

**School of Media, Culture and Creative Arts**

**The Politics of Cinematic Realism during the Chinese Cultural Revolution  
1966 – 1976**

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## Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been previously accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by any other person except where all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the politics of cinematic realism during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Mao Zedong (毛泽东), the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, not only launched the Cultural Revolution in 1966 but also acted in an incendiary role during the Cultural Revolution with the help of his wife Jiang Qing (江青), his collaborator Premier Zhou Enlai (周恩来) and other political allies. In order to achieve his personal goals to eliminate his deputy Liu Shaoqi (刘少奇) and to further consolidate his political power, Mao instigated students as Red Guards (红卫兵) to attack Liu as well as intellectuals, especially in the realm of literature and arts. He then expelled his political opponents and sent the students to the countryside to be re-educated. The Cultural Revolution not only had a severe impact on Chinese economic development, but also hampered literary and artistic creativity, especially in the film industry.

The thesis examines the impact of Jiang Qing's Three Prominences Theory on film production and the role she played in film censorship during the Cultural Revolution. It explains how she ensured film production was in line with the spirit of the Cultural Revolution and how it served to strengthen the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese film industry produced 93 films among the nine major film studios during a ten-year long period of the Cultural Revolution; each film portrays a similar political message.

This thesis also analyses, through selected films, the major filmic themes of class struggle and wartime. Class struggle is the theme of two significant types of films: the poor against the rich; the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. Wartime is the theme of films on two major topics: the Chinese civil war and the Chinese resistance

war against the Japanese invasion. Regardless of theme, all of these films represented the social and political ideology of the Communist Party at the time, while also serving as popular entertainment. Jiang Qing's model film style not only dominated the film industry but also embodied particular aesthetic characteristics, such as the positioning of protagonists as central, bright and lofty in mise-en-scène. These films thus had entertainment value as well as pedagogical realism to ensure the engagement of audiences in the ideology of the Cultural Revolution.

This thesis sheds light on the critical challenges faced during the Cultural Revolution by the Chinese film industry. It is hoped that its findings on a much neglected field — the influence of the politics of cinematic realism during the Cultural Revolution on film production — will contribute to an understanding of the Chinese film industry of that time.



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## Preface

While I was teaching media studies at Jiangsu Teachers University of Technology (江苏教育技术师范大学) in China in 2005 and 2006, I read a book called *Zhang Yimou: Interviews*. By chance I also found an old article, ‘Where Control of Literature and Art is Too Specific, There is No Hope’ (《管得太具体, 文艺没希望》), written by a well known Chinese actor, Zhao Dan (赵丹), and published by *People’s Daily* (人民日报), the official Communist Party newspaper, on 8 October 1980. A note included with Zhao’s article indicated that the author died on 10 October 1980, two days after his article was published. These writings sparked my curiosity — how and why had the Chinese film industry changed little since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, even after the Cultural Revolution?

*Zhang Yimou: Interviews* was written by Frances Gateward, an American academic, and published by the University of Mississippi Press in 2001. This book is based on her interviews with Zhang Yimou (张艺谋), a fifth generation Chinese film director who has directed several films that are well known in the West such as *Red Sorghum* (红高粱 1987) and *Hero* (英雄 2003); she discusses film production and film censorship with Zhang during the post-Mao era, after the Cultural Revolution. What fascinated me the most was this remark by Zhang: ‘The trouble is not how much I can get to fund a film production. What I have to consider is how I can get a film through the censorship; that is my big worry’ (Gateward 2001, 36).

Zhao Dan’s article raised several important issues about the Chinese Communist Party’s control of literature and art. Zhao questioned how the Communist Party could predetermine the literary and artistic content and contexts of creative

work, and also pointed out that Lu Xun (鲁迅) and Mao Dun (茅盾), two well known Chinese writers and literary critics, did not write according to some prior external direction. Zhao wished to know who had told Karl Marx what to write. He concluded that the Communist Party should not specifically control every detail of literature and art because that would deprive art of its creative force and deny the egalitarian spirit of the communist system. Many newspapers and magazines reprinted Zhao Dan's article and many famous writers, critics and actors in literature and art circles such as Ba Jin (巴金), Bing Xin (冰心), Xia Yan (夏衍), Yang Hansheng (阳翰笙), Chen Huangmei (陈荒煤), Bai Yang (白杨) and Zhang Ruifang (张瑞芳) supported Zhao's views. However, anecdotal evidence claims that Deng Xiaoping (邓小平) did not like Zhao Dan's article at all and would not concede that the Chinese socialist system had impeded the development of literature and art.

When I had finished reading the article and the book, I had a better understanding of the political demands that still affect film production and censorship. Deng Xiaoping banned the film *Sun and People* (太阳和人), written by a prolific military writer, poet and playwright, Bai Hua (白桦), directed by Peng Ning (彭宁) and produced by the Changchun Film Studio in 1979. After viewing the film in 1980, Deng Xiaoping (2001, 391) explained why he had banned it:

I have watched the film *Sun and People* and this film is definitely based on the film script *Bitter Love* (苦恋). No matter what the motive of the playwright was, the film gives a clear impression that neither the Communist Party nor the socialist system is any good. Where is the playwright's Communist spirit that he vilifies the socialist system? Some people consider that this film has high artistic value, and that is the reason it can cause more damage to socialist society.

Furthermore, Deng (2001, 256) explained: 'Literature and art cannot be separated from politics. Progressive and revolutionary literary and artistic authors must cogitate

on the social influence of their works, and also consider the benefits to the people, the nation and the Communist Party'. Paul Clark (1987, 125-126) pointed out that the Chinese Communist Party has always placed these demands on Chinese literature and art circles. This thesis demonstrates that the same political tune was sung by Jiang Qing during the Cultural Revolution. I came to realise that the Chinese film industry, even today, must consider political decisions in regard to film production and film censorship.

After I returned to Perth in late 2006, I started enquiring whether it was possible for me to engage in studies on the films produced during the Cultural Revolution. When I obtained confirmation from Curtin University in early 2007, I embarked on my study journey. However, I found only a few scholarly materials on the films produced during the Cultural Revolution in Australia and even fewer scholarly and systematic studies on the films made during the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, while I was in Shanghai and Beijing during my planned study trip, I collected about 70 films and many newspaper critiques about the films of that period although I was unable to see certain films at either the China Film Archive in Beijing or the Shanghai Library in Shanghai. Furthermore, after I talked to A/Professor Ma Ning (马宁) at Shanghai University (上海大学) and Professor Fang Fang (方芳) at the Shanghai Theatre Academy (上海戏剧学院), I discovered that the Chinese government has never encouraged the study of the films produced during the Cultural Revolution.

When starting this research, I struggled to discover relevant material on which I could base my inquiries into cinematic realism during the Cultural Revolution because most official Chinese media outlets do not sell any films produced during that period. However, I discovered that all the films produced during the Cultural



Revolution were being sold by street sellers and during my research journey to China I was able to obtain what I wanted. Since the development of Internet technology in China, I have been able to view, from time to time, a few non-official critiques online about Chinese films produced during the Cultural Revolution, as well as works on the history of that period. Some of these critiques have enhanced my understanding of how the Communist regime has tried to control the media in general.

While writing this thesis I presented my research study outline at the Southwest/Texas Popular Culture and American Culture Association's 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA in 2010. When presenting my topic in the Film and History seminar, no questions were asked. Although many people who attended knew the history of the Cultural Revolution, no one had seen any of the films made at that time. When I showed a few clips of those films, the audience became interested and one member asked what particular films were produced in China during the Cultural Revolution. I answered that the class struggle-themed opera films were dominant because Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, was directly involved in their production.

From a historical perspective it is valuable to revisit the films produced during the Cultural Revolution because they not only have entertainment value as cultural products with distinct branding and unique artistic features, but also because they are useful material sources that reveal important aspects of key social and political events during that time in China. A critical study of these films can make an important contribution to the understanding of modern Chinese history and the current situation of Chinese literature and art, especially Chinese cinema. While I do not claim to exhaust the critical and political import of the archive I have assembled here, I hope at least to raise awareness of the significant cultural features of the films produced during a unique phase in recent Chinese history. Hopefully, in relation to this under-

researched topic, this study provides meaningful comparative portraits of Chinese life and values by using the pragmatic lens of the films produced and shown during the Cultural Revolution. I hope, too, that the very assemblage of this archive of the 93 films produced during the Cultural Revolution will contribute to our knowledge of that era.

All references are properly noted and indicated in accordance with the Chicago Author-Date 16<sup>th</sup> Edition system. Some Chinese terms have been translated or transliterated such as names, original film titles and quotations using the *Pinyin* system with attached Chinese characters in parentheses where necessary. All translations in the thesis are mine except where indicated otherwise. When names or original film titles are first mentioned, these appear with Chinese characters alongside; thereafter the Chinese characters are omitted. A chronological list of the films produced during the Cultural Revolution, together with a more general list covering films mentioned or discussed in the thesis, is included as an appendix.

## **Introduction**

Chinese cinema during the Cultural Revolution differs from its incarnations before or after that period. Films produced during the Cultural Revolution not only had unique aesthetics and distinctive characteristics, but also were an important cultural product with profound socio-political impacts on the Chinese people. The exceptional characteristics and special features of these films have evoked many questions with regard to how they were produced and for what purpose. It is important to understand the extent to which these films realistically reflected the truth of Chinese society and culture, or to which they reflected ‘the truth’ according to the Chinese Communist Party.

This study explores the cinematic realism of the films produced during the Cultural Revolution and the present chapter provides an overview of this study. It includes a critical review of the most important scholarly literature on cinematic realism and Chinese cinema during the Cultural Revolution; a statement of objectives of this study; an explanation of the research methodology; and an outline of chapter proceedings.

### **A Short History of Cinematic Realism**

When viewing Chinese films made during the Cultural Revolution, even today, it is clear how deeply embedded the socio-political agenda was. This embedding was largely due to the Cultural Revolution, a political movement that dictated what should be shown in the films, thus affecting Chinese people from all walks of life. In other words, the films were profoundly influenced by the Cultural Revolution but how realistically they reflected the socio-political schemas is a question considered in this

section. In order to understand these realistic schemas, this section defines what cinematic realism is and how Chinese films during the Cultural Revolution reflected realities at that time.

Many film scholars have already defined and developed the concept of cinematic realism through particular films such as the Italian films *Rome, Open City* (*Roma città aperta* 1945) and *Paisan* (*Paisà* 1946) by Roberto Rossellini, the American motion picture *Citizen Kane* (1941) by Orson Welles and the Soviet movie *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925) by Sergei Eisenstein. The founding critical works of cinematic realism were undertaken by French film critic André Bazin and American film theorist Siegfried Kracauer. Scholars of Chinese film such as Paul Clark, Chris Berry, Rey Chow, Ma Ning, and also many Mainland Chinese film scholars such as Zhang Junxiang (张骏祥), Di Jiannong (翟建农) and Dai Jiafang (戴嘉枋) have also discussed cinematic realism. Even if the social and political allusions in their writings are not always explicit, each of their discussions can be traced back to philosophical trends that emerged in Chinese cinema during the Cultural Revolution.

In critical discourse on film, the term cinematic realism designates neither a genre nor a movement, and has neither rigid formal criteria nor specific subject matter. Instead, the term represents a style whose chief elements are the long take, deep focus and limited editing, using non-professional or at least relatively unknown actors when possible (Stam, Burgoyne and Fitterman-Lewis 1992, 185-186). In addition, cinematic realism possesses both the essence of cinematic ontology and the impassioned rhetoric of simplicity, purity and transparency (Margulies 2003, 42-46). Film critics and theorists have long given their intellectual support to the practice of realism in filmmaking. As Rudolph Arnheim (1993, 10), an art and film theorist and perceptual psychologist, wrote in the early 1930s, films offer the possibility of

mechanical imitation of nature in which originals and copies become indistinguishable in the eyes of the public. Yet it was André Bazin, a prolific film critic, who first developed a theory of cinematic realism on the basis of the film image's mechanical reproduction. He located the concept of cinematic realism in distraction and plotlessness, which he saw as structurally analogous to the unscripted, indeterminate, underplotted nature of reality. In other words, what filmmakers as different as Robert Bresson, Vittorio DeSica, Jean Renoir, Roberto Rossellini, and Orson Welles had in common was a desire to put cinema at the service of what Bazin called a fundamental faith in reality. Not only did Bazin sketch the history of art in film, but he also identified cinema as the fulfilment of human craving for realistic representation.

Bazin cited examples of cinematic realism such as Italian neo-realistic films *Rome, Open City* and *Paisan*. These two films portrayed the reality of war. The former is set in Rome and is about a young boy, Marcello, who is shocked to see his mother, Pina, killed by a Nazi soldier and then secretly participates with other children in the resistance against the Nazi occupation. They are following in the steps of the resistance fighters: an engineer, Giorgio Manfredi; a priest, Don Pietro Pellegrini; and many other resistance fighters who all die in the struggle against the Nazi occupation in 1944. Similar in style, *Paisan* consists of six episodes with each being set at a different location in Italy. Each episode incorporates twists and turns in a story related to Italians fighting with or assisting foreigners during World War II. Both films have a quintessential documentary quality just like a number of classic expressionist film masterpieces such as *Nosferatu* in 1922, *Die Nibelungen* or *Greed* in 1924 (Bazin 1976, 16).

Bazin (1971, 26) praised Italian neorealism for its aesthetics, great progress in expression, triumphant evolution of the language of cinema and an extension of stylistics. These features establish the significance of cinematic realism as an important approach in the development of filming the socio-political complexity of publicly well-known events. A further example of realism supplied by Bazin was *Citizen Kane* (1941). This film displays the fundamental quality of reality using cinematographic illusions in terms of space and time although it is a drama. *Citizen Kane* portrays an enormously wealthy media proprietor, Charles Kane, rising and then falling from his empire in the early 1910s in the United States. What is clear is that the filmmakers Roberto Rossellini and Orson Welles used realistic approaches such as truthful artificial settings and accurate performances to increase the credibility of complex, delicate and cumbersome events. As Bazin (1971, 38) writes:

I have arrived at the point of characterising as similar the style of Rossellini in *Paisan* and of Orson Welles in *Citizen Kane*. By diametrically opposite technical routes each arrives at a scenario with roughly the same approach to reality — the depth of focus of Welles and predisposition toward reality of Rossellini. In both we find the same dependence of the actor relative to the setting, the same realistic acting demanded of everyone in the scene whatever their dramatic importance. Better still, although the styles are so different, the narrative follows basically the same pattern in *Citizen Kane* and in *Paisan*.

The elements of reality in cinema can be enriched by a wide variety of possible combinations. These combinations can be explicitly and implicitly chosen realities; as Bazin (1971, 13) commented: ‘the reality produced by the cinema at will ... is the reality of the world of which we are part and of which the film receives a mould at once spatial and temporal’. This spatial and temporal mould may be achieved through the artifices of sound, colour and so forth.

Cinematic realism was further defined through the work of Siegfried Kracauer, a cultural critic and film theorist. He argued in his book *Theory of Film: Redemption of Physical Reality* in 1960, two years after Bazin’s death, that, although

all of the arts and especially film are able to record physical reality, cinematic realism should also include realistic tendency and formative tendency. The term realistic tendency, according to Kracauer (1965, 33-34), refers to the fact that film not only can rush audiences through vast and different expanses of space and time, but it can also seize upon physical reality with all its various and multiple movements of the impression of actuality; the term formative tendency refers to the fact that film can offer extensive experiences of intellectual aspiration and tangible fantasy at the expense of the realistic tendency through historical and cultural re-enactments of putative events. Kracauer thus explains how a realistic film may none the less contain 'unrealistic' elements (a dream sequence, for example). On the one hand, audiences can experience a cognitive concept of realistic tendency when viewing a motion picture — that 'things are there, you may or may not see them'; on the other hand, filmmakers could use the formative tendency by combining different shots at various times at the expense of realistic tendency. In this regard, filmmakers can render dreams or visions, for example, with the aid of appropriate settings which are anything but realistic yet still provide an aesthetic validation of reality (Bazin 1971, 26).

Cinematic realism was also defined through its ontological aspects by Stanley Cavell (1985, 115-133), an American philosopher, who was concerned about how film could reconcile audiences with what they experienced of the world and the world shown on film by permitting audiences to view events at a distance. He also insisted that, fundamentally, cinematic realism was the art of contemplation, an intellectual and spiritual exercise that could bring people back to the world of reality and reaffirm the participation of people in the world of actuality (Cavell 1985, 115-133). In this sense, cinematic realism can restore the relationship between people and the world.

According to a more recent study by Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne and Sandy Fitterman-Lewis (1992, 185), cinematic realism can be defined with reference to French New Wave and Italian Neo-Realism from the critical point of view of semiotics. Both styles of film demonstrate how cinematic realism deals with filmic representation. The former deploys a stylistic form that is seemingly less artifice than traditional cinema and the latter is arranged to show the true face of post-war Italy. Although, according to film psychoanalytical theorists such as Jean-Louis Baudry and Christian Metz, cinematic realism deals with the correct aspirational representation and the correct innovative representation, it should also encompass the metapsychological aspects of spectatorial belief and desire, a realism of subjective response and a combination of verisimilar cinematic representation with a fantasy-induced situation (Cook and Bernink 1999, 348-350). These views are also in line with the conclusions of Stam, Burgoyne and Fitterman-Lewis (1992, 185):

A purely Formalist definition of realism, finally, would emphasize the conventional nature of all fictional codes, and would posit realism simply as a constellation of stylistic devices, a set of conventions that at a given moment in the history of an art, manages, through the fine-tuning of illusionistic technique, to crystallize a strong feeling of authenticity.

However, the decisive issue with regard to the semiotic interrogation of cinematic realism is seen against the backdrop of these critical views which consider cinema as essentially or intrinsically realist. Actually, cinematic reproduction, for both Bazin and Kracauer, is the essential or intrinsic objectivity of film.

It is evident that using cinematic realism, filmmakers created many influential and powerful works often associated with social and political propaganda: for example, Sergei Eisenstein in Soviet Russia, Leni Riefenstahl in Nazi Germany, Peter Watkins in the United Kingdom, and more recently Michael Moore in the United States. Their realistic films, in general, present human rights issues, moral values,



socio-economic matters or socio-political agendas assembled from the bare documentary facts. In addition, cinematic realism, according to some film theorists and critics such as Raymond Williams (1977, 63) and others, tends towards a Marxist critique of illusion and is associated with a reflection on democracy, giving equal time to ‘anonymous voices and unknown faces’.

The Marxist critique of forms from art and film that represent economic and social inequalities resonates with filmmakers and writers for whom cinematic realism is a way of cutting through the artifice of standard cinema associated with Hollywood ‘escapism’. This does not mean that communist filmmakers have a privileged pathway to the truth, but rather that they devote their faith to what Bazin (1971, 149) and Cavell (1985, 113) call the ontological realism of images and realist films. These images and films could perform the type of demystification often associated with leftist intellectuals’ goals in order to achieve an impact on audiences. For instance, Bazin, in his two wittiest articles, ‘Entomology of the Pin-Up Girl’ in 1946 and ‘The Myth of Stalin in Soviet Cinema’ in 1950, shrewdly denigrated the ideological mystification in films from Hollywood and the Soviet Union, respectively.

The desire of cinematic realism to show what has remained invisible challenges the realities spoken of by ‘anonymous voices and unknown faces’ in democratic society. In this sense, Hollywood films have regularly put ordinary people into extraordinary circumstances, but have done so through a codified system of well-known actors and stereotypes. This cinematic manoeuvre of Hollywood films often satisfies the hunger of audiences for the realities occurring in the world. For example, the graphic and realistic portrayal of World War II in Steven Spielberg’s film *Saving Private Ryan* in 1998 is remembered especially for its intensity. This film, which seems similar to the Italian Neorealist film *The Battle of Algiers* in 1965 directed by

Gillo Pontecorvo, is considered to be one of the last instances of Italian Neorealist cinema. It is clear that both Spielberg and Pontecorvo used realist techniques to show the faces and amplify the voices of the protagonists who were ordinary people — the soldier Ryan, and the Algerian revolutionary men and women in Pontecorvo's film. The realistic tendency of cinematic realism, then, is not in the service of sociology, but rather of a democratic art form.

### **Cinematic Realism in China**

Realistic approaches to filmmaking were also dominant in Chinese films produced and shown during the Cultural Revolution. Paul Clark (1987, 63), for instance, a New Zealand Chinese film scholar, believes that Chinese cinema had adopted socialist realism since the early 1950s following the Soviet Zhdanovian approach. Hence Clark (1987, 125) points out:

The comfortable presumption that the Cultural Revolution that Mao launched officially in 1966 was simply a distorted and atypical phase of political extremism and forced mobilisation, distinct from the years before and after that unfortunate period, is misleading. The Cultural Revolution is significant as much for its continuities with the rest of Chinese history since 1949 as for its disjunctions with what came before and what followed.

Therefore it could be construed that Chinese films depicted the same realities during the Cultural Revolution, and before or even after the Cultural Revolution despite the different social and political environment. However, films using the realistic approach propagated a nationwide mass culture and created new modified Chinese operatic films (Chinese opera in this thesis refers to Beijing opera and other regional operas); as Clark (1987, 63) explains, there were several reasons for using these realistic approaches: firstly, film was still the main entertainment and educational medium at that time; secondly, opera films could be understood by most Chinese as they were part of national popular culture; thirdly, the Chinese government had already built

many mobile film projection teams to screen films at different locations in rural China.

Cinematic representations of operatic and feature films, though, were narrow and strict when depicting wartime events and class struggles because Jiang Qing, a member of the Chinese Communist Party Politburo and former well-known actress, with her political allies, had total control of the Chinese film industry at that time. She not only developed model operatic films and model feature films but also disseminated her political opinions through her control of the Chinese film industry; she also accused the Chinese film industry of carrying out the ‘dictatorship of a black line in literature and art in the previous seventeen years’ (十七年文艺黑线专政), from the establishment of the People’s Republic of China up to the Cultural Revolution. In addition, she denounced many films produced before the Cultural Revolution as ‘big poisonous weeds’ (大毒草) and labelled these films as ‘feudal-bourgeois-revisionist’ propaganda (Clark 1987, 129). In using realistic approaches, the two major film types (on the themes of wartime events and class struggles) depicted Chairman Mao and the Communist Party leading poor Chinese people from victory to victory, conquering their enemies, who were either Japanese invaders and the Kuomintang armies and / or Chinese intellectuals associated with wealthy families of the past.

The importance of cinematic realism in the realm of political ideology in Chinese films is also explained by Clark (1987, 25) as follows:

The transition to socialism in Chinese filmmaking was a dual process. The Party cultural leadership made the transition from Yan’an to Shanghai, erecting a system of film production and art designed to serve the policies the leaders had articulated in Yan’an.

This realist political framework not only related to films but also shaped the dynamic relationship among filmmakers, audiences and political leaderships. This caused

tensions between the cultural and political property being represented in Chinese films. What Mao had demanded in his *Yan'an Talks* in 1942 was that literature and art must serve workers, peasants and soldiers, and the Communist Party and its policies. However, the implementation of this political framework was not as desirable as Chairman Mao and his wife, Jiang Qing, in particular, expected, because too many literary and art works and especially films portrayed either dead heroes or ghosts in ancient or subtle romantic stories; not many works had been undertaken that eulogised socialist nation building before the Cultural Revolution.

Thus filmic realism was severely censured by Jiang Qing and her political clique during the Cultural Revolution. When the film studios resumed production in 1970 in the middle of the Cultural Revolution, Jiang Qing had absolute control over all film studios. As Paul Clark (1987, 63) notes, Jiang Qing at that time implemented the so-called combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism in terms of reforming nationally popular operatic dramas into relatively modern-style opera films; she did this by adapting or transplanting them from novels and local operatic dramas. The intense realism of these modern-style opera films was no doubt better suited to the needs of the policies of the Communist Party during the Cultural Revolution; the Chinese people, moreover, were much more inspired and motivated by these kinds of films made during the Cultural Revolution than during the previous seventeen years, according to many Chinese film scholars.

Chris Berry (2004, 30), for example, an Australian scholar of Chinese film who at one stage worked in the Chinese Film Archive in Beijing, writes as follows:

The Chinese cinema shared didacticism with all the other arts and media in the People's Republic before 1976. As such, these discourses can be compared to two other discourses. One is the European tradition of what Susan Rubin Suleiman terms 'authoritarian fictions' in her study of what are also known as *romans à thèse*. Although Suleiman's work focuses on late nineteenth and early twentieth century French novels, the basic drive towards an exemplary

mode of narration designed to demonstrate an argument could also be applied to many other works in the Western tradition, including, as she notes, the biblical parable. In the cinema, the most proximate discourse would be the Soviet socialist realist cinema associated with the Stalin era.

Berry thus shares Clark's view that realistic approaches in Chinese film production, from the founding of the People's Republic of China to the end of the Cultural Revolution, were similar. Berry also agrees with Clark that the realistic function of Chinese cinema could be studied through an analysis of Western theories to examine the discourses of Chinese films, and that the pedagogical functions of Chinese films had the same roles as the Soviet films. Chinese and Soviet cinema both presented propaganda features that were concerned with the transmission of communist ideas and values. In other words, films were used as an educational tool as well as entertainment to disseminate social and political agendas.

More precisely, in regard to the films associated with realistic social and political agendas, Berry (2004, 77) points out that 'although the slogan "let themes take the lead" was only explicitly used during the Cultural Revolution, it in fact described the underlying logic of the Chinese classical cinema between 1949 and 1976'. This emphasis on film representation revealed the manner of Chinese cinematic realism in terms of the changes of artistic discourse (*mise-en-scène*) and narrative discourse (*diegesis*). The films presented progressively a socialist utopia embedded within socio-political propaganda in terms of socialist distancing.

Other scholars like Rey Chow, Ma Ning, Di Jiannong and Dai Jiafang analysed more specifically the political representation of the workers, peasants and soldiers and their status in Chinese society as well as the crucial relationship between film and reality. They argued that films with serious subject matter, aimed at social and political criticism or education and propaganda, had nothing to do with entertainment but with the political life of filmmakers. According to George Semsel

(1990, 25), a well-known film scholar and Chinese official, Zhang Junxiang, argued with regard to filmmakers seeking political safety rather than artistic pursuits:

The work of film directors is indeed very heavy and difficult. Directors must be responsible for the political and artistic qualities of their films. In China the interface of the left and the right will continue; however, an absolutely secure situation may not produce outstanding art. Certainly directors and scriptwriters want to have a sense of security, but on the other hand, we must also acquire a sense of responsibility — a responsibility to sing the praises of advanced persons and events, and to expose and criticise backward thoughts and events.

It is not difficult to see the political reality that was paramount in Chinese films. This political reality can be said to have impeded filmmakers from pursuing artistic quality in terms of aesthetic reality.

Rey Chow (1995, 48), an American Chinese film critic, clarified that the image of Chairman Mao was not only depicted as a political presence, but also as an image of salvation and enlightenment to the Chinese people in the same way as Stalin was depicted in Soviet films. Interestingly, in her view, the Cultural Revolution was like the ‘epitome of a big rock-and-roll concert with Mao as the biggest rocker and every other Chinese person his fan’; Mao promised the Chinese youth strength, unity, power and an infinite sense of hope for the future. The most important portrayal of Mao was his image seen on film around the world. This, then, was how cinematic realism was used in films to present the political agenda during the Cultural Revolution period.

Ma Ning, an Australian-educated Chinese film scholar, claimed that ‘The Cultural Revolution is a traumatic, cultural regression and social disaster ... in the cinema during that period when political criteria were the measure for everything’ (Semsel 1987, 64). Therefore, the conventions of space and time in the film industry demanded an idealisation and stylisation in accord with Mao Zedong’s thoughts of revolutionary realism — of wartime literature and class struggle themes. These two

major themes were the forms of socialist realism which largely represented the revolutionary images of workers, peasants and soldiers, the protagonists of all films. The application of these revolutionary images signified the social formation of a particular discursive practice, moving the masses closer to the recognition of cultural identity and of the reality of the performance. In broad terms, then, what Kracauer called the formative tendency (discussed above) was stronger than the realistic tendency in the films of the Cultural Revolution.

According to Ma Ning (1992, 10), Tony Rayns, in his study of Chinese film, highlighted the difficulties of using Western generic categories. In an essay called ‘An Introduction to the Aesthetics and Politics of Chinese Cinema’, he argued:

Outside of very broad categories like ‘opera film’ and ‘national minority film’, the notion of genre has little place in Chinese cinema. The structural models in force are less ‘purely’ cinematic than their Western equivalents; they seem to have deep roots in the traditions of fiction-writing, poetry and drama. One type might be described as a juxtaposition of individual lives and the movement of history... Another is the ‘before-and-after-Liberation’ story, which elaborately contrasts the miseries of life under the Kuomintang with social reorganisation under the Communists.

This peculiar situation is clearly due to the socio-political reality and the cultural system in China. With regard to the socio-political reality of cinematic representation, Dai Jiafang and Di Jiannong, Mainland Chinese film critics, provided very detailed accounts from their ideological analysis that drew upon the methodology of expressionism and constructionism as well as psychoanalysis and Marx-Leninism (Dai 1995; Di 2001).

The particular characters of the Chinese films made during the Cultural Revolution are discussed by Di Jiannong with many specific references in his book *Red Past: 1966 – 1976 Chinese Film* (《红色往事: 1966 – 1976 年的中国电影》). He assesses the political realism of the films, what their ideological functions were and examines the political relationship among Mao, Jiang Qing, Zhou Enlai and Deng

Xiaoping associated with film content and film censorship. He shows how Jiang Qing had absolute authority to pursue her socio-political ideals of artistry and aesthetics in the production of the films; he also demonstrates how, despite interventions by Jiang Qing, filmmakers improved their techniques and skills as a result of Jiang's criticism in areas such as lighting and filming, and even costumes. The obvious disadvantage of his book is that it does not examine the films themselves.

For Dai Jiafang, the relevance of the operatic film as a realistic form of cinematic representation in the study of Chinese contemporary films is very important. He specifically focuses on the formation of aesthetics and politics in the operatic films. Although these films were harshly criticised by many, he argues that their formation was quite radical, and their ideological functioning was obvious. Evidently, these films were an apt form of socialist realism.

The important and central issues for scholars, therefore, who engage in political film criticism is to ascertain whether the films produced during the Cultural Revolution were historical and political products or entertaining and artistic creations. By using the concept of cinematic realism in analysis of the Chinese films made during the Cultural Revolution, what can be seen is that the critical discourse on Chinese cinema not only reflected aesthetic and artistic formations but also revealed the political and historical movement.

From the historical point of view, the Cultural Revolution was arguably the most tumultuous period in post-Liberation China. Domestic chaos and instabilities aside, China was also in a very vulnerable position internationally. There was a border dispute with the Soviet Union; the Americans were still in Vietnam; China was anxious to establish a new relationship with America and become a member of the United Nations and so forth. Premier Zhou Enlai died on 8 January 1976 and a short



while later on 9 September 1976 Chairman Mao Zedong also died. Three weeks after the death of Mao, on 6 October 1976, the ‘Gang of Four’ was arrested. Subsequently, the official end of the Cultural Revolution was declared. Peter Zarrow writes that ‘the Cultural Revolution exactly fits any definition of holocaust or even belongs in the same category as Nazi genocide’ (Zarrow 1999, 165). In particular, many Chinese memoirs about, and by, Chinese intellectuals who suffered from the Cultural Revolution have been published both in China and the West. Unfortunately very few have recorded the experiences of those working in film and the cinema industry at that time. So far, few academics or film critics have written systematically and holistically about the films produced during the Cultural Revolution. Most researchers have been content to investigate triumphal and historical events. Moreover, the government of the People’s Republic of China, in effect the Communist Party, has never been interested in encouraging anyone to study the whole phenomenon of the Cultural Revolution. Indeed as MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2006, 457) have concluded ‘to ensure that this version of history remained sacrosanct, academic research on the Cultural Revolution was strongly discouraged and university courses on it were eschewed’.

Many Chinese film scholars such as Ma and Chow primarily concentrated on 1980s’ Chinese films, namely the fifth generation of Chinese cinema. They did not write in detail about films made during the Cultural Revolution, perhaps because they were not accessible. For example, Ma wrote his thesis on *Spatiality and Subjectivity in Xie Jin’s Film Melodrama of the New Period*, but he did not mention the film *Spring Seedling* (1975), directed by Xie Jin and produced during the Cultural Revolution (see Chapter Five for a discussion), nor did he do so in his doctoral dissertation *Culture and Politics in Chinese Film Melodrama* despite his analysis of

Xie Jin's films. Interestingly, no academics or film critics have properly scrutinised the film *Spring Seedling*, a film which portrays the important theme of class struggle at that time.

In the last few years some research has been carried out in America about the representation of the Cultural Revolution in Chinese films which essentially reflects the views of historical and contemporary film arts (Fu 2003; Lu 2004). Besides filmic studies, there is a great deal of Western literature about the history of the Cultural Revolution (Collier and Collier 1973; Witke 1977; Terrill 1995; MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006). There is, though, no complete work in English about the films made during the Cultural Revolution.

Conducting research on cinematic realism in Chinese films made during the Cultural Revolution requires an interdisciplinary approach. This study, using such an approach, explores the connections between the history of the Cultural Revolution and its filmic presentations and representations. In doing so, both primary and secondary references are used such as books, newspapers, journals, films and interviews to examine the significant implications and intersections in regard to the nature of films, the history of the Cultural Revolution and how the theory of film connects with the philosophy of filmmaking. Moreover, it unveils how filmic discourse changed to carry out the political and social discourse in the Cultural Revolution, serving as a political instrument of the Communist Party and presenting to audiences an entertaining repertoire with political messages. It investigates the films' formations from the perspective of Chinese film directors, actors, critics and academics, and whether or not the Cultural Revolution period is to be seen as a transitional era of the Chinese film industry. It also aims to clarify the style of given directors and to show what political, social and aesthetic issues were involved in overt and unified

expressions on screen. Most importantly, it is hoped that this study will make a significant contribution to Chinese film history.

The films produced during the Chinese Cultural Revolution are to be viewed not just as cultural and artistic products, but rather they are also to be read as historical and sociological source materials which portrayed Chinese life and values in that unique period. However, these films have been overlooked due to historical and political reasons. The historical and political lesson that is learned from the Chinese film industry during the Cultural Revolution is bound to provide a useful reference point for the assessment of the cultural and artistic work created currently and in the future. This study provides the first systematic and comprehensive analysis of films production, censorship and film texts against their political background during the Cultural Revolution. In doing so, the study offers a historical perspective for appreciating how contemporary Chinese cinema has evolved and gained international recognition in the current era of globalisation. Through the comparative lens, it will also contribute a balanced and nuanced understanding of the changes and continuity of the political and ideological function of films made in different periods, offering an important contribution to the understanding of modern Chinese film history and current Chinese literature and the arts.

More specifically, this study seeks to make a fresh contribution to international scholarship on cinema by extending and replenishing the theories and concepts about film and the Cultural Revolution. Hopefully, it can, as the Chinese proverb says, ‘cast a brick to attract jade’ (抛砖引玉) in international scholarship about the films produced during the Cultural Revolution because of the dearth of knowledge about Chinese cinema in that period.

## **Overview**

The Chinese films produced and shown during the Cultural Revolution period are an important component of Chinese contemporary art and culture. These films reflect unique and different aesthetics and ideology. The ideological formation of these films is very much involved in social and political schemas that had an overwhelming impact on Chinese society at that time. These films are understood not only as an entertaining repertoire but also as a political instrument of the Communist Party, disseminating Party policies and educating the masses about political issues.

Within this critical context, this study undertakes an examination of film production and consumption in general, and how these films communicated and to what extent they were submerged as political vehicles rather than aesthetic works in particular. The study's hypothesis is that, despite the fact that operatic and feature films were made for entertainment, they also embodied considerable realism reflecting specifically the social and political circumstances of Chinese society during the Cultural Revolution. The study aims to trace the narrative structures and artistic discourses of these films to identify the realistic themes embedded with the political messages and propaganda, and also to examine film theory and film censorship of that time, with regard to film aesthetics and ideology.

In order to analyse the aesthetics and ideology of the films made and shown during the Cultural Revolution, it is imperative to explore what the Cultural Revolution was about and how this political movement held sway over the process of the Chinese film industry. In other words, the study examines under what circumstances the films were produced and how some films, including Chinese and foreign films, were selected for Chinese cinemas. Thus, the study first examines the motives of Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao during the Cultural Revolution,

to examine whether he had been fighting to consolidate his supreme position after the failure of his irrational economic policies or had wanted to change the ideology of the Chinese people towards socialist nation building. In the realm of literature and art, Mao and his wife, Jiang Qing, condemned the fact that too many ancient and historical literary and art works were being produced rather than films portraying workers-peasants-soldiers in Chinese socialist construction. Therefore, the history of the Cultural Revolution is analysed through selected works by different scholars such as Roderick MacFarquhar, Michael Schoenhals, Ross Terrill, Jonathan Spence and Immanuel Hsü. This analysis has helped assess the social and political encounters and consequences of the Chinese film industry during the Cultural Revolution.

Chinese cinema was uniquely different during the Cultural Revolution, not only reflected in aspects of aesthetics but also in social and political ideology, despite claims by Paul Clark and Chris Berry that the Cultural Revolution was part of the continuum of Chinese socialism. In other words, the study considers whether the political theory and ideology of the films were significant features, by looking at elements such as filmic codes, texts and messages. In the process of this examination, some film sequences and frames are discussed in order to determine how these films were realistically incorporated into the political movement of the Cultural Revolution. These films include *Bright Sunny Skies* (艳阳天 1973), *The Harbour* (海港 1973), *Undertaking* (创业 1974) and many others.

In addition, film censorship is considered to have had an enormous impact on the outcome of the pre-existing cinematic realism of the films made during the Cultural Revolution. As Jiang Qing had hegemonic control over film censorship, she monitored the films not only from an aesthetic point of view but also from the point of view of political standards. The purest ideas of Jiang Qing matched entirely with the

purpose of the Cultural Revolution. Sometimes, though, Mao himself was confused about the aim of the Cultural Revolution. For instance, the film *Song of Teachers* (园丁之歌 1974) was denounced as ‘a poisonous weed’ by Jiang Qing when the film was sent for censorship, but when Mao saw this film and praised it, the film became ‘a fragrant flower’.

The specific films chosen for analysis are *Scouts* (侦察兵 1974), *Sha Jia Bang* (沙家浜 1971), and *Reconnaissance across the Yangtze* (渡江侦察记 1974). These films are regarded as wartime literature films (that is, films based on novels set in wartime) which were very popular among Chinese audiences at that time. There are many adapted, transplanted and reproduced films such as these among the 93 films produced during the Cultural Revolution. About twenty films were adapted from novels; fourteen films were transplanted from plays; and six films were reproduced (i.e. remakes of earlier films). To some extent, these films were well received by audiences not only because well-known actors performed in them but also, fundamentally, because of their realistic contents. However, the battles between Jiang Qing and the political leaders Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping as well as filmmakers about film censorship were quite intense in regard to the dialogue and images portrayed in the films.

The study also focuses on the style of the films made during the Cultural Revolution. As Chris Berry (2004, 77) points out, the taxonomies used by the Western and Chinese classical cinemas are quite different: Western genre films not only are regulated by classification, but also oriented with their marketing value through stylistic characteristics, settings, typical characters and so forth; Chinese films were organised in accordance with the subject matter. In reality, all film productions were planned by Communist Party officials during the Cultural Revolution.

In the detailed formal analysis of the significant themes of cinematic realism, special attention is given to particular films such as *Spring Seedling* (1975), *Jubilant Small Cool River* (欢腾的小凉河 1976), *Sparkling Red Star* (闪闪的红星 1974) and *The Red Lantern* (红灯记 1970). These films exhibit a number of distinctive elements of cinematic realism. The first two films use the reflexive mode of the class struggle theme which depicted peasants in the countryside; one is about class struggle against intellectuals between a doctor with a hospital official and the ‘barefoot doctor’, and the other is about class struggle against ‘capitalist roaders’ between a county cadre and a peasant village head. Both films were heavily criticised after the Cultural Revolution, but they had a profound influence on Chinese society during the Cultural Revolution. The greatest criticism came from the Communist regime and officials in the Chinese film industry. Of the last two films which were typical of wartime-themed productions, one was of the Chinese civil war, *Sparkling Red Star*, and the other was of the Chinese resistance war against the Japanese invasion, *The Red Lantern*. Both Li Jun (李俊), the director of *Sparkling Red Star* and Ah Jia (阿甲), the playwright of *The Red Lantern* were entangled in politics in connection with Jiang Qing. After the Cultural Revolution, Li Jun was censured because his film was assisted artistically and praised politically by Jiang Qing; Ah Jia, unlike Li Jun, was applauded for his rebelliousness against Jiang Qing because he fought for the ownership of the creation of the opera *The Red Lantern*.

In examining these exemplary instances of Chinese films, this study leads to several questions. First of all, what are the dominant political and ideological messages embedded in the films which served as educational tools? Second, what role did Chinese cinema play in the Cultural Revolution? Lastly, will this study enable the

construction of a new concept of politicised Chinese films with styles similar to the Western notion of cinematic realism?

### **The Politics of Cinematic Realism in China**

The central aspect of this study is to explore cinematic realism during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 in terms of how Chinese cinema as a cultural product had politically affected society at that period. In other words, this study aims to ascertain whether or not the films produced and shown were truly representative of social and political realities in China. A comparative analysis and cross-cultural examination of films was carried out to investigate the specific socio-political contexts of the films. In order to produce an understanding of the social and political cinematic context of the Chinese films, the intrinsic and extrinsic political application and theoretical implications of the films were examined by adopting Western aesthetic and critical theories and Chinese methods.

In order to comprehend Chinese film culture in terms of cinematic forms and norms and the role of Chinese cinema played during the Cultural Revolution, some important archetypal films produced and shown in the Cultural Revolution period were selectively investigated and analysed as well as the filmic philosophies behind these films. Thus, some interdisciplinary approaches were employed to examine cinematic realism in regard to the styles and content of these films in the historical and cultural context.

First of all, the data gathering for this study entailed collecting films produced and shown during the Cultural Revolution as well as the secondary literature of film scholars and critics from the Shanghai Municipal City Library and the China Film Archive in Beijing in China. As a result, 70 out of the 93 films produced during the



Cultural Revolution were collected as well as others including old Chinese films and imported films shown during the Cultural Revolution; a considerable number of the film transcripts and critiques were also collected. In the process, this study endeavours to tease out what Bazin and Kracauer call the school of cinematic realism reflected in these collected films and critiques in which Clark and Berry see the combination of revolutionary realism (Kracauer's realistic tendency) and revolutionary romanticism (Kracauer's formative tendency). The development of this critical combination not only took into account the aesthetic practicalities but also reflected on the social and political reality of the films.

This study focuses on the historical context of the Cultural Revolution by examining the pre-existing reality of the social and political atmosphere for the Chinese film industry. In other words, the circumstances and conditions in which the films were made and shown during the Cultural Revolution are examined through the cinematic elements related to socialist realism which largely affected Chinese society as a whole. A detailed textual analysis of the film narrative structure of styles rather than genres was undertaken because Chinese films are not categorised in terms of genre. Thus they are analysed here using a critical methodology called realistic narrative diagnosis. This diagnosis is a blend of Rosenbaum-Combs' method of political realism and Walsh-Taylor's method of factual narrative analysis (Rosenbaum 1997; Combs 1990; Walsh 1981; Taylor 1979). Rosenbaum-Combs' method is to look at how political films occupy a utopian space and time as well as controlling the choice of ideas; and Walsh-Taylor's method is to focus on the presentation, entanglement, influence and aesthetic and political thinking. As Hans Richter (1986, 23) states: 'Why and from where the cinema really derived its particular spirit and particular artistic, organisational, technological, political and economic form were

more important issues than cinematic qualities'. In other words, the filmic themes must have the revolutionary spirit associated with socialist society which Chris Berry (2004, 27) calls the pedagogical cinema.

The rationale behind adopting these two methods, namely 'Rosenbaum-Combs' and 'Walsh-Taylor', is to examine the films made during the Cultural Revolution holistically in terms of cinematic presentations, cultural ideas and political formations, and to evaluate the political and cultural influences of their entertainment repertoire at that time. There is no single approach that can be drawn upon to examine the films produced during that period as they are seen as arid propaganda rather than being propitious for film culture by not only the current Chinese government but also many film scholars such as Di Jiannong, Ma Ning, Chris Berry and Paul Clark.

Jonathan Rosenbaum (1997) specifically engaged in examination of the politics of form in film, exploring the spirit and mind of filmmakers and James Combs (1990) explicitly identified the different periods of political films. Martin Walsh (1981) and Richard Taylor (1979) used the Brechtian prospective to look at how radical cinema cemented certain political education and studied the effectiveness of socialist film in changing society, respectively.

However, political cinema is not an invention of Chinese filmmakers; it has existed in the West for a long time. Chinese films made and shown during the Cultural Revolution were political and had an impact on the Chinese people although these films, to a great extent, were aesthetically unlike Griffith's film *Birth of a Nation* in 1915, Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* in 1925, or Leni Riefenstahl's film *Triumph of the Will* in 1935. The formulation of these Chinese films was not only politically charged but also practically incorporated with the Cultural Revolution so as to perpetuate revolution, the aim of the Chinese Communist

Party. Hence, this study concentrates on the meaning of the political theories and images which saturated the films made and shown during the Cultural Revolution to determine how these political theories and images motivated the Chinese people to participate in this political movement — the Cultural Revolution.

The most conspicuous political theory was Jiang Qing's theory of 'The Three Prominences' as Chris Berry (2004, 40) and Di Jiannong (2001, 69) have noted. This theory was fundamental to film production and created protagonists as major heroes among heroes. Hence, this study examines who the heroes were and how these heroes fought for the revolution. Furthermore, this study also examines how these heroes were depicted in the films and what the implications of these images were under the influences of the theory of 'The Three Prominences' in Chinese society; as Chris Berry (2004, 40) argues, the psychological realism of Chinese cinema concerned film characters in terms of their ability to serve as exemplary models for emulation on the part of audiences.

