiusuo, 2010), 97.
[104] Xia and Song would later condemn these works in the 1950s in the face of considerable political pressure.

histories, Ying Yunwei was by no means unknown to Xia, Song, and others who committed themselves to the work of play-making in the 1930s and 1940s.

As Xia and Song rightly recognized, Ying Yunwei had been a witness to and significant participant in Chinese theatre's development in the first half of the 20th century. Yet, Ying's engagement with theatre and film was more akin in temperament to what Christopher Rea calls the "cultural entrepreneur"[105] than to a conventionally defined intellectual dramatist. As such, Ying's career was fodder for a narrative different from the canonized *myth* of pioneering dramatists' artistic and political transformation from amateur theatre fans and progressive May Fourth intellectuals in the 1910s to established dramatists and left-wing activists in the 1930s.[106] Ying's reputation as a modern dramatist struggling to make *huaju* responsible to ideological, artistic, and commercial demands resonated with Xia and Song, whose own careers experienced a bumpy start. It is no wonder why Xia cited Ying as the "ideal candidate" upon which to base their play.

Ying Yunwei entered the Shanghai theatre world in 1919 at the age of 15. Following the model of Ren Tianzhi (dates unknown) and other civilized drama veterans, Ying's first role was as a cross-dressing performer. Unlike *huaju* pioneers such as Hong Shen, Xiong Foxi, and Yu Shangyuan, who began their careers in student productions abroad, Ying's first "stage" was the Shanghai streets, where he joined a local Youth Propaganda Troupe (*Qingnian xuanjiang tuan*) in espousing iconoclastic and anti-imperialist ideologies. During these politically progressive street performances, Ying

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[105] Such as Xu Zhuodai (1885-1958?), Chen Diexian (1879-1940), and Zhou Shouju (dates unknown). See Rea, 52-53.

[106] Parallel with the several major constructions of *huaju* history that took place in the first half of the 20th century, the founding and leading figures of *huaju*, commonly referred to as established dramatists, had their life stories canonized into the "official myth" of *huaju*'s historical development.

played the traditional coquettish and shrewish female role (*fengsao podan*).

Two years later, Ying's activism and talent in terms of performing and organizing theatre activities led him to cofound (and manage) with Gu Jianchen (1897-1976) the Shanghai Theatre Association (STA), which was one of the four major amateur drama societies in Shanghai in the 1920s.[107] This was the same troupe that, in 1923, recruited Hong Shen upon his return to China from New York. Ying spent the remainder of the decade working alongside Hong and other STA members to develop *huaju* as a comprehensive art and to professionalize the "behind the scenes" forces of Chinese modern theaters. Such professionalization included practicing gender-appropriate performances and establishing the leading role of the director.[108] Ying fully demonstrated his talent in this role in the 1930s, when he directed both theatre and cinema productions. Prior to the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Ying directed 34 *huaju* productions and 15 films. The artistic quality and commercial profitability of these works consolidated his position as an experienced director and capable producer in the intertwined fields of drama and filmmaking.

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[107] The other three major Shanghai drama societies were Zhu Rangcheng's *Xinyou jushe*, Tian Han's *Nanguo she*, and the *Fudan jushe* (Fudan Drama Society) that was affiliated with Fudan University. See Huang Shizhi, "Lun Shanghai xiju xieshe zuzhi yu guanli de xiandai hua" (On the Shanghai Drama Society and its Modern Management), in *Wenhua yishu yanjiu* (*Study on Culture and Art*), no. 6, 2009, 219.

[108] Hong Shen deserves credit for making these major achievements in the professionalization of modern Chinese drama possible. In addition to establishing the performative norm of gender-appropriate casting in 1923 (an event discussed later in this chapter), Hong applied modern drama schemes to amateur productions. *Young Mistress' Fan*, Hong's adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*, was performed in 1924 on the Comic Stage *(Xiao wutai*) in Shanghai to considerable box-office success. Alongside a mixed-gender cast, Hong implemented, for the first time in the history of Chinese drama, a coherent directorial vision as a reaction against the Chinese theatre's reliance on actors' improvisation (at that time scenario-based improvisation was the norm for China's new theatres). Hong created the role of theatrical director, charged with overseeing the aesthetic qualities of the play. He also set up regular schedules for multiple rehearsals, which further limited the need for ad-libbing. In this manner, *Young Mistress' Fan*, despite being presented in a Shanghai *mise-en-scene*, was generally recognized as the first "authentic" *huaju* production to adhere to modern (Western) theatre conventions.

Xia described Ying as a "comprador (*maiban*)-cum-man of drama."[109] In contrast to the conventional intellectual and artistic development of modern Chinese dramatists, Ying's trajectory stood out in three respects: as a cross-dressing female impersonator active in civilized drama rather than as a May Fourth "man of letters," such as Hu Shi, who wrote theoretical proposals and new plays in the late 1910s; as a commercial-minded "cultural entrepreneur"[110] embracive of all social classes instead of a bohemian left-wing radical who strongly held an "unofficial" (*zaiye de*) political stance in the late 1920s;[111] and, in the 1930s, as an established director and producer rather than a reliable and profitable playwright. Ying's "alternative" trajectory made him an intriguing other that could serve to question the dominant narratives of *huaju* as a modern literary genre and the public persona of *juren* as intellectual playwrights. My reading of Ying's "inappropriate" fit, in addition to explaining his simultaneous *presence* and *absence* in *huaju*'s development—omnipresent in a plethora of dramatic activities but largely absent from canonized drama histories—demonstrates that Xia, Song, and Yu sought to create an alternative canonization of *huaju*, one that reflected their lived experiences as left-wing *juren* struggling to balance commercial and artistic pressures within a politically tumultuous China.

Poking Fun at Huaju*'s "Creation Myth"*

Ying's early cross-dressing experiences on the new theatre stage were part of a

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[109] Xia Yan, 19.
[110] Rea, 51.
[111] Zhu Xiaobing, "Zuoyi xiju yanjiu (A Study on Left-Wing Drama)" (Ph.D dissertation, Nanjing University, 2001), 5.

performing "vogue" shared by many in the early generation of drama pioneers.[112] Most crucial for the theatrical transformation and modernization of Chinese theatre culture was the cross-dressing role he assumed in *The Shrew* (*Pofu*), a play written by Ouyang Yuqian, directed by Hong Shen, and staged by STA in Shanghai's Labor Education Auditorium (*Zhigong jiaoyu litang*) in September 1923, the troupe's first public performance. Seeking to abolish the convention of male actors impersonating female characters, Hong Shen staged Hu Shi's *The Main Event in Life* (*Zhongshen dashi*) with actresses in female roles on the same bill as *The Shrew*, which was performed with an all-male cast. Just as Hong predicted, juxtaposing these plays provoked understanding applause for the first but ridiculing laughter toward the second. Thereafter, the convention of men playing female roles was challenged and gradually gave way to gender-appropriate performances in most amateur drama troupes in Shanghai. The dramatic contrast caused by staging these two productions on the same bill was memorialized and canonized[113] as the pivotal "scene" in which the practice of man playing woman, now charged with a certain "sexual perversity,"[114] was ridiculed not only by dramatists with foreign training—like Hong Shen—but also civilized drama veterans and the Shanghai audience.

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[112] See Siyuan Liu, *Performing Hybridity in Colonial-Modern China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[113] Such canonization appeared in Hong Shen's 1933 "Introduction" and the *Archival Materials of the Drama Movement's First Fifty Years* that was organized by Tian Han and Ouyang Yuqian in 1955, two works that Siyuan Liu identifies as milestones within the myth-making of spoken drama history. Siyuan Liu, 15.

[114] Soon after returning to Shanghai from New York and joining the STA in 1923, Hong Shen, claiming to "have read too much of Professor Freud's book on 'sexual perversity'" and uneasy with the practice of "men playing women," strove to make gender-appropriate casting *de rigueur* in Shanghai. See Siyuan Liu, 118; and Man He, "Hong Shen: A Life in Theatre and Film," in Kirk A. Denton, ed., *The Wedded Husband: A Modern Chinese Literature and Culture Publication* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Foreign Language Publications, 2014), 5.

Although most of the credit for this performance has understandably gone to Hong Shen, Ying's contribution must not be overlooked. In unwittingly playing the "undesirable" role, Ying provided the mirror image necessary to illuminate the progressive trajectory of modern Chinese theatre's evolution. Later, when canonizations of modern drama began to celebrate Hong's juxtaposition of *Event* and *The Shrew* on stage, Ying remembered the preparations, negotiations, and staging plans that took place back stage,

> The first two plays he [Hong Shen] directed after joining the Shanghai Theatre Association were *The Shrew* written by Ouyang Yuqian and *Event* written by Hu Shi. These two plays have six to seven female characters in total. However, STA only had three actresses at that time: one was Qian Jianqiu who played the leading female role in *Young Mistress' Fan*, the other two were sisters, Wang Minqing and Wang Minjing, both of whom were still students. We did not have enough actresses to cover the female roles. Meanwhile, some [of us], such as Gu Jianchen, Chen Xianmo, and myself, still liked the cross-dressing performative norm and felt we were good at playing women on stage. Hong Shen really loathed this convention. [However], Hong Shen had just recently joined STA and felt it rather difficult to directly criticize and change the STA conventions. Hong Shen thus came up with a good idea, asking Gu, Chen, and I to play the female roles in *The Shrew* but recruiting Qian and the Wang sisters in the gender-appropriate cast for *Event*. Hong Shen deliberately praised our performative quality and arranged *The Shrew* as the final program. We, of course, were thrilled, feeling that we [Ying, Gu, and Chen] could compete with them [the student actresses: Qian and the Wang sisters]. To my great surprise, the audience, after watching the natural and realistic performances of *Event*, made fun of our poor performance. Man playing woman, thereafter, went to the coffin (*shouzhong zhengqin*).[115]

Here, Ying clearly accounts for the theatricality unfolding on- and off-stage during STA's pivotal 1923 production. Ying, via his confidence in and enjoyment of playing

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[115] Ying Yunwei, "Huiyi Shanghai xiju xieshe" (Reminiscences of the Shanghai Theatre Association), in Tian Han, Ouyang Yuqian, etc., eds., *Zhongguo huaju yundong wushinian shiliao ji* (*Historical Materials on the Chinese Drama Movement of the Last Fifty Years*), vol.2, (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1958), 3.

female roles, neatly served as the necessary “antagonist” for Hong Shen’s desired theatrical effect—to spur the audience’s “appropriate” responses of appreciation and ridicule. In this manner, Ying was not a passive witness but a direct and crucial participant in fashioning one of *huaju*’s defining performative norms—that of gender-appropriate casting—which has conventionally be attributed to Hong Shen.