This study further engages in a detailed formal analysis of the films made and shown during the Cultural Revolution with additional documentary analysis involving an examination of critiques from magazines and newspapers related to these films. First, it examines the styles of the films and film censorship to consider whether these two mechanisms caused so-called political reality to influence film production and distribution in general. Because opera films rather than feature films dominated Chinese cinema during the Cultural Revolution, why these opera films were so important at that time is examined from two aspects: the aesthetic and the socio-political. The aesthetic aspect focuses on the differences between Chinese operas and these opera films, how and why Jiang Qing wanted to reform the traditional Chinese opera plays into modern Chinese opera films, and whether these reformed opera films

emerged as a distinct form in their own right. From the socio-political aspect, the study examines the implications of the socio-political ideology of these opera films, whether they fitted into the ideology of the Cultural Revolution at that time and how they inspired the Chinese people during the Cultural Revolution.

Second, the study concentrates on how Jiang Qing was able to control film censorship and to what extent she enforced the socio-political reality upon film creation in order to strengthen film as a political tool rather than as an entertainment device. The battle of film censorship among Jiang Qing, Mao, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and filmmakers is discussed in its historical and political context. Special consideration is given to the question of whether the battle over film censorship triggered a check on the selection of the social and political reality in the formation of the films.

After examining the styles of the films and film censorship, this study analyses the four major themes of films in the period of the Cultural Revolution, namely class struggle between ordinary people and intellectuals; class struggle against ‘capitalist roaders’; the Chinese civil war; and the Chinese resistance war against the Japanese invasion. These themes fall into what Ivone Margulies (2002, 2) describes as ‘performative realism’, a realism that does not simply present a given reality but enacts social tension, and these themes appear in both the opera film and the feature film. An evaluation of these themes in terms of the formation of Chinese films made and shown during the Cultural Revolution leads to a critical discussion as to whether they were the main provocateurs and innovators of realist representation, constructed uniquely and differently in terms of *mise-en-scène*, *diegesis* and *distanciation*. For example, *Breaking Up* (决裂), a feature film, not an opera film, directed by Li Wenhua (李文化) in 1975, a well-known film director and photographer, is a film

with the theme of class struggle. This film depicts how an ordinary student from the Chinese countryside went to study at a Commune University. Not only does he study but also has to go to work. Due to a lack of study time, he could not do a test and handed in a blank examination paper. Consequently, he rebelled against the university authorities, which not only won the hearts and minds of other students but also turned him into a student leader. This cohort of films made during the Cultural Revolution is analysed in detail to verify how this kind of film portrayed the real life of people during the Cultural Revolution.

At the same time, an interdisciplinary approach examines the films adapted, transplanted or reproduced from novels, plays or old films. This approach further explains the correlation between the films made and shown during the Cultural Revolution and their counterparts such as novels and plays to validate the verisimilitude of the social and political realities in the films. Thus, some prototype films adapted, transplanted or reproduced from novels, plays or old films were selected and analysed for their political content and context as well as cinematic developments. The political content means the films contain information on the kind of political ideology; the political context concerns how the films related to Chinese society; and the cinematic developments signify filmic artistic qualities, aesthetic components and camera work in films saturated with social and political discourses.

Moreover, some discussions with Ma Ning, a Chinese film scholar at Shanghai University, who was educated in Australia, and Fang Fang, a professor in film studies at Shanghai Theatre Academy, were carried out in order to determine what kinds of cinematic realism were reconstructed realities rather than a reflection of putative events during the Cultural Revolution. These discussions included why some Chinese people still like to watch the films made and shown during the Cultural

Revolution, how the current Communist regime sees the influence of Jiang Qing at that period, and what the realities were in these films that inspired many revolutionary Chinese people at that time. This study also explores the influence Jiang Qing exerted on the Chinese people through these films.

In addition, to correlate history with filmic formation, an analysis of some seminal works and journal articles produced by Chinese film scholars such as Tony Rayns and George Semsel was undertaken alongside some works by scholars of Chinese history such as Ross Terill, Roderick MacFarquhar, Michael Schoenhals and Immanuel Hsü. The aim was to examine how filmic discourse changed to portray the social and political ideology during the Cultural Revolution. Further analysis was undertaken of the specific entertainment values of the films made and shown during the Cultural Revolution.

Finally, due to the scope of this study which covers works of oriental and occidental film literature, a broad view of Chinese visual culture in terms of narrative structures and the artistic discourse of Chinese films made and shown during the period of the Cultural Revolution is provided. The framework of this methodology provides a useful instrument, then, for explaining the political interventions designed to support the interests of the Cultural Revolution in Chinese cinema to promulgate the doctrine of Mao Zedong and his Communist Party. The development of that framework begins in the following chapter, Chapter One, where it is argued that, were it not for the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese film industry would have lacked the productivity to develop creatively. What, then, persuaded Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong to inaugurate a massive political movement, the Cultural Revolution, a revolution which affected Chinese people from all walks of life, and had significant consequences in the realms of literature and art? This is the guiding

question of the first chapter, which situates the Cultural Revolution in a political and historical context.

Chapter Two, ‘The Three Prominences’, explores how the theory of The Three Prominences was the dominant feature of film production during the Cultural Revolution. It examines how Jiang Qing’s theory of The Three Prominences functioned and how the political narratives were depicted in the films under the influence of her theory. It also examines the styles of Chinese films produced and shown during the Cultural Revolution, including opera films, feature films and other forms of films and, at the same time, compares these differing types of film with Western films. This chapter also investigates why, from a political and aesthetic perspective, Jiang Qing wanted to promote the opera films.

In the third chapter, ‘Diegesis and Censorship’, it is argued that film narratives with political figures were key issues for film censorship among Mao, Jiang Qing, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and filmmakers, in order for cinema to become a pedagogical tool to promote socialism during the Cultural Revolution. The chapter goes on to investigate how the political narratives including cinematic languages and filmic images affected the Chinese people, and particularly to what extent the languages and images of the protagonists — the workers, peasants and soldiers — persuaded the Chinese people to participate in socialist construction and nation building. Chapter Three also examines the battle around film censorship among Jiang Qing and Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and filmmakers.

Chapter Four, ‘Film Adaptation, Transplantation and Reproduction’, argues that, through film adaptation, transplantation and reproduction from novels, plays and other films, new films were produced to more easily disseminate Chinese socialist ideology to the Chinese population during the Cultural Revolution. The chapter

explores those films that were adapted from novels, transplanted from plays, and reproduced from old films during the Cultural Revolution. It takes up the issues of why and how these films were adapted, transplanted and reproduced. At the same time, the political content and context of these films are discussed.

In Chapter Five, 'Significant Themes of Cinematic Realism', there is an examination of how the significant themes of cinematic realism (such as class struggle between the poor and intellectuals, class struggle against 'capitalist roaders', the Chinese civil war and the Chinese resistance war against the Japanese invasion) reflect the history of modern China during the Cultural Revolution. These four main themes of the films produced during the Cultural Revolution are analysed to provide a detailed historical account of the realism portrayed in regards to the life of the Chinese people.

Finally, in the conclusion, the argument points to the films produced and shown during the Cultural Revolution as having particular aesthetic and political applications in terms of their cinematic and pedagogical realism. The precise conclusions can be construed as follows: were it not for the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese film industry would have been more productive and creative and would not have produced the overly politically-oriented films which it did; the Chinese film industry, comprising ten major film studios, only produced 93 films of varying quality in total in the ten-year period of the Cultural Revolution; all the films produced possess the political hallmark of the Cultural Revolution insofar as they were class struggle-themed and war-themed films.

In addition, the Chinese Communist regime has always made sure that the film industry obeys its literature and art policy (according to the social and political circumstances of the time) designed to serve the needs of the Chinese people and the



Communist Party; this policy is based on Mao's speech at the Yan'an Literature and Art Forum in 1942. The Chinese Communist Party not only understood the importance of visual culture but also actively participated in film production and film censorship during the Cultural Revolution in order to maintain the socialist system in China.

## Chapter One

### The Chinese Film Industry during the Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution, short for ‘The Chinese Cultural Revolution’(中国文化大革命) or ‘The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution’ (无产阶级文化大革命), was Mao’s last revolution. Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong launched the Cultural Revolution in 1966 to reinforce his socialist orthodoxy in order to defend and develop his Marxist-Leninist philosophy within the Party and the country by removing capitalist and revisionist thinking as well as what he regarded as old culture, old thinking, old customs and old habits (四旧: 旧文化, 旧思想, 旧风俗, 旧习惯); he wanted to remove these traditional elements from Chinese society because he was concerned about the reluctance of the Party ranks to perpetuate the socialist revolution. It was an unprecedented socio-political battle rather than a cultural movement that lasted from 1966 to 1976. This socio-political battle was completely different from some earlier socio-political movements initiated by Mao such as *the Hundred Flowers Policy* in 1956, *the Anti-Rightist Campaign* in 1957, and *the Great Leap Forward* in 1958 because it pervasively and forcefully engulfed the whole nation and paralysed the superstructure of the Communist Party as well as the education system and the realms of literature and art. The aim of the Cultural Revolution was to change the political ideology of the Chinese people so that they would follow Mao’s version of socialist transformation. In this atmosphere, the Chinese film industry was one of the hardest hit institutions because cinema held an important role in entertainment and educational systems at that time in Chinese society (Clark 1987, 72-81). The Cultural Revolution destroyed the Chinese film industry’s productivity and creativity.

This chapter consists of two sections. The first section provides a historical background in order to examine how the Cultural Revolution began, the political triggers, the cultural fuse and the major targets of the Cultural Revolution. The second section examines the setbacks to the Chinese film industry during the Cultural Revolution; in particular, it examines the damage to film studios, the fate of the film arts community, film productivity and creativity nationally and internationally, in order to show how these aspects directly and indirectly affected the cinematic realism of Chinese cinema.

### **Historical Background**

When Mao Zedong launched the Cultural Revolution in 1966, the People's Republic of China was in quite a vulnerable and isolated situation. Nationally, China had recovered from the economic disaster of the *Great Leap Forward* not long before. Internationally, the Vietnam War was still going on south of China; there was intermittent fighting between China and Taiwan in the east; and there were disputes with the Soviet Union in the north. Furthermore, China was not even an official member of the United Nations. In addition to these national and international circumstances, many Chinese Politburo Standing Committee Members such as Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping as well as most of the Chinese Military Marshals did not support Mao in launching the Cultural Revolution. Mao, in order to achieve his goal, acted in an incendiary role in the Cultural Revolution and first started to attack intellectuals in the realm of literature and art as he had done during the *Rectification Campaign* (延安整风运动) of 1942 and the *Hundred Flowers Campaign* (百花齐放政策) of 1956, with the help of his wife Jiang Qing, Defence Minister Marshal Lin Biao (林彪), Premier Zhou Enlai and other Mao enthusiasts.

## ***Overview***

Chinese youth who first responded to Mao's appeal for the Cultural Revolution formed different groups of 'Red Guards' (红卫兵) around the country in 1966. These Red Guards were student activists in schools and at universities. The different groups not only fought each other but also attacked the leaders and the Party administrations of schools or universities accusing them of carrying out bourgeois and revisionist pedagogy. When the Chinese Communist Party Politburo in May 1966 issued the 'May 16 Notification', Mao's ideological justification for the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guards obtained an official confirmation that student activists could attack anyone they thought was hostile to the Cultural Revolution (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006, 39). Subsequently, the Party Central Committee in August 1966 passed its 'Decision Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' which defined the Cultural Revolution as a great revolution that touched people to their souls and constituted a new stage in the development of the socialist revolution in the nation of China (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006, 92). This 'Decision' gave the Red Guards authority to crush the so-called reactionary bourgeois academic authorities, repudiate the prevailing bourgeois ideology in the realm of literature and art, and transform the existing revisionist educational system. As a result of this 'Decision', the first 'big-character' poster (Figure 1) appeared on the wall of the main university canteen at Beijing University on 25 May 1966 accusing the University President, Lu Ping (陆平), and other university officials of doing nothing at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006, 56). This 'big-character' poster caused considerable disruption to the normal work and studies at Beijing University.

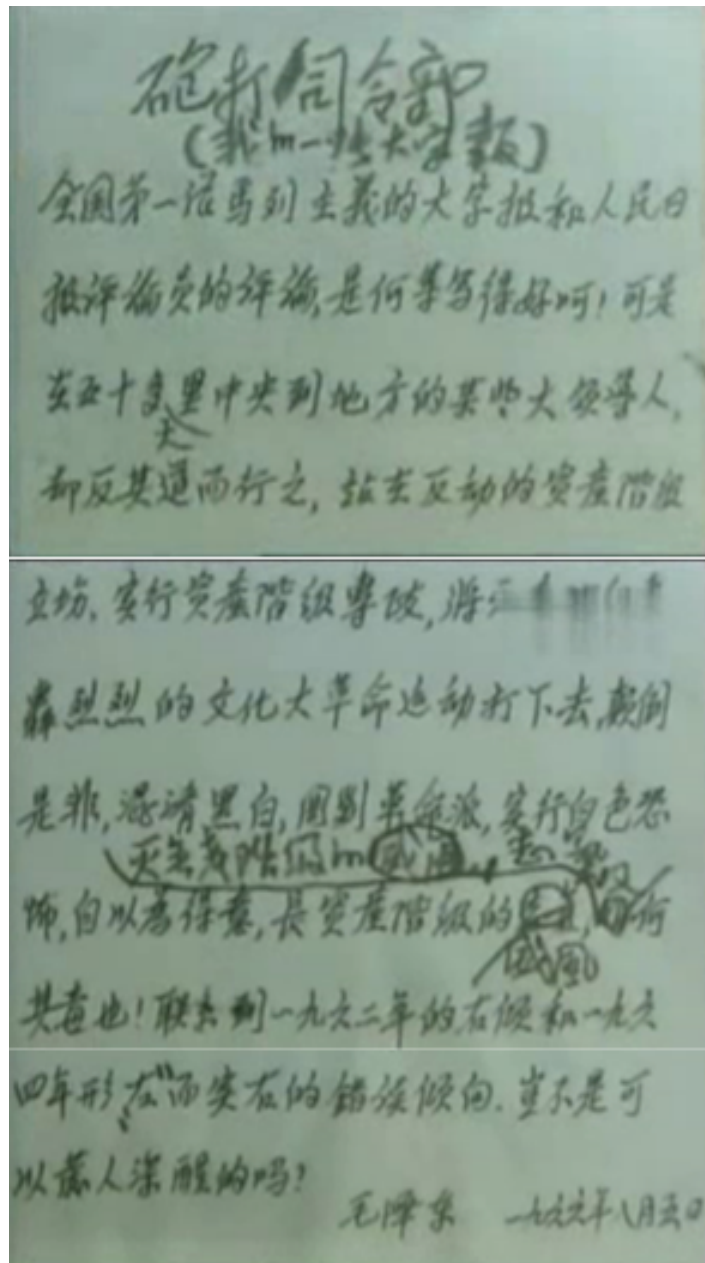


**Figure 1:** The first ‘Big-Character Poster’ at Beijing University. It was written by Nie Yuanzi (聂元梓), Secretary of the Party branch of the Philosophy Faculty with other rebels to attack the University President Lu Ping (陆平) and other University officials. ([http://tupian.baik.com/a3\\_60\\_11\\_0130000342990125759116255452\\_jpg.html](http://tupian.baik.com/a3_60_11_0130000342990125759116255452_jpg.html))

Mao, on hearing Beijing University officials wanted to tear down this ‘big-character’ poster on the instructions of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping to limit rebellious activities, stated that he wished it to remain (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006, 54-58). Subsequently, Mao constructed a ‘Big-character Poster’ (Figure 2) entitled ‘My big-character poster: Bombard the Headquarters’ (炮打司令部 — 我的一张大字报) on 5 August 1966; then on 7 August 1966, it was published in the *People’s Daily* (人民日报), the official Chinese Communist Party newspaper (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006, 89). Mao wrote that, despite having undergone a Communist revolution, China’s political hierarchy was still dominated by bourgeoisie elitist elements, capitalists, and revisionists, and that these counter-revolutionary elements were indeed still present at the top ranks of the party leadership itself. This

was, in effect, an open call-to-arms against Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and their allies. This activity of writing big-character posters spread quickly to people from all walks of life. The fanatical workers, peasants, soldiers, intellectuals, radical cadres and rebellious film crews quickly imitated this activity and put 'big character' posters up everywhere possible to attack and transform the authorities in every part of the superstructure of every organisation such as the State Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Propaganda. Consequently, all revolutionary rebels obtained four great rights: to speak out freely (大鸣), to state their views openly (大放), to write big-character posters liberally (大字报), and to hold great debates overtly (大辩论).

Mao's 'Big-character Poster', published in *The People's Daily*, motivated and mobilised the Red Guards to rally across the nation (Wang 1988, 54-55). Mao not only encouraged all Red Guards to travel to see him in Beijing, but also met millions of them eight times, ending on 18 August 1966, at Tiananmen Square in company with Lin Biao and Zhou Enlai to express his gratitude for exposing Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping (MacFarquhar and Schoehals 2006, 107; Terrill 1995, 324). The Red Guards, on the one hand, violently exposed so-called revisionists or 'capitalist roaders' such as Liu and Deng; on the other hand, they destroyed works of art and historical relics, denounced intellectuals, burned books, and attacked those they considered elitists, revisionists or anti-Maoists. Through these fights and struggles of the Red Guards against old customs, old habits, old cultures, and old thoughts, Mao re-established the supremacy of his authority, his revolutionary line and his work style, revitalising the youth and politicising the masses.



**Figure 2:** Mao’s ‘Big-character Poster’ in his own handwriting.  
 (Stills from <http://www.letv.com/ptv/vplay/322940.html>)

The Red Guards physically attacked school and university officials and took their fight into city factories, rural villages and defence establishments by accusing most leadership personnel of all kinds of baseless crimes. Millions of people were persecuted in the violent factional struggles around China, and suffered a wide range of abuses including public humiliation, arbitrary imprisonment, severe torture, unbearable harassment, and even seizure of their property. A large segment of the

population was forcibly displaced. Even Liu Shaoqi, who was the second in charge of the Communist Party and the President of China, was fatally attacked in October 1968 as a revisionist and a Chinese Khrushchev without his family knowing (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006, 273).

When the Red Guards rallied across China singing revolutionary songs, shouting revolutionary slogans, loudly beating drums against their perceived enemies, all they needed in order to have free rides on trains and buses, was to carry ‘A Little Red Book’ (Figure 3) — quotations from Chairman Mao (毛主席语录); compiled by Lin Biao (林彪) it contained selected extracts from the writings of Mao. ‘A Little Red Book’ was almost equivalent to a passport for all the Red Guards as it enabled them to live and eat in Beijing. Mao’s personality cult grew to immense proportions during the Cultural Revolution. Consequently, all schools and universities were shut down



**Figure 3:** Various editions of ‘The Little Red Book’ compiled by Lin Biao (林彪) containing selected quotations from Mao’s works. Almost every Chinese person had one during the Cultural Revolution. (Accessed on 31 May 2013 from <http://www.morningsun.org/images/index.html#>)

for three consecutive years from 1967 to 1969. In 1969, the Cultural Revolution subsided and the Red Guards were mostly disbanded, as Mao feared they were still causing chaos that might harm the very foundation of the Communist Party of China. In any case, the purpose of the Cultural Revolution had been largely fulfilled, and Mao had completely consolidated his political power. Subsequently, Mao also ordered



the Red Guards, urban young intellectuals, to be moved from cities to the countryside, where they would cause less political and social disruption.

Besides the involvement of the Red Guards, millions of factory workers were also dragged into the Cultural Revolution in many cities such as Shanghai, Beijing and Wuhan. Some factory workers formed rebel factions (造反派) and others formed scarlet factions (赤卫队), the former supporting the Cultural Revolution and the latter fighting against the Cultural Revolution (Hsü 1975, 839). They fought each other for a considerable time and many factories had to halt production. Eventually, the rebel factions took control of the factories in cities around China. The Shanghai Rebel Faction not only removed the Shanghai Mayor, Chen Pixian (陈丕显), and his deputy, Cao Diqu (曹狄秋), but also seized power from the Shanghai municipal government. The leader of the Shanghai Rebel Faction, Wang Hongwen (王洪文), eventually took control of the Shanghai city municipal government when a rebel faction fight, the so-called 'January Storm' took place in Shanghai; he was even promoted eventually to become second in charge in the Chinese Communist Party and Mao's successor after Lin Biao died following the failure of an assassination attempt on Mao (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006, 155). In Beijing city, the mayor, Peng Zhen (彭真), was removed and the Beijing Communist Party Committee effectively ceased to function; this caused great chaos in the capital city (Hsü 1975, 845). In Wuhan city, Chen Zaidao (陈再道), a general in charge of Hubei province, was also removed (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006, 199). These phenomena were repeated in many cities around China.

In comparison with the cities, Chinese peasants did not form any large social and political groups and their lives were relatively quiet; however they did rebel

against the families that used to own more land before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949; the members of these families were labelled 'Landlords' (地主) or 'Rich-peasants' (富农). They were publicly humiliated by being forced to wear 'big character' slogans on billboards around their necks or on paper hats on their heads; they were also dragged into every 'Class Struggle Conference of Recalling Past Sufferings and Thinking Present Happiness' (阶级斗争忆苦思甜大会) where they were made to criticise themselves for how they used to exploit poor peasants. Sometimes they were denounced in street parades or sometimes, even worse, they were beaten severely at the Class Struggle Conferences. So they suffered just like many intellectuals and the ridiculed Party cadres in the cities.

In the military, there were no rebellions during the Cultural Revolution because the People's Liberation Army of China was under the control of the Defence Minister, Marshal Lin Biao. Even under the experienced leadership of Lin, however, the Army was still controlled by Mao. For this reason, the Army was the only organisation able to maintain the safety and stability of most sectors of China. As a result of this, in 1969 at the Ninth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Lin was endorsed as the Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party and Mao's successor, the second in charge in China. However, Lin accused He Long (贺龙), a Marshal and Vice Premier, and Chen Yi (陈毅), a Marshal and Minister for Foreign Affairs, of not participating in the Cultural Revolution (Wang 2009, 371).

There was intra-Party opposition to the Cultural Revolution right from the beginning. Neither Liu Shaoqi nor Deng Xiaoping, the Party General Secretary, wanted to support Mao's position, unlike Premier Zhou Enlai who had kept Mao informed of everything at all times. So, on the one side was the Mao-Lin Biao group, supported by the PLA; on the other side was a faction led by Liu and Deng, whose

strength resided in the regular Party machine. When the Cultural Revolution began in February 1966, Liu Shaoqi was still on a diplomatic mission visiting foreign countries and consequently, after returning to China, he did not intuitively see through Mao's plot for 'great disorder under heaven'. Premier Zhou Enlai tried to reconcile the two factions, but failed.

Mao's decision to launch the Cultural Revolution in 1966 was not something ephemeral and impulsive despite no one challenging his position as the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party. He had social and political frustrations in relation to the development of socialist construction and nation building as well as feelings of dissatisfaction regarding literature and art circles and, in addition, his personal life. These frustrations and dissatisfactions were elements of the political triggers, cultural fuse and personal targets leading to the Cultural Revolution.

### ***Political triggers***

There were three political triggers leading to the development of the Cultural Revolution. The first trigger was in regard to Mao's political status, occurring at the 8<sup>th</sup> Party National Congress in 1956 which virtually weakened the supreme position of Mao. This Congress adopted decisions to recognise the Party structure and reduce the practices of the Mao cult in a similar way to the denunciation of the personality cult of Stalin by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev at the Soviet Party Congress earlier the same year (Hsü 1975: 830). In other words, Mao's previous position as the guide of the Chinese Communist Party as described in its 1945 constitution was replaced by a collective leadership in the 1956 version.

The second political trigger concerned Mao's economic development policies. In 1957 Mao promoted the economic development policies of the *Great Leap*

*Forward* and the *People's Communes* based on his idealistic political aspirations rather than on the reality of the then existing level of industrial and agricultural productivity. Not only did his policies impede the development of the Chinese economy but they also caused a great famine in China in 1959 (Clark 1987, 79-82; Hsü 1975, 833). When Peng Dehuai (彭德怀), a Marshal of the People's Liberation Army and Defence Minister, travelled the countryside and witnessed the starvation of the peasants, he wrote a letter to Mao advising him of the dishonest reporting of agricultural output figures under the policies of the *Great Leap Forward* and the *People's Communes* in 1959 (Hsü 1975, 833). Mao was silent. All the senior members of the Central Committee of the Party such as Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and Chen Yun (陈云) as well as the General Secretary Deng Xiaoping sat on the fence and would not criticise Mao's economic development policies.

Furthermore, a 'Letter of Opinion' to Mao written by the foolhardy Peng was circulated at the Lushan Conference of the Central Committee in August 1959; in his letter he vehemently argued that Mao's approach to, and leadership of, the socialist transformation had been hasty and excessive (Hsü 1975, 830; Karnow 1972, 117). Consequently, Mao mistakenly thought Peng had the support of the Soviet Communist Party leader, Nikita Khrushchev, whom he had met in Tirana, Albania when touring in Eastern Europe, because, after Peng had returned to Beijing from his trip a week late, the Soviet Union terminated a nuclear agreement with China signed two years earlier (Hsü 1975, 832).

As a result of this political struggle between Mao and Peng, Mao lost the battle but won the war. Mao had to accept responsibility for the initial poor showing of the *Great Leap Forward* and the *People's Communes* and placated all the members of the Politburo Standing Committee except for Peng, by reluctantly saying:

Everybody has shortcomings. Even Confucius made mistakes. So did Marx. He thought that the revolution would take place in Europe during his lifetime. I have seen Lenin's manuscripts, which are filled with changes. He, too, made mistakes (Karnow 1972, 116).

At the end of the Lushan Conference, Peng was dismissed as Minister of Defence and member of the Politburo. Peng apparently had counted on the support of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping but when neither sustained him, his cause was lost. This was the second political trigger for the Cultural Revolution in relation to Mao's economic policy.

The last political trigger concerned Mao's foresight that the Sino-Soviet split would increase tension and divisiveness within the Chinese leadership. Mao did not like the Soviet model of socialism especially after Nikita Khrushchev withdrew all aid to China and demonised Joseph Stalin. Subsequently, Mao named the Soviet Communist system revisionist. Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, on the other hand, were in favour of the Soviet style of five-year plans for socialist construction and nation building. Indeed, as the Chinese economy began to recover under the impetus of new policies introduced by Liu and Deng, the status of Liu also climbed higher. Mao was worried that Liu and Deng had created a new Mandarin class similar to the Soviet Communist Party's apparatchiks (Hsü 1975, 830). This new Mandarin class comprised the intellectuals, special individuals such as artists, writers, actors, academics, and Party functionaries who had long performed services for the Party and the nation. In addition to being protected by Liu and Deng, this Mandarin class sought material incentives, wage privileges and other benefits. Mao saw in them a tendency toward enjoyment of the easy life and a reluctance to perpetuate the revolution.

### ***Cultural Fuse***

In addition to these three political triggers, there was a cultural fuse, involving a historical play, which ignited the Cultural Revolution. It was *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* (海瑞罢官), written by Wu Han (吴晗), the Deputy Mayor of Beijing, a leading historian and former professor at Tsinghua University in 1961. The subject of this play was a minister, Hai Rui, in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) who had been dismissed for consistently telling the truth. Mao initially approved of this play, but subsequently he came to see the innuendo condemning him for dismissing Marshal Peng Dehui in 1959. Although Wu Han did not intend Hai Rui to represent Peng Dehui, the allegory was very clear — it criticised Mao's dismissal of Peng. Jiang Qing and her coterie had always argued that this play about the dismissal of a forthright Ming dynasty official for telling the truth was in fact an attack on Mao in the camouflage of a historical event (Mazur 2009, 410). On the eve of the Cultural Revolution, Jiang Qing stopped the performance of this play after Mao himself had retrospectively condemned it. Mao could not launch a counterattack through the Party channels on the play in Beijing, which was why Mao had to secretly dispatch Jiang Qing to Shanghai to seek help (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006, 15).

After reading many drafts of a critical 'Comment on the Newly Composed Historical Play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*' (《评新编历史剧〈海瑞罢官〉》) by Yao Wen Yuan (姚文元) which was subsequently published in the Shanghai *Wenhuibao* (文汇报) newspaper on 10 November 1965, Mao was ready to launch the Cultural Revolution in order to attack Liu Shaoqi ((Hsü 1975, 840). When Premier Zhou Enlai learned on 26 November 1965 of Mao's role in the writing of this critique, he immediately telephoned Peng Zhen, mayor of Beijing and a member of the Party Central Committee Secretariat, asking him to publish this critique in Beijing

(MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006, 18). Jiang Qing was successful in achieving the publication of this article as Shanghai was familiar territory to her; she had lived there as an actress and teacher and was acquainted with many of the cultural and social elites in the 1930s (Zhao 1995, 83-84).

Mao also felt that few literary and art works were being produced reflecting the socialist transformation. Many, in contrast, regressed to old thoughts, old habits, old customs and old cultures. He was further displeased that the magazine *Frontier* published more than sixty articles, directly and indirectly criticising Mao and his policies by using historical allusions, allegories and analogies co-written by Wu Han and others in the Beijing Party leadership. These activities must have further frustrated Mao, leading him to demand a revolution in literature and art, and the education sector. It was an area in which he had expressed strong views over twenty years before at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art in 1942 (Mao 1967, 69).

### ***Major Targets***

The Cultural Revolution was Mao's last revolution. This last revolution became a catastrophic political movement for three main reasons: the first was the internal power struggle in the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party; the second was Mao's injudicious personal vengeance; the third was his unhappy marriage with Jiang Qing and the death of his son Mao Anying (毛岸英). The first and second reasons are well known but the third reason has been for the most part overlooked.

Power struggles, as in all political organisations around the world, had always existed in the Chinese Communist Party since it was founded in 1921. In the official history of the Chinese Communist Party, there were ten major Party leadership struggles (党的十次路线斗争). However, from the time that Mao Zedong had taken

charge of the Party before China's Liberation, no one had successfully and overtly challenged him until Peng Dehuai came into conflict with him in 1959. Mao after all was not only one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party but also the most important founding leader of the People's Republic of China after the defeat of the former Nationalist Party government in 1949. Mao had an immense knowledge of Chinese history, philosophy and literature, but lacked the wisdom of economics, foreign cultures and a philosophical understanding of the primacy of the real world over ideas (Hsü 1975, 829-832). Under his leadership, China underwent many successful and massive economic reforms and political movements in the first decade of the People's Republic of China. Mao understood the Chinese classical and philosophical motto — 'it is much more difficult to consolidate political power than to seize it' (巩固政权要比夺取政权更难). Hence he persistently kept up the momentum of revolutions till his death. When he implemented the economic development policies of the *Great Leap Forward* and the *People's Communes* based on his idealistic and political aspirations rather than on the reality of the existing level of industrial and agricultural productivity, not only did his policies impede the development of the Chinese economy but they also caused a great famine in China. He was not an economist nor an agriculturist and no one in the Chinese Communist Party dared to point out that his economic development policies were neither suitable nor applicable to China. That is why Mao, taking responsibility, told his Party comrades: 'The trouble I have brought on is a great one, and I hold myself responsible for it. Comrades, you should also analyse your own responsibilities, and you will feel better after you have broken wind and emptied your bowels' (Solomon 1971, 395).

Mao would not forgive Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping for not showing loyalty to him at the Lushan Conference. Although they did not oppose Mao they made Mao



apologise for the failure of his policies. After the Lushan Conference, Mao became rather reclusive while Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping felt confident enough to speak out on important political and economic development policies. They also were responsible for an economic recovery in the industrial and agricultural fields (Hsü 1975, 835-836).



**Figure 4:** It is believed that this is the last photo of Mao Zedong (毛泽东) and Liu Xiaochi (刘少奇) taken together on 19 September 1966, at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Soon after this Liu Xiaochi, until 1966 considered as Mao's successor, became a victim of the Cultural Revolution. (Accessed on 31 May 2013 from [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_3d25c7410101kezv.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_3d25c7410101kezv.html))

The third target involved Mao's personal life. Mao had multiple marriages and his marriage with Jiang Qing was not a particularly happy one. When Mao wanted to marry Jiang Qing, he was told by the Party that there would be many restrictions on her participation in Party political activities because she was quite a well-known actress who already had had several infamous marriages and a troubled life in

Shanghai (Wong 1985, 386). After China's Liberation, Jiang Qing was not well enough to accompany Mao at all times and in fact had to go to Russia for cancer treatment for a considerable period. Mao lived alone adjacent to Liu Shaoqi who lived with his well-educated, English-speaking wife, Wang Guangmei (王光美) in elegant quarters in Zhongnanhai. Mao was jealous of Liu's harmonious marriage (Li 1994). Being the president of China Liu was a man of immense stature in the eyes of the Chinese people and was, in fact, viewed as almost equal to Mao in the Party (Terrill 1995, 326). Another two familiar incidents might further verify the discontent in Mao's marriage with Jiang Qing: one was that Jiang moved out of Zhongnanhai, the headquarters of the Chinese Communist Party and home to many top officials, to live by herself in Diaoyutai (outside of Zhongnanhai in Beijing) at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution; the other was that Jiang Qing was not content to be a housewife as she had been in Yan'an before she had a daughter Li Na (李讷); and, after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Jiang lived quite a different life style from Mao (Xu and Li 2010).

More recently, according to Mao's personal bodyguard, Li Yinqiao (李银桥) and his wife, Han Guixin (韩桂馨), in their oral account, Mao Zedong was very upset by the death of his elder son Mao Anying at the headquarters of the volunteer troops of the Chinese People's Volunteers in North Korea. Mao, on receiving word from the Soviet Union that the American Air Force would bomb the headquarters, had instructed the commander of Chinese forces in Korea, Peng Dehuai, to shift his headquarters immediately; Peng failed to do so. When Mao later learned that the headquarters had been bombarded, he angrily muttered: 'This Peng Dehuai... I sent a telegram to get him to shift the headquarters' (Di 2008, 501). The knowledge of this

event has enlightened many Chinese people as to why Peng Dehuai was removed from his position in the military and the Party.

These political triggers, the cultural fuse and personal targets became more apparent after Lin Biao died in an aircraft crash in Outer Mongolia on 12 September 1971 when escaping after a failed attempt to assassinate Mao. Many Westerners confirmed that Chairman Mao was responsible for initiating the Cultural Revolution and Premier Zhou Enlai was responsible for its implementation. Furthermore, some Western commentators also asserted that ‘1972 belongs to Zhou Enlai rather than Jiang Qing’s radicals’ due to the condemnation of Lin Biao as a leftist by Zhou (Ladany 1988, 355). Wang Li (2001, 992), a Communist Party member and a Cultural Revolution historian, writes:

Today’s historians have become partial and fail to respect history. Mao Zedong is given all the blame for striking people down, while Premier Zhou is given all the credit for protecting people. This does not accord with the facts. As far as I know, all the decisions to protect people were taken by Mao Zedong and executed by Zhou Enlai. Had Mao Zedong not taken the decision, Zhou Enlai would not have dared, but not have been able to act either, since he was not in a position to decide what was to be done about important cadres. One cannot separate Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai — make one into a bad guy, the other into a good guy; make one into a muddle-headed person, the other into someone with a clear mind; and say that one is wrong while the other is right.

What were the achievements of the Cultural Revolution and what price was paid to achieve them? Ultimately, Mao reclaimed his supremacy in the Chinese Communist Party and revitalised the revolutionary momentum through political awareness and the class struggle for socialist transformation. The turmoils of the Cultural Revolution impinged severely on the educational area and the realm of literature and art as its name implied. As MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2006, 460) point out: ‘The Cultural Revolution became the economic and social watershed of modern Chinese history’.

## **Chinese Film Industry**

During the first four years of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese film industry could not produce any films. The damage to the infrastructure of film studios, the film arts community, film productivity and creativity was severe. In addition, distinguished world-class filmmakers such as Joris Ivens and Michelangelo Antonioni were offended by Jiang Qing's criticism of their films during their invited trip to China during the Cultural Revolution. Paul Clark (1987, 87), explaining the adverse realities in the film industry, notes that 'the Cultural Revolution brought more destruction than *Wu Xun*, *Anti-Rightist*, and *Great Leap* episodes combined'. This section analyses many works of Chinese film scholars such as Paul Clark, Chris Berry, Rey Chow, George Semse, and in particular many mainland Chinese film scholars such as Dai Jiafang, Di Jiannong and Zhang Wei, in order to present an understanding of the impacts on the Chinese film industry during the Cultural Revolution.

### ***Damage to the Industry***

The film industry sustained significant damage at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in February 1966 when Jiang Qing colluded with Lin Biao to convene a symposium for military literary and artistic workers in Shanghai (Zhang 2006, 236). At the end of this symposium, Jiang asked four military personnel to produce a summary of the symposium panel discussions. This summary was called 'Huiyi Jiyao' in Chinese (《会议纪要》). It was sent to Mao who revised it three times. By 19 March, Mao agreed to send the revised summary of the symposium to Lin Biao via Jiang Qing (The History Research Office of CPC n.d.). When Lin received it he asked the Party Central Committee on behalf of the Central Military Commission to approve it. On receiving the approval, he changed its name to '*The Summary of a*

*symposium for the military literary and artistic workers entrusted to Comrade Jiang Qing by Comrade Lin Biao* (《林彪同志委托江青同志召开的部队文艺工作座谈会纪要》), and then released it on 10 April (The History Research Office of the CPCCC n.d.). This Summary not only denied the achievements of the film industry in the entire previous seventeen years from 1949 to 1965, but also confirmed that bourgeois thought and modern revisionist thinking on literature and the arts had governed the film industry during those years (Chen, Cui, Wang, and Hu 2006, 240). On reading the revised Summary, Jiang Qing brusquely denounced about 650 feature films produced in that period, calling them ‘poisonous weeds’ and criticised many left-wing and advanced films made in the 1930s. Furthermore, according to the research work of Chen, Cui, Wang, and Hu (2006, 240), this Summary directly and indirectly led to the abandonment of the Chinese film industry’s exchanges with foreign film organisations.

After this Summary was broadcast in its entirety on 28 May 1967, Jiang Qing reviewed 68 out of 650 feature films related to military stories produced in the previous seventeen years and published an article called ‘*Talk on the Issue of Movies*’ (《关于电影问题的谈话》), in which she pointed out that seven of the 650 films, *Fighting South and North* (南征北战 1952), *Plain Guerrillas* (平原游击队 1955), *Grow up in the War* (战斗中成长 1957), *Seahawks* (海鹰 1959), *Shangganling* (上甘岭 1959), *Mine Warfare* (地雷战 1962) and *Tunnel Warfare* (地道战 1966) were ideologically strong and all the remaining films had problems (Zhang 2006, 236-237). Thus, Jiang Qing avoided acknowledging the outstanding achievements of the film industry. The 643 remaining films were then labelled as having four kinds of different reactionary problems:

The first kind was anti-Party and anti-socialist poisonous weeds; the second kind was the dissemination of incorrect political lines to reverse verdicts of counter-revolutionary members; the third kind was defaming old army cadres with love and romance stories; and the fourth kind was the portrayal of the middle personal characters (Zhang 2006, 237; Yu 2006, 110).

Moreover, according to Zhang Wei (2006, 237), a Chinese film scholar at the Beijing Film Academy, Jiang Qing especially criticised films such as *Forced Recruitment* (抓壮丁 1963) and *Unwind Trinidad* (逆风千里 1964) as well as the literary works of Qu Baiyin's *On the Issue of Film Innovation Monologue* (《关于电影创新问题的独白》) and Cheng Jihua's *History of Chinese Film* (《中国电影发展史》) because these films and books were either disseminating the wrong political lines or anti-socialism. As the Cultural Revolution proceeded, all the film studios around China were closed down. The studios were unable to produce any films from 1966 to 1969 and no feature films from 1966 to 1972 (Gong 2006, 177). Moreover, a large number of precious art works, historical relics and cultural materials, filmic art props, theatrical costumes and film equipment were destroyed (Gong 2006, 177).

The Chinese film industry was not only damaged nationally but also internationally. During the whole period of the Cultural Revolution, not a single film was sent to any international film festival because the artistic quality and political content of the films were unsuitable for such events. However, in order to show the great results of the Cultural Revolution and to continue to spread the Communist spirit around the world, Jiang Qing invited US President Richard Nixon to a model ballet, *The Red Detachment of Women*, at the Great Hall of the People when he was visiting China after the opening up of Sino-American relations in 1972 (Witke 1977, 336). Because President Nixon enjoyed the Chinese ballet, Jiang Qing then decided to invite two distinguished world-class filmmakers, Joris Ivens and Michelangelo Antonioni, to visit China to make films about China. While both directors took a

considerable amount of documentary footage about the Cultural Revolution, their films were not screened in China at that time.



**Figure 5:** Richard Nixon, President of the United States, and wife Pat Nixon were invited by Jiang Qing to watch her Model Ballet *The Red Detachment of Women* at the Great Hall of People on 22 February 1972 during the Nixon's visit to China. (R-L: Pat Nixon, Jiang Qing, Richard Nixon and Zhou Enlai. Accessed on 31 May 2013 from [http://phtv.ifeng.com/album/private/detail\\_2012\\_02/09/12399399\\_5.shtml#p=3](http://phtv.ifeng.com/album/private/detail_2012_02/09/12399399_5.shtml#p=3))

Ivens, an influential and prolific documentary filmmaker, was a devout Communist. He had been supporting the Chinese Communist Party since the late 1930s and had visited China on numerous occasions (Schoots 2000). On his first visit to China in 1935, Ivens was brave enough, despite the danger, to smuggle an expensive film camera and other film equipment into the Chinese Communist Party revolutionary base, Yan'an. Due to this bold feat, some facts about the life of Mao and his Red Army in Yan'an were captured on film and subsequently shown abroad. His 1939 documentary *The 400 Million* also reflected the past of China. In Ivens' own words: 'A fifth of the world population defends their liberty, their wonderful culture' (Böker 1981, 51).

On his last visit to China, from 1972 to 1977, Ivens filmed *How Yugong Moved the Mountain*, a 763-minute documentary about the Cultural Revolution. His

last fiction film, *A Tale of Wind (Une Histoire de vent 1988)*, inspired by *How Yugong Moved the Mountain*, was set in China's Gobi Desert. It is about a film crew headed by a veteran director who travels through the desert. While the crew waits for the wind to pick up, weather reports tell of storms everywhere but in China. The director is hospitalised after a fall from his chair and dreams he is part of the Méliès Film, *A Trip to the Moon* (1902). Unfortunately, neither the documentary nor the fiction film has ever been shown in China.

Apart from discussing the aesthetics of Ivens' documentaries, Chinese officials mostly argued about the ideological content of his film work, in particular his representation of Chinese society. His documentary films were understood differently, depending on the political or ideological position of the scholars and critics. The content was well received by the Chinese government of the time.

Antonioni was invited to visit China in 1972 during the middle period of the Cultural Revolution. A self-described Marxist intellectual, Antonioni was so revolutionary that he was invited by the Chinese government to make a film about the new China. Consequently, he went to many places in China, including Beijing and Shanghai and their vicinity, to shoot thirty thousand metres of film in twenty-two days (Chatman 1985, 170). The result was a feature-length exploratory documentary film called *Chung Kuo, Cina* in Italian. This documentary film concerned the Chinese Communist Party because it shows a boatman urinating in the Huang Pu River in Shanghai. Hence, after Antonioni released his 217-minute documentary film, he was no longer welcome in China. The film was screened in many countries in the world but not in China until its screening at the Beijing Film Academy in 2002. As Chatman (1985, 175) notes:



On 18 November 1980, the Chinese publicly apologized to Antonioni on the occasion of the beginning of an Italian film on Marco Polo. Antonioni was satisfied, and there was talk of his making another film about China.

The Chinese officials argued at the time that Michelangelo Antonioni had not filmed the positive aspects of China, which was what the Chinese government wanted, instead capturing undesirable and negative aspects of China and Chinese people. Antonioni did not wish to make a propaganda film for the Communist regime. He set out to make a film mainly about Chinese people, so he used close-ups to portray with realistic gusto the faces of ordinary Chinese people — round eyes, long and bony noses, faded faces, thick hair, extravagant gestures and awkward-looking clothes. Because of these portrayals, Jiang Qing disliked him and accused him of being anti-Chinese as well as counter-revolutionary.

The intent of the invitation to Ivens and Antonioni had been to encourage them to embellish the Cultural Revolution and spread information about it around the world through their lenses. However, the objective of promoting the Cultural Revolution to the world was not successful as far as the Communist Party was concerned and hence the documentaries were never shown in China at that time. Even when Antonioni's *Chung Kuo* was shown later in Beijing after the Cultural Revolution, it was purely for academic purposes and not for the entertainment of ordinary Chinese people (Wikipedia, 15 March 2013). What these visits by Western filmmakers demonstrated was the failure of the Communist regime as well as Jiang Qing, to understand the Western mentality in regard to the Cultural Revolution; these visits also highlighted the extent to which the Chinese film industry was isolated from the world at that time.

The shutdown of all the film studios in China lasted for four consecutive years from 1966 to 1969. Chinese cinema had to rely on a limited number of selected old

Chinese and several imported foreign films. The old Chinese films were *Fighting North and South* (1952), *Mine Warfare* (1962) and *Tunnel Warfare* (1966) called by the Chinese ‘san zhan pian’ (三战片) meaning three war feature films, which were screened repeatedly. The imported foreign films were the Russian films *Lenin in October* and *Lenin in 1918*; the Albanian film *Rather Die Than Surrender*; the North Korean film *The Girl Who Sells Flowers* and the Indian film *The Vagabond*. Remarkably, *The Girl Who Sells Flowers* had a huge impact on many Chinese audiences who watched it (Liu 2002). They wept from beginning to end because of the tragic life of the main protagonist, a pretty girl in her early twenties, who was exploited by a feudal and brutal landlord to the point that she became blind. This film was like a mirror of China in the past, epitomising the life of most people before China’s Liberation. That was probably why so many Chinese audiences empathised with the main protagonist. The Communist Party and Chairman Mao wanted the Chinese people to realise that their lives were better than before Liberation in 1949 — at least no ordinary people would suffer like the girl who was selling flowers in the film.

The Chinese film industry had been through many political and administrative reforms since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. The Communist government firstly established the China Film Corporation for film distribution and exhibition in February 1951 (Zhang 2004, 191) and had nationalised the entire film industry by January 1952 (Zhang 2004, 190). In addition, the Communist regime fully funded the film industry, which consisted of four major film studios — Changchun, Beijing, August the First and Shanghai — until after the Cultural Revolution. Not only did the film industry go through these fundamental changes but it also sustained enormous political interference, which left it devastated

by the end of the Cultural Revolution. Comparatively, there was less political stress and more creative production during the pre- and post-Cultural Revolution periods. However, the film industry has never had political and financial autonomy and therefore Chinese cinema has always perpetuated visual clichés that only show the positive aspects of Maoism and the Chinese Communist Party.

### *The Film Arts Community*

As soon as the Cultural Revolution started, the political battles and personal encounters in the film arts community immediately followed because most of the film directors, actors, cinematographers and other film crews had been involved in film production during the previous seventeen years. Jiang Qing and her film critics claimed these films had reactionary content and categorised them into the four kinds of political problems as noted above. Jiang Qing knew this community extremely well, having been an actress herself and a member of the National Film Production Bureau. Therefore she also knew many members of the film arts community and many controversial details about film production. This is why so many filmmakers suffered during the Cultural Revolution.

For example, according to the research of three Mainland Chinese film scholars, Wang Yang (汪洋 1984, 72), Su Yun (苏云 1984, 44-45) and Jun Ying (俊英 1984, 124-125), almost all film artists and technicians who worked at the Shanghai film studio experienced retribution. The majority of them were sent to reform camps nicknamed in Chinese ‘niu peng’ (牛棚) meaning ‘cowshed’. A few of them were imprisoned and sixteen of them were fatally attacked. At the Beijing film studio, more than three hundred people were, in one way or another, attacked and seven people were killed. Among these were some experienced artistic personnel and fine film

technical experts. At the Changchun film studio, about 95% of personnel including artistic, technical and managerial cadres were harshly criticised and violently assaulted; nearly three hundred people were sent to reform camps, more than five hundred film artists, technicians and administrators were transferred and sent to the countryside and about 55.2% of people were dismissed from the studio. The majority of film professional directors and actors were discharged from the August the First Studio, a military organisation, or transferred to different work; in addition, almost all of the studio leaders were branded as ‘capitalist roaders’, ‘traitors’, ‘spies’ or ‘anti-revolutionary revisionists’ and they became the targets of ‘the proletarian revolutionary dictatorship’ (Wang 1984, 72). At the Xi’an film studio, 130 out of 400 personnel in total were demonised as ‘revisionists’ or ‘ghosts and monsters’ in Chinese ‘niu gui she shen’ (牛鬼蛇神) literally meaning ‘cow-ghost-snake-evil’, then incarcerated; some were also physically attacked so badly that they were disabled. Similar events occurred in all the other small film studios in China.

Many tragic incidents happened in the film arts community during the Cultural Revolution; not only were many outstanding film directors and excellent film actors unable to work in their professions, but they were also attacked on the direct orders of Jiang Qing because they knew too many controversial details about her past. Some of the directors and actors were former colleagues or friends of Jiang Qing including a fine film director, actor and essayist, Zheng Junli (郑君里), and a famous and beloved actor, Zhao Dan. Both of them had been very close friends and former work colleagues of Jiang Qing in a Shanghai film company in the late 1930s.

Zheng, who had directed many notable films such as *A Spring River Flows East* (一江春节水向东流 1947), *Crow and Sparrow* (乌鸦与麻雀 1949) Lin Zexu (林则徐 1957) and *Nie'er* (聂耳 1959), had won many accolades nationally and

internationally. He was fatally attacked in 1969 during the Cultural Revolution (Clark 1987, 133; MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006, 115-125). The reason for this incident, according to anecdotes, was that Jiang Qing demanded some letters back from Zheng she had written to him just before the Cultural Revolution (Zhao 2005, 214); one letter was about Jiang Qing wanting to know which foreign country her third husband Tang Na (唐纳) was living in at that time. However, Zheng could not present this letter to Jiang because he had lost it at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Jiang thought Zheng would make political trouble for her due to the contents of the letter. Hence Jiang ordered a search of Zheng's entire apartment and then his incarceration when the Cultural Revolution commenced.

Zhao, a leading performer, was also incarcerated for five years during the Cultural Revolution because he knew too much about Jiang Qing despite the fact that he was one of twenty-two Chinese film stars given star status by the public in 1962 (Zhao 2005, 211). He not only acted in the film *Wu Xun* (武训传 1951) which Mao harshly criticised and about which the *People's Daily* newspaper published a critical article 'Pay attention to the discussion of the film *Wu Xun*' (《应当重视电影<武训传>的讨论》) in 1951, but also performed in many other excellent films such as *Li Shizhen* (李时珍 1956), *Lin Zexu* (1958) and *Nie'er* (1959). His performances were so artistically charming, passionately striking and psychologically attractive that he received the title of 'Performing Artist' (表演艺术家). Yet Jiang accused him of counter-revolution and anti-socialism (Zhao 2005, 19-22).

Many film directors and actors like Zheng and Zhao suffered during the Cultural Revolution. According to research undertaken by Zhao (2005) and Clark (1987), film directors including Cui Wei (崔嵬), Gu Eryi (顾而已) Wang Ping (王苹)



**Figure 6:** The twenty-two elected Mainland Chinese Film Stars in 1962. Most of them were, one way or the other, criticised, sent to reform camps, or fatally attacked during the Cultural Revolution. (<http://hgk22.blog.163.com/blog/static/410438462008127101923273/>)

and many others suffered; and most of the twenty-two Chinese film stars named as outstanding in 1962 were attacked in some way during the Cultural Revolution including Bai Yang (白杨), Yu Yang (于洋), Wang Xiaotang (王晓棠). Many more could not bear the humiliation and committed suicide: for instance, Shangguan Yunzhu (上官云珠) and Shu Xiuwen (舒秀文). Some were sent to the reform camps because the content of the films they appeared in or directed was branded as representing 'feudal, bourgeois and revisionist' ideas, rather than representing new Chinese socialist construction and development (Zhao 2005; Clark 1987).

Besides the attacks on film directors and actors, the Beijing Film Academy, the only higher education film school in China, was closed down and students had to give up their studies. Jiang Qing and her political allies accused the Academy of being a revisionist institute and of not training students to develop a good understanding of films for more than ten years (Zheng and Gong 2006, 379). Consequently, all the lecturers were transferred, the film equipment disappeared and the academy was occupied by other organisations.

The fate of the film arts community, then, like other groups, encountered social and political attacks during the Cultural Revolution. In fact, film directors and actors, due to their fame, probably suffered more personal pressure and vicious attacks than film crews. This was a bleak phase in the history of the Chinese film industry.

### ***Productivity***

The Cultural Revolution went through a ten-year long period and during those years the Chinese film industry suffered from the social and political upheaval; film studios were ransacked and all film crews were, one way or the other, sent to reform camps or

transferred to other locations. The film industry during the Cultural Revolution period yielded the lowest number of films produced in the history of film production in China. Ninety-three films in total were produced by about ten major film studios during a six-year period of the Cultural Revolution from 1970 to 1976 even though film industrial technology had developed during that time. Film production went through roughly three different stages.

The first stage was in the first four years of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1969, when the Chinese film industry produced no films apart from newsreel footage. This was a stage when the whole nation was engulfed in the intense factional struggles and widespread violence as discussed in the previous section.

The second stage was from 1970 to 1972. In this stage, the film industry produced nine films including seven Chinese opera films and two ballet films; two Chinese opera films were produced in 1970: *The Red Lantern* (红灯记) and *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (智取威虎山); two films were made in 1971, the Chinese opera film *Sha Jia Bang* (沙家浜) and the ballet film *The Red Detachment of Women* (红色娘子军). Five films were produced in 1971: four were Chinese opera films — *The Harbour* (海港), *Long Jiang Song* (龙江颂), *The Red Detachment of Women* and *Raid the White-Tiger Regiment* (奇迹白虎团) — and the fifth was the ballet film *The White-haired Girl* (白毛女). These two categories, Chinese opera and ballet films, were, strictly speaking, not proper motion pictures. Although similar to documentaries or newsreels, depicting Chinese opera and dance on stage, they were not truly like documentaries or newsreels because film directors and cinematographers manipulated the stage settings into more suitable scenes for filming in line with Jiang Qing's idea of 'filming the stage plays and making the stage plays like motion pictures' (Dai



1995, 150). That is why these opera and ballet films were neither plays nor feature films but something in between. Jiang Qing wanted to make plays into films because first of all, she wanted to show the reformed Chinese opera and ballet to all Chinese people in film format, and because plays could be seen only in theatres in cities, and not in the countryside; and many well-equipped country projection facilities already existed in the mid 1960s as filming industrial technology had developed before the Cultural Revolution (Clark 1987, 124; Li, Li, and Zhang 2005, 121). Furthermore, film studios at that time had no film scripts and the ransacked film studios were just reopening to make films. Jiang Qing, as the person in control of literature and the arts, seized the opportunity to publicise her programs.

In the third stage from 1973 to 1976, eighty-five films were made in a four-year period by the ten major studios in China. They included sixty-one feature films, six opera films, seventeen Chinese local opera films and a ballet film. Most of these films were produced by the four major film studios, namely Shanghai, Beijing, Changchun and August the First film studios. After seeing and liking Jiang Qing's model opera film *Long Jiang Song* in July 1972, Mao subsequently invited the actress who performed the female protagonist, Li Bingshu (李炳淑), to dinner (Di 2004, 144). Mao was interested in Li's views about the status quo of literature and art. From Li's responses Mao realised that few literature and art works were being produced that were appropriate to the needs of the Chinese people. Jiang Qing was enraged by Li's revelations but was forced by Mao to allow feature films to be produced for the first time during the Cultural Revolution. The first feature film was *Bright Sunny Skies* made by the Changchun film studio in 1973.

Compared to the periods immediately before and after the Cultural Revolution, the productivity of the film industry was very low during the Cultural

Revolution. For example, the film industry produced 105 feature films in the year of 1958 (Chen 1997, 6). Statistically speaking, the 93 films produced during the Cultural Revolution period spread among the ten major film studios indicates an average of less than one film per studio each year.

### *Creativity*

During the Cultural Revolution the most serious problem among the major film studios in the Chinese film industry was film creativity. Film scriptwriters, directors and actors were extremely apprehensive about whether their scripts, works and performances adhered to Communist Party guidelines. As a result the artistic and aesthetic creativity of film was insipid, simple and ossified because producers did what they had been told to do. Chinese filmmakers at that time were only concerned about being in line with Communist Party principles; they thought little about aestheticism. Hence films at that time tended to lack any appealing propositions. They were all about how Mao and the Communist Party had taught the people to do this or that.

According to the Mainland Chinese film scholar Yang Yuanying (杨远婴 2006, 170):

Firstly, as far as film creative properties in this period were concerned, films were neither art nor commodity but mouthpieces of class struggle; then, in terms of the norms of film art, the starting point of film creation was the political situation, productive strategy, requirement for leadership and moral precepts; and finally, the attitude of filmmakers to the creative status was that they did not want to achieve any good results artistically as much as they sought to be politically correct.

In these kinds of political circumstances, most films produced held no attraction for audiences. Not one film had a trailer to show the dramatic or spectacular scenes, nor were there any film credits at the beginning or end. Instead these films incorporated

text quotations of Mao Zedong first rolling out with the soundtracks and announcements at the beginning of the films. This was a phenomenon of the Model Opera films and some feature films as well.

In addition, films produced during the Cultural Revolution were leftist and propaganda-filled entertainment tools. Jiang Qing's model opera films and most feature films such as *Bright Sunny Day* (1973), *Green Pine Range* (青松岭 1973), *Break Off* (决裂 1975), *Spring Seedling* (1975) and *Counter Attack* (反击 1976) were not as Rey Chow (1995, 22) defined 'primitive'. According to Chow's definition, a primitive film should not only depict traditional cultures and social events but also a sense of phantasmagorical exoticness. Most protagonists in these films were single with no wife or no husband, sometimes even with no children. What they did have was a belief that they had Mao and the Party behind them. There was never any sense, then, that they loved or had been loved.

With regard to the film treatment, not only is the protagonist always in the centre of mise-en-scène; he (and sometimes she) is also always portrayed in much more radiant colours than the antagonist. Wherever the protagonist goes, there is always an aura of triumph expressed through some victorious soundtrack in the background. In contrast, the antagonist is depicted in unflattering and gloomy colours and appears as a shifty character on screen, accompanied by menacing music. This treatment pervades all films made during the Cultural Revolution regardless of the nature of the film and is only found in Chinese films of this period.

In terms of the discourse of film narratives, there are two major themes: one derives from wartime literature and the other concerns class struggle. Both themes conform equally to the rule that in the plot, the protagonist is absolutely flawless and the antagonist is always blemished. The protagonists are workers-peasants-soldiers

and the antagonists are the Kuomintang, Japanese invaders, rich people and intellectuals. Whatever or whenever the protagonists have problems, all they have to do is to recite some words of Mao and the Communist Party, and they will conquer the antagonists. In every film, Mao and the Communist Party always win and their enemies always lose. It is true that Mao and the Communist Party seized power from the Kuomintang government and established the People's Republic of China. However, in the history of the Chinese civil war from 1946 to 1949, Mao's Communist Party did not always win every battle. Hence, Chinese filmmakers during the Cultural Revolution only realistically produced the content of films about the battles which Mao and the Communist Party had won, as they did during the periods before and after the Cultural Revolution. As always it is the victors who write history.

Another phenomenon during the Cultural Revolution is that the films to be produced were allocated to each film studio, in particular to the four major film studios: Shanghai, Beijing, Changchun and August the First. The film subjects pre-determined before the film scripts were written had to reflect the life of workers, peasants and soldiers in socialist construction and nation building. Although all films had the same themes of wartime literature or class struggle, the settings of each film were often different. Therefore, to some extent, the film content could be said to have reflected at least some aspects of Chinese life, if only in terms of locations.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter examined the reality of the Chinese film industry during the Cultural Revolution. Mao's last revolution — the Cultural Revolution — had its own social and political agenda. Not only did Mao exaggerate society's class struggles but he also took personal measures to attack the key structures of the Communist Party. He

obviously thought that China could not continuously develop according to his version of socialism without the launch of the Cultural Revolution. Mao used his wife, Jiang Qing, and Lin Biao to set in motion the Cultural Revolution in order to change the political ideology of the Chinese people and to defeat the so-called capitalists and revisionists. He also used the youth, the Red Guards, as a primary force to attack the education system and literature and art circles. Thus, the Cultural Revolution had its political triggers, cultural fuse and political targets — the supposed representatives of capitalists and revisionists — Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping.

The chapter also discussed how the Cultural Revolution affected the Chinese film industry in terms of film productivity and creativity and the film arts community. The film industry was destroyed because it was one of the institutions for promoting political ideology; before the Cultural Revolution, the film industry had produced many films which were viewed as not being in line with socialist construction and nation building. The film industry, including ten major film studios, produced only 93 films during a ten-year long period of the Cultural Revolution; as a result, the film industry was isolated internationally and was unable to develop any relationships with world-renowned filmmakers.

In the following chapter, Jiang Qing's theory and film production during the Cultural Revolution are examined. An analysis is presented of the circumstances in which her theory was created, how this theory had an impact on film production, and what kinds of films were produced. This is followed by a discussion of the styles of films including opera films, feature films and the other forms of films, as well as the function of these films during the Cultural Revolution.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Three Prominences**

Before the Cultural Revolution, Chinese cinema seemed to have more entertainment value than political value; after the Cultural Revolution, it tended to have more marketing value than cultural value. During the Cultural Revolution, however, Chinese cinema arguably possessed more political value than cultural or entertainment significance due to the socio-political environment which required the production of films to serve the needs of the Communist Party; this was carried out in the framework of the political principles of the theory of The Three Prominences. These principles were inspired by Jiang Qing who played a vital role in the Chinese film industry during the Cultural Revolution. In line with this theory, film represented China's socio-political struggle; the socio-political aesthetic strategy of this theory required the presentation of political images and movements. Thus, the contention of this chapter is that Jiang Qing's theory of The Three Prominences was the dominant framework for film production during the Cultural Revolution.

This chapter begins to explore what the theory of The Three Prominences was; how Jiang Qing developed it based on her experience at the Beijing opera rehearsals for film production with help from her political allies Yao Wenyan and Yu Huiyong; and how it depicted workers-peasants-soldiers. The chapter then moves to an analysis of Chinese film styles, comparing these with Western films in order to emphasise the realistic and aesthetic strategies employed in the opera films, feature films and other films produced during the Cultural Revolution.

### **The Theory of The Three Prominences**

When the Chinese film studios resumed production in 1970, not only had Jiang Qing already risen to be a member of the Communist Party Politburo, but she had also been crowned ‘the great flag bearer of literature and art’ (伟大的文艺旗手), especially in the film industry (Dai 1995, 40). She was virtually the director of every film produced at that time due to her knowledge of film production and her politically sensitive astuteness. Moreover, she had the final say as to whether the films produced would be released. Almost all the films made during the Cultural Revolution under her leadership changed from being allegories of ancient ghost and romantic stories to being about the realities of workers-peasants-soldiers involved with socialist reconstruction and nation building in line with the theory of The Three Prominences.

Jiang Qing’s notorious theory of The Three Prominences, in Chinese ‘san tu chu’ (三突出) meaning ‘three-jut-out’, was the dominant principle adhered to in film production during the Cultural Revolution. This theory demanded political loyalties from the socialist characters. Directors had to present positive characters prominently among all characters; present heroic characters prominently among all positive characters; and present the major heroes prominently among all heroic characters (在所有人物中突出正面人物; 在正面人物中突出英雄人物; 在英雄人物中突出主要英雄人物; Dai 1995, 123; Di 2001, 69; Berry 2004, 40). The theory was arguably important as it framed film production in such a way as to eulogise Chinese socialist heroes — workers-peasants-soldiers — as well as Mao and the Chinese Communist Party. As the theory was developed in practice, it completely changed the landscape of Chinese cinema from the ancient ghost and romantic films produced before the Cultural Revolution to films of socialist distancing during the Cultural Revolution.

This changing landscape was encouraged by Mao because he was dissatisfied with the status quo of literature and art up to the early 1950s (Dai 1995, 5). Following the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Mao was very critical of the film industry, and especially after watching the film *Wu Xun* (武训传 1951); he then presented his critique — 'Pay Attention to the Discussion of the Film *Wu Xun*' (《应当重视电影<武训传>的讨论》), published on the first page of the Communist Party's official newspaper *People's Daily* on 20 May 1951, where he argued as follows:

The film *Wu Xun* raises some fundamental issues. At the end of the Qing Dynasty when the Chinese people rose up against foreign invaders and engaged in a great struggle against the feudal rulers, people like Wu Xun simply did not touch on the feudal economic base and its superstructure, but fanatically propagated feudal culture and publicised the scandalous behaviour of the reactionary feudal rulers in order to obtain status in the feudal culture. Should we celebrate such servility? Should we praise his base behaviour under the revolutionary banner of 'serving the people', by using the failure of the revolutionary peasant struggle to contrast his behaviour in chanting praises to the masses? Can we tolerate this? To acknowledge or tolerate this kind of reactionary propaganda as legitimate publicity is to slander the peasants' revolutionary struggle, distort Chinese history and defame the Chinese nation.

This film was seriously criticised by Mao and many other Chinese officials and film critics; even the film's American-educated director, Sun Yu (孙瑜), and its well-known actor, Zhao Dan, who played the role of Wu Xun, were made to present self-criticisms. Until the Cultural Revolution the film industry had never had any conscious policies concerning the production of films reflecting Chinese socialist construction and nation building, and the industry was not conspicuously 'nationalistic' in nature.

Mao had acknowledged much earlier that history was created by the working class; therefore, he believed they should be the main characters in literature and art. Mao had clearly pointed this out in his *Yan'an Talks* (《在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话》)



话》) in 1942 before the establishment of the People's Republic of China. After watching a performance of their new historical play, *Forced to Climb Liang Mountain* (《逼上梁山》), in 1944, Mao wrote a personal letter to the playwrights Yan Zhaoxuan (杨绍萱) and Qi Yanming (齐燕铭):

On stages in the past, the old literature and art were played far from working class people due to their status in old society. The stages were mainly occupied by the characters of lords, ladies, young masters and young ladies. History was turned upside down. But now you have reversed this history, recovering the true face of history from old plays to start the new plays. That was worth celebrating. You reformed the old revolutionary plays that have demarcated a new starting time. When I thought of this move, I was very happy for you. I hope that before long you can not only write more scripts but also have more performances, and make these become more common practice as well as advocating these activities to the whole nation (Dai 1995, 5).

It is clear from this letter that Mao wanted the literature and art circles to produce more works about working class people instead of about ancient and feudal aristocracy. However it is also clear that from 1949 up to the Cultural Revolution, Mao did not see many literature and art works about working class people being created in the new China — certainly not along the lines of the play he had seen in 1944, *Forced to Climb Liang Mountain*. Consequently, when Mao met the Lao Patriotic Front Party Art Troupe on 4 September 1964, he said to them:

I am a person who has faults and makes mistakes. I talked about literature and art serving workers-peasants-soldiers twenty years ago. But we did not get this right during the last fifteen years. Should I be blamed? From now on I will correct my mistakes (Bo 1993, 1227).

This conversation took place about two years before the Cultural Revolution proving that Mao was determined to correct his mistake. The 'mistake' (according to him) was that he had let the literature and art circles indulge in too many feudal, bourgeois and revisionist cultural activities and he wanted them to present works about workers-peasants-soldiers instead. As Mao himself could not initiate these changes because Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and other leaders controlled the levers of power, he

secretly sent his wife, Jiang Qing, to Shanghai to organise a counter critique of the play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*, and to denounce its playwright, Wu Han, as the play had indirectly criticised him just before the Cultural Revolution (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006, 15-16).

In order to portray workers-peasants-soldiers as being clearly affiliated with the Communist Party, the theory of The Three Prominences, according to Chinese film scholars such as Berry, Yu, Zhang and Yang, directed that the majority of space and time be given to socialist heroes. Under the guidance of the theory of The Three Prominences, Xie Jin (谢晋), a famous fourth-generation film director in China who produced many outstanding films during his fruitful fifty-year long career, went on to state apologetically:

For many years now, some people in literary circles have used the excuse of writing about things with which they are personally familiar in order to oppose Chairman Mao's directives regarding the need for literary and art workers to go deep among the worker/peasant/soldier masses, to join in their fierce battles, and familiarise themselves with the life of struggle of workers, peasants, and soldiers (Clark 1987, 132).

Despite the fact that his *Stage Sisters* (舞台姐妹 1965), which is a kind of film noir, was heavily attacked less than a year later during the Cultural Revolution, Xie strove to produce a very leftist class struggle-themed film *Spring Seedling* in 1975 to meet the demands of the Communist Party, which were that literature and art must serve the working class — workers-peasants-soldiers — and also must serve the political needs of the Party. What was demonstrated in Chinese cinema during the Cultural Revolution was that the protagonists must be shown at the centre, large and radiant, and the antagonists had to appear off-centre, relatively small and gloomy in the mise-en-scène, reflecting the realistic and aesthetic strategies employed by the theory of The Three Prominences.

### *Genesis of The Three Prominences*

Chinese cinema during the Cultural Revolution differed from the industry's previous and subsequent incarnations. This difference was related to the ideological changes of political space and time. The ideology of the films produced during the Cultural Revolution had one goal, which was to extol socialist construction and nation building under the leadership of Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party. These films were produced to inspire and encourage the Chinese people to participate in the socialist revolution of class struggle and to defend 'Marx-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought' (捍卫马列主义毛泽东思想). In order to achieve these goals, the theory of The Three Prominences gave precise political guidance for depicting the characters — workers-peasants-soldiers — in the context of *mise-en-scène*; the heroes, for example, were to be given prominence by being made central, large and radiant so as to encourage the Chinese people to participate in the Cultural Revolution. Because of their strong appeal to audiences, heroic characters were made to seem 'humanistic', an effect that contributed to the films' popularity. As Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson (1985, 16-18) explain, realism without the 'humanistic' effect would be diluted, since audiences would be less engaged by impersonal events. This is why the theory of The Three Prominences was vital for film production during the Cultural Revolution, helping to explain the 'romantic' tone of the films' realistic style. However, in order to comprehend the importance of the theory of The Three Prominences, it is necessary to understand its genesis.

The theory of The Three Prominences was first generated from the reform practice of Chinese opera, and then used predominantly in film production. This theory had evolved through two major creations according to many Mainland Chinese film scholars such as Dai Jiafang, Di Jiannong and Liu Libing (刘立滨). The first

creation was by the Culture Minister, Yu Huiyong (于会泳), a former music theory lecturer at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. The Shanghai newspaper *Wenhuibao* first asked him to write about the revolutionary experience of reforming Chinese opera for a special column. He refused to do this because he was busy doing administrative work as the director of the Shanghai Literature and Art Revolutionary Planning Committee and as deputy director of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music Revolutionary Board (Dai 1995, 124). The two literature and art editors of *Wenhuibao* thought Yu was the right person to talk to about the experience of reforming Chinese opera because he had previously contributed two excellent essays on the subject, ‘The Red Lantern’ and ‘Sha Jia Bang’, and was under the direct leadership of Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao (张春桥); he also completely understood Jiang Qing’s literature and art revolutionary spirit (Dai 1995, 124). These two editors thought a better idea would be to conduct an interview with Yu, who agreed (Dai 1995, 125).

On 23 May 1968, the *Wenhuibao* published his article ‘Let the Literature and Art Stage Be Forever Propaganda for the Mao Zedong Thought Front’ (《让文艺舞台永远成为宣传毛泽东思想的阵地》), which was edited by Yu and his secretary who added some of Mao’s quotations (Dai 1995, 126). This was the first article proposing the theory of The Three Prominences because Yu grasped better than anyone else Jiang Qing’s ideas on how to reform Chinese opera to suit the needs of the Cultural Revolution. This article not only proposed the theory of The Three Prominences but also praised Jiang’s great contribution to the reform of Chinese opera and confirmed that her model Chinese operas had been effective in leading the Chinese people against capitalism, feudalism and revisionism; in giving Mao Zedong Thought access to the revolutionary literature and art stages; and in opening the prologue of the political movement of the Cultural Revolution.

Although Yu had already praised the theory of The Three Prominences, Yao Wenyuan, a member of the Communist Party Politburo and Jiang's close ally, further modified this theory in a published article 'Strive Diligently to Portray Brilliant Images of Proletarian Heroes' (《努力塑造无产阶级英雄人物的光辉形象》) in the eleventh issue of the Chinese Communist Party's official magazine *Red Flag* (红旗杂志) in 1969 (Di 2001, 69). Yao's article rigorously modified what had been the third prominence, from 'give prominence to the major characters among the characters' to 'give prominence to the major heroes among the heroes'. This was the second creation of Jiang Qing's theory of The Three Prominences, which became much more important to the literature and art circles in creating revolutionary works, especially for all film production during the Cultural Revolution. This lexis changed to depict 'heroes' rather than 'characters' and progressed the representation of workers-peasants-soldiers from figurative to realistic heroism, which had a greater effect on Chinese audiences. Moreover, Yao's article also once more mentioned the importance of 'The Summary of a symposium for the military literary and artistic workers entrusted to Comrade Jiang Qing by Comrade Lin Biao' and suggested using a combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism to create literature and art (Liu 2004, 147). This combination of realism and romanticism, which was explored more than a century earlier by Western scholars such as German poet and philosopher Friedrich Schiller and Russian literary critic Vissarion Belinsky, confused many Chinese film directors and actors in terms of how to create literature and art during the Cultural Revolution. Xie Tieli (谢铁骊), a well-known film director, for instance, spent more than two years on the pre-production of the Chinese opera film *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* which was one of Jiang Qing's eight model opera films (Di 2001, 70). Thereafter, all Chinese filmmakers used centred, close-up

shots and bright images to portray the heroes — workers-peasants-soldiers — in the mise-en-scène, in accordance with the theory of The Three Prominences.



**Figure 7:** Two film stills: above, from the Model Ballet Film, *White Haired Girl* (白毛女); below, from the Model Opera Film, *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (智取威虎山).

### ***Application of The Three Prominences***

The theory of The Three Prominences was successful in building more patriotic and political loyalties within the socialist nation of China and the Communist Party because the main characters of workers-peasants-soldiers on screen were the Chinese people themselves (albeit often in the service of the films' formative tendency). However, this theory, as mentioned, was hard to apply in film production. Filmmakers had to think about which realistic and aesthetic strategies to implement; Jiang Qing herself was consulted and she discussed the issue with filmmakers, and even Mao gave some feedback and had input into opera films such as *The Red Lantern* and *The Harbour* (Shen 2008; Di 2001).

When filmmakers implemented the theory of The Three Prominences, they also created relevant terms for techniques to match the words 'san tu chu' (Three Prominences) in Chinese such as 'gao qi dian' (高起点) meaning up-close shot, 'san pei chen' (三陪衬) meaning three enhancements, 'san te ding' (三特定) meaning three specifications, 'san dui tou' (三对头) meaning three corrections, 'yuan pu dian' (远铺垫) meaning long-shot, 'jin pu dian' (近铺垫) meaning close-shot, 'duo ceng ci' (多层次) meaning multi-dimensions, 'duo bo lan' (多波澜) meaning multi-plots and 'dui hui he' (多回合) meaning more direct confrontations in reality. They used these aesthetic techniques to depict the relationships of heroes and villains, heroes and positive figures, major individual heroes among the mass of heroes (Di 2001, 69).

Although Yu Huiyong and Yao Wenyuan helped to construct the theory of The Three Prominences around Jiang Qing's ideas, they themselves could not implement this theory because neither knew how to produce a film. Yu was a music lecturer and Yao was a politician. Therefore, Jiang Qing had to step in to assist filmmakers with the production of her opera films. Interestingly, for her opera film

production, Jiang used many films which she previously had labelled as feudal, capitalist and revisionist poisonous weeds such as *Fugitive* (杨门女将 1960), *Pandora's Box* (1929), *Jane Eyre* (1943), *The Red Shoes* (1948), *Knife in the Water* (Nóz w wodzie, 1962) and *The Savage Heart* (*Corazón Salvaje* 1968) to show the Chinese filmmakers how to gain inspiration from the colour, lighting and composition displayed in these films. Of the six films, one was Chinese and five were foreign. Her choice of these five world-renowned films to show the filmmakers demonstrated Jiang's knowledge of the film world. She not only spent many nights with the filmmakers watching these films but also, despite their weariness, had energetically discussed the films in order to motivate them to improve opera film productions (Di 2001, 70).

Jiang also realised that implementing the theory of The Three Prominences was not just a matter of writing enough slogans into the text; it needed concrete material provision as well as her husband Mao's support. Therefore, Jiang went to see Mao to explain the importance of her opera film production for the Cultural Revolution. From him she obtained support in the form not only of material incentives, but also the opera film plots.

First Mao ordered the Special Military Group 8341, his personal security unit headed by Wang Dongxing (汪东兴), to enter the Beijing film studio to assist with opera film production in 1969 (Di 2001, 73). The studio was virtually made into a military camp. All the people working at the Beijing film studio had to live like soldiers, under the command of Jiang Qing; they had to work and sleep in the studio, and were not allowed to go home. Mao had previously instigated this kind of work environment for important factories in Beijing such as the Number Twenty-Seven Locomotive Factory and the Xinhua Printing Factory in order to achieve safety and



sustainability (Di 2001, 73). For all film crews in the opera film production of *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, Jiang also arranged very special deals including food, working conditions and film equipment; for example, she authorised the use of imported Kodak celluloid film for her opera film production because it produced better colours (Di 2001, 72-80). Under Jiang's leadership, the Culture Minister, Yu Huiyong, first skilfully used Western musical instruments combined with Chinese musical instruments to play Chinese opera tunes making the traditional Chinese opera music more enjoyable. For instance, the opera film *The Harbour* produced in 1971 has many more melodious operatic tunes than the original opera (Dai 1995, 155). As Jiang was very pleased with this opera film music, the songs and melodies of this opera film were rehearsed on stage and first broadcast on television; Jiang also organised Yu to accompany Mao to watch this opera on television, making Yu ecstatic for many days (Dai 1995, 155).



**Figure 8:** Mao Zedong not only supported his wife, Jiang Qing, materially but also went to see her model operas accompanied by his deputy Lin Biao during the Cultural Revolution. (Accessed on 31 May 2013 from [http://www.360doc.com/content/11/0721/05/112480\\_134822073.shtml](http://www.360doc.com/content/11/0721/05/112480_134822073.shtml))

Mao not only gave material support to his wife Jiang Qing, but also, as already mentioned, contributed his ideas for the opera film productions. Two good examples of opera films were *The Red Lantern* and *The Harbour*. After Mao watched *The Red Lantern* in January 1971, he rather sarcastically questioned Jiang asking, ‘What is this kind of Model Films? All the revolutionaries were killed by enemies, weren’t they?’ (Dai 1995, 152). This question irritated Jiang enormously and in fact *The Red Lantern* was the only Model Opera film in which the revolutionaries lost the battle. It was also one of the first two opera films produced in 1970. It is clear that even Jiang herself found it difficult to implement her theory of The Three Prominences in order to achieve an absolutely satisfactory outcome. The second film was *The Harbour*. Mao suggested the plot be changed from small problems among individual workers, Qian Shouwei (钱守维) and Han Xiaoqiang (韩小强), to class enmity between them (Dai 1995, 153). Therefore, Qian became the number one class enemy and Han was just a young worker who did not like being a stevedore. In this sense, the opera film was made more confrontational and possessed more dramatic effects.

Although Mao had offered ideas for the opera film *The Harbour*, the production was not without difficulties. This production was remade three times and involved many top Politburo members such as Premier Zhou, Ye Jianying (叶剑英), Li Xiannian (李先念), Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan (Di 2001, 157-166). Jiang Qing was able to get them involved simply because she was Mao’s wife; she wanted to put political pressure on the film director, Xie Tieli, and cinematographer, Qian Jiang (钱江), to take the work on the opera film seriously because she had already sacked one film director, Fu Chaowu (傅超武), and cinematographer, Li Wenhua (李文化), for not portraying the main protagonist, Fang Haizhen (方海珍), properly in



**Figure 9:** A still from *The Harbour* (海港), one of eight Jiang Qing's Model Opera films. The main protagonist Fang Haizhen (方海珍) sings at the dock in support of the African revolution.

the first film production of *The Harbour*. This was despite Jiang changing the protagonist actress from Tong Ziling (童芷苓), a well-known Shanghai Chinese opera actress, to Li Lifang (李丽芳), a relatively young Ningxia Chinese opera actress, in order to give the main protagonist more of a heroic and youthful status (Di 2001, 147). In the second film production of *The Harbour*, Jiang was still not satisfied with the work of Xie, the film director, and Qian, the cinematographer, and made many suggestions to modify the production. However, Xie and Qian argued with her about lighting and the images of the main protagonist, Fang Haizhen (Di 2001, 161). In order to satisfy Jiang Qing, Premier Zhou motivated Xie and Qian to work hard on *The Harbour* so as to produce a good quality film like Jiang's ballet film *The Red Detachment of Women* which was very popular in the USA (Di 2001, 161). Because of this, Xie was allowed to have another well-known film director, Xie Jin, from the

Shanghai Film Studio involved in the third opera film production of *The Harbour* and they were thus able to finish the production in May 1973. Although Jiang was ostensibly satisfied with this third production of *The Harbour*, she still made 14 suggestions about the dialogue and the realism of the settings of the rain scenes among others (Di 2001, 170). These scenes were re-filmed and the film was eventually completed in August 1973, having finally met all of Jiang's demands (Di 2001, 170).

The use of the theory of The Three Prominences was not simple, for not only could the filmmakers not execute it politically and aesthetically according to Jiang's ideals, but also Jiang herself was sometimes confused about how to implement it. What Jiang did do was work diligently for the implementation of her theory of The Three Prominences in order to motivate and inspire the Chinese people to support the socialist revolution. There is no doubt that the major heroes of workers-peasants-soldiers in her opera films were fully represented and fulfilled the propaganda requirements of the Cultural Revolution.

### **Film Production during the Cultural Revolution**

To understand film production during the Cultural Revolution, it is necessary to review the history of the Chinese film industry from the time the Chinese Communist Party took power and established the People's Republic of China in 1949 up to the time of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. In this 17-year period, the Chinese film industry went through several reforms because the Communist government not only recognised the visual supremacy and persuasive authority of cinema but also set a new social and political standard for literature and art circles in line with Marxism-

Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought (Mazur 2009, 393). In this new social and political environment, the film industry experienced roughly five fundamental reforms.

The first reform was to amalgamate many small private film studios into several large state-owned film studios such as the Shanghai and Changchun film studios by 1955 (Yu 2006, 82). For example, small film studios mainly located in Shanghai such as the Kunlun, Lianhua, Wenhua and Tianyi film companies were all amalgamated into the Shanghai Film Studio. The Northeast Film Studio, which was a significant movie production company in the northeast part of China, and other small film studios became the Changchun Film Studio. At the same time, the Communist regime also established several new film studios such as the Beijing Film Studio in 1949, the August the First Film Studio in 1952 and the Xi'an Film Studio in 1958 (Clark 1987, 59). This reform, then, allowed a number of film studios around China to come under the control of the Communist regime.

The second reform was to change the film content from romantic films and films focusing on moral issues such as *A Spring River Flows East* (1947) and *Myriads of Lights* (万家灯火 1948) to socially and politically inclined films such as *Bridge* (桥 1949) and *White Haired Girl* (白毛女 1950). The lessening of film censorship restrictions later led to the production of some more 'humanistic' films during the years 1962-1965, but during the Cultural Revolution these films were harshly criticised. For example, *Two Stage Sisters*, a film in the film noir genre, directed by Xie Jin in 1965, was censured for possessing a romantic narrative and a lack of social and political content.

The third reform was the authorisation for more film production which led to a dramatic rise in the number of movie-goers from 47 million in 1949 to 415 million in 1959 (Clark 1987, 61); after 1959 there were even more movie-goers (Yu 2006, 121).

This rise was due to the 589 feature films produced in the 17 years between the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the Cultural Revolution in 1966, together with relatively cheap movie tickets (Yu 2006, 115). Even more significantly, not only had China established the Beijing Film Institute in 1956, which was the first higher education institute specialising in film, but it also set up an award for film excellence, the Hundred Flowers (百花奖) award, in 1962. These initiatives raised Chinese film arts to international standards in terms of the quantity and quality of films and established a theoretical foundation for film development. For example, the first wide-screen Chinese film with stereo sound, *New Biography of A Veteran* (老兵新传), was directed by the prominent filmmaker Shen Fu (沈浮) in 1958, and received a silver medal for film techniques at the Moscow International Film Festival in 1959 (*China Cinema Encyclopaedia* 1993, 520).

The fourth reform involved the creation of a policy for the importation of foreign films. Through this policy the Communist regime stopped importing Hollywood movies, especially after the Korean War broke out. They not only accused Hollywood of exploiting the Chinese economy, but also blamed it for negatively influencing the Chinese people (Yan 2006, 523). Films were instead imported from socialist states such as the USSR, Poland, Hungary, Romania and North Korea, still allowing Chinese film professionals to view the development of some other countries' film industries. Soviet films had a huge impact on the Chinese people (Yu 2006, 92-102; Gang 2006, 112), especially films such as *Lenin in October* (1937), *Lenin in 1918* (1939) and *The Gadfly* (1955), which had similar elements of Communist inspiration and social justice as Chinese films. A shortfall of this policy was that the Chinese people were no longer able to see and learn from films produced in more technologically advanced countries, especially the US, Britain, Italy and France.

Historically, most cinemas in China had shown Hollywood films before China's Liberation in 1949 and some Hollywood films were still being shown up to 1955. However, due to the deteriorating relationship between China and many Western countries, Western movies were banned; this proved to be a direct impediment to the development of the Chinese film industry. Hence, Chinese filmmakers had no option but to learn film narrative and technology mostly from Russia. For example, in celluloid technology, China could not produce celluloid as well as the Kodak products made in the US; and the Chinese celluloid with its blurry colour bothered many Chinese filmmakers.

The fifth reform was the implementation of a set of new policies which involved the central government's Ministry of Culture and Arts handing over direct control of film production and distribution to the provincial administrative level. On 6 March 1957 the State Council released *The Provision of Regional Film Distribution Enterprises Under the Leadership and Management of Local Administrative Authorities* of the Ministry of Culture and Arts. This policy stated:

In accordance with the Report of the Ministry of Culture and Arts, the Ministry authorised the China Film Distribution Company to hand over all its local branches to local administrative authorities for the enhancement of local administrative leadership and management of the film distribution enterprise. In order to assist the initiative and enthusiasm of the local cultural department, the State Council especially agreed with this report, and attached the Provision of Regional Film Distribution Enterprises. This Provision is to be forwarded to the Local Administrative Authority of the Ministry of Culture and Arts. The hope is to execute this specific report of the Ministry of Culture and Arts in conformity with local circumstances (Yu 2006, 100-101).

This reform, which operated until 1993, gave the provincial authorities autonomy in terms of how to fund film production and distribution (Yu 2006, 101). It also brought about competition among film studios which benefited by being allowed to keep the money earned from the box office after the target quota had been achieved.

The success of the reforms was demonstrated by three peaks of artistic, excellent and fruitful film production in 1956, 1959 and 1963-1964 (Zheng and Gong 2006, 255-333). During the first peak there were many good films produced, such as *Ten o'clock on National Day* (国庆十点钟 1956) by Wu Tian (吴天), *Shang Gan Ling* (上甘岭 1956) by Shao Meng (沙蒙) and Lin Shan (林杉), from Changchun Film Studio, as well as *Family* (家 1956) by Chen Xihe (陈西禾) and Ye Ming (叶明) and *Railway Guerilla* (铁道游击队 1956) by Chao Ming (赵明) from the Shanghai Film Studio. These films were adapted from well-known novels and had artistically and aesthetically stylish treatments. The second peak, in 1959, was as a result of the cooperation with Russian film experts who taught the Chinese film directors and photographers how to use advanced technologies and techniques such as montage, and how to explore the performance of psycho-aesthetic characters on screen; the second peak produced films such as *Song of Youth* (青春之歌 1959), *Lin Zexu* (林则徐 1959), *Nie Er* (聂耳 1959), *Five Golden Flowers* (五朵金花 1959) and *The Lin Family Shop* (林家铺子 1959). Also during the second peak, the Beijing and Shanghai film studios formed several innovative teams with directors, photographers and artistic tutors, including Zhu Jinming (朱今明), Ouyang Hongying (欧阳红缨), Xie Tian (谢添) and Shui Hua (水华) in Beijing; and Shi Hui (石挥), Chen Liting (陈鲤庭), Xie Jin, Bai Chen (白沉), Xu Changlin (徐昌林) and Shen Ji (沈寂) in Shanghai (Zheng and Gong 2006, 287) who had gained experience in other countries. Hence, the Chinese film industry learned about the teamwork methods of directors and photographers such as the British team of David Lean and Freddie Yong, the Japanese team of Miyagawa Kazuo and Akira Kurozawa, and the Russian team of Sergei Eisenstein and Dmitri Vasiliev, from the directors and photographers working



together in the Chinese innovative teams. These innovative filmmaking teams provided enormous benefits to Chinese cinema in terms of how to work harmoniously and cooperatively. In the third peak from 1963 to 1964, the film industry achieved a high level of poetic and aesthetic filmmaking outcomes after many years of socialist film production. Films such as *Zhang Ga the Soldier Boy* (小兵张嘎), *Early Spring February* (早春二月) and *Serfs* (农奴) in 1963, and *Dr Norman Bethune* (白求恩大夫) and *The Sentry Under the Neon Light* (霓虹灯下的哨兵) in 1964, had the greatest impact on the Chinese people in terms of socialist education. The treatments of these films were simple, authentic and realistic and appealed to Chinese audiences.

At the same time as experiencing these peaks, the film industry also had to confront specific political campaigns such as the ‘Three Antis’ (三反) and the ‘Five Antis’ (五反), which not only criticised the film *Wu Xun* (1951) but also in the years 1951 and 1952 sought to eradicate intellectuals’ bourgeois habits in the film industry by attacking, through literature and art circles, the book by Yu Boping (俞伯平) *A Research Study of the Dream of Red Mansions* (《红楼梦研究》 1951), the ‘Thoughts of Hu Shi’ (胡适思想), and the Hu Feng Counter Revolutionary Group (胡风反革命集团) in 1952 (Peng 2000, 19-29). This is why most Chinese films made during this period did not contain elements of love and romance, elements considered to be flirtatious and bourgeois. Also, the 1956 policy of ‘let a hundred flowers bloom and let a hundred schools of thought contend’ (百花齐放, 百家争鸣) was part of Mao’s political strategy to promote new forms of art under Chinese socialism by soliciting new ideologies and criticism from intellectuals in the realm of literature and art. Subsequently, however, Mao mounted another political ‘Anti-Rightist’ campaign (反右斗争) against these very intellectuals whom he had asked, in 1957, to voice

criticism and concerns to the government. As a result, a considerable number of intellectuals who had worked in the realm of film arts were prosecuted or marginalised (Yu 2006, 98). After this Yan'an style rectification campaign against 'rightists', Mao implemented another politicised economic movement, the *Great Leap Forward*, which resulted several years later in a tragic famine affecting the whole of China. Given these catastrophic political and economic upheavals, most filmmakers dared not be creative and show any initiative, instead abiding by what they were told by the Communist Party. As Paul Clark (1987, 54) concluded:

Cadre[s] and Artist[s] achieved an unstable balance between the political concerns of the cultural authorities and the concerns of filmmakers. Even the more interventionist wing in the Party could see the unproductive results of heightened intervention in the aftermath of the Anti-Rightist campaign and the Great Leap Forward.