Yet, the on-stage performance of *Event* and *The Shrew* only constituted the visible part of normalizing a gender appropriate cast. Also important was the change in perception: the realization that “man playing woman” was not just ill-suited for *The Shrew*, but to *huaju* in general. I find in Ying’s sketchy account of his female impersonation: “raising one’s voice, being affectedly bashful, every single movement is laughable,”[116] a subtle hint of the comic contrast between the illusionary “theatrical reality” that the all-male cast of *The Shrew* hoped to create on stage and the disillusioned reality that Ying and his fellow cross-dressing actors actually felt when they failed to deliver such an illusion within the *huaju* framework. The audiences for STA’s first public performance were thus presented with two shows in which Ying played the roles of protagonist and antagonist: within *The Shrew* itself Ying failed to convincingly deliver the role of female protagonist in a work intended to address the serious theme of woman’s liberation; whereas, within the overall theatricality of staging *Event* with a gender appropriate cast and *The Shrew* with an all male cast, Ying “successfully” delivered the unnatural and laughable “backwardness” of man playing woman. Ying’s *performance* within the play (*ruxi*) and beyond the play (*chuxi*)—for both the audience and for the development of *huaju* history—colored a canonical episode of Chinese

[116] Ibid.

theatre's modernization with a slapstick (*huaji*) and playful (*xi*) quality. Gender-appropriate casting became the performative norm—and man playing woman was "sent to the coffin"[117]—thanks in part to comedic effect.

Unlike most canon-makers of *huaju* history who have either overlooked or failed to highlight the playful theatricality of this episode, Xia, Song, and Yu in *XJCQ* fully captured *juren*'s playful promotion of performing hetero-sociality and even hetero-intimacy in *huaju*'s illusionary reality. Understanding the historical significance of playing gender-appropriate roles on stage, *XJCQ* opens with a slapstick scene depicting the serious (though occasionally playful) struggles that *juren* youth (men and women) confronted and performed in 1921. Act I tells how Lu Xiankui, the character modeled after Ying Yunwei, boldly brought his fiancée, Feng Yunhe, to perform a "current event speech with make-up" (*huazhuang shishi yanjiang*)—an early form of new theatre that is better known in the scholarship as a sub-genre of early civilized drama—entitled *Taohun ji* (*Story of Elopement*) with a gender-appropriate cast. When the curtain rose on Act I, a chaotic, run-down, and filthy backstage appeared, represented by two poles with fading paint that stood by the entrance and exit gates. A handbill posted on the left pole not only informs the audience of *Taohun ji,* but also efficiently reflects the new theatre culture that Lu Xiankui (Ying Yunwei) and his generation of *juren* were born into:[118]

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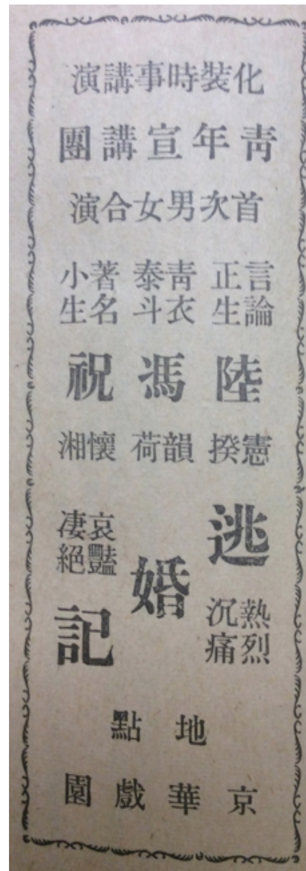
[117] Ibid.
[118] Xia, Song, and Yu, 1946, 3.



Speech on Current Event with Make-up

The Youth Propaganda Speech Troupe

The First Time Man and Woman Perform Together

Male Orator Role: Lu Xiankui
The Leading Young Maiden: Feng Yunhe
The Famous Young Male Role: Zhu Huaixiang

Sad and Beautiful;
Desolate and Broken-hearted

The Story of Elopement

Heartily and Enthusiastic;
Grief and Remorse

Place: Peking Drama House

Figure 5.1 A poster in *Xiqu chunqiu* (*Annals of Theatre*), 1946

Significantly, *XJCQ* does not stage the canonical episode of STA's 1923 production to celebrate the "finalization" of gender-appropriate casting as *huaju*'s performative norm; instead, it foregrounds one of a plethora of struggling endeavors that *juren* exercised—without triumphant results—in the different new theatre forms of the early 20th century. The scheme of *huaju* history in *XJCQ*'s account, clearly influenced by the genealogy of *huaju* written by Hong Shen in his 1932 "Introduction to Drama," intentionally draws a difference between the "public speech with make-up" form of new theatre from the "feudal" and hybridized civilized drama culture while conflating and inserting into it the "progressive" allure of gender-appropriate casting.

The play further deviates from the canonical narrative by presenting the struggle to establish gender-appropriate casting as a backstage struggle between young men and women of drama (Lu and Feng) and a gentry man, Old Master Feng, who is Lu's father-in-law. Although this plot detail clearly ties the historical moment of gender-appropriate performance with May Fourth discourse, the way that *XJCQ* stages this scene follows the conventions of Shanghainese farce (*Shanghai huaji ju*). While the men and women performing together in *Story of Elopement* are only alluded to on the set, Lu Xiankui's backstage efforts to make sense of performing public hetero-intimacy, despite Old Master Feng's interference, is staged in a lively fashion:

> [*Old Master Feng is on stage, Lu Xiankui does not see him*]
> Lu Xiankui: (*continuously exaggerating*) Actually, this old gentleman usually is very reform-minded, very active opening new schools, and engaging in substantial entrepreneurship. But in coming to terms with male-female relationships, he is outdated. I am thinking that they must all share the same problem regarding this. For example, true, we [Feng Yunhe and Lu Xiankui] haven't been officially married, but our marriage was settled a long time ago. He, however, forbids us to proceed with courtship. How could this be forbidden? We appear to dare not to disobey him, but we meet each other daily…
> [*Old Master Feng felt shocked and froze with anger*]
> Chen Shumo: (*awkwardly*) Xiankui!
> Lu Xiankui: No hurry, I don't have anything until ACT II. (*Continues*) This time I brought his daughter to our play, really gave him a surprise. Now he must be faint with anger. But what is the point of getting angry? His girl has grown up. Of course she will favor her husband and listen to her husband. That her father is angry and faint amounts to nothing! This counts as a small lesson I taught him. He called me a bastard; OK, the bastard is me, I am a bastard. Even if he kicks me a couple times, I do not care at all. The victory finally belongs to the generation of son and daughter. See, Yunhe is now on the stage—[*Stretches his arm and points to the direction where Old Master Feng stands*]
> ...
> Lu Xiankui: [*extremely embarrassed, suddenly doesn't know what to do*] On…on stage, this is really messy and chaotic. The stage used to be a Peking opera stage…look, it still has an altar for the old God statue. Hahaha… (*Making no sense*) Mr. Jiang, a gentleman like you who achieved such a great thing, must be wise and knowledgeable, thus, thus… (*cannot continue*) this is my father-in-law.

(*Jiang Han also feels embarrassed*)
Old Master Feng: (*shaking with anger*) You, you little brat, what nonsense are you talking about?
Old Master Feng: (*does not listen*) Where is Yunhe?
Lu Xiankui: (*intentional slapstick*) The canal [Feng's daughter's name Yunhe has the same pronunciation with "canal"], the canal is located in north Tongzhou. Since ships and trains operated there, the river has been in bad shape. It has many places blocked and out of repair for many years. Listen… (*suddenly raising his neck and pretending to be a dog barking to the back stage*)
Old Master Feng: Are you, are you crazy?
Lu Xiankui: I am making a stage effect. This is called stage effect. Otherwise, you can go to the front stage and listen. It sounds like a real dog barking. (*to Chen Shumo*) I have done my part, I need to put on make-up (*rush down*).[119]

In this scene, Lu experiences a series of embarrassing and awkward moments. His disrespectful yet funny accounts of Old Master Feng and the slapstick handling of his embarrassment when caught are delivered via a combination of Northern-style "face-and-voice" (*xiangsheng*) stand-up comedy, civilized drama, and the Chinese one-man play (*dujiao xi*) traditions. This scene therefore makes what Christopher Rea calls "*huaji* Shanghai," the comic culture in Shanghai, an integral theatre effect of *huaju*-making.[120]

Furthermore, it is notable that instead of recreating the key event on stage—the establishment of gender-appropriate casting—as a way to distinguish modern drama from its civilized and commercial counterparts, *XJCQ* presented a comical scene about the backstage reaction to this event. I find such a "backstage view" to be necessary, because it was only from the safety of the backstage—away from the canonical events taking place in front of the curtain—that *XJCQ*, itself a modern drama, was able to employ elements common to civilized and commercial drama without contradicting *huaju*'s self-proclaimed distinction from those genres. By the same token, including a backstage

[119] Ibid., 12-13.
[120] Rea, 66.

rejoinder to the advent of gender-appropriate casting was also an ingenious way for *XJCQ* to affirm *huaju*'s uniqueness, since the curtain served as a symbolic "barrier" between modern drama and its "backward" peers. Comedy and the backstage thus combined in *XJCQ*'s opening scene to simultaneously challenge, and strengthen, canonized accounts of *huaju*'s birth.

Juren*: Bohemians or Cultural Entrepreneurs?*

Noticeably downplayed in the playwrights' depiction of *juren* is the bohemianism that had been a fixture of left-wing drama culture in the late 1920s and early 1930s. At that time, not only were the *theatrical realities* written and staged by left-wing *juren* inspired by Western cultural and literary norms, as seen by their frequent adaptations of Western dramas, left-wing *juren*'s life styles in *social reality* were likewise influenced by the cosmopolitan bohemian culture and depressed characters they depicted on stage. Chen Baichen (1908-1994), a left-wing drama veteran, remembered that in 1928, when a group of young artists gathered under Tian Han's leadership in the Southern Art Academy (*Nanguo yishu xueyuan*), they turned Shanghai's West Aixiansi Road into a "stage" resembling Paris's Latin Quarter on which they could perform cosmopolitan bohemian culture domestically,

> Since March 1928, a lively group of young men and women suddenly appeared on the desolate West Aixiansi Road. They either grew long hair falling down to their shoulders; or recited [poems] while walking around as if there were no other people next to them; or recited dialogues and performed self-appreciation; or men and women walked side by side, talking about theories and books. Most of them were penniless, but they still enjoyed life, acting like artists. These are our students from the Southern Art Academy. They viewed West Aixiansi Road as if

it were the Latin Quarter in Paris.[121]

Chen Baichen's account of left-wing men of drama's idiosyncratic public personas resonates with the following fanciful depiction of 1920s *juren* in *XJCQ*. In this scene, while a group of young men and women casually sit together in the *Dongfang yishu xiao juchang* (Oriental Art Small Theatre)[122] and discuss their performances from that afternoon, the bohemian Dong Tao openly expresses his sentimentalism, as well as his intent to leave his companions for the real battlefield in China's south:

> Dong: No (*bearing the pain*), I just let out the pent-up emotions. I am not sentimental… Yes, yes, this is the pain of the time, this is the sentimentalism that is deeper than sentimentalism. (*to everyone*) Well, ladies and gentlemen, listen to me. This is the agony of hundreds and thousands of young people. This is the suffering of our nation. [*singing*] …
> I am depressed,
> The depression, the abyss-like depression.
> It could not wear down my aspiration,
> It only encouraged my ambition.
> (*Ruoyan sings with Dong*）
> I am a wandering person,
> A drifting soul.
> Coming from the far-away soil and land, I burst into the palace of art;
> Our small theatre paradise.
> (*Dong sings alone*)
> But, after all, I am a wandering child,
> I can only hesitate outside of the artists' palace.
>
> Have you seen?
> In the north the feudal warlords are [restless like] jumping beans;
> People-eating jackals and wolves.
> I yearn for the southern land
> The scorching southern land.
> Only over there—

[121] Chen Baichen, *Dui Chenshi de gaobie* (*Farewell to the World*) (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1997), 301. Also see Ge Fei, 2008, 45.
[122] Here *XJCQ* interestingly "conflates" two rival art institutes, the Southern Society that was privately funded by Tian Han and pursued the left-wing ideal of "going to the people" and the *Xihu yishu xueyuan* (West Lake Art Institute) in Hangzhou that was funded by the GMD government.

Listen,
Those are the revolutionary songs that call on me.[123]

Such emotionally fraught depictions of *juren* differ dramatically from the pragmatic life experiences of Ying Yunwei. In contrast with his bohemian peers, Ying made use of his optimistic and amiable personality and the social network he consolidated during his stint as a "comprador capitalist" in the early 1920s to ease the financial pressures of running STA. It was in the roles of producer, director, and financer that Ying's symbolic capital rested. Not only tapping into his own fortune for theatre productions (Ying had earned considerable wealth in the early 1920s by working as a manager in one of Yu Qiaqing's [1867-1945] shipping companies), Ying assumed his banker/comprador identity to reach out to patrons in Shanghai and Hong Kong. As Xia Yan recalled, Ying often wore a diamond ring—the most important stage prop for his businessman persona—while seeking funding for STA.[124] Ying was alert to the financial pressures facing theatres at a time when modern drama productions in general were still "amateur" and their professional profit splitting system had not yet been established.[125]

Although commercial concerns were a reality for nearly all dramatists in the 1920s and 1930s,[126] Ying addressed them more frequently and explicitly. In this regard, Ying's actions place him in tandem with the business-minded class of cultural

[123] Xia, Song, and Yu, 1946, 38.
[124] Xia Yan, 2.
[125] It is not until the mid-1930s when *huaju* gained stable performance schedules in modern cinema houses that the professional splitting system was finally established. The professional splitting system was an agreement between drama troupes and cinema owners in which between 30-40% of box office revenue would go to the cinema owner.
[126]According to Huang Shizhi, the established drama societies had their own gateways when it came to finding stable financial support. The Southern Society mainly relied upon Tian Han's personal charisma to woo donors; the Xinyou Drama Society owed its success to Zhu Rangcheng's efforts; and the Fudan Drama Society operated under the auspices of Fudan University. See Huang Shizhi, 219.

entrepreneurs who invested their capital and creativity into theatre as one of a wide range of commercial enterprises.[127] Like those figures, Ying differed fundamentally from the archetypical "man of letters" who "disdained commerce and was concerned exclusively with aesthetic and moral matters."[128]

Perhaps the clearest example of Ying's simultaneous engagement with commercial and aesthetic issues can be found in STA's production of *Roar China!* (*Nuhou ba, Zhongguo!*). In 1932, Ying, serving as director, led STA to stage what is conventionally cited as one of most important leftist dramas of the time.[129] In his carefully thought out "staging plan" (*shangyan jihua*), Ying shares the details of his financial concerns:

> STA, in light of the major deficit caused by staging *The Merchant of Venice* [1930], had already been downhearted for over three years, aborting all public performances because of lack of money. STA, therefore, did not contribute anything to the drama field [during this time]. Here, we also apologize to the audience who cared about STA. As for this production [*Roar China!*], it was not because we suddenly obtained assistance and became rich. In fact, we took the risk to try [a new financing method]. These were our financial sources: 1. Money loans; 2. Issuing advance tickets. What made the money arrangement a little bit easy is that we did not need to pay cash for the entire budget. Thus, we took the risk to throw all the cash we raised into building the commercial ships, warships, and the pier [the stage-set for the production].[130]

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[127] On "cultural entrepreneurs," see Alexander Des Forges, *Shanghai Mediasphere*: *The Aesthetics of Cultural Production* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007).
[128] Rea, 53.
[129] For more details regarding the history, translation, and performance of *Roar China* in Russia, Japan, and China in the 1930s, see Xiaobing Tang, 213-28; and Qiu Kunliang, "Xiju de yanchu, chuanbo, yu zhengzhi douzheng: yi *Nuhouba*, *Zhongguo* jiqi dongya yanchu wei zhongxin" (The Performance, Propagation, and Political Struggle of Drama: A Case Study Centered upon *Roar China* and Its Performances in East Asia), in *Xiju yanjiu* (*Journal of Theatre Studies*) no. 7 (2011), 107-50.
[130] Ying Yunwei, "*Nuhouba, Zhongguo* shangyan jihua" (The Staging Plan for *Roar China!*) in Du Xuan, ed., *Xiju hun: Ying Yunwei jinian wenji* (*The Drama Soul: Collection Memorializing Ying Yunwei*) (Beijing: Xiju chubanshe, 2004), 61.

The financial deficit to which Ying refers was the first major *huaju* production that he directed in 1930: a five-act *huaju* production of Shakespeare's (1564-1616) *Merchant of Venice*. Differing from STA's earlier adaptations of Western plays, such as Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* in 1924, for *Merchant of Venice* Ying decided to abandon the custom of using a Shanghai *mise-en-scene* in favor of an authentic stage-set and costume design that would represent 16th century Italy. It took Ying half a year to raise over 3000 *kuai* and recruit the 30 actors necessary for this grand-scale production. To further highlight the expensive visuals and spectacles, Ying also employed artistic lighting (*meishu dengguang*), which one contemporary critic proclaimed to be "dazzlingly beautiful and starting a new fashion for [the *huaju*] stage."[131] By investing a major portion of the budget in spectacles and visual effects, Ying echoed earlier civilized drama productions as well as Xia's and Song's historical productions 15 years later.

Though *Merchant of Venice*'s enlarged budget put STA in a rather difficult financial situation, it did not discourage Ying from envisioning even greater stage spectacles for *Roar China*. Ying planned to spend most of the budget on the stage set and the remainder on the lighting. Understanding *Roar China*'s strict demands for stage scenes—namely, "a plethora of outdoor scenes; major changes in the scenes for different acts; the special stage props (piers, warships, and commercial ships, etc.); and frequent applications of changing scenes and characters without curtain-falling (*qiangjing*)"[132]—Ying trained over 30 stage hands to learn and master 27 scene changes that would be repeated for 3 performances daily. Also, unsatisfied with table and wall lamps and other

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[131] Huang Aihua, "'Gan wei tianxia xian' de Ying Yunwei" (Ying Yunwei, the One who Dares to be the First), in *Zhongguo xiju* (*Chinese Theatre*), no. 1, 2005, 63.
[132] Ying Yunwei, 2004, 59.

small sources for lighting, Ying purchased over 10 large spotlights and an additional 3 dimmers to facilitate the scene changes. Clearly, Ying was not averse to employing the "gimmicks" of civilized drama when it came to staging *Roar China!*

Another difficult but necessary directorial tactic for arranging such a large-scale theatre production was how to manage the cast and crew. Ying planed to recruit 100 professional and amateur performers (50 experienced professional actors from STA, other drama societies, and drama schools; 20 Chinese boy scouts; and 30 actual pier workers) to stage the play. Of course, to choreograph the movement of 100 actors and accompanying stagehands required intense rehearsals, which meant that *Roar China* demanded a large rehearsal budget as well. While promising a marvelous artistic production, Ying also never hesitated to express the commercial concerns inherent in his staging plan. That even in this most famous left-wing production Ying let "money talk," reflected the real scenario that left-wing *juren* faced in the 1930s. Staging a left-wing drama successfully required the business acumen of an entrepreneur.

As Lu Xiankui, Ying is fashioned in *XJCQ* as a troubled hero who is torn between his idealistic dream of making ideologically inspiring and aesthetically daring *huaju*, on the one hand, and his pragmatic need to compromise with political censorship and commercialism, on the other. Accordingly, Lu is both admired by other characters, men and women of theatre, as a Shanghai-style comprador capable of resolving the inherent tensions of playmaking (*doudezhuan* in Shanghai dialect) and therefore able to "save" the Shanghai drama scene[133] and despised as a philistine for his obsession with luxury and lack of political progressiveness:

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[133] Xia, Song, and Yu, 1946, 59.