In other words, film production and distribution were directly affected by this uncertainty. Filmmakers thus experienced many undesirable challenges both politically and economically.

By the time of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, the film industry had completed all political and administrative reforms since the founding of the People's Republic of China but, because of the Cultural Revolution, it experienced considerable damage as discussed in the previous chapter. Not only was there a lack of film production generally, there was also a lack of creative film works and a dearth of participation in international film events. All film productions were under the control of Jiang Qing and her political coterie either in the Politburo or in the film industry and were produced to indoctrinate socialist political thought in order to encourage and strengthen the revolutionary movement. She played a very important role as 'the great flag bearer of literature and art' during the Cultural Revolution. Jiang Qing might have been a novice at politics but was an expert in film; she not

only fully comprehended film techniques but also truly fathomed Chinese operatic dexterity. For this reason, she was successful in her endeavours in the film industry because, in order to propagate the revolutionary spirit through a nationwide mass culture, she first transplanted opera into film. This was both necessary and appropriate because films could be screened anywhere in China, whereas operas could only be performed in large cities.

As Paul Clark (1987, 125) in his study of Chinese cinema argues, the themes dominating Chinese film history were ‘the tension between Yan’an and Shanghai, the use of film to help shape a mass national culture, and mutual influences and conflict among [the] Party, artists, and audiences’. More precisely, the political tension involved in the Chinese film industry during the Cultural Revolution reached its climax with the interference of Jiang Qing and Mao Zedong. That is why Chinese film critic Di Jiannong (2001, 6-7) points out that not only did Jiang Qing directly interfere in the Chinese film industry, but also she was openly supported by her husband Mao Zedong. In this political environment and under the influence of Jiang Qing’s theory of The Three Prominences, Chinese films during the Cultural Revolution period were not produced according to a particular genre, as Chris Berry (2004, 77) explains:

The emphasis on representation and political line in the Chinese classical cinema meant that theme was the basis of both production and critical discussion. Therefore, although the slogan “let themes take the lead” was only explicitly used during the Cultural Revolution, in fact it described the underlying logic of the Chinese classical cinema between 1949 and 1976. The Chinese *Film Art Dictionary* makes this distinction quite clear in its entries for the terms “*ticaì*” (subject matter [题材]) and “*leixing dianyinglun*” (genre theory [类型电影论]), where it specifies the latter as a foreign system of classification.

The taxonomies used by the Western and Chinese classical cinemas were different. Western genre films not only were regulated through the production of classifications,

but also were oriented according to the marketing value of their stylistic characteristics, settings, typical characters and so on. Chinese films, mostly opera and feature films as well as a few ballets, were planned and organised in accordance with the subject matter by the Communist Party during the Cultural Revolution.

### ***Model Films***

There were two groups of opera films produced during the Cultural Revolution. The first group of eight films are called the Model Films because of their quality due to the considerable effort put into their production by Jiang Qing (Zhang 2006, 238). These eight Model Films were produced between 1970 and 1972, the first group of films produced just after the Chinese film studios resumed production. There were five Chinese operas — *The Red Lantern*, *Taking the Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, *Sha Jia Bang*, *The Harbour* and *Raid the White-Tiger Regiment* (奇袭白虎团); two ballets — *The White-Haired Girl* and *The Red Detachment of Women*; and a film called *Sha Jia Bang*, a single symphonic recital.

According to research done by Zhang Wei (张巍) in 2006, the second group of eight films produced after 1972 was not as popular as the first group of eight films because Jiang Qing had put more effort at that time into political work than into the film industry. There were five Chinese opera films — *Azalea Mountain* (杜鹃山), *The Red Detachment of Women*, *Fighting on the Plains* (平原作战), *Long Jiang Song* (龙江颂) and *Boulder Bay* (磐石湾); one of songs with piano accompaniment — *The Red Lantern*; one piano concerto — *Yellow River* (黄河); and one ballet — *Ode to Yimeng* (沂蒙颂).

The reason for the popularity of the first eight Model Films was that Jiang Qing first selected more than 30 different shows from all over China and invited these troupes to Beijing to perform for Beijing audiences in June and July 1964 before the Cultural Revolution (Zhang 2006, 238). After watching these performances of operas, plays and ballets, she convened a symposium on how to reform Chinese operas and plays; she then published her long speech ‘A Discussion on Revolutionised Chinese Opera’ (《谈京剧革命》) on 23 June 1964 (Zhang 2006, 238). In this speech, Jiang fervently disseminated her leftist ideas about literature and art and established the concept of revolutionary model operas and plays, thus consolidating her leadership in literature and art circles. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of Mao’s ‘Talks at the Yan’an Conference on Literature and Art’ in 1967, Jiang once again invited the eight shows to Beijing to perform and, after providing instruction for some changes, these eight shows became the first eight Model Films (Zhang 2006, 238). These eight shows, performed over thirty-seven days in Beijing and attended by three hundred thousand people, were extremely popular (Dai 1995, 39). On 17 June 1967, Mao, Premier Zhou and Lin Biao attended the final session of the eight performances watching the Chinese opera *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* which officially ended the opera exhibition gala (Dai 1995, 39).

The support of many media outlets such as newspapers, radio and television all over China helped to increase the popularity of these eight performances. For example, the Communist Party’s official newspaper *People’s Daily* published a special editorial ‘Cheer the Great Victory of Revolutionary Chinese Operas’ (《欢呼京剧革命的伟大胜利》) praising the triumph of these eight performances and calling them the ‘new opening era’ of proletarian literature and art, and the end of counter-revolutionary revisionist literature and art (Zhang 2006, 238). These eight

shows, once performed in Beijing, helped Jiang secure her place not only in literature and art circles but also in the arena of politics in the Communist Party Politburo.

According to Dai Jiafang (1995, 23), the term ‘model shows’ was used for these eight shows because they had been developed through several phases into eight Model Films. The first phase was when the Shanghai newspaper *Liberation Daily* (解放日报) published an editorial on 16 March 1965 stating:

People who watched this play were profoundly affected by the enthusiasm of political fighting and the encouragement derived from the revolutionary and artistic momentum, and all chanted: ‘Good Play, Good Play!’ They reckoned this revolutionised Chinese opera was an excellent model. The artists working in theatres informed each other quickly and they all expressed willingness to learn from the Chinese opera *The Red Lantern*.

The second phase was when Yuan Xuefen (袁雪芬), a famous performing artist in Zhejiang Shaoxing opera in Shanghai, published her article entitled ‘An Excellent Model’ (《精益求精的样板》) in praise of *The Red Lantern* in the Beijing newspaper *Guangming Daily* (光明日报) on 22 March 1965 (Dai 1991, 23); and the third phase was when these eight shows were prepared for film production. Kang Sheng (康生), a Politburo Standing Committee member and Jiang Qing’s close ally, was the first person to ask Chen Bo (陈播), the head of the August the First Film Studio, to produce films of these eight shows as Model Films (Di 2001, 11). Jiang Qing, therefore, subsequently used this term for these eight shows captured on film.

These eight Model Films in terms of their political discourse and artistic treatment are very distinct from feature films. Their unique styles can be described as ‘operatic genre’, ‘balletic genre’ or ‘symphonic genre’. These different types of genre — or styles — can be characterised by the following features: first, the protagonists are young and flawless heroes in centre stage; second, the antagonists are relatively old and powerless; third, the revolutionary struggles by the protagonists are

overwhelming; fourth, in terms of personal relationships, the protagonists have no spouses or love interest but have family members; fifth, melodramatic strategy is employed; and sixth, operatic music, dancing or singing plays a major role throughout the film. These elements can be well described by Ma Ning's filmic term of 'Yin' and 'Yang'. Yang means heroes, revolutions, victories and all positive events. Yin refers to villains, counter-revolutions, failures and all negative issues. The former always overcomes the latter in Chinese socialist films. Clearly the diegetic structure of these eight Model Films was not sophisticated and did not have complex psychological narratives. In portraying the protagonists, most of the films used low-angle mid shots in order to show the heroes in the dominant position, demonstrating the theory of The Three Prominences. The political message of these eight Model Films is thus glaringly obvious — the Communists conquer all their enemies in victory after victory.



**Figure 10:** Two stills from *The Red Detachment of Women*. The protagonist Wu Qinghua (吴清华) conquers her enemy Nan Batian (南霸天) and leads the Red Army to continue the revolution.

Although these eight Model Films were criticised very harshly immediately after the Cultural Revolution by the Chinese regime and the film industry and in fact were banned, the five Chinese operas of these eight Model Films are still quite popular today; they are still screened because the songs are liked by many Chinese

people who are not familiar with Western and modern music and songs (Dai 1995, 1-3). The five original operas presented in the Model Films were re-performed in 1982 and 2003; nowadays all these eight Model Films can also be seen online (Yan 2006, 74).

### ***Feature Films***

Among the 61 films produced during the Cultural Revolution from 1973 to 1976, there are two distinct groups. The first group consists of 52 adult feature films; the second, of nine children's feature films. The themes of both groups concern class struggle and wartime literature. There were about 36 class struggle-themed films produced and 25 wartime literature-themed films.

The first film to feature the theme of class struggle was *Bright Sunny Skies* produced in 1973, about peasants in the countryside. The class struggle theme in this group of films also depicted workers in city factories such as in *The Fiery Year* (火红的年代 1974) and *Fights on the Berth* (战船台 1975) as well as in countryside villages such as *Green Pine Ridge* (青松林 1973) and *Zhan Hong Tu* (战洪图 1973). These class struggle-themed films were not as popular as the war literature-themed films such as *Scouts* (侦察兵 1974) and *Rolling Wheels* (车轮滚滚 1975) made during the Cultural Revolution. There were three reasons for this: first, the films did not have a spectacular mise-en-scène; second, the diegetic discourse was less attractive; and third, the novels on which these films were based were far more engaging than the films. For example, the film *Bright Sunny Skies* had the same name as the novel which was written by Hao Ran (浩然), a well-known and prolific writer at that time. His novel *Bright Sunny Skies* is in three volumes consisting of more than a thousand pages, but the length of the film is an hour and 35 minutes and 27 seconds,



limited by the feature film convention at that time, which was that films were not supposed to be longer than two hours and thus could not contain all the details of a long novel.

*Scouts*, produced in 1974, was the first feature film based on wartime literature. The scriptwriter and director of this film were the same person, Li Wenhua, a cinematographer at the Beijing Film Studio. He participated in many film productions as a cinematographer such as *Early Spring in February* (1963) and *Great Wall of the South Sea* (南海长城 1965). After being sacked by Jiang Qing for the opera film production of *The Harbour* in 1971, Li, according to the account of Di Jiannong (2001, 412), was one day in 1973 reading a novel called *Extremely Brave Scouts* (《神勇的侦察兵》) by Liu Zhixia (刘知侠) at the film studio library. Li felt this novel about Communist scouts gaining secret information and defeating the Kuomintang soldiers during the Chinese Civil War was a good one. He therefore decided to turn this novel into a film and started writing the script. While doing so, he also visited the head of the Communist scouts in this battle. When Li finished his film script he obtained permission for the film production from Di Fucui (狄福才), one of the military personnel at the head of the Beijing Film Studio, who thought it would be useful for propaganda purposes to produce more films.

The production of the film *Scouts* was carried out quietly. Li Wenhua invited two well-known film stars, Wang Xin'gang (王心刚) and Yu Lan (于蓝), to perform the roles as the main protagonists, an advisor to the People's Liberation Army, Guo Rui (郭锐), and Aunt Sun (孙大娘). Wang was the only film star who had not been harassed at the August the First Film Studio, and Yu (who was a film star) had only just been released from a reform camp during the Cultural Revolution. The film was finished and released for Chinese cinema in 1974 without Jiang Qing knowing about

it; the film censorship personnel, her allies, while knowing about the film, had not checked it properly. When Jiang Qing eventually saw this film, she was angry at the reality depicted in it. So she asked Yu Huiyong, the Culture Minister, to tell Di Fucui that she wanted the film director, Li Wenhua, to write a report on this film. Li thought the film was valuable entertainment and politically sound, and found a helper to write the report. When he handed it in, Jiang did not wish to accept it as she wanted a self-critical statement from Li. He had no choice then but to write and submit such a statement. When Li was ill in hospital a nurse told him that she had read his self-critical statement in the *Liberation Army Daily* (解放军日报) reprinted from the *People's Daily*; and the following day, Li was disappointed to discover that not only had his self-criticism been published on page four of the *People's Daily* but also that the film *Scouts* had been criticised by Jiang Qing and her political allies as well as Li's colleagues (Di 2001, 414).

Unfortunately, the film scriptwriter, director and cinematographer, Li Wenhua, was not only criticised during the Cultural Revolution but also reprimanded after the Cultural Revolution due to the leftist films he had directed during the Cultural Revolution such as *Breaking Up* (1975) and *Counter Attack* (反击 1976). *Breaking Up* was a very well-known class struggle-themed film which was in keeping with the political atmosphere of the Cultural Revolution; and *Counter Attack* was also a class struggle-themed film which was not released for Chinese cinema but was pre-viewed quite extensively. Li, responding to the criticism, claimed that he had directed these films as tasks arranged by the Beijing Film Studio during the Cultural Revolution and therefore the Communist regime should not blame him for these films (Li 2011).

The second group of 61 films comprised nine children's feature films; four wartime literature-themed films — *Sparkling Red Star* (闪闪的红星 1974), *Beacon-fire Youth* (烽火少年 1975), *Yellow River Youth* (黄河少年 1975), and *Jinsuo* (金锁 1976); and five class struggle-themed films — *Sunny Courtyard Story* (向阳院的故事 1974), *Red Rain* (红雨 1975), *Ah Yong* (阿勇 1975), *Small Conch* (小螺号 1975), and *The Secret of Ah Xia River* (阿夏河的秘密 1976). There is no doubt that the narratives of these films were designed to eulogise the leadership of the Communist Party and to do this, used realistic codes and elements to portray the young people as heroes either in the wars or in the social and political class struggle. The film *Sparkling Red Star* was the first archetype of a Chinese Civil War motion picture made during the Cultural Revolution depicting the young Pan Dongzi (潘冬子) fighting alongside his parents and following in their steps. This kind of film was needed during the Cultural Revolution in order to encourage the younger generation to become the revolutionaries of the future.

### ***Other Forms of Film***

The Chinese film industry not only produced opera and feature films during the Cultural Revolution, but also created other forms of film such as the Uyghur opera film *The Red Lantern* (1975) and the film *Songs of the Long March* (长征组歌: 红军不怕远征难 1976), neither of which represented the dominant themes of wartime literature or class struggle. The former was directed by Chen Ying (成荫), who had directed the Chinese opera film *The Red Lantern* at the August the First film studio. The latter was directed by Wang Ping and Huang Baoshan (黄宝善) and was also

produced by the August the First film studio; it comprised a mix of Chinese songs in a Western musical style with Chinese poetry recitals.

The Uyghur opera film *The Red Lantern* has several unique characteristics: all the actors are Uyghur actors and sing in the Turkic language (the language of the people of Eastern and Central Asia); the melodies are mixed, played on Uyghur musical instruments such as the Dap, Dutar and Tãmbur, as well as on Chinese and Western musical instruments; the arias, however, are similar to Chinese opera. In terms of the settings and plots the film resembles the Chinese opera *The Red Lantern*. The main purpose of this film was to spread the revolutionary spirit to ethnic minorities.

The film *Songs of the Long March* is a stage documentary show and the only film Jiang Qing did not interfere with because Premier Zhou himself had fostered this play since 1966 with other leaders such as Deng Xiaoping and He Long. It also involved many famous musicians such Chen Geng (晨耕), Tang He (唐诃) and Sheng Mao (生茂) as well as many well-known singers such as Ma Yutao (马玉涛), Jia Shijun (贾世骏) and Ma Guoguang (马国光). Some montages of the victorious Red Army were intermittently added in between the on-stage songs over ten acts that comprised static singing scenes and motion fighting mise-en-scène.

These two films, produced near the end of the Cultural Revolution, are very different from the forms and norms of conventional, classic films. To a certain extent, *The Red Lantern* still possesses realistic codes and elements, but *Songs of the Long March* does not follow a narrative structure. Both films do, nevertheless, manifest aural and visual performances in a more general manner of story presentation.

## Conclusion

The theory of The Three Prominences was central to Chinese film production during the Cultural Revolution. It is clear that Jiang Qing's theory was developed through two major phases by Yu Huiyong, the Minister of Culture, and Yao Wenyuan, a Politburo member, who translated her ideas into words. To a great extent, her theory not only affected operas but also had a considerable impact on films in terms of composition, framing, lighting systems and camera work. Under the influence of Jiang Qing's theory, filmmakers portrayed the major heroes as distinctively large, bright and centred figures in order to evoke more patriotic and political loyalties towards Mao and the Chinese Communist Party.



**Figure 11:** Still from *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (智取威虎山), one of Jiang Qing's eight Model Opera films. Main protagonist Yang Zhirong (杨志荣) is centred and wearing tiger skin jacket. The main antagonist, Zuoshandiao (座山雕), is defeated and lying on the ground.

The Communist regime sought to control visual media because it recognised the importance of the visual culture of pedagogical realism for the purposes of socialist propaganda and nation building. It is in this context that the opera Model Films and feature films were produced when the Chinese film studios resumed production during the Cultural Revolution. These films had unique styles in terms of their political content as well as the aesthetic and artistic formation of *mise-en-scène*. In particular, Jiang Qing's eight model films had a tremendous impact on the Chinese people and were in keeping with the political motivations of the Cultural Revolution.

While Jiang Qing's theory of The Three Prominences was an important influence on film production, it was not the only influence; film diegesis and film censorship also enabled Jiang Qing to ensure Chinese cinema's social and political purity (its 'romantic' realism, as it were) in order to perpetuate the socialist revolution. Communist doctrine and ideology also played a significant role. Images of Mao, for example, and of other Communist Party leaders, as well as images of workers-peasants-soldiers, were fully portrayed in films of the time. This, then, was the political and thematic background in which the films were produced; the following chapter will consider some of the formal elements, including cinematic language and image construction, of the films during the Cultural Revolution.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Diegesis and Censorship**

Chinese cinema was more overtly social and political during the Cultural Revolution than before or since. The films during that period concentrated on social and political figures such as Mao Zedong, the Communist Party and workers-peasants-soldiers. Films promoted the vision and ideology of the emergent socialist society; in order to do so, the doctrine of socialist realism was imposed by Jiang Qing and her political coterie on all writers, filmmakers and artists, a doctrine similar to that imposed under Stalin in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Film censorship in accordance with Jiang Qing's theory of The Three Prominences promoted the adoption of more accessible styles of idealised and optimistic images. This chapter thus argues that film narratives with political figures were the key issues in film censorship decisions among Mao, Jiang Qing, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and filmmakers, in order that cinema could be used as a pedagogical and ideological tool to promote socialism.

This chapter begins by exploring film narratives in terms of the political figures including protagonists and antagonists represented in the films produced during the Cultural Revolution. It examines the extent to which these narratives illustrated the different codes and elements of realistic contexts which were presented in order to encourage the Chinese people to participate in socialist construction during the Cultural Revolution; it also examines how these political narratives unfolded in films depicting war and class struggle during the Cultural Revolution and how the images, juxtaposed in the narratives, achieved perceptual and emotional power. The chapter then examines film censorship in relation to the political narratives to determine whether the disputes among Chinese Communist Party leaders were

justified in terms of their political purposes. The contexts of a few films made during the Cultural Revolution were selected for examination in accordance with the political criteria relating to the relevant historical socialist period. How Jiang Qing used her political intuition to censor films (as there was no blueprint for the content of a film) is examined in order to better understand the Cultural Revolution in the context of literature and art. Lastly, this chapter investigates the role of Chinese cinema during the Cultural Revolution through the interrelation of film distribution and consumption with education. In other words, as Thompson and Bordwell (1994, 194-295) suggest, this study investigates how positive images of heroes, in this case, the socialist protagonists, became significant idols.

### **Political Narratives and Figures**

Despite some Chinese film scholars such as Paul Clark and Chris Berry claiming that the Cultural Revolution was a continuum of Chinese socialism as discussed in the previous chapter, other Chinese film scholars such as Li Shaobai (李少白), Ma Debo (马德博) and Zhang Yingjin (张英进) viewed it differently and thus categorised Chinese film history differently as well. According to Li Shaobai (1991, 43-63), Chinese film history was divided into nine periods:

- (1) initial experiment from 1905 to 1923;
- (2) early artistic exploration from 1923 to 1926;
- (3) crisis and turning from 1927 to 1932;
- (4) revolutionary change from 1932 to 1937;
- (5) war time from 1937 to 1945;
- (6) artistic enrichment from 1945 to 1949;
- (7) socialist cinema from 1949 to 1965;
- (8) prohibition from 1966 to 1976 and
- (9) further exploration from 1977 to 1989.

Li divided the film history of the People's Republic of China from 1949 to 1989 into three periods, just two years before his book was published in 1991. Interestingly, Ma Debo (1995, 1-32) schematised Chinese film history differently, from 1905 to 1995, into eight periods:



(1) primitive commercial film from 1905 to 1931; (2) leftist film from 1932 to 1937; (3) realist film from 1947 to 1949; (4) propagandist film from 1949 to 1976; (5) social film from 1981 to 1982; (6) film of life from 1982 to 1986; (7) cultural film from 1984 to 1987 and (8) modern commercial film from 1987 to 1995.

Ma divided the years 1949 to 1995 into five periods. The differences between these two, Zhang Yingjin (2004, 10-11) pointed out, are that Li gave priority to articulating artistic concerns and socio-political events rather than arguing for a politicised film history because he wished to avoid the official sanctioning of his Chinese film historiography written in 1991; Ma simply omitted the war years from 1938 to 1946 and the immediate post-Mao years from 1977 to 1979, as well as the overlapping years in the four periods in order to advance his argument in favour of a cyclical model of Chinese cinema development. The period of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 could be described as either a propagandist film period (according to Li Shaobai) or as a prohibition film period (according to Ma Debo). Obviously both film scholars analysed Chinese film history from their own perspectives; whether or not the films were from the propagandist period or from the prohibition period, they were still subject to film censorship by the Communist regime. The film narratives and political figures were indeed more thoroughly censored during the Cultural Revolution than ever before in Chinese film history. Hence, the Chinese film industry at that time produced unique themes and specific styles in order to serve the political needs of the socialist nation.

The construction of film narratives and political figures among the films produced during the Cultural Revolution differed significantly from the films made before the Cultural Revolution. A number of dramatic decors, for example, were constructed around characters — characters confined to the proletarian roles of workers-peasants-soldiers as well as the Communist Party instead of the humanistic

characters in the films produced before the Cultural Revolution. These depictions of aspiring working class characters and the Communist Party, which appeared in the whole spectrum of films made and shown between 1966 and 1976, were essential for the Cultural Revolution.

### ***Workers***

There were six major films to eulogise workers involved in socialist construction and nation building among the 93 films made in total during the Cultural Revolution. Four of those were feature films: *The Fiery Year* (1974), *Undertaking* (创业 1974), *The Iron and Steel Giant* (钢铁巨人 1974) and *Fighting on the Slipway* (战船台 1975); two were opera films which were the same film *The Harbour*, one produced in 1972 and the other reproduced in 1973 by the Beijing Film Studio in conjunction with the Shanghai Film Studio. *Undertaking* was the only one among these six films included in the *China New Literature Compendium 1949-1976: Film Volume 1* (《中国新文学大系 1949-1976: 电影卷 1 》), an important scholarly reference book edited by Chen Huangmei (陈荒煤) and Luo Yijun (罗艺军) and published in 1997 just after Mainland China celebrated the ninetieth anniversary of the first Chinese film made in 1905. The reason, given in the editorial prologue in that work, for some Chinese films not being selected is that they were considered neither artistically or aesthetically sound, nor socially or politically correct.

However, not only do the four feature films have the same theme of class struggle; they also have similar characteristics such as settings in Chinese heavy industry: *Undertaking* in the oil fields, *The Fiery Year* in a steel refinery, *The Iron and Steel Giant* in a large scale machinery factory, and *Fighting on the Slipway* in a shipyard. The worker protagonists in these four films were all middle-aged men

around forty who were not fully qualified in their professional occupations but had received some informal education and understood the practicalities of the industrial process. They were fighting antagonists who were fully qualified professional intellectuals of whom one or another came from, or were associated with, rich families in the past. Furthermore, of course, these protagonists were centred in the frame, with more close-up shots and extra radiance in the mise-en-scène in accordance with Jiang Qing's theory of The Three Prominences. In contrast, the antagonists were portrayed off-centre, with median shots and slightly gloomy colour to understate their character, their conspiratorial nature and vicious innermost selves in order to present them to audiences as morally and emotionally despicable.



**Figure 12:** Top L-R: main protagonist Zhao Sihai (赵四海) in *The Fiery Year* (火红的年代) and main protagonist Zhou Tingshan (周挺杉) in *Undertaking* (创业). Bottom L-R: main protagonist Dai Jihong (戴继宏) in *The Iron and Steel Giant* (钢铁巨人) and main protagonist Lei Haisheng (雷海生) in *Fighting on the Slipway* (战船台).

The film *Undertaking* was not only selected by *China Cinema Encyclopaedia* in 1995, but also was the only film made during the Cultural Revolution to be selected

by *China New Literature Compendium 1949-1976: Film Volume 1* in 1997. Its chief editor Chen Huangmei is a contemporary Chinese author and literature and art critic. He explained that although the editors had worked very hard on the selection processes, not wanting to overlook some good literary works created during the Cultural Revolution, *Undertaking* was, unfortunately, the only film selected from the 93 films produced during the Cultural Revolution (Chen 1997, 10). For Chen, the other films of the Cultural Revolution were too 'political' to be considered worthy of inclusion.

*Undertaking* is set in the Yumen and Daqing oil fields and covers the period from before China's Liberation to the 1960s. The film plot links American imperialism prior to China's Liberation and Russian revisionism in the 1960s with class struggle to counter the thinking of Western petroleum experts that there was no oil in China. The 'positive' character and principal hero in *Undertaking*, Zhou Tingshan (周挺杉), the leader of a group of oil workers determined to drill a high-yield oil well, has no doubts about the correctness of his struggle with the geology engineer Zhang Yizhi (章易之), and ultimately with Mr Wang (王副指挥), the second in charge of the oil field, a class enemy trying to sabotage the newly drilled well. Although Zhou is not a geology engineer, he studies Mao's works 'On Contradiction' (《矛盾论》) and 'On Practice' (《实践论》) to tackle the problems in the oil field. Somehow, Zhou finds that the reason for the failure of the first drilling was that a rich peasant had moved the signpost for the original drilling site away from his family land because Mr Wang, the second in charge, had deliberately misinformed this rich peasant; nevertheless, Zhou still successfully drills the second high-yield oil well. This film, to a certain extent, is a more realistic reflection of the People's Republic of China after its establishment during the 1950s and 1960s; it depicts the

state oil workers overcoming the difficulties of a lack of crude petroleum and their success in achieving oil self-sufficiency, a story based on the real life of ‘Ironman Wang Jinxi’ (铁人王进喜). It is interesting politically to question why Jiang Qing wanted to ban this film — it seems she believed the film praises Liu Shaoqi rather than eulogising Mao’s revolutionary ideas. Mao himself did not perceive the nuances and subtleties of the political intertwining in this film, as discussed below.

Three other films besides *Undertaking* were also produced at that time in a similar manner. For example, Zhao Sihai (赵四海), the main protagonist of *The Fiery Year* in his late 30s and the head of a team of steelworkers, was determined to produce good quality alloys. He vividly recalled how Chairman Mao visited the steel factory four years before and how Mao’s visit inspired him to do his best; with his work colleagues he fought against the factory director, Bai Xianzhou (白显舟厂长); and he defeated Ying Jiawei (应家培), the class enemy, an old engineer; finally he produced good quality alloys instead of imported alloys for use in naval vessels. This film with its anti-revisionism theme attracted some interesting questions; according to Di Jiannong (2001, 252), some audiences wrote to the main performer, Yu Yang (于洋), to ask him why Zhao Sihai, who was well over 40 and still lived with his mother, was not married. Yu, for the sake of portraying a positive image of Zhao Sihai, humorously replied to the audiences that Zhao and his wife lived in two different places and they had not yet managed to work and live in the same place. Actually, the truth was far from that — no romantic elements were allowed at the time the film studios resumed their productions during the Cultural Revolution.

Although Rey Chow (1995, 36-37) notes that Chinese films produced during the Cultural Revolution had no ‘primitive passion’, the element of ‘primitive passion’ did appear in two other films, *The Iron and Steel Giant* and *Fighting on the Slipway*.

The main character, Dai Jihong (戴继宏), is married and his wife works alongside him to build a giant steel-rolling machine in *The Iron and Steel Giant*. In *Fighting on the Slipway* the principal hero, Lei Haisheng (雷海生), is married with a young daughter; his wife supports him in the building of a large vessel. Both films have almost identical plots: the main protagonists are newly selected team leaders who lead a band of workers to build a machine or a vessel; although they work in an undesirable environment they eventually accomplish the tasks despite attempted sabotage by particular engineers, who are class enemies. Their accomplishments win honour for Chairman Mao and are portrayed as being a consequence of the Cultural Revolution. The themes of these two films reflect Chairman Mao's revolutionary line of self-determination and self-reliance, at the same time opposing the revisionist line.

The plots of these six major 'worker' films follow three stages according to Chris Berry (1982, 37-72): 'the first crisis might cause some peripheral heroic characters to waver; the second confirms the rightness of the central hero's line; and the third ends in exposure of the enemy and victory for proletarian forces'. However, Di Jiannong (2001, 252) notes that Chinese audiences who at first had liked these kinds of film came to loathe them over time because of the recurring narrative; that is, all the films were based on people in rural areas while there was a dearth of films about workers in the cities.

### ***Peasants***

There were certainly more films produced to extol peasants than workers during the Cultural Revolution, because there were more peasants in the countryside than workers in the city. Another explanation could be that peasants needed more entertainment related to their lifestyle. At any rate, more than 20 films were produced

representing peasants during the Cultural Revolution. Among these films, five had a particular influence on the Chinese people: *Bright Sunny Skies* (1973), *Green Pine Ridge* (1973), *Golden Road* (金光大道 1975), *Spring Seedling* (1975) and *Jubilant Small Cool River* (欢腾的小凉河 1976). *Bright Sunny Skies* was the first feature film to be made during the Cultural Revolution as noted in the previous chapter; *Spring Seedling* and *Jubilant Small Cool River* will be dealt with in Chapter Five. Thus, this section explores only the themes of *Green Pine Ridge* and *Golden Road* in order to understand the pedagogical structures of Chinese films which represented peasants and class struggle in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution.

*Green Pine Ridge* is not only a remade film but also a transplanted film from a play. The first version of *Green Pine Ridge* was produced in black and white in 1965; then it was reproduced as a colour film in 1973 with the same director, Liu Guoquan (刘国权), the same band of actors, and using the same film studio, the Changchun Film Studio. The film is set in a mountain region in the north-east of China and its theme is one of opposition to capitalism; it depicts some individual peasants who want to earn extra small amounts of money by selling agricultural products privately and who, in so doing, ignore the commune's collective work in the fields. From today's perspective this is a very trivial matter and could be considered as an important initiative for the peasants to undertake. However, at that time, such behaviour was treated as a very serious matter under the Communist regime of the day. The plot of this film, then, is about class struggle against capitalism in rural areas in China.

The main protagonists include Zhang Wanshan (张万山), an old retired horse cart driver; Fang Jiyun (方纪云), the Party secretary; and Xiumei (秀梅) and Dahu (大虎), two young, eager horse cart driving trainees. They are all striving to achieve a

successful harvest in the commune village. The middle person is the village head Zhou Cheng (周成), who is busy looking after the sale of agricultural products to the government agent and managing the harvest work and personnel arrangements in the fields. He is also Xiumei's elder brother. The antagonist is Qian Guang (钱广), a newly selected horse cart driver who hides his original family identity as a rich peasant, a position which was classified as class enemy at the time; he also helps some peasants to sell their private agricultural products and earn some extra money.



**Figure 13:** Main protagonist Fang Jiyun (方纪云), the Party secretary, advises village head Zhou Cheng (周成) in *Green Pine Ridge* (青松岭).

One morning, Xiumei and Dahu practise driving the horse cart without permission. The cart, pulled by three horses, is driven without incident out of the village but when they arrive at a T-junction in front of a large elm tree, the horses suddenly start to run fast and Xiumei and Dahu lose control over them. A village



peasant, Laosi (老四), on seeing Xiumei and Dahu driving the horse cart, tells Qian Guang, the newly selected horse cart driver, about Xiumei and Dahu driving the horse cart out of the village and asks Qian where they are going. Qian replies that he knows Xiumei and Dahu do their horse cart training in the area of the dangerous T-junction but he cannot stop them because Xiumei and Dahu are supported by Zhang Wanshan. Laosi becomes anxious and immediately goes to see Zhang and tells him about the direction in which Xiumei and Dahu are going. Zhang instantly realises the danger and takes a short cut across the mountain to the T-junction. When he sees Xiumei and Dahu and the out of control horses, he jumps down the mountain path and bravely stops the running horses. Xiumei and Dahu are surprised to see Zhang. Unfortunately, one of the horses breaks loose and runs away and Xiumei and Dahu cannot catch it. Then they see a man in the roadway and yell at him to capture the runaway white horse; the man catches it easily and rides it back to them. During their conversation, they find out he is the Party secretary, Fang Jiyun, who has come to work at their village.

The struggle between Qian Guang and the two learner drivers, Xiumei and Dahu, is a regular occurrence. Qian secretly drives the horse cart for his own business; in order to do this he bribes some of the village peasants but he fails to bribe Zhang Wanshan. Eventually, Fang and Zhang find out that Qian Guang has deliberately set a trap using three whips on the horses in order to go through the T-junction without telling anyone, and purposely has caused a horse to be sick in order to blame Xiumei for not looking after the horse properly; they also find out that Qian is a rich peasant. Therefore, Zhou Cheng, the head of the village when faced with these facts, is no longer able to support Qian. After Qian is taken away, Zhou happily assists the people of the commune village to resume their agricultural activities harmoniously.

The characterisation and plot in *Green Pine Ridge* are quite weak and not particularly influenced by Jiang Qing's theory of The Three Prominences. There are four protagonists who are portrayed on an equal footing. More importantly, the film exaggerates anti-capitalism in the class struggle theme to meet the needs of the regime even though it is a remake of a film produced before the Cultural Revolution.

In comparison with *Green Pine Ridge*, the film *Golden Road* was slightly more popular because the characterisation and plot were more sophisticated. *Golden Road* has two episodes. The first episode was made in 1975 and the second in 1976. This film is set in a rural area just after the land reform of the 1950s. At that time, poor and 'middle' peasants (贫下中农) were classified as socialist contributors and received land during the land reform; rich peasants (富农) and landlords (地主) were rated as class enemies (阶级敌人) and their land was expropriated and distributed to poor and 'middle' peasants. The main protagonist, Gao Daquan (高大泉), a poor peasant who is a well nourished and handsome man in his 30s and also a member of the Communist Party, encourages all the poor peasants in his village to work collectively and to participate in socialist construction and nation building. However, the head of their village, Zhang Jinfa (张金发), who is also a member of the Communist Party, wants to make himself rich quickly and does so by tricking some poor peasants out of their land and colluding with the rich peasant, Feng Shaohuai (冯少怀), the counterrevolutionary, Fan Keming (范克明), and the rice shop owner in the nearby town to push up the price of rice; in this way he gains a profit due to a transportation standstill caused by stormy weather. Feng uses his sister-in-law, Qian



Gao builds the roads.



Gao educates peasants.



Gao criticises individuals.

**Figure 14:** Main protagonist Gao Daquan (高大泉) in *Golden Road* (金光大道) above.

Caifeng (钱彩凤), to incite her boyfriend, Gao Erlin (高二林), to leave his elder brother, Gao Daquan, and his family. Gao Daquan, with the support of his wife Lü Ruifeng (吕瑞芬) and their young son, has no choice but to let his brother Gao Erlin leave their home. Thus, Gao Daquan, without his brother's help, becomes very busy. Feng also uses Gao Erlin and other poor peasants to make a profit but does not care about the peasants' welfare. Gao Erlin works so hard in the bad weather that he almost dies. When injured, he thinks of his brother, Gao Daquan, and wants to go back and live with him. Gao Daquan rescues his brother and takes him home to his wife, Qian Caifeng. Eventually, Gao Erlin and his wife Qian Caifeng realise that Gao's brother-in-law, Feng Shaohuai, has exploited and deceived them. Finally, the activities of Zhang Jinfa, Fan Keming and Feng Shaohuai against socialist construction are exposed and the three are taken away from the village. Gao Daquan is then able to continue to lead all the peasants according to Mao's revolutionary line of socialist construction.

This two-episode film is quite different from the previous films which had been made in 1973 and 1974 without 'primitive passion' — spouses or family scenarios. *Golden Road* not only uses 'primitive passion' in the treatment of the film plot but also, more importantly, deploys it as a primary intrinsic motivator to humanise the characters. Thus it adds an element of realism to the film.

Depicting peasants striving for Chinese socialism, no doubt, was useful during the Cultural Revolution. Not only were the peasants the largest section of the population in China but also they were faithful socialist contributors in the rural areas in China at that time. The films, to a great extent, realistically reflected the life of the peasants in the past and were a source of inspiration to the peasants during the Cultural Revolution.

## *Soldiers*

During the Cultural Revolution the Chinese film industry not only made films about workers and peasants but also produced many films about soldiers. Fifteen films depicted soldiers either in the Chinese civil war or in the war against the Japanese invasion. These films about soldiers were much more popular than the films about workers and peasants because they provided more action and drama. Some were more popular than others, though. The most popular films included *Scouts* (1974), *Fighting North and South* (南征北战 1974), *Reconnaissance across the Yangtze* (渡江侦察记 1974), *Unforgettable Battle* (难忘的战斗 1976), and *South China Sea Storms* (南海风云 1976). *Scouts* has already been discussed in the previous chapter. *Fighting North and South* and *Reconnaissance across the Yangtze* are two remade films which will be further examined in the following chapter on film adaptation, transplantation and reproduction. This section examines the film narratives of *Unforgettable Battle* and *South China Sea Storms*.

Both *Unforgettable Battle* and *South China Sea Storms* were produced in 1976. The former was made by the Shanghai Film Studio and the latter was produced by the August the First Film Studio. They were popular because they were not only based on wartime literature but also had handsome young actors, Da Shichang (达式常) and Tang Guoqiang (唐国强), who attracted an enormous following. Da Shichang performed the main character, Tian Wenzhong (田文中), in *Unforgettable Battle* and Tang Guoqiang acted the principal hero, Yu Hualong (于化龙), in *South China Sea Storms*. Anecdotal evidence states that there were massive numbers of film fans waiting at the gate of the Shanghai Film Studio and the August the First Film Studio

to see these two actors when they finished work each day in spite of the strictures of the Cultural Revolution.

The film *Unforgettable Battle* is about a small group of the Chinese People's Liberation Army led by Tian Wenzhong, a young army officer in his 30s, who tries to buy grain from peasants for the city dwellers; he is also fighting Kuomintang spies and bandits in a small city in Southern China in 1949. These Kuomintang spies and bandits are led by a covert senior Kuomintang army officer who pretends to be a general manager of the Rich Country Rice Company, Chen Futang (陈福堂), performed by a well-known actor, Bai Mu (白穆). Chen impedes the People's Liberation Army's purchase of grain from the peasants and organises attacks on the grain-carrying barges of the People's Liberation Army when they leave the countryside in order to destabilise the new establishment of the People's Republic of China. Chen also extorts information through direct threats about the arrival dates of the grain-carrying barges from a deputy district chief, Liu Zhiren (刘志仁). Chen portrays himself as a supporter of Tian and his army by buying grain from the peasants, but secretly he tries to buy grain from the peasants at high prices despite the new grain price policy issued by the local authority. In addition, the Kuomintang spies and bandits from time to time pretend to be part of the People's Liberation Army so that they can go into the countryside and attack the peasants and rob them of their grain, causing great difficulties for Tian who then goes into the countryside and discovers the deception for himself; Tian then considers all the problems together and eventually solves them. In the coda of this film, Tian sees through another trick set up by Chen when he invites some businessmen to a banquet one evening in a town restaurant. The trick is that Chen planned to open the restaurant window curtain during the evening as a signal to the Kuomintang spies and bandits that they can come

down from the mountain and attack the People's Liberation Army in the town. Tian, however, goes to the restaurant and opens the curtain himself despite Chen's efforts to stop him. When the Kuomintang spies and bandits see the light, they come down from the mountain. The People's Liberation Army, which has been waiting for them, wipes them out. Tian thus successfully accomplishes the mission set by Chairman Mao and the Communist Party.



**Figure 15:** Main protagonist Tian Wenzhong (田文中) performed by a handsome young actor, Da Shichang (达式常), fights main antagonist Chen Futang (陈福堂) performed by a well-known actor, Bai Mu (白穆), bottom right, in *Unforgettable Battle* (难忘的战斗).

*Unforgettable Battle* was adapted from the novel *Grain Purchasing Brigade* (《粮食采购队》), written by Sun Jingrui (孙景瑞), who was also the film's scriptwriter. According to Mao's secretary, Wu Xujun (吴旭君), Mao's other personal secretary, Zhang Yufeng (张玉凤), knew Mao liked to watch new films so

she obtained *Unforgettable Battle* for him; when Mao watched it, he broke down in tears and his mournful mood affected all the members of his staff watching the film with him (Quan 1998). Many years later, when the film director's wife, Lan Weijie (蓝为洁), read the description of Mao's story from Quan Yanchi's book *Mao Zedong Stepped Down from the Gods* (《走下神坛的毛泽东》) she told her 80-year-old husband, Tang Xiaodan (汤晓丹), about Mao crying while viewing the film; when Tang heard this, he too broke down in tears.

*South China Sea Storms*, however, is very different to *Unforgettable Battle* despite both films being based on wartime literature. *South China Sea Storms* is about a real event — South Vietnam and China fighting for the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea in 1974, just a year before the Americans left South Vietnam. The Chinese navy and militia not only won the battle and reoccupied the Paracel Islands but also captured an American advisor, Gerald Emil Kosh, seconded to the Republic of Vietnam. Although the Republic of Vietnam requested United States' help, the American President Gerald Ford declined, possibly because the Watergate case had just finished; under the leadership of the former American President, Richard Nixon, America and China had just begun developing a diplomatic relationship; and America did not want another war with China since America had lost many soldiers in Vietnam. *South China Sea Storms*, based on this event, has as its main hero Yu Hualong, the captain of the Chinese warship, who led the Chinese forces against the warship from the Republic of Vietnam in the South China Sea. In addition, this film also depicts intermittently, through flashbacks, how Yu grew up from being an ordinary young man to become the captain of a warship.





**Figure 16:** Main protagonist Yu Hualong (于化龙) performed by a handsome young actor, Tang Guoqiang (唐国强), in *South China Sea Storms* (南海风云).

Although this film was not as popular as *Unforgettable Battle*, it reflects a historical event that occurred during the Cultural Revolution. Both films were much loved by Chinese audiences at that time not only because of the appearance of new

young actors such as Da Shichang and Tang Guoqiang, as well as older actors such as Bai Mu and Cheng Zhi who had just returned to work, but also because the themes of these two films were completely different from other films representing workers and peasants. In addition, the filmic techniques and narratives of these films had improved radically during the final stage of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 adding to the entertainment value.

### **Film Censorship**

As noted above, there was no absolute blueprint for film content during the Cultural Revolution. What Jiang Qing did in her role as ‘the great flag bearer of literature and art’ was to rely on her political intuition, her cinematic knowledge and her political allies when examining the films produced by the Chinese film industry. The political pressure exerted by film censorship on the Chinese film industry was much worse than that which Hollywood suffered during the McCarthy era of the late 1940s and the early 1950s. The film censorship battle during the Cultural Revolution was similar to the direct interference by the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence and even by Prime Minister Harold Wilson in the UK in the 1965 British documentary film, *The War Game*, by Peter Watkins. Not only did Jiang Qing directly control film censorship, but so, too, did her husband Mao from time to time, as did many other top Chinese leaders such as Premier Zhou and Deng Xiaoping. In addition, Jiang Qing and her political allies such as Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, Yu Huiyong and Liu Qingtang (刘庆棠), the deputy Culture Minister, had more direct confrontations with filmmakers about film censorship during the Cultural Revolution.



**Figure 17:** Jiang Qing's political allies from left to right: Yao Wenyuan (姚文元), Hao Liang (浩亮), Jiang Qing (江青), Liu Qingtang (刘庆棠), Yu Huiyong (于会泳) and Zhang Chunqiao (张春桥). (Gained on 31 May 2013, [http://image55.360doc.com/DownloadImg/2012/11/1122/28159443\\_10.jpg](http://image55.360doc.com/DownloadImg/2012/11/1122/28159443_10.jpg))

### ***Mao and Jiang Qing***

It is true to say that, during the Cultural Revolution, Jiang Qing had more political intuition about film censorship than did Mao. Jiang could see the innuendoes, for example, in the historical play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* — innuendoes that Mao was unable to see initially, as discussed in Chapter Two. This was possibly because Mao was aging and suffering from motor neurone disease and Jiang Qing, by contrast, was relatively young, in her late 50s at that time. Ultimately, though, Mao's word was final in regard to film censorship; so even Jiang had no power to stop a film being released for Chinese cinema if Mao approved it.