> Liang Menghui (*cannot talk anymore, pauses*)—Because, the air in our drama field is so suffocating. Those student amateur drama troupes, which are no longer able to produce plays, only find more and more difficulties. As for the Concessions, because of the Japanese interference, even those song troupes need to first register and then sing their choruses.
> …
> Liang Menghui (*Looking at Lu Xiankui*)—In that case, we have to figure out something to break this suffocating scene.
> Peng Fang (*follows Liang's words*)—So we are thinking of putting together several drama troupes' energies and efforts, and giving a presentable public performance.
> …
> Liang Menghui (*hesitant*)—We have already talked about it. Little Peng and Su Fei both insist that it must be you who stands up to organize and lead this public performance. For one, you have many friends, and are capable in the Shanghai dialect; also, Mr. Tian now is imprisoned in Nanjing, Mr. Ouyang is in Guangdong, and Mr. Hong Shen is in Qingdao. Here in Shanghai, we only have you. You are the only one who can unite all the drama workers in Shanghai.[134]

Two details contained in this passage are worth noting. First, the fictional character of Lu Xiankui is presented as the only person capable of uniting the Shanghai drama field after Tian, Ouyang, and Hong had all left the city. By positioning Lu/Ying as the peer of, and the alternative to, the absent "founding fathers," *XJCQ* asserts a role for lesser-known "players" (in the view of canonized narratives). Moreover, the play makes Lu/Ying the protagonist and relegates the contributions of Tian, Ouyang, and Hong to the background, thus creating a hierarchical reordering of the theatre network and *huaju* history. In this manner, *XJCQ* reveals the real advantages to the drama scene that a cultural entrepreneur such as Lu/Ying can offer. The force most capable of "saving" modern drama in a time of national crisis was not the idealism of the bohemians, but the friendships and commercial networks developed back stage. Ying Yunwei thus went

[134] Ibid., 60.

from being an “undesirable other” to the “ideal candidate” for dramatizing the public persona of left-wing men of theatre.

Ying Yunwei was also an ideal candidate for arousing public sympathy. His struggles to balance theatre, market, and political demands would have resonated with Chongqing residents, who were themselves struggling to mitigate the unpredictable hardships of war.[135] The following scene depicts Lu Xiankui’s growing frustration as he works to stage the patriotic play “Shanghai Corner” (*Shanghai de yijiao*)—*XJCQ*’s conflation of *Roar China!* and Xia Yan’s *Under Shanghai’s Roof* (*Shanghai wuyan xia*, 1937)—in the occupied city:

> Lu Xiankui: You are all masters! There is only one who is a coward (*sunzi;* literally, grandson). I am the only coward. When I was a bank manager, I often scowled to others. Now I am a director, a performer, and a stage director. Everyone else is scowling back to me.
> …
> Liang Menghui: (Calmly) Old Lu, I heard that you already signed the contract and decided the specific date for our new play.
> Lu Xiankui: Um. (Quickly trying to find something) Look!
> Liang Menghui: I don’t need to see anything. I understand all of your troubles. But, before we start rehearsing, we already had an oral agreement. For this play, we will strive for a higher artistic quality.
> Lu Xiankui: (Eventually takes a reel of paper out, unfolding the paper) Look, Old Liang, it is not because I make troubles with you on purpose. Really, it is the deadline, the deadline almost kills me. The timing is so important. If we don't stage this show on this date, we will not seize upon any other dates in the future…
> …
> Liang Menghui: In terms of artistic quality, I am asking…
> Lu Xiankui: [jumps up] I don’t know about the artistic quality. I am only a businessman. I am a bastard. I only know how to make money. OK? Is it Ok for everyone? [Mourning and weeping]…
> …
> (Little Ge walks up on the stage)
> Little Ge: (raises his head from reading the account book) Mr. Lu! (Holding a pile of receipts) These are all the debts that will be due soon. Mr. Wu: 550; Mr. Hu’s business: 800; Master Cai: 500; and there are also two other bills…it is

[135] I am grateful to Kirk Denton for suggesting this parallel.

> already the end of the month, what we will do for the paycheck for the last pay-period? We can hold off [on paying] the performers, but those laborers who worked on the stage-set…I am afraid that we can no longer keep them if not paying them soon. Now our cash flow is only 3.3 dollars.[136]

Rather than improving, Lu's situation becomes even more desperate as the deadline approaches:

> Lu Xiankui: But who will believe in me! We have to make today's show. If not, we will be made fun of forever. Also, we already spent the money we made by selling tickets. If we have to return the audience's tickets, where can we get money? If we don't return the ticket money, and you all don't stage the play, am I going to be charged as a fraud? You are all talking about conscience, talking about art, how about me? I, Lu Xiankui, only have to go to jail.
> Su Fei: Old Lu, what you just said was really not necessary.
> Lu Xiankui: I am not necessary. I am the surplus one. I am the bastard. You, on the other hand, are real artists, great actors, great directors. I am only the bastard.[137]

Lu/Ying's daily, necessary, but often unrecognized "battles" would have rendered him an "everyman" to which the audience could easily relate. Furthermore, by depicting the "bohemian" playwrights Su Fei and Liang Menghui as only adding to Lu's burden, Xia, Song, and Yu were in fact affirming *XJCQ*'s central theme: that it was *juren*, not *wenren*, who were the driving force behind *huaju*.

Huaju *in Defense of the Nation*

Among the plethora of impressive contributions that Ying made to drama and cinema, the sub-category of "dramaturgy" was not among them. Differing not only from May Fourth intellectuals such as Hu Shi who wrote plays as a genre of modern literature more than as

[136] Xia, Song, and Yu, 1946, 107.
[137] Ibid., 133.

stageable drama, Ying's practices as director and producer also distinguished him from other STA and *Zhongyi* members who excelled in all areas of playmaking, including that of dramaturgy. Yet, despite his striking lack of writing credits, Ying still enjoyed considerable fame among his playmaking peers. Furthermore, when China and the drama field faced the crisis of war, the writers of *XJCQ* suggested that it was only Ying Yunwei who possessed the networks and skill to unite both *juren* and the nation against the foreign threat.

It is in the final act of *XJCQ* that Lu Xiankui's mission to organize all Shanghai *juren* at last bears fruit. However, just as Lu and the "bohemian" dramatists Kuang Qi, Peng Fang, and Su Fei start to work together to stage *Defending Lugou Bridge* (*Baowei Lugouqiao*) at the Penglai Theatre, a play meant to stir nationalist spirits to resist Japan, the war begins in earnest. The theatre stage transitions from being a modern play house performing the story of the July 7, 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident to the city streets, where the real struggle of defending Shanghai was taking place.

> [*Suddenly comes the sound of cannon. At the moment, the people are all frozen. But immediately, they all understand what happened.*]
> Peng Fang: Cannons!
> Su Fei: The war has started!
> Peng Fang: (*with an exaggerated voice and gesture that belongs to actors*) Ah, finally, the war starts here!
> Kuang Qi: Dear friends, this is our national revolutionary cannon! Let's go to the battlefield. Let's go to the battlefield and die for our nation!... An hour ago, I was still trying to make stage props in the Penglai theatre, trying to use the big drum to imitate the real cannon. But only one hour later, the cannon of the Resistance War can be heard! Friends, let's cry, let's sing![138]

[138] Ibid., 131.

As Kuang Qi calls for all men of theatre to march onto the streets, *XJCQ* concludes with China's *juren* united with the Chinese people in both spirit and deeds. Considering that *XJCQ* was staged during Chongqing's "fog season," when overcast weather brought a lull to Japanese bombardment, it is easy to see how such a patriotic conclusion would have served as a rallying cry before the next round of fighting.

As we have seen, Xia, Song, and Yu's original intent—to dramatize Ying's theatre life as a narrative of left-wing *juren*—expanded to include within its scope both the friendships and business relationships that Ying had been cultivating since the 1910s. *XJCQ* thus went from being about "one person" to being about "a group of people, to those who still stand up, to those who already fell."[139] By the play's end, this "group" had further expanded to include not just left-wing *juren*, but the Chinese nation *in toto*. Borrowing from Scott's "backstage discourse" of the weak standing up to the powerful, we see that *XJCQ* was not only a means for "nontraditional" *juren* such as Xia Yan and Song Zhidi to assert themselves in *huaju* history against the canonical narrative; it was also a metaphor, and an inspiration, for the Chinese masses (the weak) to resist the Japanese invaders (the powerful). The audience for *XJCQ* at once watched a *huaju* production, learned Chinese drama history, and drew parallels to their own wartime "blood and tear" struggles. Viewers of *XJCQ* would have left the theatre not only familiar with the history of modern drama and the role of *juren*, but also recommitted to the goal of national defense.[140]

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[139] Ibid., 1.
[140] Not only did *XJCQ* speak to Chinese audiences, but it did so for some Japanese as well. In 1946, a detailed act-by-act summary of the play that was published in *Gaozao zhoubao* (*Reform Weekly*), a magazine affiliated to the *Reform Daily Publisher* (*Gaizao ribao she*) founded by Lu Jiuzhi (?-2008), carried a clear agenda to use the drama history as an avenue to educate detained Japanese soldiers captured

Conclusion

Before 1937, "the year of *huaju*," the canonical narrative of modern drama clearly prioritized the dramaturgic and literary over the performative and theatrical. The well-known and much-quoted *Drama Volume* and "Introduction to Drama" (*Xiju daoyan*), edited and written by Hong Shen in 1932, juxtaposed vernacular plays written by May Fourth intellectuals (e.g. Hu Shi), progressive drama reformers from the Spring Willow society (e.g. Ouyang Yuqian), civilized drama veterans-cum-amateur drama activists (e.g. Chen Dabei 1887-1944); and Peking opera reformers (e.g. Wang Zhongxian 1888-1937); they also framed the evolution of modern Chinese drama, in a teleological manner, from hybrid civilized drama to the birth of *huaju* as a modern literary genre. Though he argued that drama is a collective art demanding the talents of poets, performers, and painters, Hong still emphasized playwrights and their signature dramaturgic/literary works in his canonical mapping out of the drama field.[141] The men of drama whose theatrical activities are credited in Hong's edition are those whose contributions lay in modern drama's literary repertoire.

In contrast, *XJCQ* presents an alternative canonization of *huaju*, one where the focus is not on bohemian playwrights and their scripts, but on the back-stage negotiations that took place among men of theatre as they struggled to balance artistic, economic, and

during the war, as well as to sway the popular opinion of any Japanese still living in China. Both the rhetoric and the perspective employed in its discussion of *XJCQ* informed Japanese readers of the brave and active Chinese resistance against Japanese oppression. See Xiao Yi, 26-27. For more information on Lu Jiuzhi, who married Chen Yaoguang (c.a.1921-?), the adopted daughter of Chiang Kai-shek and his third wife, Chen Jieru (1906-1971) in 1946 in Shanghai, see *Zongheng* (*Review*), no. 6, 2004.

[141] Hong Shen's 1932 understanding of the labor/talent distribution in play-making echoes his earlier views on theatre as a democratic space where playwrights and performers have a *zhiji* relationship, but it is still playwrights who assume the leading role. See Chapter 1.

commercial concerns. By "canonizing the backstage," *XJCQ* claimed a space within *huaju* discourse for *juren* such as Xia Yan, Song Zhidi, and Yu Ling to assert their lived history of Chinese modern drama against established drama narratives. Specifically, *XJCQ* presented a canonization of *huaju* that emphasized play-making over play-writing, and bridged the binaries between the political and the artistic, the popular and the critically acclaimed. *XJCQ* was thus reflective of playmakers' own evolving self-identity, from *wenren* to *juren*.

XJCQ was neither the first *huaju* to document the backstage, nor the first to employ historical analogy for political ends. And, as the drama collections of Song Chunfang and Shu Weiqing reveal, it was also not the first attempt to form a *huaju* canonization different than Hong Shen's "Introduction to Drama." However, *XJCQ* was, I believe, the first to accomplish all three of these tasks in a satisfying manner. Previous "theatres of dramatists," such as Tian Han's *Death of an Actor* and Wu Zuguang's *Return on a Snowy Night*, highlighted the often bleak off-stage lives of performers, but did not depict *juren*'s proclaimed "saint-like" role of being China's moral arbiters and prophetic guides. Similarly, Song Chunfang's and Shu Weiqing's collections of drama-related works, though notable for including "meta-books" on the theories and specifics of play-making and important in shaping the development of Chinese modern drama, were still mostly focused on plays and drama literatures and failed at defining *juren* in a way that was understandable by the masses. Finally, Xia Yan's and Song Zhidi's earlier attempts at creating an historical *huaju* that was politically pertinent *and* profitable—*Sai Jinhua* and *Wu Zetian*, respectively—were unable to impress left-wing drama critics, who faulted the plays for flirting too closely with commercial trends. What allowed *XJCQ* to

succeed where others failed was its subject matter—the play-making activities of Ying Yunwei.

Ying Yunwei was the "ideal candidate" for Xia, Song, and Yu to present their backstage account of *huaju* history. Ying's "everyman" status—demonstrated by his reputation for being more interested in putting on a "good show" than in making political proclamations—made "Ying Yunwei" a topic that could pass government censorship and "Lu Xiankui" a character that could win the masses' sympathy. Moreover, Ying Yunwei, by the time of *XJCQ*'s debut, had demonstrably achieved the three goals of the modern drama field: professionalization, popularization, and politicization. Helping to end the convention of men playing women, staging an elaborate production of the leftist drama *Roar China!*, and being appointed by Zhou Enlai to serve as the "neutral" head of *Zhongyi* were just some of Ying's accomplishments. His rich experiences running STA and *Zhongyi*, his extensive network of performers, stagehands, and financial backers, and his skill at navigating the politically uncertain waters of wartime Chongqing were further proof of Ying's playmaking dexterity. A play about Ying Yunwei was thus a play about the maturation of *huaju* itself. Much like its subject matter, *XJCQ*'s extended run was equally triumphant.

When judged by its glowing reviews, box-office take, and political impact (in terms of raising the spirits of a war-weary Chongqing audience while offering subtle criticisms of the GMD), *XJCQ* appears to have achieved every measure of success. Certainly, *XJCQ* struck a responsive chord among audiences and critics alike. One is left to wonder, then, if *XJCQ*'s "alternative canonization" was in fact more akin to the lived realities of Shanghai and Chongqing *juren* than the "play-centered" narrative put-forward

by Hong Shen in 1932 and maintained by most scholarship.[142] Consequently, when we look at *XJCQ*, we are not only "rediscovering" a neglected work that played an important role in Chongqing's war effort; we are also "relearning" the history of Chinese modern drama more broadly. *XJCQ* asks us to again ponder how such "history" is constructed, who are the figures it includes, and more important, who are the ones excluded.

[142] For an example of English scholarship that presents a "play-centered" retelling of the history of modern Chinese drama, see Edward M. Gunn, *Twentieth-century Chinese Drama: An Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

Conclusion

> The color page in front of me right now—the cover of the playbill for *The Wedded Husband* held at The Ohio State University in November 2013—makes me forget about the chilly weather in Shanghai in the final days of 2013. A feeling of joy warms my entire body. On November 16 and 17, 2013, eight Ohio State University students of different races, skin colors, and nationalities performed, with the help of some experienced professors, the three-act-play (written in English) *The Wedded Husband* on a campus stage. Jump back to April 11 and 12 in 1919, two American female students and six Chinese students premiered this same play in the University Hall Chapel at Ohio State.[1]

On November 16 and 17, 2013, ninety-four years and seven months after its debut, Hong Shen's *The Wedded Husband*: *A Realist Chinese Play* (1919) was staged for four performances at the Roy Bowen Theatre in the Ohio State University's Drake Performance Center as part of a campus-wide interdisciplinary Hong Shen Project.[2] With the revival of *TWH* by and for the cosmopolitan scholar-student community in 2013, my inquiry into cosmopolitan intellectual dramatists' "play-making" of "Chinese" spoken drama (*huaju*) that started from Hong Shen's student theatre activities in America gained a vital and rewarding resonance. Not only were the transnational origins of modern Chinese drama expanded from Japan to America; but also Hong Shen and his

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[1] Hong Qian, "Ninety-Four Years and Seven Months," trans. Yichun Xu, in *The Wedded Husband: A Modern Chinese Literature and Culture Publication*. Kirk A. Denton, ed. (Columbus: The Ohio State University Foreign Language Publications, 2014), 1.

[2] In addition to restaging *The Wedded Husband*, which was directed by Siyuan Liu and produced by myself, the Hong Shen Project included the translating and public screening of the Hong Shen-written film *Shanghai Old and New* (*Xinjiu Shanghai*, 1936), an academic symposium entitled "Hong Shen and the Modern Mediasphere in Republican-Era China," and Hong Qian's donation of part of her father's books—including a 1938 sketch of Hong Shen by Xu Beihong (1895-1953)—to the campus library. Speakers at the Hong Shen Symposium were Kirk A. Denton, Siyuan Liu, Megan Ammirati, Liang Luo, myself, Xuelei Huang, Xiaomei Chen, and Patricia Sieber.

cosmopolitan dramatist peers' "cultural liminality"[3] between May Fourth-like iconoclasm and sentimental attachment to the Confucian structure of feelings (*qing*) was carefully revisited. For my own research, in particular, the framework of "play-making" discussed in this dissertation attained its most immediate theatrical incarnation during the preparation and staging of *TWH*. As it was for Hong Shen nearly a century ago, *TWH* served as a stage to make visible modern Chinese drama to a cosmopolitan audience. On a more personal level, the seventeen-month process of (re)staging *TWH*—which included securing funding, finding a director, actors, and stagehands, and devising publicity—broadened my understanding of *huaju* and "play-making" to include textual, performative/theatrical, and metanarrative levels.

This dissertation has examined how *huaju*-making in the first half of the 20th century provided intellectual play-makers a vital but tension-ridden venue to (re)produce forms of "self" as performative-informed "enlighteners" to the masses and participatory citizens for building a modern China; and restore and (re)define social norms within the extended *huaju* "stage." I have demonstrated how play-making, seen and practiced as a "democratic institution" by cosmopolitan dramatists such as Hong Shen, attempted, among other things, to form a "unity" incorporating the metropolitan masses, a rural base for the Mass Education Movement, and shelters for war refugees during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Due to insufficient historical documentation—which is another form of media—the story of "play-making" and "nation-building" told here has been pivoted around major cosmopolitan dramatists—Hong Shen, Xiong Foxi, Yu Shangyuan, and Xia

[3] Kirk Denton, "Forward," in *The Wedded Husband: A Modern Chinese Literature and Culture Publication*. Kirk A. Denton, ed. (Columbus: The Ohio State University Foreign Language Publications, 2014), x.

Yan—while they mobilized *self* and *huaju* against the backdrop of successive wars and (re)constructions on both domestic and global scales.

Hong Shen witnessed the rise of post-WWI cosmopolitanism in America while he majored in ceramic engineering at OSU but more fully expressed his talents making modern Chinese theatre in Columbus, Ohio. Embracing and digesting the "cultural shocks" between China (a collapsing political entity) and America (the frontier of global modernity) with an optimistic spirit, Hong in staging *TWH* was determined to challenge Chinese overseas students identities as a class "superior" to Chinese immigrant laborers and at the same time as a race "inferior" to their cosmopolitan cohort. Assisted by a mixed gender and mixed racial student cast, Hong put on a "Chinese realist play" that both problematized the tradition of arranged marriage in China and proclaimed the "enlightening and educating" power of Confucian ethical norms, such as loyalty, filial piety, and chastity, to post-world-war America. Modern Chinese theatre, thus, was not only a "tool" by which "modern" Chinese could reclaim their national, cultural, and racial dignity vis-à-vis a "feudal" past and a "hostile" West. *TWH* (and modern Chinese theatre in general) also served as a "democratic institution" where "voices" from Confucian China, alongside the scientific and rational West, communicated on an equal footing; and where "bodies" of Chinese men and Caucasian women performed romantic intimacy in the play and "fraternal" intimacy while making the play.

Hong's practice of rewriting, performing, and defining modern Chinese drama via *TWH* thus greatly distinguishes his experience abroad from other well-known narratives of overseas students, such as Lu Xun and Wen Yiduo, both of whom faced tension-charged "humiliations" of their own racial, national, and gender identities. Unlike these

tragic accounts which have become interwoven into a shared discourse of suffering and failure—and from which arrives the most-known variant of modern Chinese nationalism—both Hong's story and the broader cosmopolitan current it represented (which included Yu Shangyuan and Xiong Foxi in the I-House) have, until now, been left unexamined. Writing my story of "play-making" and "nation-building" from the vantage point of a "happier" episode in the intertwined histories of theatre, culture, and the intelligentsia has allowed me to chart the significant yet unfortunately overlooked path that was built around a three-fold conception of "play-making."