Mao did in fact order two films to be released against the wishes of Jiang Qing. These were *Songs of Teachers* (1974) produced by the Central News Documentary Film Studio in 1974 and *Undertaking*, about the workers in the oilfields, as discussed earlier. *Songs of Teachers* was the only film which exalted the

role of a teacher — to help students to study hard; most teachers were criticised and attacked during the Cultural Revolution. The theme of this film was completely different from Jiang Qing’s model film and it was transplanted from a local Hunan opera (湘剧) which was in Mao’s hometown local dialect. Actually, the Hunan opera *Songs of Teachers* was captured on celluloid because it had been successfully performed and welcomed by many audiences in 1973.

When the production of *Songs of Teachers* was sent for film censorship, Jiang Qing said: ‘This film is a poisonous weed!’ In particular, she criticised the dialogue in which the main protagonist, the teacher Yu Ying (俞英), says: ‘How can illiterate people undertake revolutionary responsibilities?’ (没有文化怎能把革命的重担来承担). In response, Jiang Qing asked: ‘Why can’t illiterate people undertake revolutionary responsibilities? Is our old generation of proletarian fighters also illiterate?’ (Li, n.d.).



**Figure 18:** Left: Zuo Dafen (左大玢)’s family photo. ([http://res.news.ifeng.com/e96a0c81baf9e6df/2011/0813/rdn\\_4e45d3d175233.jpg](http://res.news.ifeng.com/e96a0c81baf9e6df/2011/0813/rdn_4e45d3d175233.jpg)) Right: her performance as the main protagonist, the teacher Yu Ying (俞英), in the Hunan opera film *Songs of Teachers* (园丁之歌).

Eventually, Jiang also criticised the actress, Zuo Dafen (左大玢), who played the main protagonist, the teacher Yu Ting, because she performed like a young mistress in the film (Li n.d.). Jiang Qing criticised this film because it contradicted the ethos of

the political hero of the Cultural Revolution — an old student called Zhang Tiesheng (张铁生), who was a Red Guard had gone to the countryside (as Mao had told students to do) and had handed in an almost empty test paper at a university entrance examination when Chinese universities resumed teaching and recruiting workers-peasants-soldiers in June 1973. On the orders of Jiang Qing, the *People's Daily* newspaper published a critique called 'Criticise Thoroughly the Big Poisonous Weed *Songs of Teachers*' (《深入批判大毒草<园丁之歌>》) on the front page on 4 August 1974. All the other newspapers around China then followed the *People's Daily* in criticising the film.

However, when Mao watched *Songs of Teachers* while he was visiting his hometown Changsha (长沙) in November 1974, he immediately recognised the performer on screen and said, 'Is this big baby, Zuo Dafeng?' (Li n.d.). Mao applauded this film after watching it, but when his staff quietly told Mao that this film was a big poisonous weed which was being criticised all around China, he was piqued and said, 'What big poisonous weed! Where is the poison? In my opinion it is very good!' (Li n.d.). While he was saying this, he stood up and applauded the film again. Everyone watching this film with Mao applauded as well. Therefore, *Songs of Teachers* turned from being a poisonous weed into a fragrant flower, and the actress, Zuo Dafen, avoided personal and political harassment during the Cultural Revolution.

In addition to applauding the film, *Songs of Teachers*, Mao also applauded on 25 July 1974 the film *Undertaking* after receiving a letter of complaint from the scriptwriter, Zhang Tianmin (张天民), of the Changchun Film Studio. Mao stated: 'This film has no major blunders, I recommend its release. Do not demand perfection in films. More than ten criticisms of this film are just too many. This is no good for the adjustment of the inner Party policies on literature and art' (Di 2001, 369).

However, Mao did not notice, as Jiang Qing did, that the film depicts (especially in close-up shots) booklets of his two articles ‘On Contradiction’ and ‘On Practice’ which had been sent to the workers in the Daqing oil fields by Liu Shaoqi; the fact that Liu Shaoqi, one of the major targets of the Cultural Revolution, had sent the articles to the workers, was deemed to be a political gesture to eulogise Liu Shaoqi. Mao launched the Cultural Revolution, among other reasons, to get rid of Liu Shaoqi even though he was Mao’s deputy. Jiang Qing considered that *Undertaking*, one way or the other, not only extolled Chinese oil workers but also praised Liu Shaoqi politically. Since Mao had already instructed the release of this film, and Deng Xiaoping had immediately passed on Mao’s instruction to the Culture Ministry and the Changchun Film Studio, he could not change his instruction. In addition, Hu Qiaomu (胡乔木), one of the organisers and a former political secretary of Mao, first asked Zhang Tianmin to write to Mao, then asked Zhang Tianmin’s wife, Zhao Liang (赵亮), to write ‘A Letter of Appreciation to Mao’ (Zhang 2010).

These two cases of film censorship demonstrate two possibilities: either Jiang Qing had more political consciousness about film content and context in regard to the Cultural Revolution than her husband did, or Mao, having achieved his main goal with the Cultural Revolution, no longer cared about censoring to the extent that he had previously. However, Mao did change his approach in dealing with film censorship when he received another letter of complaint from the film scriptwriter, Xia Tieli, and film director, Qian Jiang, about the censorship by Jiang Qing of the film *Seaside Rosy Cloud* (海霞 1974). A face-to-face battle then ensued between Jiang Qing and Deng Xiaoping over this film.

### ***Jiang Qing and Deng Xiaoping***

Jiang Qing wished to ban *Seaside Rosy Cloud* because she considered the actress Wu Haiyan (吴海燕), who performed the main protagonist, Haixia (海霞), to be like a ‘city miss’, and not like a female militia leader; Jiang Qing believed Haixia’s portrayal would destroy the proletarian images of workers-peasants-soldiers; moreover, Yu Huiyong and Liu Qingtang maintained that this film was against Jiang Qing’s theory of The Three Prominences and did not reach the status of her Model Films. In addition, Jiang Qing and Yu Huiyong were not satisfied with the modified version that had been made of *Seaside Rosy Cloud* after the criticisms and, as a result, the film scriptwriter Xia and film director Qian wrote to Mao (Di 2001, 373-376). Their letter to Mao was organised by He Jiasheng (贺捷生), an Army Major General and daughter of Marshal He Long, and first sent to Deng Liqun (邓力群), the key political consultant at the State Council and the Minister of Propaganda, then to Hu Qiaomu and finally to Deng Xiaoping who eventually passed it to Mao. This was the second letter about film censorship which had been handed to Mao by Deng. As mentioned before, Mao asked that the letter of complaint be sent to each member of the Politburo on 29 July 1974 (Di 2001, 382).

When Deng Xiaoping learned about Mao’s instruction, he immediately convened a Politburo meeting on the evening of 30 July 1974 at the Great Hall of the People to watch the film. Deng also invited the Culture Ministry’s key personnel and the film scriptwriter and director (Di 2001, 382). At the meeting to watch the film, Deng Xiaoping sat in the middle; on his right, there were Li Xiannian (李先念), Hua Guofeng (华国锋), and Yu Qiuli (余秋里); on his left were Zhang Chunqiao, Yu Huiyong and Zhang Weimin (张维民), the deputy Culture Minister; Xie Tieli and

Qian Jiang sat behind Deng Xiaoping and Li Xiannian; Wang Hongwen (王洪文) was absent; and Jiang Qing and Yao Wenyuan refused to participate. After more than four hours watching the first version and then the third version of the film, *Seaside Rosy Cloud*, Deng asked Yu, Zhang Weimin, Xia and Qian to leave early and let all Politburo members discuss the film (Di 2001, 383).

The following day, the Politburo decided that the third version of *Seaside Rosy Cloud* should be released for cinema exhibition (Di 2001, 383). The Culture Minister, Yu Huiyong, complained to Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao but they could not do anything since the Politburo had made the decision. Fundamentally, no one dared to go against Mao, not even Jiang Qing.

As a result of this decision, Yu Huiyong had to apologise indirectly to the Beijing Film Studio. Consequently, Yu became ill and his white blood cells became so depleted he had to stay in bed (Di 2001, 386). When Jiang Qing heard that Yu was sick, she rang him immediately on 5 August 1974 to urge him not to succumb; in particular, she urged him not to be defeated spiritually. Although he might have had faults and shortcomings related to his work, no one could deny that he had carried out her wishes with regard to the revolution in literature and art over the previous ten years (Di 2001, 386).

Despite the Politburo's decision to release *Seaside Rosy Cloud* for cinema, the Culture Minister, Yu Huiyong, and the deputy Culture Minister, Liu Qingtang, with the support of Jiang Qing, impeded the release process and warned the film scriptwriter, Xie, and film director, Qian, at the Beijing Film Studio that they would be disciplined by the Culture Ministry for writing to Mao (Di 2001, 388). Yu and Liu were thus able to resist the Politburo's decision because they had the support of Jiang Qing and another two members of the Politburo, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan,



who were the most prominent political critics in China at that time and controlled most official Chinese media outlets such as newspapers and magazines.

There is no doubt that the film censorship of *Undertaking* and *Seaside Rosy Cloud* was handled quite differently in each case; the political struggle relating to film censorship was much more severe on *Seaside Rosy Cloud* than on *Undertaking* on account of Mao having changed his way of dealing with the letters of complaint from filmmakers. Clearly, Jiang Qing not only examined the appropriateness of the filmic diegesis for the Cultural Revolution but also considered the suitability of the cinematic aesthetics for the political images of workers-peasants-soldiers. The battle with Deng Xiaoping was a political challenge to her concept of the Cultural Revolution. Deng dealt with her views on censorship by strategically enlisting Mao's support.

### ***Jiang Qing and Premier Zhou Enlai***

The political tension surrounding film censorship between Jiang Qing and Premier Zhou Enlai was weak in contrast to the tension between Jiang Qing and Deng Xiaoping. Zhou always made concessions to Jiang Qing, possibly due to his loyalty to Mao or to calm down the political tension between filmmakers and Jiang Qing, or perhaps because he was suffering from cancer during the last few years of the Cultural Revolution.

For example, when the film production of *The Fiery Year*, which has been discussed previously (see Chapter Three), was complete, Xu Jingxian (徐景贤), the Secretary of the Shanghai City Committee of the Communist Party, who was in charge of Shanghai City, cleverly changed its name from *Steel Torrent* (钢铁洪流) to *The Fiery Year* to differentiate it from the stage play; this meant it was better suited to

the political needs of 1974, the year in which it was produced. When the film's director, Fu Chaowu (傅超武), took it to the film censorship committee in Beijing, Premier Zhou Enlai and the other Politburo members watched it and approved it for release. However, when Jiang Qing watched it she demanded that two segments be modified, one where the protagonist Chao does not have enough strength to fight against the 'middle' person, the factory director, Bai; and the other where steel workers should call the Party Secretary Wong 'Old Wang' instead of 'Secretary Wang' because the title of the Party Secretary is the Party post, not an administrative position (Di 2001, 249). Fu Chaowu had no choice but to make the modifications; even though he had permission from Premier Zhou to release the film, this did not guarantee its release. He took it back to the Shanghai Film Studio and made the modifications demanded by Jiang Qing. After hearing about Jiang Qing's demands, Premier Zhou angrily muttered: 'Do not send any films to me for approval in the future' (Di 2001, 250).

It is clear from these incidents that Jiang Qing had absolute power over literature and art products; by the same token, the filmmakers had direct links with the top Chinese Communist Party leaders such as Premier Zhou and Deng Xiaoping, and even with Mao. These phenomena which were unprecedented in the history of the Chinese film industry reflected the fact that Jiang Qing was not only Mao's wife and an eager politician, but also an actress who possessed great knowledge of film arts and was able to influence the outcomes of film production to ensure that film products followed the political line and the spirit of the Cultural Revolution. However, when the Cultural Revolution reached its later stages, Deng Xiaoping, because Mao and Premier Zhou were experiencing deteriorating health, took charge of the Central Committee after the Lin Biao incident in 1971; and he tried to strengthen his

leadership position by fighting with Jiang Qing and her political allies more directly over film censorship issues.

### **Interrelation of Film Distribution and Consumption with Education**

Because of the importance of films for mass political education, censorship and control over film distribution were extremely important. For this reason Jiang Qing and her political allies scrutinised film productions thoroughly and meticulously. The Chinese film industry, from the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the post-Cultural Revolution era beginning in 1980, was never regulated by the market economy but by the political economy, as Yan Yuanying (2006, 69-74) notes. The workers-peasants-soldiers were depicted through the political value system as supporting socialist construction and nation building, unlike Hollywood motion pictures which were created for the entertainment of the populace and to make profits in accordance with capitalist ideology. The Chinese film industry, in order to educate the Chinese people about socialism, had to produce movies reflecting the abstract ideology of socialism with objective instead of subjective reality, in order to portray revolutionary reality. To achieve this goal, the Communist regime produced educational movies and maintained low prices of movie tickets for Chinese people until after the end of the Cultural Revolution.

#### ***Low Price of Movie Tickets***

Realising the importance of visual culture, the Communist regime maintained low prices of movie tickets until 1984; as Yu Li (2006, 125) explains: 'Film ticketing prices had been consistently maintained at RMB 0.20-0.35 (about 5 cents in US currency) for 35 years; then the prices rose due to the sustainable market economy'.

During the Cultural Revolution the Communist regime kept the price of movie tickets low; at the same time, it managed to produce films for both education and entertainment that depicted both political and realistic truth. The Chinese government took several measures, according to Yu Li (2006, 14), to enable wide circulation of movies at that time; it made *many* copies of films and let all cinemas screen films; it made *a few* copies of film and let cinemas take turns to screen films for a long period; and it screened films in huge venues. For important movies, the Chinese government used several strategies: it intermittently screened these films; it required particular cinemas to screen these movies; and it controlled their screening. Through these measures, then, the Communist regime effectively and efficiently maintained movies as educational tools.

In 1984 these measures and strategies were abandoned because the market economy developed due to a policy change in 1978 which mirrored the Russian approach to management of the studios in terms of film production, distribution and exhibition. The State Council approved the policy change in *The Application Report of Reforming the Management of Film Distribution and Exhibition* (《关于改革电影发行放映管理体制的请示报告》) and handed it down to the Ministry of Culture and Arts, and the Ministry of Finance (Yu 2006, 123). In this report, the central government agreed to re-introduce the management system which was in place before the Cultural Revolution. According to this system, government-provided capital for film production was deducted from box office returns; the profits were divided into 20% for the Ministry of Finance and 80% for the development fund. This system of funding allowed the Chinese film industry to introduce a new ticket pricing system regulated by the market economy. Low prices for movie tickets, therefore, officially ended in the post-Cultural Revolution era in 1984.

### ***Movies as Educational Tools***

The affordability of movie tickets before 1984 enabled movies to be used as educational tools by the Communist regime. During the Cultural Revolution, the film industry produced many politically charged films such as *The White-Haired Girl* (白毛女), and children's films. These films, even children's films, were not produced particularly for entertainment purposes because their themes were very political; they were produced instead to raise the morale of the Chinese people.

For example, the tale of *The White-Haired Girl* was about how old Chinese society forced human beings to become ghosts and the new socialist society forced ghosts to become human beings. The story, according to He Jingzhi (贺敬之 2002, 14), originated from Pingshan County in Hebei province China, and the white-haired girl was called 'White-Haired Fairy Lady'. In 1940, the Eighth Route Army of the Chinese Communist Party had a difficult time working in a village near the mountain region although it had been liberated for several years. When a cadre of the Eighth Route Army from the district decided to gather all villagers for a meeting, no one attended. A village cadre prevaricated that all villagers had gone to make an offering to the White-Haired Fairy Lady because it was the fifteenth day of the month. This district cadre then pressed for details of the White-Haired Fairy Lady. He presumed that the White-Haired Fairy Lady was a wild animal which had been misunderstood by the rural population, or the White-Haired Fairy Lady had been constructed as a plot to prevent the villagers from attending the meeting. The district cadre in the village decided to catch the White-Haired Fairy Lady. So one night this cadre, carrying a weapon, went and hid with some villagers in the Goddess' temple. Just after midnight, when the wind was blowing quietly and there was dim light from the moon, they heard the sound of footsteps approaching and suddenly a vague white

shape entered the Goddess' temple and grabbed the food on the altar table; when what appeared to be a ghost was about to leave, the district cadre leaped up and shouted loudly: 'Are you human or ghost?'

The White-Haired Fairy Lady, having been startled, shouted wildly and then turned on the cadres. The district cadre shot her and she fell to the ground. She got up and tried desperately to run away, but the cadres and villagers tracked her down to a deep gloomy cave in the mountains. The sound of a child weeping could be heard indistinctly in the cave. The district cadre went into the cave and saw the White-Haired Fairy Lady tightly embracing a pale child who was cowering in a corner. The district cadre at first hesitated, then said: 'What are you, human or ghost? You must tell me! I will forgive you and rescue you from this cave'. Suddenly, the White-Haired Fairy Lady knelt down in front of the cadres and villagers and choking back tears, said that about nine years ago (before the Sino-Japanese war), a despotic landlord who had seen her as a beautiful and intelligent girl wanted to have her. He conspired to prosecute her father, a tenant farmer, who was sent to jail and died there because he could not pay his debts. As a result, the landlord took advantage of her for his temporary obscene desires and made her pregnant. When this landlord was going to marry another girl from a rich family he decided to kill the White-Haired Girl on his wedding day. A benevolent female servant found out about the plot and told her to leave. Although she escaped from this despotic landlord and his family, she had nowhere to go. She eventually had found this cave where she had given birth to a child and where she had continued to live. Due to the lack of sunlight and salt, she and her child had become pale. The cadre and villagers listened to this tale and then burst into tears.

*The White-Haired Girl* epitomises the genre of the time; it was created as an opera in Yan'an in 1945, and captured in film in 1950, then transplanted into a Chinese opera in 1958, finally being filmed as a Model Ballet in 1970. When Jiang Qing transplanted the story for her Model Ballet film, she removed the segment relating to the sexual relationship between the white-haired girl Xi'er and the despotic landlord because she did not want Xi'er to be tainted by something unmentionable. Jiang Qing also considered that, if this segment remained in the movie, it would damage the reputation of Xi'er as a heroine and it would not fit in with her 'three prominences' political theory.

For this reason, Paul Clark (2008, 109) remarked in his recent publication *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History*, 'More Chinese probably saw the eight "model performances" not live on stage, but as feature films'. The films proved to be enormously popular then, despite not being produced as popular entertainment in a Western or Hollywood sense: 'These fifty old-style operas were made for an audience of one — Mao Zedong' (Clark 1987, 128).

Movies as educational tools were not only limited to films like *The White-Haired Girl* but also extended to children's films which had various class struggle themes. Ten children's films were made during the Cultural Revolution, more than one tenth of the total film productions. Nine were feature films and one was a stage documentary, *Prairie Children* (草原儿女 1975). Three of these films have been in the top ten of the best-loved Chinese children's films made since the Liberation of China; they are *Yellow River Youth* (黄河少年 1975), *Beacon-fire Youth* (烽火少年 1975) and *Sparkling Red Star* (1974). The ten children's films had enormous effects not only on Chinese children, but also on Chinese adults at the time. They

demonstrate to Chinese children what the class struggle and the war of resistance against the Japanese invaders were about.

One of these ten films, *Prairie Children*, is about a Chinese Mongolian boy and girl heroically fighting heavy snowstorms and class enemies to protect their commune's flock of sheep. The subject of the ballet first emerged in a 1964 animated cartoon recounting the real-life drama of two Mongolian sisters, *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grasslands*. The ballet which actually combines ballet steps and Mongolian dance was created by the China Singing-Dance Troupe (中国歌舞剧团), which, in line with ballet conventions, not only changed the two female characters into a male and female but also inserted a class enemy to dramatise the story in order to better serve the ideals of the Cultural Revolution.

Unlike *Prairie Children*, whose theme is class struggle, the theme of *Yellow River Youth* and *Beacon-fire Youth* is China's war of resistance against the Japanese invaders. *Yellow River Youth* is about the main protagonist, Zhao Zhiyan (赵志燕), a teenage boy who actively participates in the fight against the Japanese invaders and protects wounded Chinese fighters near the Yellow River region. *Beacon-fire Youth* is about the principal hero, Xiao Song (小松), also a teenage boy, who energetically takes part in fighting the Japanese invaders and cleverly becomes a secret agent for the Red Army in the Japanese-occupied areas of the north of China. Both films were produced in 1975 and were possibly influenced by *Sparkling Red Star* (a film discussed in the following chapter) produced in 1974.

There is no doubt that the role of Chinese cinema during the Cultural Revolution was to educate and inform the Chinese people through realistic films (where the realism conformed to a certain political ideal). At the same time, the Communist regime used Chinese cinema for entertainment but incorporated the



underlying political agenda through eulogising the revolutionary struggle and socialist construction of a unified China.

### **Conclusion**

The film narratives and film figures among the movies produced during the Cultural Revolution were unique in Chinese film history. Workers-peasants-soldiers were the main characters captured on celluloid, and film diegesis was about wartime literature and class struggle. The films reflected Chinese socialist construction from the early days of the Chinese war of resistance against the Japanese invaders and the Chinese civil war between the Kuomintang government and Communist Party to the period of nation building of the People's Republic of China. Although all the films are deemed realistic, it is sometimes difficult nowadays to fully appreciate the significance and impact these films had. What is clear is that the war-themed films were slightly more popular than the class struggle-themed films due to the spectacle of dramatic action.

In order to depict workers-peasants-soldiers on the screen in a socially and politically appropriate way, the censorship decisions made by Mao, Jiang Qing, Premier Zhou and Deng Xiaoping were very complex. Jiang Qing and her political coterie made intuitive film censorship decisions which accorded with their views on political correctness. However, Deng and Zhou often had strong disagreements with Jiang Qing when dealing with film censorship. While Mao had overall control over film censorship, he was not as politically astute as Jiang Qing, who was more adept at keeping the spirit of the films in line with the political goals of the Cultural Revolution. It is clear that Jiang Qing possessed not only political astuteness but also filmic knowledge. She certainly ensured that films served what she judged to be the best interests of the Chinese people at that time.

Besides an examination of film diegesis and film censorship, this chapter also explored the interrelationship of film distribution and film consumption in terms of low-price movies and films used as educational tools. These films, one way or the other, not only had entertainment value but also, and more importantly, possessed educational functions; they disseminated the political ideology of the Communist regime such as the class struggle during the socialist construction by exalting workers-peasants-soldiers. These themes were not only depicted in ordinary films but also, significantly, were depicted in children's films.

The following chapter will examine film adaptation, transplantation and reproduction during the Cultural Revolution. The focus will extend to an analysis of the content and contexts of the films (including a comparison with the novels, plays and movies from which they were derived) in order to determine the impact on Chinese audiences during the Cultural Revolution.

## Chapter Four

### Film Adaptation, Transplantation and Reproduction

Film adaptation, transplantation and reproduction have taken place in many countries around the world. While Hollywood has often carried out these practices to meet the demands of existing commercial audiences, the Chinese film industry used them for social and political purposes during the Cultural Revolution. More than 40% of all Chinese films made during the Cultural Revolution were adapted, transplanted or reproduced, and most of them reflected Chinese socialist ideology.

This chapter begins by exploring *film adaptation* during the Cultural Revolution in terms of how many films were directly *adapted* from novels and to what extent the interpolated scenes and invented characters met the social and political agenda concerning the Communist Party's socialist construction. This exploration involves comparing the realistic elements and the expressive norms and forms of films with the novels on which they were based; it also involves exploring the use of interpolations and elisions of film diegesis as well as examining the social and political implications for Chinese society at that time. Furthermore, this chapter examines, from a realistic perspective, the idiosyncratic film patterns adapted from novels for the screen.

The analysis of adaptation is followed by a discussion of *film transplantation*, with reference to films transplanted from plays and operas rather than novels. Attention is paid to the number of these films that were transplanted and how their content and contexts portrayed the truth or otherwise of what took place during the Cultural Revolution. In order to understand the differences between transplanted films and their sources in the form of plays and operas, this chapter examines the

process of cinematic homogenisation; that is to say, the manner by which scenes were created to serve the social and political agenda. The chapter also examines the tensions and ideologies that were reinforced in the transplanted films.

Finally, this chapter examines *film reproduction* during the Cultural Revolution. This requires several steps: first, a verification of the extent of reproduction (e.g. some films were adapted and then reproduced); second, an identification of the themes of the reproduced films according to their diegetic elements; and third, an analysis of the structure of the reproduced films. Each of these practices — adaptation, transplantation and reproduction — is discussed below.

### **Film Adaptation**

Before analysing the Chinese films adapted directly from novels during the Cultural Revolution, definitions of film adaptation are discussed. In addition there are discussions of the practices of film adaptation and the reasons why filmmakers wanted to translate novels into films.

Thomas Leitch (2007), an American film expert and English professor at the University of Delaware, defines film adaptation as the transfer of a written work or works in whole or part to a feature film, a type of derivative work; a common form of film adaptation is the use of a novel as the basis of a feature film. Moreover, film adaptation includes the use of non-fiction writing such as journalistic work, autobiography, scripture, historical sources, and even other films. Clearly, adaptation uses diverse resources (including, for example, diaries and comic books).

In addition, Linda Hutcheon (2006, 15-16), another American film scholar, explains that it is difficult to define the seeming simplicity of the word ‘adaptation’ because the means of adaptation are complex: ‘As a product, an adaptation can be

given a formal definition, but as a process — of creation and of reception — other aspects have to be considered'. This explanation obviously encompasses several meanings: a media product can refer to films, plays, operas or even paintings, and the process of creation and reception refers to the practice of adapting novels to films as well as the way that audiences engage with such adaptations. According to Robert Stam (2010, 3-5), the practices of film adaptation and their transitions have four consequences: a loss or a gain in positive tropes because of the persuasive force of the putative superiority of literature versus film; a dichotomous thinking that often reflects a presumed bitter rivalry between film and literature; a film's provocation of an outrage not provoked by the literary source; and a hostility to adaptation due to the cultural prejudice prevalent at that time against the visual arts portraying images of the Judaic-Muslim-Protestant prohibitions or causing an erosion of the power of literary fathers and patriarchal narrators.

Besides understanding the practices and consequences of film adaptation, it is also important to understand why filmmakers want to translate novels into films in the first place. As the film critic and semiotician, Christian Metz (1974, 44), explains: 'cinema tells us continuous stories; it says things that can be conveyed also in the language of words; yet it says them differently. This is a reason for the possibility as well as for the necessity of adaptations'. In other words, film has in its grasp, for example, innumerable symbols for emotions that cannot be expressed simply through language. An analysis of some Chinese adapted films produced during the Cultural Revolution will lead to further understandings of how these films relate to the literary works on which they were based.

Twenty-six films were directly adapted from novels among the 93 films produced in total during the Cultural Revolution. They included 22 feature films and

four operatic films; they were either war-themed or class struggle-themed features except for one, the Hebei Clapper opera film *The Magic Lotus Lantern* (宝莲灯 1976), which had as its theme a well-known ancient love story. The 22 feature films included 20 adult movies and three children's movies. Some of the adult feature movies were more popular than others, for example, the war-themed *Scouts* (1974) and *Unforgettable Battle* (1976) as well as the class struggle-themed *Sunny Bright Skies* (1973) and *Golden Road* (1975). These popular movies have been discussed in previous chapters. The three feature movies for children were *Sparkling Red Star* (1974), *Sunny Courtyard Story* (向阳院的故事 1974) and *Hong Yu* (红雨 1975). The movie *Sparkling Red Star* has already been mentioned in the previous chapter and will be discussed again in Chapter Five. The four opera films include three Chinese opera movies — *The Red Lantern* (1970), *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (智取威虎山 1970) and *Fighting on the Plains* (平原作战 1974) — and the Hebei Clapper opera movie, *The Magic Lotus Lantern*. *The Red Lantern* will be discussed in the next chapter.

Besides the adult adapted popular feature movies such as *Scouts* (1974), *Unforgettable Battle* (1975), *Sunny Bright Skies* (1973) and *Golden Road* (1975), the adapted children's feature movies, *Sunny Courtyard Story* (1974) and *Hong Yu* (1975) are worthy of discussion because, to a great extent, these two films depicted the class struggle which touched the lives of Chinese children. *Sunny Courtyard Story* was directed by Yuan Naichen (袁乃晨) and produced by the Changchun Film Studio in 1974. Yuan was not only a film director but also an actor and film translation director. In addition, he won the Golden Rooster Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2008 Golden Rooster and Hundred Flowers Film Festival. The movie *Sunny Courtyard Story* was adapted from the long novel *Sunny Courtyard Story* written by Xu Ying (徐

瑛), a prolific writer, in 1973. Not only was this novel adapted into a movie in 1974; it was also translated into English and published as *A Real Good Holiday* by Beijing Foreign Language Press in 1977. The movie was not as exquisite and affective as the novel; as Robert Stam (2010, 3) explains, the film adaptation lost positive tropes because of the putative superiority of the literature source. However, the essence of the novel was completely captured in the movie.



**Figure 19:** Grandfather Shi (石爷爷), a sub-protagonist, mentors Tiezhu (铁柱, the main protagonist), Heidan (黑旦), Xuehua (雪花), Shanhuizi (山虎子) and Xiaogang (小钢) in the courtyard in *Sunny Courtyard Story* (向阳院的故事).

It is set in a country town in the north of China. The main protagonist, Tiezhu (铁柱, meaning Iron-pillar in English), a teenager, lives with his grandmother, the old head of the local residents' committee, who shares a housing compound called Sunny Courtyard with several householders. Schoolmates of Tiezhu such as Heidan

(黑旦), Xuehua (雪花), Shanhuizi (山虎子) and Xiaogang (小钢), a younger brother of Heidan, all live in the compound. These children are led by Tiezhu who organises their participation in volunteer labour on the first day of the school holidays; this work involves digging rocks in the area near the mountains for the construction of roads.

These children, responding to Chairman Mao's call to 'learn from Comrade Lei Feng, serve the people wholeheartedly' (向雷锋同志学习, 全心全意地为人民服务!), go along to do the volunteer work quietly without telling their parents. However, Hu Shouli (胡守礼), an antagonist who is a former schoolteacher and now a travelling salesman, also lives in Sunny Courtyard. When he finds out the children are out doing voluntary work, he slyly mumbles that the children will have no chance of going to the key provincial senior high school the following year if they do not review their school work during the upcoming summer holiday. Also, when he learns from Tiezhu's grandmother that he has not been selected to be the mentor for the children during the summer holiday, he is very angry but he can do nothing.

Instead of the antagonist Hu Shouli, Grandfather Shi (石爷爷), a sub-protagonist who is a retired worker and a member of the Communist Party, is selected to be the mentor for the children. He also lives in Sunny Courtyard but he is not related to any of these children although they call him Grandfather Shi. He thinks children should do some physical work as it will help them grow up and have a concept of what working people do. Grandfather Shi not only organises these children to take part in the roadwork building but also takes them to the countryside and teaches them what class struggle is in terms of socialist construction.

The film has four dramatic conflicts and each conflict is more serious than the previous one. All conflicts are triggered by the antagonist, Hu Shouli, rather than the protagonist, Tiezhu, who creates positive outcomes in the film. The first conflict is



that Hu Shouli tells Xuehua's mother, Yuxiu (玉秀), that she should tell her daughter to stay home to study as this is the way to be admitted to the key provincial senior high school and to subsequently become a medical doctor. Yuxiu tries to force her daughter to study at home but Xuehua does not want to study at home; instead she wishes to participate in the social volunteer work. Xuehua has been advised by Tiezhu and others that if her mother does not allow her to take part in the social volunteer work she should refuse food in protest. Yuxiu then has no choice, and eventually allows her daughter to do the social volunteer work. This first conflict depicts Hu persuading Yuxiu to tell Xuehua to study, instead of participating in the social volunteer work; this element is different from the novel in which Xuehua herself wants to study to be a doctor and her mother wants her to take part in social volunteer work. This difference between the film and the novel reflects the rivalry between film and literature, explained by Robert Stam as dichotomous thinking in two different media. Xuehua is part of the new generation of Chinese and if she is portrayed as not wanting to engage in social volunteer work in the film, this might be seen as politically incorrect; or more seriously this could be seen as denigrating the new generation of Chinese during the Cultural Revolution. Hence this scenario was forbidden by the film censorship group at that time.

The second conflict occurs when Hu tells Heidan how to cheat in the social volunteer work competition; the film depicts Heidan cheating in the competition to win the banner for being an excellent volunteer youth worker. In the novel, this conflict is described differently — Heidan cheats to have more time to carve cigarette holders which he can use to exchange for an aluminium water bottle from Hu Shouli. This difference shows that, as Robert Stam explained, a film may provoke an outrage not provoked by the literary source. More importantly, this difference exaggerates

what was essentially the rebelliousness of a child into what Chinese society at that time called class struggle.

The third conflict in the film, as opposed to the novel, is that Heidan became lost in the Da Xi Mountain; in the book, Heidan, a typical young teenager, became lost in the provincial capital city because he was captivated by city life and the products of carving skills to be seen there. The film shows Heidan alone in a dangerous mountain rather than wandering and lost in a safe city in order to show clearly that class struggle affects not only Chinese socialist society generally, but also young people as a whole.

The final conflict arises when Hu Shouli removes the placard placed by Tiezhu outside a cave near where the children are doing social volunteer work — a placard indicating that this cave is dangerous. Therefore, the dangerous cave becomes a safe cave in the eyes of these children. Afterwards, Hu Shouli comes to realise that he has lost the cigarette holder Heidan made for him; the sky gets dark and swiftly it starts raining heavily. To avoid the rain the Sunny Courtyard students, Xuehua, Shanhuizi and Xiaogang, run for shelter into the cave which now seems safe. Suddenly the cave starts dropping mud and leaking water from its ceiling. At this perilous moment, Grandfather Shi and Tiezhu come to save the children. Grandfather Shi jumps into the cave and pushes Xuehua, Shanhuizi and Xiaogang towards the exit of the cave; and at the same time, Tiezhu pulls them up out of the cave. Just before Tiezhu and the other children pull him up out of the cave before it collapses, Grandfather Shi accidentally steps on a cigarette holder which he picks up. This is the conflict which leads to the climax of the film. The climactic scene is not as nail-biting as in the novel which locates the children inside the cave as the entrance to the cave collapses. In the novel, therefore, the children face possible death. Their teachers, the

principal and the children's parents, as well as the Communist Party secretary and masses of the country township, take turns to dig soil out from the cave entrance one shovelful at a time because they cannot use any earth-moving equipment in the torrential rain at night and because tremors caused by such equipment could cause the entire cave to collapse. Had the scenes described in the novel been included in the film, child audiences may have been psychologically traumatised by viewing this film. This is an example of the dichotomous thinking explained by Robert Stam.

When Grandfather Shi takes out the cigarette holder, Heidan immediately recognises it and tells Grandfather Shi that he himself had carved this cigarette holder and had given it to Hu Shouli as a present some time before. Grandfather Shi links all the adverse incidents together and concludes that Hu Shouli has tried to harm these children through the use of all kinds of tricks. These incidents portray the class struggle existing in Chinese socialist society at that time. When Grandfather Shi also learns that Hu Shouli was from an impoverished landlord family, he, with the support of the township Communist Party leaders, gathers together everyone at the Sunny Courtyard to criticise Hu Shouli. In the meeting, Grandfather Shi declares that the great leader, Chairman Mao, taught that they should never forget that class struggle exists in socialist society; children should learn from Comrade Lei Feng to serve people wholeheartedly; and children should be trained to be the successors of the proletarian class. At the end of the film, Grandfather Shi and Tiezhu, together with many other students, march forward to music proclaiming the triumph of socialism.

*Sunny Courtyard Story* was not only suitable for children but also for their parents because it showed how class struggle activities could be classified and how children could be educated about class struggle in a socialist society during the Cultural Revolution. The differences in terms of a loss or a gain of positive tropes

between the novel and the film were not important; the representation of class struggle was the main concern in this film.

The film *Hong Yu* is similar to *Sunny Courtyard Story* in that it is about class struggle but is set in the countryside and is about Hong Yu (红雨, literally meaning ‘red rain’ in English), a sixteen-year-old who is determined to become a ‘barefoot doctor’ (赤脚医生) to serve poor and middle-class peasants during the Cultural Revolution. This was at a time just before the Cultural Revolution in June 1965 when Mao Zedong had promised ‘to establish key medical and health centres in the rural areas of China’ (把医疗卫生工作的重点放到农村去). This film was directed by Cui Wei (崔嵬), a well-known actor and one of 22 film stars named by the Chinese film industry in 1962 in China. *Hong Yu* was produced by Beijing Film Studio in 1975 and adapted from the novel also called *Hong Yu*, which was written by Yang Xiao (杨啸) in 1973.

Both the novel and the film record mostly the same historical moments of the Chinese health system reforms during the Cultural Revolution. Many young selected workers, peasants and soldiers were trained at that time in short-term intensive medical courses to be ‘barefoot doctors’ at general hospitals across China. They were not trained by medical schools, colleges or universities because these institutions had all been closed down at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. The ‘barefoot doctors’ did solve the problem of the lack of medical health professionals around China, especially in the rural areas of China.

There are a number of differences between the adapted film *Hong Yu* and the novel it is based on. The first difference is that after Hong Yu finished his ‘barefoot doctor’ course he comes back to his village, Qingshanpo (青山坡). The film depicts how Hong Yu successfully treats peasants for common diseases such as respiratory

infections, fevers and sprains by using a combination of Chinese medicine and acupuncture and Western medicine. On the way home, for example, at the construction site of a reservoir, he uses acupuncture to successfully treat the shoulder sprain of a peasant, Wang Laoqing (王老庆). Consequently, all the villagers get to know that Hong Yu has good medical skills and they cheer for him. Just after setting up a simple clinic in the village, Hong Yu wants to use acupuncture to treat another peasant, Zhao Laohuan (赵老欢), who has suffered from stiff knees for a long time; however Zhao is terrified of needles. Persuaded by his wife, Zhao does go to see Hong Yu to seek acupuncture treatment; however, Zhao's muscles contract because of his nervousness and, as a result, the acupuncture needle breaks inside his muscle. Fortunately, Hong Yu is able to use another acupuncture needle to relax his muscles and get the broken needle out. This incident is observed by the antagonist, Sun Tianfu (孙天富), who has been a herbal medical practitioner for 30 years in the village and who is from a former rich family; he exaggerates the incident around the village in order to defame Hong Yu. Consequently, the villagers stop coming to see Hong Yu in his clinic although the incident was not life-threatening. However, Hong Yu has a passion for helping the peasants and, in time, with the support of the village secretary of the Communist Party he wins the peasants back. This incident is portrayed in the film differently from the novel. In the novel, Hong Yu does not remove the acupuncture needle from Zhao Laohuan's muscle; Zhao is sent instead to hospital in order to have the acupuncture needle removed.

The second difference is that after Hong Yu conducts emergency treatment on an infant who has suffered from food poisoning outside the village, he comes home and hears that the condition of another peasant, Grandpa Shi Jiang (石匠爷), is deteriorating since taking the Chinese herbal medicine he has prescribed. When Hong

Yu arrives at Grandpa Shi Jiang's home, he checks him and immediately finds that Grandpa Shi Jiang is indeed suffering from the side effects of Chinese herbal medicine. But Hong Yu does not know why the Chinese herbal medicine is poisonous because he has obtained this medicine especially from an experienced and well-known Chinese herbal medical practitioner. At the same time, Sun Tianfu, the antagonist, goes to Grandpa Shi Jiang's home and insists on saving him; he asks the village leader, Erhuai (二槐), to send Grandpa Shi Jiang to the county hospital. Hong Yu immediately points out that Sun's plan will lead to Grandpa Shi Jiang dying on the way to the county hospital. Hong Yu also thinks over why Sun Tianfu wants to save Grandpa Shi Jiang now, when, in the past, Sun Tianfu never wanted to treat him because Grandpa Shi Jiang had criticised him before China's Liberation for not being a good herbal medical practitioner. Eventually, Hong Yu finds out that Sun Tianfu has put a poisonous herb in the medicine used to treat Grandpa Shi Jiang. This is confirmed by the doctor in the county hospital and by the Chinese medicine shop where Sun Tianfu bought the poisonous ingredient. Sun Tianfu had tricked the peasant, Sun Fugui (孙富贵), into buying the Chinese herbal medicine for Hong Yu to treat Grandpa Shi Jiang. After the exposure of this crime, Sun Tianfu tries to kill Hong Yu but Hong Yu is able to protect himself and arrests Sun Tianfu. This act is only slightly different from the novel in which Grandpa Shi Jiang is sent to the county hospital and diagnosed as suffering from the side effects of Chinese herbal medicine; on checking, the hospital discovers that Sun Tianfu added the poison. The interpolated scene in the film, which shows that Hong Yu knows the side effects, is a political decision, not a dramatic creation, because it proves that Chairman Mao's policy to use 'barefoot doctors' is correct since it demonstrates that 'barefoot doctors' are as good as formally trained doctors.

From these two examples in the film *Hong Yu*, it is not difficult to see how film adaptation was used for the pragmatic necessity of cutting a sprawling novel to make it fit the screen to suit the needs of Chinese society at that time. Similarly, other adapted movies from around the world, including those adapted from novels such as *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and *The Great Gatsby* (1974) in the US, had a considerable impact on audiences at that time. Linda Hutcheon (2006, 37) explains how this phenomenon is not necessarily negative: ‘Most of the talk about film adaptation, however, is in negative terms of loss. Sometimes what is meant is simply a reduction of scope, of length, of accretion of detail, of commentary’.

Besides these two adapted films, *Sunny Courtyard Story* and *Hong Yu*, another two adapted opera films are worth mentioning — *Taking the Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (1970) and *The Magic Lotus Lantern* (宝莲灯 1976). The former is a Chinese opera film directed by Xie Tieli and produced by the Beijing Film Studio in 1970 and the latter is a Hebei Clapper opera film directed by Chen Huaiai (陈怀皑) and Chen Fangqian (陈方千) and also produced by the Beijing Film Studio in 1976.

*Taking the Tiger Mountain by Strategy* was adapted from the novel *Linhai Xueyuan* (林海雪原, literally meaning ‘snowy forest’), written by Qu Bo (曲波), who took five years from 1952 to 1956 to complete it. Interestingly, it was first adapted into a feature film called *Linhai Xueyuan* with the subtitle *Taking the Tiger Mountain by Strategy* by film director Liu Peiran (刘沛然) and produced by the August the First Film Studio in 1960. When the novel was adapted into a Chinese opera film in 1970, the name taken was *Taking the Tiger Mountain by Strategy*. This novel was also twice adapted for a television series directed by Zhu Wenshun (朱文顺) and produced by Jilin Television Station (吉林电视台) in 1986, and directed by Li Wenqi (李文歧)

and produced by the Literature and Art Centre of the Propaganda Department of Shenzhen City (深圳市宣传部文艺创作中心) in 2003. Furthermore, this novel is going to be adapted as a 3D film in 2013 by Hark Tsui (徐克), a Vietnamese-Chinese and American-educated film director (Chen 2011, 102; Baidu Encyclopaedia 2012).

There is no doubt that the novel *Linhai Xueyuan* has been extremely popular. These five adaptations listed above have spanned more than five decades since the novel was published in 1958. Four of these five adaptations were entitled *Linhai Xueyuan* after the novel; the opera film, however, was named *Taking the Tiger Mountain by Strategy*. Not only is the opera name different but so, too, is the format in terms of the accretion and elision of cinematic elements.

The opera film is set in the northeast of China in 1946. When the Chinese Communist Combined Army liberates the northeast region of China, a group of bandits hides in difficult terrain on the mountain called Tiger Mountain (威虎山); this location is easily guarded but hard to conquer. The head of the bandits is Zuoshandiao (座山雕, a nickname literally meaning ‘seated mountain eagle’), who had been associated with the Japanese before 1946 and is now known as the leader of the Kuomintang fifth security brigade. A reconnaissance platoon leader in the Communist Combined Army, Yang Zirong (杨子荣), under the leadership of a regiment chief of staff, Shao Jianbo (少剑波), eagerly pleads to be allowed to pretend to be a bandit in order to join the group of bandits entering Tiger Mountain. He is allowed to present a map obtained by the Communist Combined Army from a real bandit, a map of spy and bandit locations and contacts, to Zuoshandiao as evidence of his contribution. Zuoshandiao is eager to have the map because whoever has it can control the region. Yang Zirong passes tests set by Zuoshandiao and is thus able to send out information about Tiger Mountain to the Communist Combined Army. Yang, however, is



recognised by a bandit, Luan Ping (栾平), who had escaped from the Communist Combined Army and now has come to the Tiger Mountain. Yang cleverly conquers Luan with his knowledge of the bandits' contacts; in any case Luan will not admit he was a prisoner of the Communist Combined Army — if he does, he will be immediately killed because Zuoshandiao never trusts a prisoner. When Shao Jianbo receives information from Yang about the fiftieth birthday banquet of Zuoshandiao being held at the Tiger Mountain hall on the eve of Chinese New Year, he leads a group of ski-trained soldiers and the militia to the hall to wipe out the bandits. The opera film *Taking the Tiger Mountain by Strategy* is a greatly reduced version of the novel due to its nature as an opera. Although there is considerable loss of quality and quantity in time and space, many opportunities have been taken to present the opera film for political purposes.

The major loss is the dramatic reduction of the novel; for example, the novel has 36 chapters while the opera film has ten acts due not only to the feature film length limitation requiring the compression of the details of the novel but also to the operatic style — it takes much longer to sing than to say a line of text. The particular scenes of the novel lost in the opera film were Chapter 2, Xuda Mabang and Butterfly Puzzle (许大马棒和蝴蝶迷); Chapter 11, The Miscalculation of the Old Taoist Priest (老道失算); and Chapter 28, Assassin and Traitor (刺客和叛徒).

Chapter 2 is about how Xuda Mabang, a cruel bandit, and his wife Butterfly Puzzle, exploit the Chinese people who are working for the Japanese invaders. Xuda and his wife take strong measures to prevent the Chinese people from escaping from the work place where they are required to sleep naked (their clothes are taken away to be guarded by fierce dogs).