Hong's optimism of building a microscopic "democratic" space by making *huaju* plays, ironically, encountered its first serious doubt from Hong himself. Having tried without success to express his cosmopolitan sympathy with the suffering peasantry in 1920s Shanghai by making modernist *huaju* such as *Yama Zhao*, Hong, along with Xiong Foxi, another American-trained dramatist, participated in the rural reconstruction movements of the following decade by writing "peasant plays" (*nongmin ju*) designed to "enlighten" the rural masses and turn them into "new citizens." Hong's *Trilogy of the Countryside* (*Nongcun sanbuqu*) and Xiong's *Crossing* (*Guodu*) both focused on the popular rural (re)construction theme and developed their plots around new (or demolishing old for the sake of building new) construction projects in Jiangnan and Ding County. In spite of their apparent textual affinity, these plays have largely been positioned at opposite ends of the spectrum representing intellectuals' practices of "going to the people." Part I and III of Hong's *Trilogy*, set in rural Jiangnan villages that were "imagined" based on Hong's short-term visit and casual talks with workers and peasants in a Shanghai suburb, were staged by urban educated youth who practiced *huaju* in

Shanghai's Fudan Drama Society and Nanjing's National Drama School, respectively. Instead of merely praising the achievements of the rural reconstruction movement, Hong chose to focus on the "problems"—the loss of rural native land, and the futility of attempting to build a modern public/national infrastructure—to suggest his skepticism toward the goal of building a rural modern. On stage, the demolishing actions and the prevailing (public) anger/sentiment of the peasant characters reinforced each other, leading to a theatrical climax where the social disorder and chaos that had been generated from building a rural public swayed equally between the categories of "village mob" and "new citizens." Off stage, the discernable "self-doubts" embodied by Hong's peasant plays partly actualized his belief that "play-making," even at the textual level, was a "democratic" space to exert a critical voice. Moreover, the theatrical aspect of "play-making" in Hong's peasant plays demanded advanced theatre technologies (including set design and lighting) to first build and then demolish the "old" theatre architectures. The process of designing and conducting "destructions" on a *huaju* stage, thus, united intellectual dramatists, student-actors, and skilled stage technicians under the frame of play-making. Furthermore, the successful application of lighting, as Hong proudly remembered in the 1950s, attracted urban spectators who—while still getting familiar with lighting techniques applied in cinema—were impressed and attracted by lighting tricks on the *huaju* stage without the mediation of camera and screen.

Xiong's *Crossing* was written and staged in East Buluogang village in Ding County in Hebei province, a location which served as another intellectual "construction" within the social milieus of the mass education and rural reconstruction movements. Although Xiong recycled the (re)construction theme addressed in Hong's peasant plays,

he deleted the nuanced dramatic tension between intellectual educators and the rural masses. Xiong turned the plot and dramatic action of demolishing an old bridge or cherry orchard in Hong's plays into building a new bridge, thereby directly echoing—instead of implicitly subverting—the optimistic goals of the rural reconstruction movement. Furthermore, the local Ding County peasants not only played roles of bridge-builders within *Crossing* but were organized by Xiong and MEM's Theatre Division to build the open-air theatre where the play was staged. By situating a textual analysis of the play alongside accounts of peasant actors' daily rehearsals and their collective labor in theatre-building, I have demonstrated that the process of making *Crossing* in textual, performative, and theatrical senses attempted to stimulate and incorporate peasants' participation in making *huaju* and a rural modern, while also transforming them into "new citizens." Thus, the "modern rural community" that Xiong Foxi allegedly built with *Crossing* not only rested on the public sympathy stimulated by the (re)construction plot, but also on the (trans)formation of the rural community into a modern public that was defined and disciplined by choreographic designing, scheduled rehearsals, and the collective labors of stage- and theatre-building. Theatre, as a "democratic" space, was actualized in 1930s Ding County in both sentimental and material senses.

Xiong's play-making experiences in Ding County promptly gained global and national attention. Today, "Dingxianism" is often positioned as the "precursor" of the drama and cultural development in Yan'an and the Jin-Cha-Ji Boarder Region during the Second Sino-Japanese War. In contrast, Yu Shangyuan's—Xiong's cosmopolitan play-making peer in 1920s' New York—efforts at orchestrating the National Drama School (NDS) in Jiang'an during the Second Sino-Japanese War has unfortunately been

overlooked. Chapter Three turns to the National Drama School, a network that exerted the tasks of training play-makers (pedagogical), refining the theatrical art of *huaju* (artistic), and propagating the ideologies of national defense and state building (political). By reading Zhang Daofan's grant proposal of building NDS, I place the school within the long-term goal of building a National Theatre, thereby linking NDS with late Qing diplomats' "awe" of the Paris Opéra in the late 19th century, the process of nationalizing Peking opera in the Nanjing decade, and the Communist regime's practices of building a national theatre in the early PRC. Leaving the prescriptive level, I examine two major NDS productions, *Metamorphosis* (*Tuibian*, 1940) and *Hamlet* (1942), and unearth the connection between these two plays' innovative use of theatre space with NDS' renovation of the Jiang'an local Confucian Temple into a make-shift "national theatre" during the war. Through my examination of the specific processes of making *Metamorphosis* and *Hamlet*, I discern NDS' "play-making" network as a pedagogical site that engaged in training professional student-actors and educating the masses, two important aspects of *huaju*-related "learning." Chapter Three thus enriches our understanding of "play-making" to include pedagogical, artistic, and political efforts.

These studies of "play-making" in textual, performative/theatrical, and, to a lesser extent, institutional aspects, prompt me to conclude my dissertation with an examination of play-makers' canonization of *huaju* in the 1940s. Accordingly, Chapter Four examines the self-referential *huaju*, *Annals of Theatre* (*Xiju chunqiu, XJCQ*), a *huaju* about the history of *huaju*-making. *XJCQ*'s self-referential status places it outside of the conventional *huaju*-canonizations formed by compiling anthologies, writing drama histories, and building drama libraries. Xia Yan, the main writer behind *XJCQ*, was

another cosmopolitan intellectual who studied in Japan in his formative years, and was a leading figure of the left-wing film- and play-making network. Interestingly, Xia chose the trajectory of Ying Yunwei, a Ningbo-born "amateur" entrepreneur and "professional" play (and film) maker, to dramatize Chinese *huaju* play-makers' collective fate. Significantly, Ying's career diverged from the "man of letters" (*wenren*) identity embedded in previous established dramatists and instead favored the "man of theatre" (*juren*) cohort who engaged not only in textual and ideological aspects of *huaju*, but the performative, theatrical, and commercial venues of play-making. While fully exerting his talent in directing and producing *huaju*-plays as well as managing drama troupes, Ying was much less qualified as a playwright, and did not contribute any signature plays to the *huaju* repertoire. Moreover, Ying's broad social networking with leftists and nationalists, bankers and dramatists, actors and stage technicians further blurred his self-identity as a left-wing dramatist. Thus, by focusing on Ying, Xia's self-referential canonization of *huaju* preferred *juren* over *wenren*, collective play-making over political factionalism, and, to a lesser extant, the domestic "amateur" tradition over the cosmopolitan theatre profession. My dissertation uncovers and inserts *XJCQ*'s canonization of *huaju*-making into the multi-voiced and multi-layered "vogue" of *huaju* canonization. Moreover, my discussion on how *XJCQ* dramatizes a *huaju* history based on Ying Yunwei rather than established play-makers such as Hong Shen sheds light on *XJCQ*'s actualization of theatre as a "democratic" space where the once-leading position of *wenren* was supplanted by *juren*.

Accompanying Ying Yunwei's personal trajectory of play-making is *XJCQ*'s shifting attention to the "back-stage" of *huaju* theatre. By building the world of *huaju*-

making, Xia unfolds a story of the back-stage where the conflict and negotiation of play-making is dramatized. Xia's canonizing of the "back-stage" was, understandably, influenced by the popular "obsession" with the back-stage that appeared in both Chinese cinema and the Hollywood films of the 1930s. Moreover, the "back-stage" provides Xia a site for his canonization of *huaju*-making that teased, challenged, and eventually subverted established *huaju* narratives. In this sense, Xia's dramatization of gossips and scandals of the "back-stage" positioned *XJCQ* within the "backstage discourse"—or "the hidden script" in James C. Scott's definition—which prioritizes the spoken over the written and the preparation for a performance over the performance itself. By making a *huaju* about *huaju*-making, *XJCQ* provides a self-canonization that encounters and challenges the established canonical voice of *huaju*.

In sum, this dissertation examines "play-making" in its textual, performative/theatrical, and meta-theatrical senses while dealing with specific *huaju* plays that were written and staged in Columbus, Ohio (Chapter 1), Shanghai and Ding County (Chapter 2), Jiang'an, a hinterland shelter for war refugees (Chapter 3), and Chongqing, the wartime capital (Chapter 4). It has unearthed an alternative imagination of *huaju* and *huaju*-making—as "cosmopolitan" instead of "Western," and "democratic" instead of "elitist." Treating "cosmopolitan" and "democratic" *huaju*-making as a vital and collective entity rather than a mere literary genre, I have examined the trajectory of *huaju*-making from one of its cosmopolitan origins among Chinese students studying in America in the early 20th century (Chapter 1); to *huaju*'s popularization among the (rural) masses (Chapter 2); to the institutionalization of a *huaju* drama school (Chapter 3); and to its self-canonization in a *huaju* play (Chapter 4). Finally, I have linked the process of

"play-making" on the extended *huaju* stage with the project of nation-building that took place among China's overseas student community, its domestic metropolises and rural reconstruction bases, and wartime capital. My approach problematizes understandings of *huaju* in extant scholarship and significantly revises the deficient discourse of modern Chinese theatre. Meanwhile, I demonstrate the vital and two-way traffic between *huaju* theatre and the political reality (worldly stage). *Huaju* thereby gains a fuller examination of its artistic meanings, social function, and the trajectory of development. As shown through the establishment of the loose network based on a three-folded understanding of "play-making," cosmopolitan dramatists, the (rural) masses, and performers all participated in and negotiated with each other in (re)defining artistic and social norms, as well as (re)producing self- and national-identities during the first half of China's tumultuous 20th century.