Chapter 11 is about an old Taoist priest in a temple. Although the Communist Combined Army sees some bandits enter the temple, the old priest denies that anyone entered the temple but concedes that someone might have walked in and out again. Actually, the priest is a secret liaison officer of the Kuomintang. The Communist Combined Army does not arrest him because they want to see who enters the temple so they can arrest whoever comes out. By doing it this way, the Communist Combined Army can obtain more information about where the bandits and spies of the Kuomintang are, and what activities they are conducting.

Chapter 28 is about an assassin, Yang Sanleng (杨三楞) and a traitor, Yu Dengke (于登科). Yang, a former Kuomintang Army Officer, stabs Shao Jianbo, a regiment chief of staff of the Communist Combined Army. Yu, a businessman born into a rich family, informs the bandits that there are only 36 Communist Combined Army soldiers. Taking advantage of this information, the bandits attack those soldiers causing the loss of eight army soldiers.

These three chapters were not presented at all in the opera film and the fact that they were not presented does elevate the essence of the novel; the protagonist, Yang Zirong, became much more dominant in the opera film following the political directions of Jiang Qing. Moreover, the operatic music delighted Chinese audiences during the Cultural Revolution; the audiences could easily remember and sing the songs. Thus, this opera film brought enjoyment within the political narrative of eulogising the Chinese Communist Party's Liberation War. This was the first film produced when the Chinese film studios resumed their film production. To a great extent, this opera film is very similar to the feature film *Linhai Xueyuan* produced in 1960 and discussed previously (Zhang 1995, 1346).

In comparison with *Taking the Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, *The Magic Lotus Lantern* was different because it was not an overtly political film. It was adapted from a Hebei Clapper opera produced by the Beijing Film Studio in 1976 incorporating ancient Chinese myths and legends. It was also known as *Save the Mother from the Mountain* (劈山救母), which is set in ancient China. A goddess is married to Liu Yanchang (刘彦昌), a scholar, and she gives birth to a boy called Chen Xiang (沉香). However, the goddess' brother, Erlangshen (二郎神), steals her Magic Lotus Lantern; as a result she has no power to defend herself and her brother ends up burying her under Hua Mountain. When Chen Xiang is fifteen, he not only learns some excellent martial-art skills under the guidance of the Master Great Immortal but also learns that his mother has been buried under Hua Mountain. He uses a powerful sword to cut Hua Mountain open, saves his mother and also recovers the magic lotus lantern from his uncle Erlangshen. After this his family gathers together to watch the magic lotus lantern being lit again.

Although this film, adapted from the Hebei Clapper opera, was clearly produced to extol love, there was no film critique about it during the Cultural Revolution. What is demonstrated here is that, while Chinese audiences were eager for political films, they also looked forward to non-political films. Since filmmakers could not make modern films about love, they used an ancient fairy tale instead. In a similar way, even contemporary Chinese filmmakers such as Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige (陈凯歌), who like to depict ancient love affairs, use this method to avoid film censorship. But such adaptation can result in significant changes: 'When filmmakers and their scriptwriters adapt literary works, in particular', as Linda Hutcheon (2006, 85) comments, 'we have seen that a profoundly moralistic rhetoric often greets their endeavours'. In other words, although the Chinese film industry has practised film

adaptation, often adapting novels for films, the question inevitably arises: how realistic are the adaptations when one considers the factual accuracy and precision of representation? Realism was achieved through a selective political process to portray the elements of class struggle and war during and before the Cultural Revolution.

### **Film Transplantation**

There were fewer transplanted films produced during the Cultural Revolution than adapted ones; eight films were directly transplanted from plays — seven feature films and one opera film. The seven feature films transplanted from plays were *Acupuncture Needles Praised under a Shadowless Lamp* (无影灯下颂银针 1974), *Fighting on the Slipway* (1975), *The Second Spring* (第二个春天 1975), *The Young Fellow* (小将 1975), *South China Sea Great Wall* (南海长城 1976), *Newcomers to a Mountain Village* (山村新人 1976) and *Maple Valley* (枫树湾 1976); one, *Safety Belt* (一副保险带 1974), was transplanted directly from the Huai Opera (淮剧), a local opera performed around the Shanghai region.

*Fighting on the Slipway*, which depicts how shipyard workers build a ship in an undesirable environment, has already been discussed in Chapter Three. *The Second Spring* has a similar theme to *Fighting on the Slipway*; it is also about how shipyard workers build a warship designed by naval engineers while facing steel quality problems. Both *Maple Valley* and *South China Great Wall* are war movies. *Safety Belt* is a class struggle-themed movie against corruption. *Acupuncture Needles Praised under a Shadowless Lamp*, *The Young Fellow* and *Newcomers to a Mountain Village* are films which praise new emerging events (新生事物, xin sheng shi wu) during the Cultural Revolution.

These eight transplanted films, in contrast to the adapted films, interpolated scenes rather than just eliding scenes from long novels. In other words, the transplanted films depicted vividly and dynamically many more events, through the use of cinematic techniques, than stage performances could, due to the limitations of time and space for stage productions. Cinematic representation which transformed more observations or ideas into a finished manuscript was, broadly speaking, also the practice of film adaptation in order to fulfil the needs of the Cultural Revolution. *Acupuncture Needles Praised under a Shadowless Lamp*, *The Young Fellow* and *Newcomers to a Mountain Village*, in particular, reflected this type of cinematic practice.

*Acupuncture Needles Praised under a Shadowless Lamp* was directed by Sang Hu (桑弧), a well-known and prolific director and scriptwriter, and produced by the Shanghai Film Studio in 1974. It was transplanted from a play *Acupuncture Needles Praised under a Shadowless Lamp* written by the Amateur Literary and Artistic Creation Group of the Shanghai Chest Hospital in 1974. The film is not a conventional feature length of between one-and-a-half and two hours, but is only 42 minutes long. Although the theme is one of class struggle between Mao's revolutionary medical health system and the revisionist medical health system, the fight between the protagonist and antagonist is not posed as a struggle among class enemies. This was quite unusual in the films made during the Cultural Revolution. Possibly there were too many films about struggle against a class enemy and Chinese audiences had become less than enthusiastic about such films.



**Figure 20:** Dr Li Zhihua (李志华, middle, female) and Dr Ding (middle, male) with two nurses treat Lao Yang (杨师傅), a factory worker suffering from heart disease, in *Acupuncture Needles Praised under A Shadowless Lamp*.

Set in a Shanghai hospital, *Acupuncture Needles Praised under a Shadowless Lamp* is about a young female anaesthetist, Li Zhihua (李志华), the main protagonist, who wants to use acupuncture anaesthesia for the heart surgery of Lao Yang (杨师傅). When Dr Li is making her rostered visit to a steel refinery, she is called to deal with a medical problem relating to Lao Yang's heart. Dr Li organises an ambulance to take Lao Yang to her hospital. When he is admitted to the hospital, the deputy head of heart surgery, Dr Luo (罗医生), the antagonist, sees Lao Yang's condition improving and suggests he go home and have nutritious food and a good rest to help him recover. However, Dr Li disagrees with Dr Luo and tries to stop him discharging Lao Yang. Consequently, Dr Li puts the case to the Party branch members for discussion. Lao Chen (陈师傅), the head of the hospital and the secretary of the Party branch, supports Dr Li with Dr Ding (丁医生). As a result Lao Yang continues to be

hospitalised. Although Dr Luo is an expert in using acupuncture anaesthesia for heart surgery, having already carried out 92 successful operations, he believes Lao Yang is unable to be treated surgically. In order to achieve his goal of 100 patients being operated on using acupuncture anaesthesia, Dr Luo prioritises the entry of some patients with minor heart problems. Dr Li points out that Dr Luo wants to be famous but does not really care for patients with severe problems on account of revisionist and capitalistic thinking; it is important, she says, that Mao's revolutionary medical health system serves workers, peasants and soldiers.

When Lao Yang's condition worsens, Dr Luo insists that he cannot guarantee the success of the operation nor can he take responsibility for the outcome because Lao Yang is allergic to common anaesthesia which may have to be used if the acupuncture anaesthesia fails. To ensure a successful heart operation Dr Li tries the acupuncture anaesthesia on herself and as Lao Yang's condition deteriorates, she advocates immediate surgical intervention. However, Dr Luo wants to transfer Lao Yang to an internal ward to receive conservative treatment. Dr Li insists that Lao Yang must be saved by surgery; otherwise, she states, he will not survive. The case once again is referred to the Party branch for discussion. Chen, the secretary of the Party branch, and Dr Ding, the main surgeon, support Dr Li. Lao Yang knows about his heart condition and, in a letter to the Party states he has absolute confidence in Dr Li and Dr Ding; if the operation fails he will not blame either of them and all he wants doctors to do is to summarise the causes of the failure so that they can better serve patients in the future. When Dr Li and Dr Ding hear about the letter, they are more determined than ever to operate successfully. As the operation is proceeding, Dr Luo goes to the operating theatre where he is seen by Chen, who persuades him to join them. The operation on Lao Yang is successful. In the coda of the film, as Lao Yang

is pushed out of the operation theatre, Dr Luo admits that he was wrong and too conservative; this successful operation has taught him a lesson, he says, and he will wholeheartedly serve the workers, peasants and soldiers in the future.

The two main differences between the film and the play are that, first, in the *mise-en-scène*, four Shanghai monuments appear — the Bund, the Park Hotel, Shanghai Mansion and Nanjing Road. Although these have nothing to do with the plot of the film, they demonstrate the dynamic life of people in Shanghai and portray prosperity; the stage version in comparison is rather static, particularly when the ambulance goes from the factory to the hospital. Second, the scene in the operating theatre on film is quite real (omitted from the stage performance) because audiences wanted to know how acupuncture anaesthesia worked; while acupuncture had been used up to then, acupuncture anaesthesia was a new emerging form of anaesthesia being performed by many doctors in hospitals across China at that time. The change of medium in this case to film, therefore, provided a more realistic performance.

Another film, *The Young Fellow*, is quite similar on two counts to *Acupuncture Needles Praised under a Shadowless Lamp*: it is of similar length (about 40 minutes long) and, although having the theme of class struggle, there is no overt political plot. The class struggle portrayed is between a teacher and students over how to implement Mao's 7 May 1966 instruction:

It is like this: students must learn first but they also have to learn various things. They must not only learn humanities, but must learn from workers, peasants and soldiers as well as learn to criticise the bourgeoisie. Schooling must be shortened; the education must be revolutionised; and the phenomenon of bourgeois intellectuals ruling cannot be tolerated any more.

This instruction from Mao was sent in a letter to Lin Biao to indicate how to teach military cadets. Consequently, on 1 August 1966, the *People's Daily* published an editorial reviewed by Mao entitled 'The Whole Country Should Be a Universal



School of Mao Zedong Thought' (《全国都应该成为毛泽东思想的大学校》).

When schools resumed their teaching in 1969, they all set up different kinds of factories, farms and military campuses.

*The Young Fellow* focuses on the Chinese education system during the Cultural Revolution. The film is located at a senior high school in Shanghai. A female student, Yang Bo (杨波), the protagonist, is not satisfied with her teacher Sun (孙老师), the antagonist, who recalls students from their construction work in a school factory to take part in a mathematics competition in class. The students are recalled when they are busy building walls; a student Xiao Ma (小马), the sub-antagonist, builds a wall that is not straight and starts to read a book about how to enter the next school grade. His actions are noticed by another female student, Xiao Li (小莉), the sub-protagonist, who informs Yang Bo about Xiao Ma's actions. Yang Bo indicates that she will deal with Xiao Ma after she has collected more bricks for the school factory building.

When Yang Bo returns with the bricks to the building site, there are no students to be seen; she finds out then that Sun has called them back to do a mathematics competition test. Yang Bo goes to the classroom and tells Sun that this sudden recall to the classroom is not fair to the students. She, with Xiao Li, consequently leaves the classroom without doing the test. When Sun notices they have left the classroom, she calls them back but they continue to refuse to do the test.

Xiao Ma obtains 99 points out of 100 in the test; he loses a point because he misses a word in the test although his calculations and equations are all correct. He argues with Sun that it is a mathematics test and not a Chinese language test. Sun agrees with his argument and changes his score from 99 to 100 points; Xiao Ma hence gains first place in the mathematics test. When the names of the winners of the

mathematics competition are about to be put on the 'big character' poster wall in the school, Yang Bo tries to stop them being put up; this enrages Xiao Ma and he accuses her of trying to stop the poster going up because her name is not on the winners' list. Instead, Yang Bo puts a 'big character' poster on the message wall in which she claims that teacher Sun's educational direction must be incorrect since it is only concerned with the quality of teaching and learning and ignores social and political education. This causes a considerable stir in the school and Sun and Yang Bo start arguing about the classroom education curriculum.

Sun tells Yang Bo that she should not come to her mathematics class; being the class monitor, she is setting a very bad example to other students. Yang Bo replies that she has a right to receive the education and no one can deprive her of her rights as she is the next generation of the working class. Chairman Mao and the Communist Party, she says, have given her the right to education. Sun reports Yang Bo to Li (李师傅), the head of school and the secretary of the Party branch (during the Cultural Revolution all schools across China had no principals but were managed by factory workers selected from the Communist Party). Li criticises Sun and points out that, through the Cultural Revolution, schools should train and develop students morally, intellectually and physically; they must not focus on the intellectual aspects of education only. Even though he openly supports Yang Bo, he also asks Yang Bo to talk to Sun.

After the conversation with Li, Yang Bo goes one night to Sun's home and talks to her. Sun tells Yang Bo that the Cultural Revolution has already been implemented, the ethos of the educational system is appropriate and now it is necessary to develop the quality of teaching and learning. Just before Yang Bo arrives at Sun's home, Xiao Ma, who is already there, tells Sun that he is going to put out a

critical article called 'Better to have more knowledge' as a critique of Yang Bo's argument. When Yang Bo arrives, the conversation between Sun and Xiao Ma is terminated. Yang Bo tells Sun that her favourite student, Xiao Ma, not only snubs moral education but also reads feudal, bourgeois and revisionist books. When Yang Bo shows these books to her, Sun suddenly realises that she has been wrong and questions Xiao Ma. In the finale, Sun goes with Yang Bo to the school factory site to carry on their mathematics lesson by using the uneven walls built by Xiao Ma as an example for the lesson.

These key interpolated scenes in the film were different from the play; they increased the realistic mode of events taking place by using cinematic techniques such as long take and close-up shots. The first scene in the film shows 60 students in the classroom situation; this cannot be shown on stage. The second scene depicts students playing in the school playground. The third scene portrays Sun and Yang Bo having a mathematics class lesson at the school factory building site. All three scenes are not presented in the play but they become realistic active events in the film by using features which plays may not be able to use such as flashbacks and montage.

The film, *Newcomers to a Mountain Village*, is different from *Acupuncture Needles Praised under a Shadowless Lamp* and *The Young Fellow* in terms of the theme and length, although all three films extol new emerging events. The film is of the conventional feature length of 114 minutes and has a class struggle theme. It depicts Mao's Red Guards, a group of Chinese youth who responded to Mao's call to move to rural areas to continue their revolution and build socialism in the countryside. This film was directed by Jiang Shusen (姜树森) and Jing Jie (荆杰) and produced by the Changchun Film Studio in 1976. It was transplanted from the play of the same

name, *Newcomers to a Mountain Village*, written by Zhao Yuxiang (赵羽翔), Wan Jie (万捷) and Li Zheng (李政) in 1975.

The film is set in Jilin province in 1971. A group of Red Guards goes there to continue the revolution in response to Mao's call from Beijing. One ardent educated female Red Guard, Fang Hua (方华), the main protagonist, writes a criticism of the power station master, Wang Deshan (王德山), the antagonist, over his personal handling of the electricity generator during the campaign 'In Agriculture Learn from Dazhai' (农业学大寨). However, the head of the village, Zhang Zhenhe (张振和), dissuades Fang from continuing to criticise Wang because he fears the power station will not be built in time, thus creating problems for agricultural activities. Wang, in order to gain support from the villagers, tries to criticise himself. However, Fang does not give in and has a face-to-face confrontation with Wang, condemning him for using improper means to buy the generator. This class struggle between Fang and Wang clearly represents the class struggle between socialism and capitalism.

When the commune director, Zhao (赵主任), learns about this confrontation, he removes Fang Hua from the position of political head of the village. However, Fang has the support of Zhang and other villagers as well as the youth group except for Liu Shinong (刘师农) who has a close relationship with Wang. She does not succumb and leads an investigation into Wang's history. Wang tries to prevent any divulgence of his secret deal and shifts the blame for the power station failure onto Fang. He then attempts to kill his neighbour, Chen Guiqin (陈桂琴), a daughter of a landlord, who knows his personal history. Fang also tries to convince Liu about the reason that Wang treats him differently. Finally, when Fang finds out that Wang was not a People's Liberation Army soldier as he claimed but was instead an officer of the

Kuomintang army who also had a part to play in an improper deal concerning the electricity generator, she exposes Wang's plot. As a result, Fang is reinstated as political leader of the village and she successfully leads the villagers in the building of a hydropower station to support their agricultural activities.

The *mise-en-scène* of the film is much more vivid than the stage scenes of the play. For example, Fang organises a village meeting to criticise Wang; the meeting comprises more than 100 villagers in the film, an unlikely number for a stage production; also a horse-drawn cart carries an electricity generator in the film — a scene that would be impossible on stage; and Fang and the Red Guards work with peasants side by side in the rice fields in the film, also impossible on the stage. All these and other realistic elements are depicted in the film but could not be shown or even described in the stage version.

What is demonstrated by these interpolated scenes is that the telling and showing of the class struggle are more effective in films particularly in terms of the interaction with the audiences. The films improve on the representations of stage performances and enhance the truisms articulated in the original manuscripts. The impact of transplanted films on the Chinese people was, in general, much greater than the impact of the original plays on which they were based, and certainly audience numbers for cinema far exceeded those for the stage; hence the films had greater popular appeal.

It is obvious, then, that the transplanted films were as important as the adapted films during the Cultural Revolution. The transplanted films interpolated more dramatic scenes from plays while the adapted films condensed dramatic scenes from novels. The filmmakers had to rely on intuition when choosing, through a

cinematic lens, vivid images that would trace the historical and political events of the time.

### **Film Reproduction**

The films reproduced during the Cultural Revolution were as important and political as the adapted films and the transplanted films. There were six reproduced films: *The Harbour* (1973), *Green Pine Ridge* (1973), *Fight North and South* (1974), *Reconnaissance across the Yangtze* (1974), *Guerrillas Sweep the Plain* (平原游击队 1974) and *The Younger Generation* (年青的一代 1976). The three war films, *Fight North and South*, *Reconnaissance across the Yangtze* and *Guerrillas Sweep the Plain*, were not changed significantly in terms of their length and narrative; some of the same actors and directors even worked on both the original and the reproduced films. For example, Chen Shu (陈述), a well-known actor, performed as an enemy intelligence director in both versions of the black-and-white *Reconnaissance across the Yangtze* in 1954 and the colour reproduction in 1974. *Reconnaissance across the Yangtze* has already been discussed in Chapter Three. *Fight North and South* produced in 1952 and reproduced in 1974 is a Chinese civil war-themed film portraying the Chinese People's Liberation Army fighting the Kuomintang army in 1947, and *Guerrillas Sweep the Plain* (produced in 1955 and reproduced in 1974) depicts Chinese guerrillas fighting against the Japanese invaders in the north of China in 1943 during the Chinese resistance war. The film *Green Pine Ridge* is different from *Fight North and South* and *Guerrillas Sweep the Plain* in that it is about class struggle in the rural area of China. It was produced in 1965, reproduced in 1973 and has been discussed previously in Chapter Three.

The other two films, *The Harbour* and *The Younger Generation*, are also on the theme of class struggle but reflect city life in Shanghai, a dominant arts and cultural centre. The former is one of Jiang Qing's eight model films and the latter is a conventional feature film. Both films also portray city youths who are not satisfied with their jobs due to bourgeois ideology.

The opera film, *The Harbour*, was first captured on celluloid from the Chinese opera performed by the Shanghai Chinese Opera Troupe and it was initially transplanted from the Huai opera, *The Harbour at Dawn* (《海港的早晨》), a local opera performed in the Shanghai region (Di 2006, 145). The first transplanted film, *The Harbour*, directed by Fu Chaowu and produced by the Beijing Film Studio was never released, having been dismissed by Jiang Qing immediately after its production in August 1972, as discussed in Chapter Three. The orders were then given for *The Harbour* to be directed by Xie Tieli and Xie Jin, and reproduced by the Beijing and Shanghai Film Studios in September 1972. However, the second version did not satisfy Jiang Qing, who put political pressure on the film directors, especially on Xie Tieli. On 14 January 1973, Jiang Qing convened a meeting with not only the film director, Xie Tieli, the cinematographer, Qian Jiang, and the main protagonist performer, Li Lifang, but also invited Premier Zhou and Politburo members such as Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, Ye Jianying, Li Xiannian, Li Desheng (李德生) and Wu De (吴德) to discuss how to produce a good version of *The Harbour* (Di 2006, 157 - 1967). As discussed in Chapter Three, Mao changed the plot from a portrayal of small problems to a class struggle among stevedores. This was a serious political intervention and Jiang Qing seized the opportunity to press on with the reproduction of the opera film. Xie and Qian had no choice but to work on it in 1973. There is no doubt that the 1973 reproduced opera film, *The Harbour*, is more realistic than the

1972 second version. As the 1972 first version of *The Harbour* was never released, it will not be discussed here.

The 1973 version and 1972 second version of *The Harbour* are almost identical; not only were they directed by the same directors, Xie Tieli and Xie Jin, they were also performed by the same actors and the same opera troupe. Although the film diegesis of the reproduced version of *The Harbour* in 1973 is essentially the same as that of the earlier version, the film is better in terms of the realistic scenarios in mise-en-scène and the opera music.

The film is set at a harbour in Shanghai. Fang Haizhen, a Party branch secretary, the female protagonist, helps a stevedore worker, Han Xiaoqiang, who, after graduation from a senior high school, does not like his job. He wants to be in the crew of a ship working internationally in order to support countries which are fighting against colonialism in Africa. Qian Shouwei, an antagonist portrayed as a class enemy, and who is a store clerk at the harbour, takes the opportunity to destroy the reputation of the Chinese aid goods by putting fibreglass into a hessian wheat bag which Han had accidentally dropped on the ground, spilling its contents; Fang and other workers face the urgent task of loading all the wheat bags onto the ship before a looming storm and checking out which bag is contaminated before the ship sails. Fang finds out that Qian deliberately contaminated a bag of wheat. At the end of the opera film, Fang helps Han to realise that every job, including his own, plays an important part in socialist construction.

Despite using all the same or slightly reformed Chinese opera music such as ‘Er Huang’ (二黄) and ‘Xi Pi’ (西皮) as well as songs in both the 1972 and 1973 versions, the differences in mise-en-scène are that first, the whole background setting and the costumes of all the performers are different in the 1972 version from the 1973



version; second, the wind is used more prominently in the 1973 version to create a more dynamic harbour environment so that the stevedore team's flag on the dock and trees on the working site and even the scarf on the shoulders of the main protagonist Fang Haizhen are all gently flapping, unlike the 1972 version in which, although the stevedore team flag is flapping, the trees at the work site and the scarf of the main protagonist, Fang Haizhen, are static; third, with regard to the cinematic aspects, Fang Haizhen is portrayed in more medium shots rather than medium close-up shots to avoid portrayal of the performer's high cheek bones which would have made Fang Haizhen look more like a glorious proletarian worker. In a sense, the 1973 version of *The Harbour* film is more like a feature film with more realistic scenes. Thus it improves on the more static stage performances. These cinematic manoeuvres were in line with the political process called 'Restore the plays on the stage but create the plays better than on the original stage into films' (还原舞台, 高于舞台), such that the artistic and aesthetic elements of the stage version were maintained and thereafter enhanced by using cinematic techniques to make the plays more realistic (Gang 2006, 183-185).

In the interests of stressing the political message, both versions of the opera films not only used popular Chinese opera music as the medium to promote the Communist ideology of class struggle but also at the beginning and ending of the films used the internationally well-known left-wing tune *The Internationale* composed by the Frenchman, Pierre De Geyter, in 1888. This tune was used to promote the cinematic revolution during the Cultural Revolution in a way similar to the use of voice-over quotations from Mao at the start of the opera film.

Another film, *The Younger Generation*, is similar to *The Harbour* in terms of the class-struggle narrative concerning a city youth who is not satisfied with his work.

The theme of the film is not overtly political, being similar to films such as *Acupuncture Needles Praised under a Shadowless Lamp* and *The Young Fellow* which depict class struggle inconspicuously. The 1965 version of *The Young Generation* was a transplanted film directed by Zhao Ming (赵明) and produced by the Tianma Film Studio (天马电影制片厂), one of three film studios belonging to the Shanghai Film Studio. The 1965 film was transplanted from a play of the same name written by Chen Yun (陈耘), who was a scriptwriter for both films, and Xu Jingxian (徐景贤), who was a political ally of the ‘Gang of Four’ and the Shanghai Mayor during the Cultural Revolution. The reproduced film, *The Younger Generation*, was directed by Ling Zhihao (凌之浩) and Zhang Huijun (张惠钧), and produced by the Shanghai Film Studio in 1976, the last year of the Cultural Revolution.

The film is about two young male undergraduates of the Shanghai Geological Institute, Xiao Jiye (萧继业), the protagonist, and Lin Yusheng (林育生), the antagonist, who have already been designated to work with a prospecting team in Qinghai province. However, Lin comes back to live with his parents in an affluent residential area in Shanghai claiming he needs medical treatment for his leg problems. During his stay of six months in Shanghai, he tries to get a job at the Geological Institute and finds a friend, Xiao Wu (小吴), from a rich family who, like himself, is unwilling to go to the remote areas of China to work after graduation. Under the influence of Xiao Wu, Lin starts to listen to Western music; and with regard to work, he tries to use his parents’ relationship with the Party secretary of the Geological Institute to get a job at the Institute in order to pursue the material pleasures of city life. At the same time, he tries to convince his girlfriend to stay in Shanghai with him.

When Xiao Jiye leaves Qinghai province and goes back to Shanghai for a conference on new practical geological prospecting methods, he is told by his leader to inquire about Lin Yusheng's health problem and also to get treatment for his own leg problems. When Xiao seeks treatment for his leg problems at the hospital to which Lin goes, he finds out that Lin has presented a fake medical report about his leg problems to his work place in Qinghai. When Lin Yusheng's parents discover this, they tell him who he really is — that he is their adopted son and his real parents are revolutionary martyrs. After Lin learns of his adoption and his real parents, he admits his wrongdoing and states he is willing to go back with Xiao to work in Qinghai province.

Although the narrative of both film versions of *The Younger Generation* was not significantly altered, the political tempo was changed quite dramatically from the 1965 version to the 1976 version; in addition it was produced in colour in 1976. The changes were necessary in order to adhere to the political demands of the Cultural Revolution.

The first change involves the background of the work site: a huge red banner with a political slogan 'Bravely strive for the year of 1962 and ferociously attack imperialism, revisionism and reactionaries' (奋战一九六二年狠狠打击帝修反) hangs on the rigger in the 1976 version of *The Younger Generation*; this is not in the 1965 version. It is clear that adding the political slogan in the 1976 version is to suit the needs of the time.

The second change concerns the scene in the 1965 version where Xiao receives two cow horn cups from an old Tibetan man; Xiao wants to give Lin these two cups to wish him and his girlfriend great happiness when Lin leaves for Shanghai to have his leg problems treated. This scene was elided in the 1976 version of the film

in which Xiao instead gives Lin a bunch of medicinal herbs which he received from an old Tibetan man. The scene from the 1965 version was dropped because it extolled love, and was seen as bourgeois romance; this did not suit the political climate of the Cultural Revolution.



**Figure 21:** Top: still from the 1976 version of *The Younger Generation* (年青的一代). Bottom: still from the 1965 version. Xiao Jiye (萧继业, right) is the protagonist and Lin Yusheng (林育生, left) is the antagonist in both films; Xiao is performed by different actors but Lin is performed by the same actor Da Shichang (达式常).

The third change is that, in the 1976 version, there are no students performing Uighur dances about the romantic life of the students at the Geological Institute hall; also there is no mention of students' dreams to be famous Uighur dancers in the future, although romantic dances were featured in the 1965 version. It was a political decision to cancel these scenes because the life of students in 1965 was completely different from the life of students during the Cultural Revolution.

A fourth change for political purposes was made in the 1976 version of the film. This version created a Professor Yan (严教授) who wants Lin Yusheng to be his assistant lecturer and who therefore supports Lin's wish to stay in Shanghai, whereas in the 1965 version, Lin himself contacts his mother's colleague and old friend, the Party Secretary Wu (吴书记) at the Institute in order to procure work there — and there is no Professor Yan at all. This was a typical political manoeuvre during the Cultural Revolution to create 'bad' intellectuals and 'good' Communist Party members. However, this Professor Yan, like Xiao Wu, is an evil character who never appears on screen.

These major changes, interpolated scenes and elided scenes, shortened the 1976 film version to 86 minutes from 107 minutes for the 1965 version to present a more politically suitable film for the Cultural Revolution. The reproduced film, the 1976 version, seems to have lost the equilibrium it had in its juxtaposition of class struggle and love extolled in the 1965 film version. Despite an eleven-year gap, something that did not change was the actor chosen for the role of the antagonist, Lin Yusheng: Da Shichang, a very popular actor mentioned in Chapter Three, performed the role in both films. A significant change in the 1976 version, however, is that the antagonist is dominant on screen throughout. In other words, the 1976 version was the

only reproduced film to assign the dominant role to the antagonist, a unique cinematic phenomenon at the time of the Cultural Revolution.

Although there were few reproduced films during the Cultural Revolution, those which were reproduced were arguably among the finest classical class struggle and war-themed films of the period. The six reproduced films discussed here were the most popular; *The Harbour* and *The Younger Generation* were the best in terms of their realism and their social and political awareness as exhibited in their narratives. These reproduced films, through their accounts of the social and political realities of the Cultural Revolution, provided inspirational entertainment to Chinese audiences.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter examined film adaptation, transplantation and reproduction during the Cultural Revolution. The discussion shows that the Chinese film industry not only translated novels into films, transferred plays and operas into films, or remade old films into new films, but also reinforced the social and political messages of these films to fit the ideology of the Cultural Revolution. The film diegesis was political and the film images mainly displayed workers, peasants and soldiers (and sometimes, too, Chinese youth), portrayed as socialist heroes.

Adapted, transplanted and reproduced films comprised the largest proportion of the films produced during the Cultural Revolution and all, at that time, disseminated socialist ideology to the Chinese people. They were subject to a selective political process to determine which novels, plays, operas, and films were to be adapted, transplanted and reproduced as new feature films. Cinematic practices reinforced the political agenda by using idiosyncratic film patterns and homogenised interpolation and elision of film diegesis.

Significant themes of cinematic realism reflected in Chinese cinema during the Cultural Revolution included the class struggle of the proletariat versus the bourgeoisie; Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (Chinese style) versus Revisionism (Russian model); the Chinese civil war; and the Chinese resistance war against the Japanese invasion. These themes will be analysed in the following chapter. The analysis will provide a further detailed account of cinematic realism involving ideological elements and aesthetic codes relevant to the historical stages of the Cultural Revolution.

## Chapter Five

### Significant Themes of Cinematic Realism

The most notable and dominant themes of the 93 films produced during the Cultural Revolution were class struggle and war. The class struggle-themed films included those with industrial, agricultural, educational and medical subjects and the war-themed films dealt with topics related to the Chinese civil war and the Chinese resistance war against the Japanese Invasion. Despite these realistic topics, Paul Clark (1987, 104) argues:

The more typical revolution films made during the nine years before 1965, anticipated the aesthetic excess of the Cultural Revolution. Their emphasis on a stereotyped and often inauthentic heroism was a major element in the socialist mass culture in which film played a central part.

In other words, the films made during the Cultural Revolution, as well as those made before it, used similar stereotypes; the protagonists, socialist heroes, were usually embellished and the antagonists, class enemies, were usually belittled. In this way, Chinese cinema espoused the same ideology before and during the Cultural Revolution. The contention of this chapter is that these film themes truthfully reflected historical moments of China from 1937 to 1976, but this is not to say that they did not embellish or romanticise the truth to serve Party interests. In order to provide evidence for this contention, four films have been specifically chosen for examination.

The chapter starts with an examination of *Spring Seedling* (1975), a class struggle-themed film with a medical subject, directed by Xie Jin, a prominent and prolific filmmaker. The film depicts the lack of a basic medical and health system in rural areas of China and how the lack of a health system leads to a class struggle between poor peasants and a well-established doctor. This examination focuses on the



cinematic structure and content of the film in order to demonstrate how it presented class struggle both politically and aesthetically.

The chapter then examines *Jubilant Small Cool River* (1976), another class struggle-themed film, a struggle against ‘capitalist roaders’, to establish the extent to which the film presented capitalist ideas in the socialist society and how these ideas were presented. The discussion of this film also considers the extent to which its theme epitomised the reality of Chinese society, especially peasant life in the rural areas of China.

The third film for discussion is *Sparkling Red Star* (1974), a war-themed film on the topic of the Chinese civil war. A critical comparative analysis is undertaken between the diegesis of this film and the Italian film *Rome, Open City* (1945); the aim here is to explain how political interference impacted on the presentation of the Chinese civil war with regard to the film’s realistic elements and cinematic techniques.

Finally, the chapter examines *The Red Lantern* (1970), another war-themed film on the topic of the Chinese resistance war against the Japanese invasion. Attention is given to the film narrative, in particular, the relationships among the family members in order to demonstrate personal survival, national survival and the survival of a valued social and political dimension. Furthermore, this chapter also discusses how Jiang Qing was involved in the creation and production of this film.

### **Class Struggle on the Medical Front — *Spring Seedling***

*Spring Seedling*, a film directed by Xie Jin in collaboration with Yan Bili (颜碧丽) and Liang Tingduo (梁廷铎) and produced by the Shanghai Film Studio in 1975, is claimed by some Mainland Chinese film scholars, such as Zhang Wei (2006) and

Yang Yuanying (2006), to be one of the most conspiratorial films produced by the Chinese film industry during the Cultural Revolution. The concept of the conspiratorial film could be derived from ‘The Political Report to the 11<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party’ (《中国共产党第十一次全国代表大会的政治报告》) by Hua Guofeng (华国锋, 18 August 1977), the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, who stated: ‘The literature and art they produced in the name of the “capitalist roader” turned into a real literature of conspiracy in order to make indiscriminate attacks vilifying the Party leadership’. The film sought to show how revisionism and capitalism overruled socialism and its proletarian dictatorship; this was achieved by using allegories to portray medical professionals who, although they worked at the socialist commune hospital, did not care about the poor and middle-class peasants in a rural area of China.

Despite the fact that this film was made during the Cultural Revolution, it follows a similar pattern to Xie Jin’s films made before and after the Cultural Revolution; it follows his stylistic matrix of ‘good people unjustly treated’ (好人蒙冤), ‘social value discovered’ (价值发现), ‘moral influence triumphant’ (道德感化) and ‘benevolence prevailing over malevolence’ (善必胜恶) used in his many films such as *Stage Sisters* (1965) and *Hibiscus Town* (芙蓉镇 1986). These, then, were typical class struggle-themed features. In relation to these features Ma Ning (1992, 259) concludes:

Xie Jin in his filmmaking inherited and transformed codes and conventions of leftist film melodrama and Maoist peasant melodrama. In using a yin-yang bipolar structuring device as a formal principle to organise different modes of representation, discourses, political/ideological values and concepts, and forms of subjectivity into a system of conflict, the story or *fabula* in his films usually attained a macro, social-historical dimension as well as a micro, personal and melodramatic dimension.

These key features dominated Xie Jin's films in both the Maoist era and the post-Mao period.

There was also an interesting debate among Mainland Chinese film and culture scholars such as Zhu Dake (朱大可) and Shao Mujun (邵牧君) and others about the constructivism of Xie Jin's films. Zhu, an Australian-educated film critic and writer, published his article called 'Deficient Modes of Xie Jin's Films' (谢晋电影模式的缺陷) in *Wenhuibao* on 18 July 1986. He concluded that the political nature of Xie Jin's films was intended to cater for social and political power by means of an excessively pragmatic aesthetics which took the form of what Zhu labelled 'tawdry cultural products'; he also declared that the films had inherited outdated modes not suited to the zeitgeist of Chinese society. Zhu argued that Xie Jin made similar kinds of films all his life, however, even after the Cultural Revolution. In response to Zhu's critique, Shao, a well-known film critic, published an article called 'A Defence of Xie Jin's Films' (为谢晋电影一辩) in *Wenyibao* (文艺报) on 9 August 1986. He, with another famous veteran film critic, Zhong Dianfei (钟惦棐), recognised that cinematic realism is about the praise and exposure of social phenomena and Xie Jin's films did follow this trajectory. In addition, Zhong also praised Xie Jin in an article called 'Ten Thoughts About Xie Jin's Films' (谢晋电影十思) in *Chinese Movie Times* on 13 September 1986, saying that 'the era had Xie Jin and Xie Jin had no era' (时代有谢晋而谢晋无时代) to pay tribute to Xie Jin's contributions to the Chinese film industry. However, despite the debate about Xie Jin's films among Mainland Chinese film scholars, the film *Spring Seedling* attracted little attention in regard to the impact of its political economy and aesthetics on the Chinese people during the Cultural

Revolution. Under these circumstances, *Spring Seedling* has been deliberately chosen for analysis here.

Even today, *Spring Seedling* cannot be viewed in official venues such as libraries and cinemas in Mainland China, but it can be watched on the Internet and bought from DVD hawkers in China, indicating how Chinese officials still currently deal with this film. The film realistically portrays the lack of basic medical facilities in the rural areas of China in order to describe the class struggle against revisionism and capitalism. The original film script, eulogising ‘barefoot doctors’ as a newly emerging phenomenon during the Cultural Revolution, was called ‘*Barefoot Doctor*’ (赤脚医生). The script was initially completed in 1973 and incorporated the information from a research report entitled ‘Viewing the Direction of the Revolution in Medical Education from the Growth of Barefoot Doctors Movement’ (《从“赤脚医生”的成长看医学教育革命的方向》) about a rural ‘barefoot doctor’, Li Honghua (李红华), who serves the peasants wholeheartedly, and the head of a commune hospital, Du Wenjie (杜文杰), who is also welcomed by the peasants after he changes his negative attitude to a positive one about the ‘barefoot doctors’ (Zhang 2006, 248).

However, in 1974, after the 10th Chinese Communist Party Congress, Zhang Chunqiao, one of the ‘Gang of Four’, invited many worker-peasant-soldier ‘barefoot doctors’ and artists to a symposium to modify this script. Zhang instructed them to change the theme from being an apolitical one to a political one, to reflect how the Cultural Revolution protected the growth of the ‘barefoot doctors’ movement and how, were it not for the Cultural Revolution, these doctors would never have appeared in the first place (Zhang 2006, 249). It is important to note that the theme implied, in a subtle way, that the class struggle between proletarian socialism and capitalist

revisionism represented the political class struggle between the ‘Gang of Four’ and Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping during the Cultural Revolution. Thus, *Spring Seedling* undoubtedly was born as a result of the direct intervention of Zhang and Jiang Qing’s political allies in Shanghai.

Despite the political character of *Spring Seedling* as a conspiratorial film, Xie Jin, the main director of this film, did not experience political harassment after the Cultural Revolution. By contrast, even though *Sparkling Red Star*, another film produced during the Cultural Revolution, was not labelled a contentious film, Li Jun (李俊), the main film director, sustained enormous political pressure from Chinese officials after the Cultural Revolution due to film modifications made according to Jiang Qing’s orders (Cui 2005, 156). Hence this study considers not only the filmic reality in regard to the film *Spring Seedling*, but also the political reality in the Chinese film industry generally.

The film is set in a rural village in Southern China and its narrative structure stretches about seven years from 1965 up to the time of the Cultural Revolution. A political leader of a women’s work team in the village, Tian Chunmiao (田春苗, meaning ‘field spring seedling’), the main protagonist in her mid-twenties, helps her neighbour, A Fang (阿芳), to take her sick child, Xiao Mei (小妹), to Chaoyang People’s Commune Hospital (朝阳人民公社医院). A doctor in his mid-fifties in the emergency section, Qian Jiren (钱济仁), one of the antagonists, is not willing to immediately treat Xiao Mei; instead he continues discussing his research project called *Talk about Mediation and Treatment of Bodies* (养身疗法浅谈) with Mr Du Wenjie (杜文杰), the hospital Head, the main antagonist. While they talk to each other, Mr Du receives a call from Li Ajiang (李阿强), the Party Branch Secretary of

Hubin Village asking him to save Xiao Mei. Mr Du then asks Doctor Qian to see Xiao Mei right away. After Doctor Qian sees Xiao Mei, he decides not to perform any emergency treatment due to the hospital's lack of medicine. He asks why Xiao Mei was not sent to this hospital earlier despite the fact that he knew Xiao Mei had been waiting some time in his consulting room. Before being transferred to the County Hospital at the request of Doctor Qian, Xiao Mei dies in the arms of Tian Chunmiao. A close-up shot shows Tian Chunmiao, desperate, angry and in tears, repeatedly calling Xiao Mei's name. This scene really moved audiences because it highlighted the lack of medical services in rural areas as well as the attitude of Doctor Qian. The opening of the film depicts the under-developed medical system in the countryside, a real and universal problem in China still. The most advanced and well-equipped hospitals are always in the cities. However, the careless attitude of Doctor Qian was exaggerated in order to create the stereotypically negative image of the antagonist for the continuum scenes.

When Tian Chunmiao is sent to study at the Commune Hospital to become a 'barefoot doctor' following Chairman Mao's directive 'to place the key of health and medical work into rural areas', Mr Du asks Doctor Qian, because he is the head of the medical treatment team, to take care of Tian. However, Doctor Qian does not allow her to study medicine and arranges for her to do all the cleaning work at the hospital. In Doctor Qian's eyes, Tian is a peasant who can hold a hoe but cannot handle a syringe. At the same time, a new young male graduate doctor, Fang Ming (方明), is designated to work at the Commune Hospital; when Tian starts studying there, he helps her from time to time with her medical studies. However, Doctor Qian is not happy with the arrangement and complains to Mr Du who shares his view that peasants are not fit for medical work. In addition, Mr Du emphasises that medicine is

scientific and concerns life and death matters, and advises Doctor Fang that he should not allow Tian to see patients although she has been sent to the hospital to study medicine.

Tian is thus unable to pursue her studies at the Commune Hospital and goes back to her village. Before Tian leaves, she says that this hospital is not for poor or middle-class peasants as Mr Du and Doctor Qian look down upon them. She argues loudly that since poor and middle-class peasants can use their hands to overturn the 'Three Biggest Mountains' (feudalism, revisionism and capitalism), to change China from a feudal society into a socialist society, they are surely able to deal with syringes. The camera shot shows her confidence in a close-up and in an upwards shot the camera shows her disappointment but also hints at the arrival of a great political movement.

After she gets back to the village, Tian gives the villagers some preventative herbal remedies and also uses acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine to cure Xiao Long (小龙, an older brother of Xiao Mei) who is suffering from pneumonia. Xiao Long's grandmother asks Jia Yuexian (贾月仙), a female antagonist, a traditional countryside medical practitioner who has a good relationship with Doctor Qian, to treat Xiao Long; she is stopped by Tian who exposes the fact that Jia was using sodium bicarbonate to treat Xiao Long. Subsequently, Tian, with the support of the Party Branch Secretary, Li Ajiang, Doctor Fang and the village people, establishes a small clinic in Hubin Village to treat common diseases. This infuriates Mr Du because he thinks the clinic has been set up in opposition to the Commune Hospital and he presents a notification from the County Medical Authority compelling Tian to close the clinic down. In addition, Mr Du confiscates her medication box; however, he cannot curb her enthusiasm to serve the peasants. All scenarios up to this point have

taken place just before the Cultural Revolution. Although the struggle between the peasant, Tian Chunmiao, and Mr Du with Doctor Qian is presented as apolitical, the film is easily read as a thinly-veiled political struggle between peasants and intellectuals.



**Figure 22:** The ‘Barefoot Doctor’ Tian Chunmiao (田春苗) carrying a hoe and a medicine box goes to work in the fields so she can treat sick peasants.

When the Cultural Revolution begins, Tian becomes ‘a revolutionary rebel’ entering the ‘barefoot doctors’ training class at the Commune Hospital where Mr Du and Doctor Qian try to manage angry peasants who had previously wanted to become ‘barefoot doctors’. However Tian insists all the medical lessons should be arranged by ‘barefoot doctor’ trainees despite the promises of Mr Du and Doctor Qian to give some extra material incentives to the barefoot medical trainees. Tian also asks Mr Du and Doctor Qian why their attitude has changed from opposing the training of ‘barefoot doctors’ just before the Cultural Revolution to supporting the training of



‘barefoot doctors’ at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution; she also asks after the purpose of this training class for the ‘barefoot doctors’. When political pressure starts to build up on Mr Du with regard to his intentions, he has no choice but to let Tian and Doctor Fang do whatever they want to do.

Tian suggests during the training class that Doctor Fang should receive a special patient, Uncle Shuichang (水昌伯), who has been suffering for some time from a spinal vertebra disease. Doctor Fang agrees to treat uncle Shuichang and so, with the help of Tian and other ‘barefoot doctors’, gives him a combination of Chinese and Western medicine.

When Doctor Fang and Tian are in the middle of treating Uncle Shuichang, Mr Du receives a letter from Mr Liang (梁局长), a bureau chief at the County Medical Authority who represents Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping’s political line, indicating that the Cultural Revolution will be short-lived. Realising that the duration of the Cultural Revolution is unpredictable, Mr Du seizes the opportunity to dismiss all the ‘barefoot doctor’ trainees despite his previous promises; furthermore, he suspends Doctor Fang’s work and makes him write a self-criticism. Mr Du also smashes a bowl of Chinese medicine made by Tian for Uncle Shuichang, saying that Tian is not a qualified doctor at the Commune Hospital.