Archives and Abbreviations

BMA	Baoding Municiple Archives
CMA	Chongqing Municiple Archives
CUAC	Columbia Univerity Archival Collections
LDA	*Lantern* Digital Archives
SMA	Shanghai Municiple Archives
OSUA	The Ohio State University Archives

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Glossary

A Ying 阿英
aimei de 爱美的
aimei ju 爱美剧
aiqing 爱情
anwei 安慰
Bai Wei 白薇
baire 白热
ban guding zhuangzhi fa 半固定装置法
ban tuchu taikou 半突出台口
Bao tianxiao 包天笑
Baowei Lugouqiao 保卫卢沟桥
Beijing chenbao 北京晨报
benshi 本事
Bianju shu 编剧史
Bianju xinshuo 编剧新说
biaoyu pai de douzheng wenxue 标语派的斗争文学
Bugan ye dei gan 不干也得干
buji zhiwu 不急之务
cai 才
Cai Jianke 蔡剑克
Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培
Cao Yu 曹禺
Changsheng dian 长生殿
changshi 常识
chayuan 茶园
Chen Baichen 陈白尘
Chen Dabei 陈大悲
Chen Diexian 陈蝶仙
Chen Duxiu 陈独秀
Chen Jieru 陈洁如
Chen Kaige 陈凯歌
Chen Lifu 陈立夫
Chen Qubing 陈祛病
Chen Yaoguang 陈瑶光
Chen Yuyuan 陈豫园
Chen Zhice 陈治策
Chenbao 晨报
Cheng Yanqiu 程砚秋
chengfa li 丞法吏
Chiang Kai-shek 蒋介石
Choujian Zhonghua xiqu yinyue xuehui ji yinyue yuan zhi xuanyan 筹建中华戏曲音乐学会及音乐院之宣言
Chuangzao she 创造社
chuanqi 传奇
Chuanying huiyi lu 钏影楼回忆录
Chuncan 春蚕
Chunliu juchang 春柳剧场
Chunliu she 春柳社
chunliu si junzi 春柳四君子
chunqiu 春秋
Chutou jian'er 锄头健儿
chuxi 出戏
Cihen mianmian 此恨绵绵
cong Kaerdeng dao jietou 从卡尔登到街头
Congjun le 从军乐
Da Bao 大保
da juchang 大剧场
da tuanyuan 大团圆
Da wutai 大舞台
da yangge 大秧歌
Da zhalan 大栅栏
Dagong bao 大公报
dagu 大鼓

Daliu he 大流河
dan 旦
dao minjian qu 到民间去
Dao Xi 道希
daxi 大戏
dazhong 大众
dazhong de 大众的
Dazhong jushe 大众剧社
dazhonghua 大众化
deren qiancai, yuren xiaozai 得人钱财与人消灾
Di yijie xiandai xiju wenwu zhanlan hui 第一届现代戏剧文物展览会
dianxing hua 典型化
[Dianying] Bianju ershi ba wen (电影)编剧二十八问
Ding Xian 定县
Ding Xilin 丁西林
Dingjun shan 定军山
dingxian zhuyi 定县主义
Dong Buluogang 东不落岗
Dong can 冬残
Dong Tao 董韬
Dongfang yishu xiao juchang 东方艺术小剧场
Dongming jutuan 东明剧团
doudezhuan 兜得转
duanpian xinzuo 短篇新作
dujiao xi 独角戏
erhu 二胡
Ershi shiji dawutai 二十世纪大舞台
Faxisi xijun 法西斯细菌
fei zhiye de 非职业的
fei zhiye de xiju 非职业的戏剧
feiyang 飞扬
Feng Keng 冯铿
Feng laoye 冯老爷
Feng Xizui 冯昔醉
Feng Yunhe 冯韵荷
Feng Zihe 冯子和
Fenghuang cheng 凤凰城
fengsao podan 风骚泼旦
fengshou chengzai 丰收成灾
fengshui 风水
Fengxue yegui ren 风雪夜归人
Fengzheng wu 风筝误
Fu Sinian 傅斯年
Fu Xiangmo 傅襄谟
Fudan jushe 复旦剧社
Fuhuo 复活
Funü shibao 妇女时报
Gai Jiaotian 盖叫天
Gaishi bao 盖世报
Gaizao ribao she 改造日报社
gan huaju 干话剧
gan qi xi lai 干起戏来
gan xi 干戏
Gan'en er si 感恩而死
ganhua 感化
ganmei de sixiang 感美的思想
Gaozao zhoubao 改造周报
geju 歌剧
geming de 革命的
gewu 歌舞
Gong Shutian 龚叔田
gongfei 共匪
Gongyuan 贡院
Gu Hong 谷虹
Gu Jianchen 谷剑尘
Gu Yiqiao 顾一樵
Gu Yuxiu 顾毓秀
Guan Hanqing 关汉卿
guangchang ju 广场剧
Guazhong lanyin 瓜种兰因
gufeng 古风
guishi shenchai 鬼使神差
Gulou 鼓楼
Guo Moruo 郭沫若
Guo Songtao 郭嵩焘
Guodu 过渡

guodu xi 过渡戏
Guodu zhi ge 过渡之歌
guofang 国防
guofang xiju 国防戏剧
guoju 国剧
Guoju xuehui 国剧学会
Guoju yundong 国剧运动
Guoli Beijing yishu zhuanmen xuexiao 国立北京艺术专门学校
Guoli xiju xuexiao 国立戏剧学校
Guoli zhongyang daxue 国立中央大学
guomin geming 国民革命
Guomin gongbao 国民公报
Guomindang 国民党
Guotai 国泰
guoyu 国语
guzhuang xinxi 古装新戏
Haimoer 海默而
Hansheng xiaojuchang 汉声小剧场
haotao 嚎啕
He Shuowen 何守文
Heinu yutian lu 黑奴吁天录
Hemu cangshu jumu 褐木藏书剧目
Hemu lu 褐木庐
Hemu lu cang xiqu shu xiemu 褐木庐藏戏曲书写目
Hirasawa Keishichi 平泽计七
Hong Jun 洪钧
Hong Shen 洪深
Hong Shen lun 洪深论
Hong Shen qishi 洪深启事
Hong Sheng 洪昇
Hongling bei 红绫被
honglü duipa 红绿对帕
hongyan 红颜
houtai 后台
Hu Dao 胡导
Hu Feng 胡风
Hu Shi 胡适
Hu Yepin 胡也频
hua 话
huagu xi 花鼓戏
huaji 滑稽
huaju 话剧
huaju nian 话剧年
Huang Dasha 黄大傻
Huang Renlin 黄仁霖
Huang tudi 黄土地
Huang Zuolin 黄作霖
huazhuang shishi yanjiang 化妆时事演讲
huiwei 回味
huju 沪剧
Huohu zhiye 获虎之夜
jiagou ju 佳构剧
Jiang Han 江涵
Jiang'an 江安
Jiangnan 江南
jianguo 建国
jianshe 建设
Jiao Juyin 焦菊隐
jiaohua 教化
jiefang qu 解放区
jiegou 结构
jietou ju 街头剧
jiezhai 戒斋
jiguan 机关
jin renshi 尽人事
Jin Shan 金山
Jin-Cha-Ji 晋察冀
Jindai mingxi baizhong mu 近代名戏百种目
jiquan 集权
Jiutian niangniang 九天娘娘
Jixiang yuan 吉祥园
jizhong yaohai 击中要害
Juben chuban ji yanchu shencha jiandu banfa 剧本出版及演出审查监督办法
juben 剧本
juben huang 剧本荒

Juchang yishu 剧场艺术
juren 举人
juren 剧人
Juyuan xiju tushuguan 剧院戏曲图书馆
juzhi 剧旨
kaipian 开篇
Kaisa dadi dengtai 恺撒大帝登台
kangzhan ju 抗战剧
kangzhan wenhua 抗战文化
kangzhan yu jianguo 抗战与建国
Konggu lan 空谷兰
Kongque dongnan fei 孔雀东南飞
kouhui er shi bu zhi 口惠而实不至
Kuang Qi 匡齐
kubai 哭拜
kui 奎
kuilei 傀儡
Kuilei zazhi 傀儡杂志
Kumiao 哭庙
Kung Qiuping 匡秋平
kunqu 昆曲
Laba 喇叭
Lanzhi and Zhongqing 兰芝与仲卿
Lao Can youji 老残游记
laojun 劳军
laosheng 老生
Le Shui 乐水
Leiyu 雷雨
li 理
li 礼
Li Hongzhang 李鸿章
Li Jianwu 李健吾
Li Naichen 李乃忱
Li Quansheng 李全生
Li Shizeng 李石曾
Li Shuchang 黎庶昌
Li Shutong 李叔同
Li Weisen 李伟森
Li Yu 李渔
Liang Qichao 梁启超
Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋
Liang Shuming 梁漱溟
Liangyou huabao 良友画报
Liaodi Pagoda 料敌塔
Lin Gongda 林公达
Lin Shu 林纾
Liu E 刘鹗
Liu fa quanshu 六法全书
Liu Hongsheng 刘鸿升
Liu Mei qingnian zazhi 留美青年杂志
Liu Mei xuesheng jikan 留美青年季刊
Liu Zhensheng 刘振声
Longwang qu 龙王渠
Lü En 吕恩
Lu Jingruo 陆镜若
Lu Jiuzhi 陆久之
Lu tian juchang 露天剧场
Lu Xiankui 陆宪揆
Lu Xun 鲁迅
Lu Xun yishu xueyuan 鲁迅艺术学院
Lun xiaoshuo yu quanzhi guanxi 论小说与群治关系
Luo Jialun 罗家伦
Ma Jiangshi 马绛士
Ma Yanxiang 马彦祥
maiban 买办
Maili ren 卖梨人
maiyi 卖艺
Mao Dun 茅盾
Mao Zedong 毛泽东
maoer xi 髦儿戏
mei guilü 没规律
Mei Lanfang 梅兰芳
meishu dengguang 美术灯光
Mi Digang 米迪刚
Mi Jiansan 米鉴三
Mingyou zhi si 名优之死
Minming she 民鸣社
minsu 民俗
minsu gejujie 民俗歌剧节

minzhong 民众
minzu hua 民族化
Modeng she 摩登社
Mofeng jushe 磨风剧社
Mori Ogai 森鸥外
moshu 魔术
mubiao yu juben zhi zheng 幕表与剧本之争
Mulian jumu 木莲救母
Nahan jushe tushuguan 呐喊剧社图书馆
Nala ju 娜拉剧
Nalei 娜累
Nanguo she 南国社
Nanguo she xiju yundong 南国社戏剧运动
Nanguo yishu xueyuan 南国社艺术学院
Nanzhong she 南钟社
Niulang yu zhinü 牛郎与织女
Nongcun sanbu qu 农村三部曲
nongmin ju 农民剧
Nuhou ba, Zhongguo 怒吼吧中国
Osanai Kaoru 小山内薰
Oumei mingju 欧美名剧
Ouyang Shanzun 欧阳山尊
Ouyang Yuqian 欧阳予倩
Ouzhou xiju shi 欧洲戏剧史
pailian ben 排练本
Paiyou zazhi 俳优杂志
Pan Gongzhan 潘公展
Pan Jinlian 潘金莲
paotou loumian 抛头露面
Peng Fang 彭芳
Pinmin canju 贫民惨剧
Pofu 泼妇
Qi Rushan 齐如山
Qin Shou'ou 秦瘦鸥
qing 情
qinggan 情感
Qinglong dawang 青龙大王
Qinglong tan 青龙潭
Qingnian huiyan 青年汇演
Qingnian xuanjiang tuan 青年宣讲团
Qiu Haitang 秋海棠
Qiu shou 秋收
Qiwen 弃文
Qu Junong 瞿菊农
Qu Yuan 屈原
quefa shenghuo 缺乏生活
quyi 曲艺
Quzi ci 屈子祠
Ren Tianzhi 任天知
rensheng mian yu shehui mian 人生面与社会面
renwu dianxing hua 人物典型化
Rong Hong 容闳
Rou Shi 柔石
Ruxi 入戏
Sai Jinhua 赛金花
Sanmin zhuyi 三民主义
Sanqing yuan 三庆园
Shanghai de yijiao 上海的一角
Shanghai huaji ju 上海滑稽剧
Shanghai juyi she 上海剧艺社
Shanghai wuyan xia 上海屋檐下
Shanghai xiju xieshe 上海戏剧协社
Shanghai yishu daxue 上海艺术大学
Shanghai yishu jushe 上海艺术剧社
shangyan jihua 上演计划
Shao nainai de shanzi 少奶奶的扇子
shaxiong qusao 杀兄娶嫂
shehui ju 社会剧
Shenbao 申报
Shen Gao 沈诰
shengdong xing 生动性
Shengguan tu 升官图
shengtang rumiao 升堂入庙
shenlin qijing 身临其境
Shi Dongshan 史东山
Shi Linghe 石凌鹤

Shibao 时报
Shicha zhuanyuan 视察专员
Shijie tongxuehui 世界同学会
Shiliao suoyin 史料索引
shingeki 新剧
shinpa 新派
Shishen baise 失神败色
shishi 时事
shiye 实业
shiye jiuguo 实业救国
shizhen 失真
shizhuang jiuxi 时装旧剧
Shoucai lu 守财虏
shouzhong zhengqin 寿终正寝
Shu Weiqing 舒蔚青
shuang shencha 双审查
shuiru jiaorong 水乳交融
sitiao hanzi 四条汉子
Song Chunfang 宋春舫
Song Chunfang lunju 宋春舫论剧
Song Zhidi 宋之的
su 俗
Su Fei 苏菲
Sun Fuyuan 孙伏园
Sun Yat-sen 孙中山
sunzi 孙子
Taiyang she 太阳社
Tan Xinpei 谭鑫培
Tang Qianqian 唐倩倩
Tao Xingzhi 陶行之
Taohua shan 桃花扇
Taohun ji 逃婚记
Tian Han 田汉
Tian Qin 田禽
Tianchan da wutai 天蟾大舞台
tianyi wufeng 天衣无缝
tigao haishi puji 提高还是普及
tilian 提炼
Tong Fengren 童凤仁
tongqing 同情
tuanti de xizheng 团体的西征
Tufu 屠夫
Tuibian 蜕变
wan tianyi 挽天意
Wang Guowei 王国维
Wang Menghuang 王梦煌
Wang Tongshun 王同顺
Wang Xiaonong 汪笑侬
Wang Yangming 王阳明
Wang Ying 王莹
Wang Zhongxian 汪仲贤
Wanshou shan 万寿山
wawa 哇哇
Wei Liansheng 魏连生
Wei zhi youshi 为之有室
weida de shouhuo 伟大的收获
Wen Yiduo 闻一多
Wenmiao 文庙
wenming xi 文明戏
wenren 文人
wenti ju 问题剧
wenxue dazhonghua 文学大众化
Wenyi yulong hui 文艺鱼龙会
Women de ziji pipan 我们自己的批判
Woxing changdan 卧薪尝胆
Wu Wozun 吴我尊
Wu Zetian 武则天
Wu Zhenxiu 吴震修
Wu Zuguang 吴祖光
wuchan jieji xiju 无产阶级戏剧
Wuhan ribao 武汉日报
Wukui qiao 五奎桥
wuqing qibei 五情七悲
xi 戏
Xia Yan 夏衍
Xia Yuerun 夏月润
Xia Yueshan 夏月珊
xian song zhi sheng 弦诵之声
Xiandai xiju tushu guan 现代戏剧图书馆

Xiandai xiju tushu mulu 现代戏剧图书目录
Xiandai xueyi jiangxi suo 现代学艺讲习所
xiandai zhuyi de 现代主义的
Xiang daomi 香稻米
xiang'an 香案
Xiangcun jianshe yundong 乡村建设运动
xiangsheng 相声
xiangtu yu 乡土语
xiansheng 先生
xianshi zhuyi de 现实主义的
xianzhang 县长
xiao shimin 小市民
Xiao wutai 笑舞台
Xiaoshuo shibao 小说时报
Xiaoshuo yuebao 小说月报
Xiaozhuang jushe 晓庄剧社
Xiaozhuang shiyan xiangcun shifan xuexiao 晓庄实验乡村师范学校
xieju 写剧
xieyi 写意
Xifang meiren 西方美人
Xihu yishu xueyuan 西湖艺术学院
xiju 戏剧
xiju bing 戏剧饼
Xiju chunqiu 戏剧春秋
Xiju daoyan 戏剧导言
Xiju de yisheng 戏剧的人生
Xiju gailiang zhuanhao 戏剧改良专号
xiju gongzuozhe 戏剧工作者
xiju jia 戏剧家
xiju jie 戏剧界
Xiju shidai 戏剧时代
Xiju tushu guan 戏剧图书馆
xiju xing 戏剧性
Xiju yanyuan dengji zhi jingguo 戏剧演员登记之经过
xin guzhuang xi 新古装戏
Xin Luoma 新罗马
Xin qingnian 新青年
Xin shenghuo yundong 新生活运动
Xin wutai 新舞台
Xin xiaoshuo 新小说
Xinchao 新潮
xing 性
xingxiang hua bugou 形象化不够
Xinhua ribao 新华日报
Xinhua ribao fukan 新华日报副刊
xinju 新剧
xinmin 新民
Xinmin bao 新民报
Xinwenhua yundong 新文化运动
xinxue 新学
Xinyou jushe 辛酉剧社
Xiong Foxi 熊佛西
xiqu 戏曲
xiqu gailiang 戏剧改良
xiucai 秀才
xiuyang 修养
xixue 西学
xiyuan 戏院
Xizhi men 西直门
xizi 戏子
Xu Banmei 徐半梅
Xu Beihong 徐悲鸿
Xu Jiuhu 徐九虎
Xu Muyun 徐慕云
Xu Zhuodai 徐卓呆
xuanchuan ju 宣传剧
Xuanzong 宣统
xuelei shi 血泪史
xuesheng jutan 学生剧团
xuetang 学堂
xuetou 噱头
ya 雅
Yan Yangchu (Y.C. James Yen) 晏阳初
Yang Cunbin 杨村彬
Yang Hansheng 阳翰笙

Yang Yuhuan 杨玉环
yangchang huaju 洋场话剧
yangge 秧歌
yanglong 洋龙
yanzou bu 演奏部
Ye Zi 叶紫
Yifeng xiju tushuguan 蚁蜂戏剧图书馆
Yilü ma 一缕麻
Yin Fu 殷夫
Ying Yunwei 应云卫
yingxi 影戏
Yinshe 银社
Yipusheng zhi ju 易蒲生之剧
yiqi hecheng 一气呵成
Yizhi mafeng 一只马蜂
Yu 禹
Yu Ling 于伶
Yu Shangyuan 余上沅
yuan 元
Yuan Muzhi 袁牧之
yuanyang hudie 鸳鸯蝴蝶
Yuchun 玉春
Yue Fei 岳飞
Yue wang 越王
yuebing 月饼
yukuai de jingjie 愉快的境界
yuyan 预演
yuyan 预言
zaiye de 在野的
zaju 杂剧
zeng jian xian cang 增减掀藏
Zeng Jize 曾纪泽
Zhaicheng 翟城
zhang 丈
Zhang Daofan 张道藩
Zhang Fengren 张凤仁
Zhang Geng 张庚
Zhang Guoben 张国本
Zhang Jiazhu 张嘉铸
Zhang Junxiang 张骏祥
Zhang Min 章泯
Zhang Pengchun 张彭春
Zhang Ying 张颖
Zhang Ying 章罂
Zhao Da 赵大
Zhao Qingge 赵清阁
Zhao Taimou 赵太侔
Zhao yanwang 赵阎王
Zheng Junli 郑君里
Zheng Zhenduo 郑振铎
zhengzhihua 政治化
zhenren 贞人
zhifu wei hun 指腹为婚
zhigong jiaoyu litang 职工教育礼堂
zhiji 知己
zhimei 至美
zhishan 至善
zhiyehua 职业化
zhongchan zhijia 中产之家
Zhongdian 中电
Zhongguo shehui kexuejia lianmeng 中国社会科学家联盟
Zhongguo wansui 中国万岁
Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi 中国新文学大系
Zhongguo yinyue xiqu yuan 中国音乐戏曲院
Zhongguo yishu jushe 中国艺术剧社
Zhongguo zuoyi xiju lianmeng 中国左翼戏剧联盟
Zhonghua juyi she 中华剧艺社
Zhongshen dashi 终身大事
Zhongyang qingnian jushe 中央青年剧社
Zhongyang tushu zazhi shencha hui 中央图书杂志审查会
Zhongzheng tang 中正堂
Zhongzhi 中职
Zhou Enlai 周恩来
Zhou Shouju 周瘦菊

Zhou Yang 周扬
Zhu Fujun 朱复君
Zhu Rangcheng 朱禳丞
Zhuang Liumei 庄六妹
Zhuang Shunwen 庄顺文
Zhuang Yinzi 庄银子
zhuangyuan 状元
zigeng nong 自耕农
zou shutou 走梳头
zui tuchu de 最突出的
zui zhongxin de zhuti 最中心的主题
Zuo Ming 左明
zuoyi de shinian; hongse de shinian 左翼的十年; 红色的十年
zuoyi nongmin ju 左翼农民剧
Zuoyi zuojia lianmeng左翼作家联盟