In the final section of the film, Mr Du and Doctor Qian realise that Tian’s Chinese medicine has had a negative effect on Uncle Shuichang and they think this may be due to poisonous Chinese herbs. They try to save Uncle Shuichang in order to cover up their previous failure to carry out their responsibilities and they organise an ambulance to take him to the County Hospital. However, Doctor Qian, like Mr Du, realises, that if Uncle Shuichang dies, Tian and Doctor Fang will have to take full responsibility for trying out their combination remedy. Doctor Qian, who was born

into a landlord family and has therefore always hated peasants, deliberately asks a young nurse to inject Uncle Shuichang with improper medication and tries to shift the blame onto Tian. However, Tian stops the injection from taking place and asks what medication Doctor Qian is using. When the nurse tries to pass the syringe to Tian, Doctor Qian grabs it out of the nurse's hand and smashes it on the floor. He then says he is a doctor and Tian has no right to see the medication he uses. Tian astutely uses her foot to cover a broken piece of syringe containing the medication. After Doctor Qian leaves, she picks it up and asks another nurse to check the medication. Tian and Doctor Fang subsequently learn that the medication is lethal.

When an ambulance comes to pick up Uncle Shuichang from the County Hospital, Doctor Fang stops Doctor Qian who is leading the way to the ward. Doctor Qian calls Mr Du for help. Mr Du then comes out and says he is the head of the Commune Hospital and he has the right to make the transfer decision, and continues to accuse Tian and Doctor Fang of making a mistake in treating Uncle Shuichang and not allowing him to rescue Uncle Shuichang. Tian responds that there is evidence that Doctor Qian was deliberately trying to murder Uncle Shuichang. Mr Du asks Tian for the evidence, yelling that Tian cannot incriminate Doctor Qian. Tian shows the result of the check, which causes the nurse who was trying to inject the medication into Uncle Shuichang to announce that she has one more injection ready. Doctor Fang grabs Doctor Qian and tells him that he is a wolf in sheep's clothing. Li Ajiang, the Party Branch Secretary, then reveals Doctor Qian's secret diary entry about Mr Du occupying the Commune Hospital and stamping out 'barefoot doctors' so as to regain his privileged position over the people.

Faced with the evidence, Mr Du states that he did not realise what Doctor Qian had done. Tian rebukes Mr Du for saying that whoever is against him is against

the Party. She tells him that he is no longer a real Communist Party member because he has been protecting Doctor Qian, has attacked 'barefoot doctors', has banned their clinics, and has smashed the medication bowl for Uncle Shuichang. In addition, Tian declares that these people are the bourgeoisie who have tried to defeat the proletariat and Mr Du has forgotten who he really is.

When Uncle Shuichang hears what is being said, he surprises everyone by walking out of the ward into the corridor, and stating loudly that what Tian is saying is absolutely right. Mr Du, on seeing Uncle Shuichang, silently bows his head in shame. Uncle Shuichang continues to walk to the crowded courtyard of the Commune Hospital where everyone is watching him. After drinking another bowl of Chinese medicine brewed by Tian, he triumphantly chants the slogan 'Long live Chairman Mao'! Everyone follows his lead, chanting 'Long live Chairman Mao'!

Although they may be described by Paul Clark (1987, 104) as inauthentic heroisms, these final sequences of *Spring Seedling* depict the realities of the Cultural Revolution. This film was a political and cultural product of the Cultural Revolution resembling Western 'New Wave' films in the way they employ a youthful iconoclastic spirit to challenge established dogma or conventions. Thompson and Bordwell (2010, 407-408) describe this kind of film as 'a combination of objective realism, subjective realism and authorial commentary to create a narrative ambiguity in the sense that a film engages with the social and political upheavals of the era'. Many Chinese filmmakers during the Cultural Revolution engaged with social and political upheavals by carrying out radical experiments with editing, visual style, and narrative as part of a general break with the conservative paradigm of cinema.

In other words, the deployment of spatial-temporal sequential scenes in *Spring Seedling* depicted the sharp contrast between the death of Xiao Mei, presented as a

reproach of the old, conservative medical system, and the survival of Uncle Shuichang, presented as praise for the emerging practice of ‘barefoot doctors’. Thus the film praised the new socio-political order of the Cultural Revolution and supported Mao’s agenda; this is why everyone chants ‘Long Live Chairman Mao!’ in the coda of the mise-en-scène.

*Spring Seedling* was the first film to portray anti-capitalist roaders when it was screened nationally in August 1975. The political allies of the ‘Gang of Four’ at the Ministry of Culture praised this film to the utmost because of its adherence to ‘three eulogies and one prominence’ (三歌颂, 一突出): extolling Chairman Mao’s revolutionary line, praising the Cultural Revolution and eulogising the newly emergent socialist events and promoting proletarian heroes (Zhang 2006, 249).

Even after the Cultural Revolution, *Guangzhou Daily* (广州日报) published an article ‘Seven Barefoot Doctors in Guangdong Province Honoured by the Ministry of Health’ (《粤7位“赤脚医生”获卫生部表彰》) on 16 February 2006, despite the fact that *People’s Daily*, the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party, issued an editorial ‘Do Not Use the Term “Barefoot Doctors” in order to Consolidate and Develop a Good Team of Medical Practitioners in Rural Areas’ (《不再使用“赤脚医生”名称, 巩固发展乡村医生队伍》) on 25 January 1985. Although the accounts seem to contradict each other, it is important to observe from these newspapers that ‘barefoot doctors’ were welcomed during the Cultural Revolution. Many Chinese still feel nostalgia for ‘barefoot doctors’ today as portrayed in the film *Spring Seedling*.

Although *Spring Seedling* was heavily criticised immediately after the Cultural Revolution, it received the endorsement of high officials and inspired revolutionary audiences during the Cultural Revolution because it reflected the

intense political reality of the complex power struggle being waged within the Party and the medical authorities at that time. Tian Chunmiao is presented in the film as beautiful, bright and youthful, while Mr Du and Doctor Qian are portrayed as old, sly and gloomy. This contrast created a strong political message conveying the idea that the class conflict between peasants and intellectuals was a struggle between proletarian revolutionaries and bourgeois counter-revolutionaries, not simply between rebels and conventionalists. This trend contextualised many films of Xie Jin through the manipulation of the cinematic diegesis of melodramatic styles.

### **Class Struggle against Capitalist Roaders — *Jubilant Small Cool River***

*Jubilant Small Cool River* is another class struggle-themed film which, by comparison to *Spring Seedling*, attacked much more starkly and directly the ‘capitalist roaders’ such as Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, who were opposed to Mao’s socialist revolutionary line. This film was directed by Liu Qiong (刘琼) and Shen Yaoting (沈耀庭) and produced by the Shanghai Film Studio in 1976, the final year of the Cultural Revolution. The film was made in Shanghai, the political and cultural base of the ‘Gang of Four’, at the time when the power struggle in the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee was intensifying between the ‘Gang of Four’ and Deng Xiaoping. As a result of the power struggle, Deng, who virtually managed the Chinese government, was dismissed for the third time from his position as first vice premier; Mao made the decision at the Chinese Communist Party Politburo meeting on 7 April 1976 ‘to revoke all Deng Xiaoping’s posts inside and outside of the Party but to retain Deng’s Party membership with his future to be advised’ (‘撤销邓小平党内外一切职务，保留党籍，以观后效’); this decision was published in *People’s Daily* on 8 April 1976. *Jubilant Small Cool River* effectively highlights the kind of complex

political struggle represented by the slogan ‘In Agriculture Learn From Dazhai’; a seemingly insignificant event, the debate concerning how to change the course of a river which affected two agricultural villages demonstrates the class struggle between socialist agricultural production and capitalist self-regulated production at that time.

In order to analyse the deployment of the film’s diegesis, a brief outline of the melodramatic plot concerning the political struggle in regard to the agricultural production between two village heads is presented here. The film is set in rural southern China during the Cultural Revolution; a number of villages and the land of their inhabitants have been consolidated into a People’s Commune, a huge collective farm. Two small villages, the second and the ninth, are situated on Small Cool River. Zhou Changlin (周昌林), nicknamed Huo Shao Xing (火烧星) meaning ‘short tempered and rebellious’, is the head of the second small village and the main protagonist. He develops a plan for diverting the river to reclaim more land for socialist agricultural production for both villages. The head of the ninth village, Xu Zhencai (徐振才), nicknamed ‘Tumbler’ (不倒翁) meaning ‘one, who despite blows that knock him down, always returns to stability’, is the antagonist; he creates a plan for his village called ‘rich and richer’. He does not want to change the course of Small Cool River because this change will affect his village’s fish farm.

Although the plan for diverting Small Cool River had been approved by the County Authority, the plan is not implemented because the two villages cannot reach agreement. Bai Hancheng (白汉成), a bookkeeper for the commune brigade which includes the second, ninth and other villages, and who is the main antagonist, informs Mr Xia (夏付主任), a deputy director at the County Authority, the antagonist and Bai’s distant cousin’s husband, at the commune brigade office about the lack of agreement as to how to implement the plan. After hearing this report, Mr Xia asks Bai

to bring Zhou into the office; Mr Xia tells Zhou that he supports Xu's opposition to the proposed change and he warns Zhou that if a Party member fails to follow his decision he or she will be expelled from the Party and if a cadre fails to follow his decision he or she will be sacked.



**Figure 23:** Main protagonist Zhou Changlin (周昌林), nicknamed 'Huo Shao Xing' (火烧星), left, talks about the plan to divert the course of Small Cool River to sub-antagonist Xu Zhencai (徐振才), nicknamed 'Tumbler' (不倒翁), right. Main antagonist Bai Hancheng (白汉成), a bookkeeper for the commune brigade, listens behind them.

However, Zhou not only argues with Mr Xia but continues with his plan. Eventually, Zhou persuades Xu to implement it by reminding him of a time when they were both exploited by a landlord before China's Liberation in 1949. He reveals the unfair contract between Xu's nephew, Yao Mengtian (姚梦田), and Bai Hancheng; he also exposes improper business deals involving Bai Hancheng and Ruan Fugang (阮富刚), the second sub-antagonist, in the name of the ninth small village. These deals,

in the name of socialist construction, took place without the knowledge of the villagers.

From this summary it is clear that the melodramatic diegesis of *Jubilant Small Cool River* unfolds within a political spectrum illustrated by a small agricultural event that reflects (albeit inconspicuously) current political agendas. The film was adapted from a novella of the same name by Wang Lixin (王立信) and published in the influential Shanghai literature and art periodical *Zhaoxia* (朝霞) in March 1975. The intense political struggle revealed in the film closely mirrored the atmosphere of the Chinese Communist Party Politburo at that time. Some cinematic sequences were depicted like stage plays in which the political dialogues about class struggle between the protagonist and the antagonists were strongly emphasised, but with simple cinematic settings as shown by the mise-en-scène. According to Zhang Wei (2006, 250), a Chinese film scholar at Beijing Film Academy, the ‘Gang of Four’ forced film crews to work on the film day and night in order to screen it nationally before 1 July 1976 — the anniversary of the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party; as a result the film was released as an anniversary gift with fewer than sixty shots. This film, like *Spring Seedling*, was labeled a conspiratorial film because it depicts Mr Xia, Deputy Director of the County Authority, as a representative of the ‘capitalist roaders’ in the Communist Party Central Committee as well as the regional leader of the Communist Party.

This is demonstrated at the beginning of the film when camera work changes from mid-shots to close-up shots or vice versa to depict Bai Hanchen, the main antagonist, with Xu Zhencai, the sub-antagonist and the head of the second small village; at his home, Bai gives Xu a present of a toy tumbler and praises Xu for being like a revolutionary ‘tumbler’. This metaphor implicitly indicates that Xu, who has



experienced many social and political movements, has never had any trouble before and like a ‘tumbler’ always stands back up. The background of the *mise-en-scène* is very simple. Bai and Xu sit at a table in a family dining room and converse about the life of peasants in the two villages, how to change the irrigation system of Small Cool River and the plan, ‘rich and richer’. Bai tells Xu that the Cultural Revolution has been going on for many years and it is time to allow peasants to take work opportunities to improve their lives rather than diverting the river. Xu responds that, even during the Cultural Revolution, the peasants’ work productivity has improved and he says he agrees with Bai and Mr Xia that the peasants should be encouraged to improve their lives. Bai says he is afraid that Zhou Changlin may not agree with Mr Xia because Zhou thinks the plan, ‘rich and richer’, is a move designed to encourage peasants to march on the capitalist road in opposition to socialist construction. Bai also reminds Xu that his nephew, Yao Mengtian, who lives in the second small village, worries about how he can afford to build brick rather than mud walls for his house.

Although there are no dramatic shots and only Bai and Xu appear in these early sequences, they not only portray the conversations that most peasants involved with village agricultural field work experience, but also more importantly portray the class struggle around the agricultural activities between the second village and the ninth village. These opening sequences set the layout for the whole film structure.

The following sequence consists of a long take of about nine and half minutes, portraying a fierce face-to-face class struggle between Mr Xia and Zhou Changlin about whether or not it is necessary to change the irrigation system of the river. In the eyes of both Mr Xia and Zhou, the issue, whether to change or not to change, is the class struggle between the ‘capitalist roaders’ and socialist

constructionists. Mr Xia tells Zhou that he knows he wants to divert the river but that Xu is against it; Mr Xia, therefore, tells Zhou that he considers it unnecessary to straighten and widen the river because it will affect the ninth village's fish farm and damage their economy. However, Zhou insists that the proposed changes will reclaim more land and lead to greater agricultural production. Mr Xia, mimicking Deng Xiaoping's voice and manner, states that it is time to implement the Four Modernisations (agriculture, industry, national defense, science and technology). Mr Xia responds by saying that, in accordance with instructions from the top, Zhou just has to ensure good agricultural productivity and opportunities to improve the lives of the peasants. He continues that Zhou should not criticise Xu's plan, 'rich and richer'. Zhou responds that, since the Cultural Revolution, agricultural productivity has improved and the lives of peasants have also improved; however, Xu's plan is a money-making scheme that is not in line with China's socialist construction.

The camera work then changes from mid-shots to medium close-ups. It shows Mr Xia laughingly saying that, even if it is a money-making scheme, the money does not go into personal private pockets and does not go overseas; more importantly, it takes them on the road to collective wealth, which does not violate the new Constitution. Zhou reprimands Xia saying that the new Constitution asks people to take the socialist road, and to criticise capitalism, and if all engaged in money-making schemes, then capitalism would prevail all over China. Class struggle should not be forgotten in socialist construction, he forcefully adds. Mr Xia retorts that, whenever Zhou opens or closes his mouth, all he speaks of is class struggle and class struggle cannot provide food or clothes, adding that people have already had enough of class struggle through the years of the Cultural Revolution. Zhou rebuts Xia's

argument by questioning whether he is being logical in seeking to reinstate capitalism in China so that Chinese people will have food to eat and will have clothes to wear.

Mr Xia raises his voice saying that he has worn this kind of political hat as a ‘capitalist roader’ for many years; he warns Zhou that anyone wishing to increase production will be criticised and if this kind of situation continues, the Party and nation will soon disappear; and that if it reaches the stage of capitalism, the nation will be better off. Zhou asks, ‘How about now?’ Mr Xia answers that it is too difficult to correct the problems now. Zhou asks Mr Xia who has said so, and Mr Xia answers that it was the Communist Party Central Committee. Zhou persists and asks Mr Xia who at the Central Committee said as much and Mr Xia replies that it was said by Deng Xiaoping, the representative of the Central Committee. Zhou states that a member of the Central Committee can also become revisionist, but he believes that Chairman Mao’s Central Committee would not have made statements such as Deng is claimed to have made.

Mr Xia explains that the Central Committee has already implemented the new policy, ‘Three Instructions as the Key Outline’ (to learn the theory in order to counter revisionism and prevent revisionism; to stabilise and unite; to put the national economy forward. 三项指示为纲: 要学习理论; 反修防修; 要安定团结; 要把国民经济搞上去). Any member of the Communist Party opposed to this policy, he continues, should be expelled from the Party according to the instructions of the Central Committee; if a cadre, this person should be sacked from his cadre position. Zhou Changlin, on hearing these words, murmurs that they are very familiar.

Interestingly, this part uses a long-take cut in a new sequence by dissolve, fading in on Mr Xia holding a fan, wearing summer clothing but not the ‘Chinese Zhongshan Suit’ (named after Sun Yat-Sen, 孙中山, an earlier revolutionary leader

who wore that style). The mise-en-scène also changes — many peasants are shown seated in the office when Mr Xia and Zhou Changlin have a fierce face-to-face debate. In this case, Mr Xia reveals to peasants that a few years before, some people acted foolishly during the *Great Leap Forward*; as a result, many people sacrificed their lives toiling for nothing. He continues that if this kind of situation had not been changed, the Party and nation would have been wiped out; however, the Central Committee has now taken measures to allocate farmland to each person and fix the farm output quotas for each household (分田到人, 包产到户). On hearing this, Zhou tells Mr Xia that, if this is similar to the past, the People's Commune will disappear — that is no different to the individual work done in the past; hence Zhou does not think that, as a member of the Party, Mr Xia should be advocating this. Mr Xia retorts that even his superiors say, 'it does not matter whether a cat is black or white, if it can catch mice, it is a good cat' (不管它是黑猫还是白猫, 就要抓到老鼠就是好猫). This is a well-known catchphrase of Deng Xiaoping — a catchphrase for which he was criticised from the moment he said it. This scene was deliberately added to the film because Deng Xiaoping had been dismissed from the Party Politburo. In order to add what Deng Xiaoping had said previously, as Zhang (2006, 250) indicates, the political allies of the 'Gang of Four' in Shanghai forced film crews to interpolate some scenes directly to highlight the then current situation in order to criticise Deng Xiaoping. Mr Xia once again states that any member of the Party who is opposed to the Central Committee instructions, will be expelled; if a cadre opposes the decisions, this cadre will also be sacked from the position.

Here the camera work cuts back to the original setting; the dissolve-in shows everyone wearing the same clothes as before. Zhou reminds Mr Xia of the time when, as the head of the county, he came to their village to promote Liu Shaoqi's policy of

‘three-selves and one-package’ (三自一包: free plots, free markets, self-financing and a household responsibility system) after the *Great Leap Forward*. Xu Zhencai interrupts saying that these were things in the past and, as Mr Xia had written a self-criticisim about them, Zhou should not mention them. However, Mr Xia responds that it is necessary to mention things from the past as they will be judged to be good or bad in the future. He reminds Zhou, too, that, in the past, Zhou had shown petty-bourgeois fanaticism in seeking to divert the river despite its being a time of economic difficulty for the nation; and as a result he failed. Mr Xia maintains that this should teach Zhou a lesson that he should not forget. Zhou says that, because he did not have enough zeal for the change at that time, the plan was destroyed by Mr Xia. Zhou says that he will never forget this lesson.

The shots rotate to show Zhou walking towards Mr Xia saying that Mr Xia is angry because he does not like the Cultural Revolution on account of being criticised as a ‘capitalist roader’; consequently he blamed revolutionary rebels of the Cultural Revolution when he had just come back to work as a Deputy Director of the County Revolutionary Committee during the Cultural Revolution. Zhou then points out that Mr Xia is in danger, prompting Mr Xia to ask, ‘What is dangerous?’ He says he is not afraid of being sacked again. Becoming angrier he reminds them that he participated in the revolution in 1938 and once bled while fighting the Kuomintang and Chiang Kai-shek (蒋介石); he once sweated for the land reform; he has worked diligently since and does not know why he is called a ‘capitalist roader’ for working for a socialist society. Zhou responds that it is clear Mr Xia’s heart is with landlords and capitalists because he removed the poor and middle-class peasants’ mutual aid teams, cut agricultural cooperatives, cursed the People’s Commune, opposed the Cultural Revolution and suppressed revolutionary rebel factions. Therefore, Zhou says, if Mr

Xia is sacked again he cannot blame anyone but himself. Mr Xia reminds Zhou that they have both been sacked from their positions: he during the Cultural Revolution and Zhou in 1960. He now wonders who will be dismissed again in the future. Xu listens to their argument and, becoming worried about Zhou's behaviour, chants at him that 'rebels, rebels will be incarcerated or decapitated'.

This long take which makes up about one seventh of the film covers the political dialogues between Mr Xia and Zhou Changlin, a dialogue with which Chinese audiences at the time would have been very familiar, especially the catchphrases which Deng Xiaoping used during the socialist construction. At the time of the film's release, rebels like Zhou Changlin were everywhere in China during the Cultural Revolution because of Mao's theory of grasping the spirit of class struggle (阶级斗争一抓就灵). The 'Gang of Four' also used this particular theory of class struggle for the political purpose of gaining control of the Party Politburo.

Following the political dialogue scene, the camera shows Zhou Changlin going to Xu Zhencai's home to convince him of the importance of diverting the river. Zhou points out that Xu did indeed do some good things for his village during the 'in agriculture learn from Dazhai' campaign several years before but, nowadays, it seems he wants to sacrifice cultivated land for the fish farm and allow peasants to work outside of the village to make extra money. These ideas, according to him, are not in line with socialist construction and are instead taking the capitalist road. Xu asks himself why he is a 'Tumbler', always confronting Zhou, a 'Huo Shao Xing'. Zhou continues that the Cultural Revolution is now in its ninth year; if the river is not radically changed, they will be letting Chairman Mao down. This is typical of the exaggerations employed during the Cultural Revolution and hence commonly heard in almost all the films produced at that time. Zhou also convinces Xu that if they really

care about people's livelihoods it is necessary to uphold socialism and not let capitalism be reinstated. In the end, Xu agrees with Zhou that Small Cool River should be made straighter and wider. Zhou then presents a spade to Xu as a symbol of the work they will do together to change the course of Small Cool River.

When Bai Hancheng hears about the decision, he immediately informs Mr Xia in the next scene. Bai tells Mr Xia that Xu agreed with Zhou on how to change the course of the River. Metaphorically speaking, Xu is a fallen 'Tumbler' because of this agreement. Mr Xia wants Bai to tell Xu that what the ninth village is doing is in line with the Central Committee's 'Three Instructions as the Key Outline'. He also tells Bai that he will be promoted soon.

After Bai comes back from Mr Xia's place, he tells Xu that Mr Xia supports him and he should not give in to Zhou. The river diversion would mean that his village would lose a huge amount of money because the fish farm would be lost forever. Bai points out that Xu is a good model peasant for the county but Zhou is not; he asks why Zhou wants him to change the river's course and whether Zhou wants to be a model in order to destroy Xu. Despite Bai's provocation, Xu keeps quiet. Bai also says that whatever Xu does, Zhou follows and goes further; for instance, Xu writes 'getting rich and richer' on his door and Zhou writes 'continuing revolution' on his wall. Zhou always suppresses Xu politically.

The day arrives when the work on the river is supposed to start. However, the camera rolls on to show Xu is still at home, and even when the deputy head of the ninth village, Yu Zhifang (余志芳), comes to call Xu to go to work on the river, Xu tells her not to worry about it. Yu, nevertheless, says that she is going to lead the peasants to work on the diversion. As Yu arrives at the riverside, Zhang Erquan (张二全), a young man from the second village, sarcastically asks Yu why her model

villager is late for work. When all the peasants from the second and ninth villages are ready to work, Xu runs in to tell them to stop; if the fish pond is filled up, he says, it will affect the income of his ninth village. He will not, he adds, help implement the plan any more.

As the argument goes on between Zhou and Xu, the camera cuts in and shows a village girl calling out that Mother Yao wants to beat Yao Mengtian because he will not come to work on the diversion as he wishes to work elsewhere to earn extra money. On hearing this, Xu challenges Zhou saying that if the peasants in his village who go out to work are capitalists, what about the peasants in Zhou's village who go out to work, referring to his own nephew, Yao Mengtian, who is a young peasant in the second village. Wishing to prevent Yao Mengtian from going out of the village to work, Zhou picks him up in a boat and gets him home. The scene then cuts in at Yao Mengtian's home where Zhou, Mother Yao, Yao Mengtian and Jiang Chunmei (江春梅), a girlfriend of Yao, are at the scene. Zhou and Mother Yao start telling Yao about the origin of his name through flashbacks of Yao's father who was beaten to death by a landlord for a small piece of land which Yao's father had dug out next to Small Cool River. After hearing this, Yao says to his mother that, although he knows it is wrong to go out to work, he still wishes to. His mother wants to slap him but Zhou stops her, realising that Yao must have a reason; he asks Yao what that reason might be. Yao eventually takes out the contract between Bai Hancheng and himself. Zhou then realises that Yao wants to build a brick-walled house for his fiancée; Bai has already paid for the bricks and Yao has to go out to work to repay Bai the amount plus commission.

Once Zhou has obtained this contract, he goes to ring the village bell to get all the villagers over so that he can commence a class-struggle meeting to counter the



‘capitalist roaders’. He shows the contract to the village people. When Bai Hancheng learns from Ruan Fugang that Yao Mengtian has returned, Bai realises that this means trouble; he therefore decides to destroy the fishpond first to make more trouble for Zhou Changlin. Zhang Erquan, on seeing the fish flowing out of the pond, goes down to repair the fences. Ruan Fugang arrives and stridently accuses Zhang Erquan of deliberately destroying the pond.

All the peasants from the second and ninth villages arrive at the fishpond as Ruan is yelling. Zhang accuses Ruan of being blind. Bai Hancheng, emerging from the crowd, says that Zhang Erquan is a young man and all the peasants should therefore excuse him, but nevertheless he should confess that he destroyed the fence of the fishpond. Zhang insists that he did not sabotage the fishpond. Zhou, who has also gone down to repair the fences of the fishpond, finds a shoe in the pond. He realises that someone has tried to make trouble for him by setting up this conspiratorial trick — but the person responsible is not Zhang.

Xu Zhencai thinks that the person who damaged the fishpond must belong to the second village. Xu throws the spade, given to him by Zhou as a goodwill gesture, on the ground in front of Zhou. He then says that he is not going to change the direction of Small Cool River and walks away. However, Zhou is very patient and follows Xu to the side of Small Cool River.

The scene cuts to Xu Chengcai, Zhou Changlin, Mother Yao and Yao Mengtian under a large tree near the river. Xu faces Zhou and says that he works hard for his village and not only wants to improve the agricultural harvests but also to reward his villagers for organising the outsourcing of the labour; it is not wrong to want to make a better life for the peasants. Zhou tells Xu that Ruan Fugang and Bai Hancheng have been using him to cover their illegal activities; and that Mr Xia has

been using him to execute his capitalist line. They want to reinstate capitalism. Zhou continues that Xu uses sideline businesses to suppress agriculture and his second village is the last one carrying out agricultural activities now. Zhou gives their indenture paper (卖身契) to Xu and then pulls out the contract between Bai Hancheng and Yao Mengtian from his pocket to show Xu, who becomes furious when he finds out that Bai Hancheng has exploited his nephew, Yao Mengtian. Consequently, Mother Yao, a sister of Xu, criticises her brother's words, 'rich and richer', as they are not those of a Communist Party member.

At this moment, Xu's deputy, Yu Zhifang, brings Ruan Fugang to see Zhou and Xu. Yu takes out her investigation report to show both Zhou and Xu. When Xu reads it and finds out that Bai Hancheng has used the outsourced labour of the ninth village for the purpose of making extra money for himself, he realises he has been wrong. Then Ruan also exposes Bai's dishonest business deals.

The next sequence shows Xu, Zhou, Ruan and many peasants at Bai Hancheng's brigade office. Xu asks Bai if the shoe he has found in the pond belongs to him. Ruan Fugang accuses Bai of taking a spade with him to sabotage the fishpond when he was supposed to be catching eels. Faced with the evidence, Bai bends his head quietly, accepting the charge. The scene then shows that Xu is upset; he goes home to tear down his plan, 'getting rich and richer', from the wall of his family home and also throws away the 'tumbler' given to him by Bai Hancheng.

In the coda of the film, Zhou Changlin and Xu Zhencai work with the people from both villages to change the course of Small Cool River. Xu tells Zhou that he will always use this special spade to strive for socialism. Zhou replies that using only a spade to strive for socialism is not enough, adding that more Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong-Thought is needed. The camera then cuts in using close-up shots to

show Xu saying that the masses state correctly that the capitalists still march on and socialists have to continue to fight. Eventually the tolling of the village bell in this sequence replaces the song being sung.

There is little doubt that this film is unique despite the mediocre quality of the visual and aesthetic output, not only because it was made during the last year of the Cultural Revolution but also because no such film had previously been made with political dialogues directly and explicitly referring to the Central Committee's leadership of socialist China. In comparison with Chunmiao in *Spring Seedling*, Zhou Changlin in this film is an authentic socialist hero; he realistically represents the characteristics of Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution by rebelling against superior authority and seeking to create a new social and political environment by using Mao's theory of class struggle in socialist society.

### **Chinese Civil War — *Sparkling Red Star***

A war-themed film depicting the Chinese Civil War is *Sparkling Red Star*; it is quite different from *Spring Seedling* and *Jubilant Small Cool River*, though all were produced at the time of the Cultural Revolution. Not only did *Sparkling Red Star* depict the Chinese Civil War, thus reflecting a different theme, it was also a film made for Chinese children with an educational purpose in mind. Strictly speaking, *Sparkling Red Star* is also a film about class struggle, and like *Spring Seedling* and *Jubilant Small Cool River*, it portrays the struggle of the poor against the rich or more precisely, the Communist Party against the Kuomintang in the 1930s. This film, like *Undertaking*, eulogises the Communist Party but in a realistic and factual way; it is neither radical in its propaganda nor implausible as entertainment for Chinese children or even for Chinese adults, and its historical subject provides an opportunity

for contemplation of the past (one of the features of realism that Stanley Cavell identifies, as discussed in the Introduction).

*Sparkling Red Star*, directed by Li Jun and Li Ang (李昂), was produced by the August the First Film Studio in 1974. It was adapted from the novel of the same name written by Li Xintian (李心田), a prolific and famous writer, in 1972. The *syuzhet* (the employment of narrative) and the *fabula* (the chronological order and number of the events), to invoke a distinction used by the Russian Formalists (Culler 1981), were greater in the novel than in the film due to the time limitations of feature films. However, the film does depict the development of a child hero, Pan Dongzi (潘冬子), growing up as a poor boy to become a Red Army scout, then a child craftsman and a young apprentice, and finally to become a young Red Army soldier under the care and education of the Communist Party.

*Sparkling Red Star* is a distinctive feature film produced in a style similar to the Western genre of neo-realism. In particular, it is quite similar to the Italian realistic film, *Rome, Open City* (1945), portraying a group of children growing up during wartime in Italy. For example, the scenes of the deaths of Pang Dongzi's mother in *Sparkling Red Star* and Marcello's mother, Pina, in *Rome, Open City* are similar as both mothers die in front of their sons. The death images of both mothers in these two films had an enormous impact on audiences and each was the climax of the film's narrative in chilling but inspirational ways.

More importantly, the internal pattern of the verbal and visual scenes in the film in regard to political communications, realistic elements, cinematic techniques and valid political interferences, highlighted particularly in the introduction, can be further explored in the film. *Sparkling Red Star* is set in Liuxi village in southern China in 1931. Pan Dongzi, a child carrying some firewood, passes the house of a

local tyrannical landlord, Hu Hansan (胡汉三), who is fleeing his house as the Red Army is liberating his village. Hu stops Pan and forces him to reveal where his father, Pan Xingyi (潘行义), is. Consequently, Hu ties Pan Dongzi to a tree and beats him almost to death. The Red Army, under the guidance of Pan Xingyi, liberates Liuxi village, and rescues Pan Dongzi. After the revolutionary power has been established in Liuxi, Pan Dongzi participates in the struggle against the landlord by redistributing land; at the same time he also learns about self-sacrifice from his father who refuses anaesthetics during an operation because other wounded soldiers might need them for their surgery. However, in the autumn of 1934, most of the Red Army is compelled to evacuate the liberated areas. Pan Xingyi has to move with the Army. On leaving, Pan leaves his son a shining red star.

When the Red Army leaves Liuxi village, Pan Dongzi and his mother also have to leave and move to the forested mountains; Hu Hansan comes back to take control of Liuxi again. Wu Xiuzhu (吴修竹), a Red Army cadre, stays behind in Liuxi and continues to lead the continuing battles of the revolutionary guerrillas and the masses. He informs them of the decision of the Zunyi Meeting (遵义会议) that Mao be confirmed as the leader of the Communist Party; this news encourages Pan Dongzi and his mother as well as the revolutionary guerrillas and the masses. Pan Dongzi's mother heroically sacrifices her life to ensure the safe retreat of the people. When Pan Dongzi witnesses his mother's death, he becomes much braver and, under the inspiration of the sparkling red star, he actively participates in battles with the enemy; he deliberately destroys a suspension bridge in order to cut off the retreat of the enemy; he cleverly dissolves salt into water and soaks his cotton clothing in it because the salt then does not need to be declared at the enemy check point and he can thus take it to the guerrillas in the mountain. In addition, he organises with another child,

Chunyazi (椿伢子), to gather intelligence to pass to the guerrillas so as to sink the rice boats of the enemy; Pan Dongzi eventually kills Hu Hansan with an axe and leads the Red Army and the guerrillas in an attack on the enemy in Yaowan town (姚湾镇) where he works in a rice shop as an apprentice. Yaowan is liberated again.

In 1938, Pan Xingyi is chosen by his leader to meet Wu Xiuzhu and his mountain guerrillas in Liuxi district. The guerrillas and the Red Army, on the orders of the Communist Party Central Committee, are ready to move on to the front to fight the Japanese invaders in the north of China. Pan Dongzi eventually meets his father, Pan Xingyi. He puts the sparkling red star on his hat and becomes a real fighter of the Red Army, thus embarking on a new journey.

The film depicts a rather straightforward outline of the Chinese civil war from 1931 to 1938, the seeming lack of embellishment serving to mark the film as realistic. The Chinese Communist Party had only been established since 1921 and operated underground in many regions of China. In terms of the political communication there are several sequences in the film. The first sequences are the dialogues between Pan Xingyi and his wife, Pan Dongzi's mother. Before Pan and the Red Army retreat from Liuxi district he asks his wife whether she has handed in her application for membership of the Party, saying that, as he is a member of the Party, wherever he goes he will fight for the Chinese revolution. When his wife answers 'yes', Pan says, 'I feel reassured, our Party will have one more new member'. His wife confirms, 'Yes, so long as the Party is here, we can cope with the difficulties and problems'. These political dialogues serve to demonstrate hope for China and show the determination of the Chinese Communist Party to fight for poor Chinese people.

The next sequences depict Pan Dongzi's mother when she is sworn in as a member of the Party by Wu Xiuzhu; she stands, facing the red Party flag with its gold

hammer and sickle on the wall while *The Internationale* plays. She swears she will ‘comply with the Party constitution, abide by the Party discipline, execute the decisions of the Party, strictly maintain Party secrecy, sacrifice personal life, never betray the Party and fight for the cause of Communism to the end’. Pan Dongzi watches his mother’s swearing in and tells his mother, ‘You are a member of the Party and I am now the child of a Party member’. These political dialogues not only influence Pan Dongzi but also affect audiences because ordinary people were not aware of these procedures.

The sequences which follow show that Pan Dongzi fully believes in communism and when the Red Army retreats and Hu Hansan comes back to control their homeland, he proudly tells people that his mother is a Party member and she will not let people suffer. He also persuades people not to save his mother because it is too dangerous.

These three sequences, through political dialogues, portray Pan Dongzi’s mother from the time she joined the Party to the time she heroically sacrificed her life; they are included purely to extol the Communist Party. Pan Dongzi’s mother is a nameless hero because the film refers to her only as Pan Dongzi’s mother and her name is never used in the film. This reflects the reality of China before 1949 when most women’s names were unimportant in the strongly patriarchal rural society. As many unnamed females and males may have died for the Communist China, the new Chinese regime built the Monument of the People’s Heroes in Tiananmen Square in Beijing just after the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949.

In terms of the cinematic techniques of this film, the directors used voice-over and music, a common documentary method, to realistically set up the image of Pan Dongzi as a little revolutionary hero. For example, at the beginning of the film, a

voice-over is used to describe Pan Dongzi's childhood together with a montage showing firstly mountains in the countryside, then Pan Dongzi who has to work collecting firewood in the mountains:

Everyone has a childhood. My childhood began in bitter class suppression and was spent in fiery class struggle. That was more than forty years ago. It was the stormy year of 1931. I was then only seven years old. I heard the grown-ups say that the Chinese workers and peasants' Red Army led by the Communist Party and Chairman Mao had reached the south hills and had started the revolution there. The Red Army would soon come to our village.

A seven-year-old boy, Pan Dongzi, who should be at school studying, is, because of the cruelty and unfairness of society before 1949, working in the mountain forest. The voice-over also portrays the thoughts of Pan Dongzi about what kind of society he is in. Furthermore, this voice-over introduces the film to the audience without portraying every aspect.

The second voice-over describes the Red Army's difficult military position in the south of China in 1934:

Father went away and the Red Army left. Only many years later did I learn the reason. The Red Army's withdrawal was one of the grave consequences caused by the third left opportunist line. The opportunists would not let Chairman Mao be leader. They took away his command of the Red Army. Thus, we failed to defeat the enemy's first fifth encirclement and suppression campaign and had to give up the central base area set up personally by Chairman Mao.

The scene shows Pan Dongzi with his mother saying goodbye to his father and watching the Red Army marching away. The directors use very simple cinematic techniques to present the complex historical event which Pan Dongzi had experienced.

The third voice-over portrays grief. It states, 'Hu Hansan returned. The class enemy made a comeback. All the fruits of victory and the happy life we had won by following Chairman Mao's correct line were lost on account of the erroneous line of the then Party leadership'. This voice-over explains the revolutionary bases that were



lost because Mao was expelled from the Party leadership. These simple words once again reinforce the reality of history and also extol Mao's wise decision to first take the rural areas, then surrounding cities (走农村包围城市的道路); this decision was crucial in defeating the Chiang Kai-shek Kuomintang regime.

The final voice-over appears in the coda of the film. It confidently explains: 'Although the revolutionary road has many twists and turns the future is bright. I spent my childhood in the war period under the sparkling red star, and from now on I continue to march on a new path of struggle'. While none of these voice-overs may add to the film aesthetically, they all provide the historical background of Chinese society at that time — a society in which the little hero, Pan Dongzi, grew up. They add to the realistic elements by deploying documentary approaches although the Chinese civil war is not re-enacted in any detail. In this way the voice-overs do in fact serve the film's aesthetics, given that realism's distinctive feature is to appear natural or unmediated; the seeming lack of aesthetics is thus the very definition of realist aesthetics.

The music is another technique which was deployed by the directors of *Sparkling Red Star*. The music and songs were selected not only for their popularity, but because they appealed to children. There are five songs interpolated in the film: the main theme song is also called *Sparkling Red Star* played at the beginning and at the end of the film; the second is a lyric of the Children's Corps; the third is a lullaby; the fourth is a martyr's song and the last is an expressive song called *The Red Star Guides Me to Fight* (红星照我去战斗).

Each song is accompanied by appropriate visual images which express what the song is about, in particular, the first and the last song. For instance, the first song is the main theme song about a sparkling red star emitting bright and colourful lights,

how the sparkling red star warms hearts, and is the heart of workers and peasants and how the glorious Party will shine for many generations. The *mise-en-scène* is about the peasants and the Red Army establishing the local Liuxi government after defeating Hu Hansan, the tyrannical landlord in the village; Pan Dongzi passes on the local people's government sign to his mother to hang outside of the house formerly owned by Hu Hansan; this is done in a festive atmosphere with firecrackers being set off, drums beating and cymbals clashing. Although the first song is sung by a children's choir, the sound fades as establishment of the local government unfolds. This melody is also the main musical theme of the film.

The last song, *The Red Star Guides Me to Fight*, is accompanied with images of beautiful scenery to illustrate the purifying emotion of this song in *mise-en-scène*. The audiences were not only moved by this song but also by the stunningly beautiful background. The camera work rolling from the side to the back and then to the front from long-shots to close-ups, depicts the bamboo raft in which Pan Dongzi and Grandpa Song (宋爷爷) make their way on the surging river through the bamboo forest on a bright sunny day. This scenario is aesthetically soothing and tranquil; it is arguably the peak of the camera work in the film. This is how Pan Dongzi is sent to work as an apprentice at a rice shop in Yaowan where he kills Hu Hansan with an axe; he sends this information to the Red Army guerrillas in the mountain and assists them to defeat the Kuomintang armies.

As film tickets were relatively cheap at the time and most Chinese families did not have radios or televisions, they flocked to cinemas to watch the film. An unknown singer, Li Shuangjiang (李双江), after singing the song, *The Red Star Guides Me to Fight*, became a household name in China. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the record of this song sold more than 300 million copies.



**Figure 24:** Top: Main protagonist Pan Dongzi (潘冬子) is sent away to work in the rice shop in Yaowan town (姚湾镇) by his guardian, Grandpa Song (宋爷爷), and the playback of this scene is the song called *The Red Star Guides Me to Fight* (红星照我去战斗). Bottom: Pan pours kerosene on the quilt while Hu Hansan (胡汉三), a local tyrannical landlord and Kuomintang official, is sleeping after a banquet at the rice shop. Pan then lights a fire and immediately uses an axe to kill Hu.

But while *Sparkling Red Star* — the first children’s feature made during the Cultural Revolution — was undoubtedly entertaining, it was also heavily politicised. According to Di Jiannong (2001, 259), the political inspiration first came from Jiang Qing after she watched the Yugoslav film *The Railway Children* (铁道儿童). Following a Party Politburo meeting in October 1972, she encouraged filmmakers to serve the interests of the Cultural Revolution by creating some children’s films. The

film crew of *Sparkling Red Star* at the August the First Film Studio stated that the aim of the film was to spread knowledge of revolutionary Model Films and to promote the revolutionary film art; and so the birth of the film had the direct support of the Party (*Sparkling Red Star* 1975, 1).

Although *Sparkling Red Star* was not Jiang Qing's ideal type of Model Films, she not only watched the finished production but also viewed some of the rushes. She was said to be very satisfied with the completed production. While she was watching the scene with the song *The Red Star Guides Me to Fight* Jiang Qing is said to have commented: 'Let those bourgeois bastards look at how beautiful our proletarian film is!' (Di 2001, 271). In addition, when she met the film director, Li Jun, she not only praised him highly but also offered 34 suggestions on how to modify the film. The film directors and the film studio felt that the suggestions were excellent and helped to produce an improved version of the film. The suggestions were very detailed in relation to images, lighting, film languages and costumes (Di 2001, 273), demonstrating that Jiang was not a novice in film production (as noted in Chapter One). Her fourth suggestion, for example, pointed out a visual continuity problem: Pan is beaten on his face while he is tied to the tree but immediately after the beating there is no bruise, although later he has one. However, the director, Li Jun, did not completely follow Jiang's instructions regarding all 34 suggestions because some of them were too difficult to implement due to time constraints and the availability of material.

Interestingly, according to Di Jiannong (2001, 280), Liu Qingtang, the deputy Minister for Culture, once followed Jiang Qing's instructions to organise a written criticism of *Sparkling Red Star* in relation to three problems: the first was why the red star, red scarf and book could not be brought out of the mountain when Pan Dongzi

was leaving there; the second was why Hu Hansan, if not drunk, could not recognise Pan Dongzi; and the third was that the death of Pan Dongzi's mother was not realistic. Although the critiques were completed, they were not published because Jiang was busy fighting for her political position at the Party Central Committee.

Relations between Jiang Qing and the film directors and the film studio were extremely tense over this film. For instance, the well-known female director, Wang Ping, was the consultant director for *Sparkling Red Star* but her name was not listed on this film's credits because the leaders of the August the First Film Studio were worried that, if Jiang Qing saw Wang Ping's name, she would scrutinise the film more closely because she and Wang had not enjoyed a good relationship in the 1950s (Song 2006, 194; Di 2001, 268). Film censorship and film production were clearly managed by Jiang personally. Being in a position of authority, Jiang could pursue her ideas of artistry and aesthetics and this led to improvements in techniques and skills in view of her criticism in areas such as lighting, filming, and even costumes. Consequently, Jiang was able to promote her 'Three Prominences' (see Chapter Three) for the glory of Mao and the Party.

*Sparkling Red Star* was very successful politically and financially. Not only did the film directors and the August the First Film Studio publish articles about how to manage film production but so, too, did many official newspapers and magazines. Zhu Xinyun (祝新运), the performer of the main protagonist Pan Dongzi, a cute, astute and brave eight-year-old boy, was awarded an apartment for entertaining many foreign visitors and he consequently published his article called 'Act like Dongzi, Learn from Dongzi and Become a Good Child of the Party' (《演冬子, 学冬子, 做党的好孩子》) in the Party's official magazine *Red Flag* in issue 11 in 1974. *People's Daily* published Fang E's (方铎) critique called 'A Lovely Little Hero' (《一个可爱

的小英雄》) on 22 October 1974; the Shanghai newspaper *Wenhuibao* published Du Yu's (都郁) assessment called 'The Flashing Art Image: about the Film *Sparkling Red Star*' (《闪光的艺术形象》) on 25 October 1974; *Liberation Army Daily* published Jing Yanjing's (景延旌) analysis called 'Enthusiastic Praise of Chairman Mao's Revolutionary Line: about the Film *Sparkling Red Star*' (《热情歌颂毛主席的革命路线》) on 13 November 1974 and almost all newspapers around China, one way or another, published a piece in honour of the film. All in all, the general view was that it was a successful example of a Model film.

However, the political interference to which *Sparkling Red Star* was subjected did not stop during the Cultural Revolution and continued afterwards. This time the interference was negative towards the film director, Li Jun, because he had received special attention and praise from Jiang Qing for this film during the Cultural Revolution. Although Jiang's 34 suggestions for *Sparkling Red Star* mostly involved the aesthetic and artistic elements, because Li had met Jiang several times, he was under political pressure immediately after the Cultural Revolution to give an account as to why Jiang Qing had wanted to see him and how Jiang had given him instructions and so forth (Di 2001, 281). Li stated to those political interrogators that he never went to see Jiang Qing alone, never said anything to her and just listened to her instructions about the film, *Sparkling Red Star*. From this film, what can be gleaned is that the politics involved within it and beyond it reflect the ephemeral nature of political decisions relating to processes of the Cultural Revolution.

*Sparkling Red Star* is a distinctive feature film produced in a style similar to the Western genre of neo-realism. Due to its unique actuality, the film had more entertainment value than political propaganda appeal. However, the film does extol the Communist Party but in a realistic and factual way. What is important to note,

though, is that political interference was evident in this film. Di Jiannong reports that *Sparkling Red Star* is still welcomed by Chinese audiences today. In the mid 1990s, it was selected for the Chinese film retrospective exhibition in Shandong province; each cinema session of this film was full and it received the Children's Film Art Award at a Chinese national film art competition twenty years after it had been produced (Di 2001, 281).

### **Chinese Resistance War against the Japanese Invasion — *The Red Lantern***

Unlike *Sparkling Red Star* which was a Chinese civil war film, *The Red Lantern*, the first film made during the Cultural Revolution, portrays the Chinese people fighting against the Japanese invaders. *The Red Lantern* was not only an opera film but also a translated film. The origin of the Chinese opera film, *The Red Lantern*, was a feature film, *More Generations Will Come* (自有后来人), directed by Yu Yanfu (于彦夫) and produced by the Changchun Film Studio in 1963. The film scriptwriters used the pseudonyms Chi Yu (迟雨) for Shen Mojun (沈默君) and Luo Jing (罗静) for Luo Guoshi (罗国土) on the film credits. The script was originally written by Shen Mojun. The title was changed three times, from *The Red Lantern* (红灯记) to *The Three Generations* (三代人) and then to *More Revolutionary Generations Will Come* (革命自有后来人) because the connotations of the first two titles were not as 'revolutionary' as the third one which was eventually published in *Film Arts* (电影文学) in September 1961 (Sun 2009, 11-12). The story for the film script was developed by Shen Mojun when, as a 'rightist', he was sent to a reform camp in Heilongjiang province. There he heard from the locals how three generations had fought against the Japanese invasion in 1939. When he had finished the feature film, the studio changed

the title once again from *More Revolutionary Generations Will Come* to *More Generations Will Come*. Due to the success of this film nationally, it was then adapted by many different performing art troupes.

According to Sun Guofan (孙国凡 2009, 13), the Harbin Chinese Opera Troupe (哈尔滨京剧团) and the Shanghai Aihua Shanghainese Opera Troupe (上海爱华沪剧团) adapted the film *More Generations Will Come* into a successful opera. The Harbin Chinese Opera Troupe adapted the film into Chinese opera under its original title *More Revolutionary Generations Will Come* and their performance achieved outstanding results in July 1963. Yun Yanming (云燕铭), who performed the role of Li Tiemei (李铁梅), gave the opera script as a thank-you gift to a number of important people in the audience, one of whom was (unknown to her) Liu Shaoqi, the President of the People's Republic of China. Some time later she received a letter from Premier Zhou Enlai, praising her excellent performance and encouraging her to strive to modify the opera; suggestions concerning the reality of the settings were given by Liu at the end of the letter (Sun 2009, 14-15).

The most successful adaptation of the film into an opera, however, was not undertaken by the Harbin Chinese Opera Troupe, but by the Shanghai Aihua Shanghainese Opera Troupe, a small performing arts group (Sun 2009, 17), in June 1963. The Troupe translated the film into the Shanghainese opera, *The Red Lantern*, which was performed in the local dialect and therefore was only popular in the Shanghai region. After seeing the performance Jiang Qing asked Zhang Chunqiao, a political secretary at that time for Ke Qingshi (柯庆施), the Communist Party leader in Shanghai, for the script (Sun 2009, 17).



When Jiang Qing obtained the script, she summoned the extremely well-known Chinese opera artists Li Shaochun (李少春), Yuan Shihai (袁世海), Du Jinfang (杜近芳) and A Jia (阿甲) from the National Chinese Opera Troupe (中国京剧团) to Zhongnanhai, the central headquarters of the Communist Party and the State Council, to discuss how to adapt the Shanghainese opera, *The Red Lantern*, into a Chinese opera (Sun 2009, 21-22). Thus, the modern version of the Chinese opera, *The Red Lantern*, was created in October 1963 but not without resistance from A Jia who had spent much time re-writing the play script. Because of A Jia's resistance to her instructions, Jiang Qing deprived him of his rights to the Chinese opera script. On 6 November 1964, Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping went to watch the Chinese opera performed by the National Chinese Opera Troupe at the Great Hall of the People, and on 1 April 1965 Mao went to see it again, in a small theatre there (Sun 2009, 134-138). In this way, Mao showed his support for his wife's endeavours to reform Chinese opera so that it would reflect the realism and the zeitgeist of socialist China.

Chen Yao (陈瑶), a member of the revolutionary committee at the August the First Film Studio, asked whether or not the model operas could be filmed as movies despite the initial reluctance of Jiang Qing (Di 2001, 99). She gave a confirmatory nod but asked Cheng Yin (成荫), a prolific film director from the Beijing Film Studio, to produce *The Red Lantern* because she thought the film directors at the August the First Film Studio were not good enough (Di 2001, 99). This was how *The Red Lantern*, the first of eight Jiang Qing's model opera films, was born in 1970.

*The Red Lantern* is set in the north of China in 1939 (and again the historical setting invites contemplation of the past). By this time the resistance to the Japanese

had been under way for two years. This anti-Japanese war had been preceded by nine years of civil war between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, due above all to the Kuomintang leader, Chiang Kai-shek's belief that the Communists were a greater enemy than the Japanese. He was reputed to have said: 'The Japanese are a disease of the skin, the Communists are a disease of the heart'. He then had been forced to cooperate with the Communists when two of his own generals kidnapped him in December 1936 in Xi'an and forced him to officially end the civil war. In fact that struggle continued at an underground level. A family of three generations consisting of grandmother, father and daughter participate in the Chinese resistance war against the Japanese invaders. The grandmother is called Grandma Li (李奶奶), the father is Li Yuhe (李玉和) and the daughter is Li Tiemei (李铁梅). The relationship among them is both interesting and extraordinary. Li Yuhe is an adopted son of Grandma Li who is his master's wife and Li Tiemei is an adopted daughter of Li Yuhe who is her real father's workmate. They are not related by blood but they are all bound together in the war fighting against the Japanese.

Li Yuhe, the main protagonist who works as a rail track switchman, sees an injured person jumping from a train. Li carries this person to his home with the help of Wang Lianju (王连举), a police inspector in the railway station and a secret Communist Party member. Li then finds out this injured person is a Communist Party liaison person with whom he should be in contact. After they confirm their identities through the exchange of secret passwords, the Communist Party liaison person passes a secret electronic code booklet (密电码) to Li and asks Li to hand it to the knife-grinder; he then leaves. Hatoyama (鸠山), a chief of the Japanese military police and the main antagonist, searches for the Communist Party liaison person and tries to obtain the secret electronic code booklet. He forces Wang to confess that Li is a

Communist Party member who has received the code booklet from the Communist Party liaison person. Hatoyama then invites Li to his headquarters for a banquet and tries to persuade Li to hand the code booklet over to him. Li denies having it. Hatoyama tortures Li and makes Wang persuade Li to hand in the booklet. Hatoyama, because Li could not be persuaded to hand in the booklet, has no choice but to invite Grandma Li and Li Tiemei to his headquarters in order to use them to convince Li to give him the code booklet. However, Grandma Li and Li Tiemei are as strong as Li Yuhe and they do not give in to Hatoyama. Eventually, Hatoyama orders soldiers to shoot Li Yuhe and Grandma Li and releases Li Tiemei. He tries to follow Li Tiemei to find out where the code booklet is, but fails. Li Tiemei, being astute, sends the code booklet to the guerrillas in the mountains. The guerrillas eventually defeat Hatoyama and his Japanese soldiers.



**Figure 25:** Grandma Li (李奶奶) in the middle, father Li Yuhe (李玉和) on the left and daughter Li Tiemei (李铁梅) on the right. The still shows that they would rather die than surrender the secret electronic codes (密电码) to Hatoyama (鸠山), a Japanese invasion force commander, in the final act of *The Red Lantern* (红灯记).

*The Red Lantern* and the feature film, *More Generations Will Come*, did not need to adhere strictly to reality because audiences of the time understood the pre-existing history. For instance, historical events sufficiently prove that the Xi'an Incident (西安事变) on 12 December 1936 forced Chiang Kai-shek to change his national policy in order to resist the Japanese invasion through joining with the Communist Party. In the Nanjing Massacre after December 1937, Japanese invaders killed some 300,000 Chinese people (Chang 1997, 83-87). Clearly, the national survival issues were whether the Chinese people or the Chiang Kai-shek government should join the Communist Party to defend the Chinese nation at that time. Believing that 'the Japanese are a disease of the skin [and hence not a serious problem] and Mao's Communists are a disease of the heart', Chiang Kai-shek did not, at that time, choose to fight the Japanese invasion.

When comparing these two films, the intense realism reflected in *The Red Lantern* is notably different from *More Generations Will Come* due to a political predisposition towards a combination of revolutionary romanticism and revolutionary realism during the Cultural Revolution (see Clark 1987; Semsel 1987; and Berry 2004). Politically and aesthetically, moreover, Jiang Qing's theory of 'Three Prominences' was implemented in different ways regarding opera films and feature films produced during the Cultural Revolution, with the latter tending to be more realistic than the former. For example, in the opera film *The Red Lantern*, Li Yuhe does not drink. He does drink before he goes to see Hatoyama in Act 6: Hatoyama Is Defied (赴宴斗鸠山). This drink is offered by his mother, Grandma Li, as a farewell drink because she knows her son may have a problem with Hatoyama at the Japanese military office; the offering of the farewell drink by Grandma Li led to the composition of a very famous Chinese opera song 'Thank You, Mother'. In the feature

film, *More Generations Will Come*, Li Yuhe likes to drink and often drinks behind his mother's back. As in the opera film, Grandma Li does offer her son a drink as a farewell drink before he goes to see Hatoyama. But while Li Yuhe's habit of drinking is shown in the feature film, it is not included in the opera film because drinking was seen as a bad habit that would therefore weaken the image of Li Yuhe as a hero during the Cultural Revolution.

In some respects, however, *The Red Lantern* is more realistic than *More Generations Will Come*. In Act 5: Family's Revolutionary History (痛说家史) of *The Red Lantern*, Grandma Li tells her grandchild, Li Tiemei, that the two of them are not related by blood to the child's father, and she explains how they became a family. This version seems more believable than its equivalent in the feature film where Li Yuhe tells his daughter, Li Tiemei, that Grandma Li is not his real mother and she is his master's wife; and also that Li Tiemei is not his biological daughter but the daughter of his workmate, Zhang Daxi (张大喜), who died in a workers' strike in Dalian City (大连市) in 1925. He gives this family information just before he and Grandma Li are killed by the Japanese invaders. These two scenes are related to personal and national survival, but it would appear that the nostalgic or more overtly sentimental elements were removed from the opera film because nostalgia is seen as feminine in nature and would therefore have weakened the heroic status of Li Yuhe.

The most important change between the two films, however, concerns the ending of *The Red Lantern*. Mao Zedong disliked the original ending and suggested it be altered to leave a more positive impression (as discussed briefly in Chapter Three). Scenes were added showing Li Tiemei leading the guerrillas and the Red Army down from the mountains and fighting against the Japanese invaders; the scenes also showed the eventual defeat of Hatoyama and the Japanese soldiers. These scenes

differ from the feature film, *More Generations Will Come*, where Li Tiemei goes to the mountains and finds the knife-grinder, the revolutionary guerrilla, and hands the secret code booklet to him, thus ending the film. The addition of this final scene, depicting the victorious revolutionary guerrillas and the Red Army, had a profound effect on audiences at that time because it gave the Chinese people hope — a hope that was desperately needed during the Cultural Revolution; the ending of the feature film, *More Generations Will Come*, is less action-oriented and less nationalistic.

*The Red Lantern* not only received Mao's attention, but also established Jiang Qing's position in literature and art circles as well as in the Party Politburo. Clearly, the political elements are much greater than the film's social and artistic codes because *both* Mao and Jiang were involved. Jiang Qing spent a considerable amount of time at the production of the opera film *The Red Lantern*. She directed the creation of the hero, Li Yuhe, in mise-en-scène, and discussed what settings should be built for the opera film, analysed the camera and lighting work and even instructed Li Yuhe to wear a white shirt as a symbol of revolutionary purity (Di 2001, 101). Under the influence of Jiang Qing, for example, Zhang Dongliang (张冬凉), a cinematographer, followed Jiang Qing's instruction that the proletarian hero must be tall and strong with eyes that shine; he installed a light on the camera for this purpose when he was filming; consequently, the image of Li Yuhe in mise-en-scène is much brighter and more sharply focussed than in the initial filming (Di 2001, 105-106). That is why Dai Jiafang (1995, 230) comments that, because Jiang Qing was very demanding of the film crews under her control, the quality of these opera films was superior to those made afterwards without her involvement.

Thus *The Red Lantern* supported the rise of Jiang Qing and Qian Haoliang in politics as well as providing entertainment. Not only did Jiang Qing rise to be a

Politburo member with the support of her husband, Mao Zedong, but so, too, did Qian Haoliang (钱浩梁), a Chinese opera actor with the stage name Haoliang (浩亮) who performed Li Yuhe; he was promoted to Deputy Minister of Culture during the Cultural Revolution; and in the entertainment field, the Chinese opera music and songs became popular throughout China. The film music could be heard in every household and the lyrics were also widely familiar. For example, in the scene where Grandma Li asks Li Tiemei to bring a shot of gin to her for Li Yuhe to drink before he goes to see Hatoyama, Li Yuhe sings the song *Thank You, Mother* to the tune of ‘xi pi er liu’ (西皮二六) played by Chinese and Western musical instruments:

*I drink your wine at parting  
And it fills me with courage and strength.  
The Japanese are offering me a feast,  
Well, I can manage even a thousand cups.  
This is stormy, treacherous weather,  
Be ready for squalls.*

This song should be taken metaphorically. The last two lines, for example, do not refer to actual weather but indicate that Li Yuhe is ready to face the cruelty of the Japanese invaders. This opera song was so popular that arguably more Chinese people at the time could sing this song than the Chinese national anthem.

The opera song *I Have More Uncles than I Can Count* (我家的表叔数不清) was also well liked at the time. Li Tiemei sings this song in the first scene in the film when Li Yuhe asks his daughter to tell her Grandma Li that an uncle is coming. After Li Tiemei gets home, she asks her grandma which uncle is coming, and suddenly realises that even her father does not know his identity because this uncle is a Communist Party liaison person. She then sings to the tune of ‘xi pi liu shui’ (西波流水) also played by Chinese and Western musical instruments:

*I've more uncles than I can count;  
They only come when there's important business.*

*Though we call them relatives we have never met,  
Yet they're closer to us than our own family.  
Both you and dad call them your own folk;  
Well, I can guess the secret —  
They're all men like my dad,  
Men with fine, loyal hearts.*

Due to the popularity of this opera film, these two songs continue to be performed today. Many famous Chinese singers such as Song Zuying (宋祖英), a contemporary singer, and Wang Rongrong (王蓉蓉), a well-known Chinese opera actress, still sing songs from *The Red Lantern* from time to time. Chinese opera usually possesses a highly elaborate form of drama and music theatre combined with singing, acting, recitation and acrobatics, with roots going back many years. However, one notable difference in *The Red Lantern* from traditional Chinese opera is that, in the film, there is no traditional opera singing, acting, recitation and acrobatics due to its subject. The film concentrates instead on singing rather than traditional styles of acting. This is another factor contributing to its popularity: most Chinese people cannot recite in the operatic fashion nor can they perform acrobatics, but they can sing and 'act' in a seemingly naturalistic fashion.

The camera work of this film is quite straightforward and simple, adding to the power of its realism. Most scenes are static compositions as it is a filmed stage performance. Sometimes, point-of-view shots are used to depict the proletarian heroes such as Li Yuhe, Grandma Li and Li Tiemei and are always brightly lit. By contrast, Japanese invaders such as Hatoyama and his soldiers are captured in a dimly lit stage environment. The visual rhythm of this opera film conformed to the requirements of the totalitarian society that was China during the Cultural Revolution.

In addition, the script of *The Red Lantern* was translated into several languages as educational materials and the opera film version was also transplanted into a Turkic opera film of the same name. This Turkic version was also directed in



1975 by Cheng Yi and produced by the August the First Film Studio. All the actors in this version of the film are Uighurs. The music and songs are distinctly different from Chinese opera films but the style is similar to the Chinese opera film, *The Red Lantern*.

Audiences responded to *The Red Lantern* as a haunting evocation of the courage and unquenchable spirit displayed by the Chinese people during the war against Japan. It is among the best of Jiang Qing's model opera films, having a modern theme revolving around three people of three different generations, who are unrelated by blood but welded together into one family by the events of the Chinese revolution. Their family 'treasure' is a red lantern which is more than just a lantern; it is a symbol of resistance against the Japanese invaders. Consequently, after the railway worker, Li Yuhe, a member of the Chinese Communist Party, and his mother are killed, his seventeen-year-old daughter takes up the red lantern and carries on the struggle.

## **Conclusion**

The significant themes of films produced in the Cultural Revolution include class struggle on the medical front, class struggle against 'capitalist roaders', the Chinese civil war and the Chinese resistance war against the Japanese invasion. Each theme portrays the social and political space and the times, since 1937, in relatively realistic ways. The films chosen for discussion in this chapter reflected those themes.

*Spring Seedling* depicts the lack of medical facilities in rural China. It describes a class struggle revolving around the attitudes of a well-established doctor and a 'barefoot doctor' of peasant patients in a rural hospital. The film demonstrates how 'barefoot doctors' willingly treated peasant patients, unlike established doctors.

Were it not for the Cultural Revolution, these ‘barefoot doctors’, an emerging socialist phenomenon of the time, would have been sabotaged by established doctors who represented capitalism and revisionism. This film thus epitomises the class struggle on the medical front during the Cultural Revolution.

*Jubilant Small Cool River* describes the class struggle against ‘capitalist roaders’ by showing what capitalism meant in agricultural villages in a socialist society, namely peasants wanting to make extra money from outside of the collective agricultural production — a desire considered to derive from capitalist ideology. The film portrays the class struggle between the heads of the two villages and with the deputy director at the county authority about how to manage socialist productive forces to achieve a better life for the people. By describing the discussion surrounding the changing of the course of Small Cool River, the film captures the ideological struggle between socialism and capitalism.

*Sparkling Red Star*, a war-themed film for children about the Chinese civil war, was adapted from a novel of the same name. Using neo-realism, it portrays a young boy named Pan Dongzi and describes how, under the Communist Party leadership, he grows up to become a Red Army soldier. This film demonstrates how, under Mao’s leadership, the Chinese Communist Party defeated the Chiang Kai-Shek Kuomintang government during the period of the Chinese civil war. The cinematic techniques of this film, although achieving outstanding results for one produced during the Cultural Revolution, also suffered political interference by Jiang Qing, causing trouble for the film director, Li Jun, after the Cultural Revolution.

*The Red Lantern* was the first film produced in 1970 during the Cultural Revolution and is one of Jiang Qing’s eight model films. She spent a considerable amount of time assisting with its production and created it not only for the political

propaganda purposes of the Communist Party, but also to aid her promotion to membership of the Party Politburo during the Cultural Revolution. It was transplanted from the Shanghainese opera, *The Red Lantern*, which itself was transplanted from the feature film, *More Generations Will Come*, produced by the Changchun Film Studio in 1963. The film also portrays the themes of personal and national survival, as well as the survival of a valued social and political justice system through the film's dramatisation of the Chinese resistance war against the Japanese invasion.

As noted by many Chinese film scholars including Paul Clark, Chris Berry, Rey Chow and Ma Ning, the significant film themes of the Cultural Revolution presented 'a combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism' through the use of different cinematic codes and elements. These themes — class struggle between the poor and intellectuals; class struggle against 'capitalist roaders'; the Chinese civil war; and the Chinese resistance war against the Japanese invasion — it may be said, reflected the history of modern China under the Communist Party during the time of the Cultural Revolution.

## Conclusion

Through various textual comparisons and filmic analyses, this study has sought to provide an understanding of the political and aesthetic impact on cinematic realism during the Cultural Revolution. It has highlighted several features of the political formations of the films produced and shown at that time, in relation to the different historical content and contexts of socialist China.

The study began by examining cinematic realism from the perspectives of French film critic, André Bazin, and American film theorist, Siegfried Kracauer, as well as from the perspectives of film scholars such as Paul Clark, Chris Berry and Zhang Junxiang. What can be construed from their assessments is that cinematic realism is understood to depict the reality of the history of the world. Cameras can physically record actuality unfolding before the eyes of people, and the ensuing scenes can be powerfully persuasive. In this way cinematic realism (but also literary and other forms of realism) can seem to be ‘unmediated’, as though offering a direct window onto the world without any intervention on the part of artist-producers. While it has not been the purpose of this study to critique realism’s ontology, as it were, nevertheless the study has drawn attention to certain realist *techniques* of production, thus undercutting the notion that cinematic realism is simply a form of unmediated documentary-making. The study has also shown the many ways in which realist films in socialist China were politically manipulated, especially in the production phase, during the Cultural Revolution, further undercutting the notion that realism is an unmediated artform. Socialist regimes do not, of course, have sole prerogative when it comes to the use of cinematic realism for propaganda purposes. In fact, filmmakers from around the world use cinematic realism to deal with explicit and implicit

historical events relating to democracy, human rights, moral values, socio-political issues and military affairs. While cinematic realism is not therefore unique to socialist regimes, the mode was certainly used to promote the political agenda of the Communist Party in China during the Cultural Revolution.

Following this contextual outline, the study went on to examine how the social and political policies of the Cultural Revolution affected the Chinese film industry. The Cultural Revolution was launched by Mao Zedong for personal and socio-political reasons to re-consolidate his leadership in the Communist Party and of the nation. He wanted to perpetuate the socialist revolution in China; however, while working towards that goal, he created turmoil in the socio-political environment and, in the process, affected people from all walks of life and especially in the realm of literature and arts. The Chinese film industry was one of the hardest hit areas especially with regard to creativity and productivity. Not many films, let alone good ones, were produced during the Cultural Revolution. In addition, in the film arts community, many film directors, scriptwriters, actors and all kinds of film crews suffered from persecution, imprisonment and fatal attacks during that time. It is clear that, were it not for the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese film industry would have been more productive and creative.

In Chapter Two the study moved to a discussion of Jiang Qing's theory of The Three Prominences and the major types of films produced during the Cultural Revolution such as Chinese opera films, feature films and other films of stage performances. It is evident that this theory significantly influenced literary and artistic outcomes, especially film production, with its use of embellished film protagonists and socialist heroes, and belittled film antagonists presented as class enemies. The most important films produced during the Cultural Revolution were Jiang Qing's

eight model films on which she spent a considerable amount of time perfecting their ideological content and mode of presentation. These Model Films were screened all over China and had a tremendous political impact on the Chinese people by spreading the message of the proletarian revolution. Not only did they possess unique aesthetic and artistic characteristics, but they also, more critically, emphasised strategic social and political aspects of Party ideology in order to strengthen the Cultural Revolution.

Film diegesis and film censorship during the Cultural Revolution were discussed in Chapter Three. The most notable phenomenon of the period was that political narratives and political figures were changed dramatically from elite classes, rulers, bureaucrats, landlords, gentrified scholars and merchants to workers-peasants-soldiers associated with the Chinese Communist Party. In other words, workers-peasants-soldiers were dominant in Chinese films and impacted significantly on Chinese audiences by encouraging them to embrace the revolutionary spirit and the political ideology of the Cultural Revolution. Political figures such as Mao and other leaders of the Communist Party were always depicted in radiant colours accompanied by glorious music in order to show their heroic status in socialist society, thus also demonstrating the required pedagogical realism.

All the films produced and shown were severely censored in order to serve the political needs of the Cultural Revolution, despite the lack of any official blueprint for film censorship. The intuitive censorship of Jiang Qing and her political allies kept the films in line with the spirit of the Cultural Revolution. This explains why there were intricate and fierce film censorship battles among Chinese Communist leaders such as Mao, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Qing over the release of some films, for example, *Songs of Teachers* (1974) and *Undertaking* (1974). Uncensored, these films

would not have adhered as closely to the socio-political ideology of the Cultural Revolution.

The study moved to an analysis of film adaption, transplantation and reproduction during the Cultural Revolution in Chapter Four. The Chinese film industry selected themes such as class struggle and war, which were incorporated in adaptations from novels to films, transplanted from plays to films and reproduced from older films to new films. The adapted, transplanted and reproduced films appeared more realistic than in their previous formats due to the application of specific techniques such as colour, positioning and use of close-ups. The adapted films mostly retained the essence of their counterparts, the novels from which they came. Some transplanted films, although appearing to be apolitical, comprised content and contexts that were implicitly about class struggle. Only a few films were reproduced but, in terms of filmic diegesis and artistic characteristics, they were more realistic than their previous versions, most notably in terms of such techniques as montage and flashback. These film adaptations, transplantations and reproductions were integral to the film industry and realistically portrayed the history of China (at least according to Party ideology) before and during the Cultural Revolution.

Finally, this study explored significant themes depicted in the films during the Cultural Revolution. These themes included class struggle on the medical front, opposing 'capitalist roaders', the Chinese civil war and the Chinese resistance war against the Japanese invasion. Each of these four themes did indeed seem to represent realistically such historical events as the Chinese civil war and the Chinese resistance war against the Japanese invasion, and, in so doing, emphasized to audiences that the Chinese Communist Party was always victorious. The films were realistic, then, to the extent that they conformed to a version of history approved by the Communist Party,

and represented that history in effective ways. The analysis of these films indicated that the political themes demonstrated in the films were dualistic, consisting of a positive image of the ‘socialist heroes’ or ‘good new China’ and a negative image of ‘class enemies’ or ‘bad old China’. The representation of, for example, ‘barefoot doctors’ and the opposition to ‘capitalist roaders’, encouraged nation building among audiences through the films’ use of socialist construction and dualism.

By employing a diagnosis blended with Rosenbaum-Combs’ method of political realism to examine how political films occupy the utopian space and time as well as controlling the choice of ideas, and Walsh-Taylor’s method of factual narrative analysis to focus on the presentation, entanglement, influence and aesthetic and political thinking, this study has arrived at certain overall conclusions from the filmic analyses and textual comparisons:

1. In the ten-year period of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese film industry including the ten major film studios such as Beijing, Shanghai, Changchun and August the First, produced only 93 films in total. Through cinematic realism, these films not only manifested historical reality as perceived by the Communist Party, but also reflected the political reality and pedagogical practicality of the time.
2. However, the Chinese film industry was quite severely damaged in terms of creativity and productivity during the Cultural Revolution. The 93 films were strictly scrutinised by Jiang Qing, the ‘great flag bearer of literature and art’ during the Cultural Revolution, with her political coteries using their political intuition despite the absence of any blueprint of film censorship to guide them.
3. What is clear is that the film diegesis and artistic discourse were altered from humanistic products to political outcomes through distancing, explicating



political messages and propaganda embedded in the films. This trend created a combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism in the production of films that served the interests of the Cultural Revolution.

4. The most interesting feature films were Jiang Qing's eight model films. These were popular as they defied convention and portrayed many positive and bright images of workers-peasants-soldiers while simultaneously exposing the negative and 'darker' sides of the so-called class enemies.
5. These strongly politicised films all bear the hallmark of the Cultural Revolution. Not only were they the vehicle for promoting the Communist Party's political ideology, but they also constituted the entertainment repertoire during the years of the Cultural Revolution. Due to the political circumstances, all the films produced during the Cultural Revolution had aesthetic and artistic discourses different from other periods in the history of Chinese cinema. The protagonists in the films were embellished in order to bring to life the theme of class struggle in socialist society. They were portrayed as more politically expressive and, at the same time, more 'realistic' — where the realism derived from conformity to the Party's ideal socialist society. Most films made earlier, and shown during the Cultural Revolution, were also quite politicised, but to a lesser extent in that they did not exaggerate the political roles in *mise-en-scène* as 'wholesome, handsome and brightsome' figures. Ironically, to a certain extent, it was precisely this exaggeration that marked the films of the Cultural Revolution as realistic in Party terms.
6. A further extraordinary and unprecedented aspect of the Chinese film industry during the Cultural Revolution is that the Chinese Communist Party leaders such as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Qing and other

Politburo members participated intensively in the process of film production. These leaders not only involved themselves directly or indirectly in film production and censorship, but also overtly and enthusiastically assisted with script editing and the filming process as they understood the importance of visual culture in a socialist society.

Overall, then, what is important to note is that the Chinese Communist regime always ensured that the film industry obeyed its literature and art policy, the principal aim of which was to serve the needs of the Chinese people and the Communist Party. This policy, based on Mao's dictum in Yan'an in 1942 that 'Literature and art must serve the people', was implemented by the Communist Party even before the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. From Mao criticising the film *Wu Xun* in 1951 and Jiang Qing condemning most films made before 1966, to Deng Xiaoping reproaching the film *Bitter Love* in 1980, this study has shown that the overarching goal of the Chinese film industry during the Cultural Revolution was to promote the Chinese socialist system and to encourage the Chinese people to participate in socialist construction and nation building.

## Appendix

Note: This appendix is based on my categorisation of the films viewed for this research.

### Feature and opera film production from 1966 to 1976

	August					Annual
	First	Beijing	Changchun	Shanghai	Others	Total
1966	2	3	1	1	5	12*
1967	0	0	0	0	0	0
1968	0	0	0	0	0	0
1969	0	0	0	0	0	0
1970	1	1	0	0	0	2
1971	0	1	1	0	0	2
1972	1	1.5	1	1.5	0	5
1973	0	0.5	3	0.5	0	4
1974	2	4	5	4	2	17
1975	4	6	5	6	3	24
1976	4	8	7	13	6	39
Total	12	22	22	25	11	93

\* These 12 films were not produced during the Cultural Revolution.

### Major themes of films produced from 1966 to 1976

Class struggle-themed films	War-themed films
61	32

### Major film types from 1966 to 1976

General	Children	Musical
46	14	33

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## Filmography

Note: This list is organised into two groups: the first comprises films produced during the Cultural Revolution, listed chronologically; the second comprises films shown during the Cultural Revolution and the films discussed or referred to in this thesis, listed alphabetically.

### *Films Produced from 1966 to 1976*

**1966 -1969** (No films produced in this period.)

**1970** (2 films produced)

*Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (智取威虎山), Beijing Film Studio.

d: Xie Tieli

s: Beijing Chinese Opera Troupe

*The Red Lantern* (红灯记), August the First Film Studio.

d: Cheng Yin

s: China Chinese Opera Troupe

**1971** (2 films produced)

*The Red Detachment of Women* (红色娘子军), Beijing Film Studio.

d: Pan Wenzhan and Fu Jie

s: China Dance Drama Troupe

*Shajiabang* (沙家浜), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Wu Zhaodi

s: Beijing Chinese Opera Troupe

**1972** (5 films produced)

*The Harbor* (海港), Beijing and Shanghai Film Studios.

d: Xie Tieli and Xie Jin

s: Shanghai Chinese Opera Troupe

*Long Jiang Song* (龙江颂), Beijing Film Studio.

d: Xie Tieli

s: Shanghai Chinese Opera Troupe

*The White-Haired Girl* (白毛女), Shanghai Film Studio.

d: Sang Hu

s: Shanghai Municipal Dance School

*The Red Detachment of Women* (红色娘子军), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Cheng Yin  
s: China Chinese Opera Troupe

*Raid the White-Tiger Regiment* (奇袭白虎团), Changchun Film Studio.  
d: Su Li and Wang Yan  
s: Shandong Chinese Opera Troupe

**1973** (4 films produced)

*The Harbor* (海港), Beijing and Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Xie Tieli and Xie Jin  
s: Shanghai Chinese Opera Troupe

*Bright Sunny Skies* (艳阳天), Changchun Film Studio.  
d: Ling Nong  
s: Collectively adapted from the Hao Ran novel

*Zhan Hong Tu* (战洪图), Changchun Film Studio.  
d: Su Li and Yuan Naichen  
s: Lu Shu

*Green Pine Ridge* (青松岭), Changchun Film Studio.  
d: Liu Guoquan and Jiang Shusen  
s: Zhang Zhongpeng

**1974** (17 films produced)

*Azalea Mountain* (杜鹃山), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Xie Tieli  
s: Beijing Chinese Opera Troupe

*Scouts* (侦察兵), Beijing Film Studio.  
d, s: Li Wenhua

*Fighting North and South* (南征北战), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Cheng Yin, Wang Yan and Tang Xiaodan  
s: Shen Ximeng

*On the Way Delivery* (送货路上), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Zheng Guoquan  
s: Liu Guoxiang

*The Fiery Year* (火红的年代), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Fu Chaowu, Sun Yongping and Yu Zhongying  
s: Ye Dan and Fu Chaowu

*Reconnaissance across the Yangtze* (渡江侦察记), Shanghai Film Studio.

d: Tang Xiaodan and Tang Huada

s: Ji Guanwo, Gao Xing and Meng Senhui

*Safety Belt* (一幅保险带), Shanghai Film Studio.

d: Zhao Huanzhang and Song Ningqi

s: Collectively transplanted from Shanghai Jiading County Amateur Literary and Art Group and Shanghai Hui-Opera Troupe

*Acupuncture Needles Praised under a Shadowless Lamp* (无影灯下颂银针), Shanghai Film Studio.

d: Sang Hu

s: Collectively transplanted from the same name play created by Shanghai Chest Hospital Literary and Art Amateur Group.

*Fighting on the Plains* (平原作战), August the First Film Studio.

d: Cui Wei and Chen Huaikai

s: China Chinese Opera Troupe

*Sparkling Red Star* (闪闪的红星), August the First Film Studio.

d: Li Jun and Li Ang

s: Wang Yuanjian and Lu Zhuguo

*Undertaking* (创业), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Yu Yanfu

s: Zhang Tianmin and others

*Iron Giant* (钢铁巨人), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Yan Gong

s: Iron Giant writing group

*Guerrillas Sweep the Plain* (平原游击队), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Wu Zhaodi and Chang Zhenhua

s: Guerrillas Sweep the Plain writing group

*Sunny Courtyard Story* (向阳院的故事), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Yuan Naichen

s: Collectively adapted from the Xu Ying novel

*Half a Basketful of Peanuts* (半篮花生), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Zhu Wenshun

s: The Half of Basketful Peanuts writing group

*Sha Jia Bang* (沙家浜), Pearl River Film Studio.

d: Yu Deshui

s: Beijing Chinese Opera Troupe Sha Jia Bang writing group

*Songs of Teachers* (园丁之歌), Central News Records and Beijing Film Studios.  
d: Sha Dan and Zheng Guoquan  
s: Hunan Xiang-Opera Troupe

**1975** (24 films produced)

*Seaside Rosy Cloud* (海霞), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Qian Jiang, Chen Huaikai and Wang Haowei  
s: Xie Tieli

*Hong Yu* (红雨), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Cui Wei  
s: Yang Xiao

*Breacking Up* (决裂), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Li Wenhua  
s: Chun Chao and Zhou Jie

*Beacon-fire Youth* (烽火少年), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Dong Kena  
s: Yan Yiyan

*Prairie Children* (草原儿女), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Fu Jie  
s: China Dance Troupe

*Ferry Spot* (渡口), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Ma Erlu  
s: Feng Yukun

*Fighting at the Berth* (战船台), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Fu Chaowu  
s: Du Yeqiu and Liu Shizheng

*Spring Seedling* (春苗), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Xie Jin, Yan Bili and Liang Tingdu  
s: Zhao Zhiqiang, Yang Zhiqiang and Cao Lei

*The Second Spring* (第二个春天), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Sang Hu and Wang Xiwen  
s: Liu Chuan, He Baoxian and others

*Young Fellow* (小将), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Zhong Shuhuang  
s: Yin Dunhuang and others

*Old with a Kind Heart* (人老心红), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Yu Zhongying  
s: Shanghai Huai-Opera Troupe

*Collecting Cinders* (拣煤渣), Shanghai Film Studio.

d: Wu Zhennian

s: Shanghai Huai-Opera Troupe

*Ode to Yimeng* (沂蒙颂), August the First Film Studio.

d: Li Wenhui and Jing Mukui

s: China Dance Troupe

*Fierce Combat near the Nameless River* (激战无名川), August the First Film Studio.

d: Hua Chun and Wang Shaoyan

s: Zheng Zhi and Huang Zongjiang

*The Red Lantern* (红灯记), August the First Film Studio.

d: Cheng Yin

s: Adapted by the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Song and Dance Troupe

*Before the Looming Thunderstorm* (雷雨之前), August the First Film Studio.

d: Li Wenhui

s: Gao Hong and Sang Ping

*Golden Road* (金光大道), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Lin Nong and Sun Yu

s: Collectively adapted from the Hao Ran novel

*Rolling Wheels* (车轮滚滚), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Yin Yiqing

s: Xue Shouxian

*New Tune of the Great Wall* (长城新曲), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Zhao Xinshui

s: New Tune of the Great Wall writing group

*Yellow River Youth* (黄河少年), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Lu Jianhua and Li Guanghui

s: Yan Yi

*Spring Days in the Desert* (沙漠的春天), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Zhu Wenshun

s: Mara Qinfu

*Blue Sea Red Waves* (碧海红波), Xi'an Film Studio.

d: Liu Bin

s: Han Guang

*Brave Lad* (阿勇), Xi'an Film Studio.

d: Sun Jing and Yan Xueshu

s: Hu Huiying

*Little Conch* (小螺号), Pearl River Film Studio.  
d: Liu Xin and Wu Ping  
s: Liu Xin

**1976** (39 films produced)

*Counterattack* (反击), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Li Wenhua  
s: Mao Feng and Counterattack writing group

*Mountain Flowers* (山花), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Cui Wei and Sang Fu  
s: Sun Qian and Ma Feng

*Ebullition Mountains* (沸腾的群山), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Gan Xuewei, Li Wei and Chen Fangqian  
s: Tao Zhonghua and Liu Zhongwei

*The Lotus Lantern* (宝莲灯, 上下集), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Chen Huaikai and Chen Fangqian  
s: Adapted from an ancient myth

*Fiery Youth* (青春似火), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Dong Kena and Xin Jing  
s: Ma An Shan Culture Bureau Creation Group of Youth Resembles Fires

*Cowhorn Rock* (牛角石), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Shi Yifu  
s: Cao Shuolong

*Bright Pearls over the Sea* (海上明珠), Beijing Film Studio.  
d: Lin Yang and Wang Haowei  
s: Zhang Xianglin

*Jubilant Small Cool River* (欢腾的小凉河), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Liu Qiong and Shen Yaoting  
s: Wang Lixin and Gao Xing

*The Young Generation* (年青的一代), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Ling Zhihao and Zhang Huijun  
s: Chen Yun and Zhao Ming

*Boulder Bay* (磐石湾), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Xie Jin and Liang Tingduo  
s: Ah Jian

*The Journey* (征途), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Yan Bili and Bao Qichen  
s: Gao Xing, Xue Yaoxian and Zhao Qingrui



*Unforgettable Battle* (难忘的战斗), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Tang Xiaodan and Yu Benzheng  
s: Sun Jingrui and Yan Li

*The Surging River* (江水滔滔), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Shu Shi and Zhao Hongbin  
s: Shi Min and others

*The Chair on Trial* (审椅子), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Liang Tingduo  
s: Ah Jian

*New Wave Songs* (新风歌), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Zhao Huanzhang and Lu Ren  
s: Zhang Youde, Duan Quanfa and Fan Junzhi

*Jin Suo* (金锁), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d, s: Da Shibiao

*The Secret of Axia River* (阿夏河的秘密), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Yan Bili, Shen Fu and Wu Zhennian  
s: Cao Zhonggao

*Well Managed* (管得好), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Zhao Huanzhang  
s: Xin Xianling and others

*Moving from the Railway* (三定桩), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Sun Yongping  
s: Wu Ruying and others

*Early Spring Comes to a Small Shop* (小店春早), Shanghai Film Studio.  
d: Deng Yimin and Xu Jihong  
s: Wang Cunshun and Wang Shouzhi

*Songs of the Long March* (长征组歌：红军不怕远征难), August the First Film Studio.  
d: Wang Ping and Huang Baoshan  
s: Xiao Hua and others

*Storm in the South China Sea* (南海风云), August the First Film Studio.  
d: Jing Mukui and Zhang Yongshou  
s: Lu Zhuguo

*The Red Clouded Hillock* (红云岗), August the First Film Studio.  
d: Li Ang and Li wenhu  
s: Shandon Chinese Opera Troupe

*The South China Sea Great Wall* (南海长城), August the First Film Studio.

d: Li Jun and Hao Guang

s: Kiang Xin and Dong Xiaohua

*By the Yanming Lake* (雁鸣湖畔), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Gao Tianhong

s: Zhang Xiaotian and Wang Weichen

*Songs of Mangoes* (芒果之歌), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Chang Yan and Zhang Puren

s: Zheng Quan and others

*Chinese Air Force* (长空雄鹰), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Wang Feng and Wang Yabiao

s: Chen Lide

*Dragon-Locked Lake* (锁龙湖), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Zhou Yu

s: Yan Fenge

*A Newcomer to Mountain Village* (山村新人), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Jiang Shusen and Jing Jie

s: Zhao Yuxiang

*Golden Road* (金光大道, 中集), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Sun Yu

s: Collectively adapted from the Hao Ran novel

*Half the Sky* (半边天), Changchun Film Studio.

d: Liu Wenyu and Zhang Hui

s: Shandong Lu-Opera Troupe

*Maple Valley* (枫树湾), Pearl River Film Studio.

d: Lu Jue, Lin Lan and Liu Xin

s: Chen Jianqiu

*Red Plums in the Mountains* (山里红梅), Pearl River Film Studio.

d: Si Meng

s: Qiao Dianyun

*A Myriad Sunset Clouds* (红霞万朵), Pearl River Film Studio.

d: Chen Gang and Li Ming

s: Anqing Culture Bureau of Sunset Clouds Glow Ten Thousands writing group

*Mountain Quarry Men* (开山的人), Xi'an Film Studio.

d: Wei Rong

s: Yan Yi

*An Important Lesson* (主课), Guangxi Film Studio.  
d: Erji Guangbudao  
s: Collectively transplanted from the same name of the play

*Expectation* (寄托), E' Mei Film Studio.  
d: Ye Ming and Zhang Yi  
s: Gao Ying, Yin Chi and Yang Yingzhang

*Two Charts* (两张图纸), Central News Records Film Studio.  
d: Sha Dan  
s: Hunan Yiyang Prefecture Culture Creative Group

### ***Films Discussed or Mentioned***

*A Spring River Flows East* (一江春节水向东流), Kunlun Film Studio, 1947, d, s: Cai Chushen and Zheng Junli.

*A Tale of Wind* (*Une Histoire de vent*), Capi Films & La Sept Cinéma, 1988, d, s: Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan.

*A Trip to the Moon* (*Le Voyage dans la Lune*), Star Film, 1902, d: Georges Méliès, s: Georges Méliès and Gaston Méliès.

*Bitter Love* (苦恋 or 太阳和人), Changchun Film Studio, 1979, d: Peng Ning, s: Bai Hua and Peng Ning.

*Bridge* (桥), North-East Film Studio, 1949, d: Wang Bin, s: Yu ming.

*Chung Kuo, Cina*, 1972, d: Michelangelo Antonioni, s: Michelangelo Antonioni and Andrea Barbato.

*Citizen Kane*, RKO Radio Pictures, 1941, d: Orson Welles, s: Herman Mankiewicz, Orson Welles.

*Crow and Sparrow* (乌鸦与麻雀), Kunlun Film Studio, 1949, d: Zheng Junli, s: Chen Baichen and others.

*Die Nibelungen*, Decla- Bioscop Film Studio, 1924, d, s: Fritz Lang.

*Dr Norman Bethune* (白求恩大夫), Haiyan and August the First Film Studios, 1964, d: Zhang Junxiang, Li Shutian and Gao Zheng, s: Zhang Junxiang and Zhao Tuo.

*Early Spring in February* (早春二月), Beijing Film Studio, 1963, d, s: Xie Tieli.

*Family* (家), Shanghai Film Studio, 1956, d: Chen Xihe and Ye Ming, s: Chen Xihe.

*Fighting South and North* (南征北战), Shanghai Film Studio, 1952, d: Cheng Yin and Tang Xiaodan, s: Shen Ximeng, Shen Mojun and Gu Baozhang.

*Five Golden Flowers* (五朵金花), Changchun Film Studio, 1959, d: Wang Jiayi, s: Ji Kang and Gong Pu.

*Forced Recruitment* (抓壮丁), August the First Film Studio, 1963, d: Chen Ge and Shen Shan, s: Chen Ge and Wu Xue.

*Fugitive* (杨门女将), Beijing Film Studio, 1960, d: Cui Wei and Chen Huai'ai, s: Fan Junhong and Lü Ruiming.

*Gone with the Wind*, Selznick International Pictures, 1939, d: Victor Fleming, s: Sidney Howard.

*Growing up in Wartime* (战斗里成长), August the First Film Studio, 1957, d: Yan Jizhou and Sun Min, s: Hu Ke.

*How Yugong Moved the Mountain*, 1976, France, d, s: Joris Ivens.

*Jane Eyre*, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 1943, d: Robert Stevenson, s: John Houseman, Aldous Huxley and Robert Stevenson.

*Knife in the Water* (Nóż w wodzie), Zespol Filmowy, 1962, d: Roman Polanski, s: Jerzy Skolimowski, Roman Polanski and Jakub Goldberg.

*Lenin in 1918*, Moscow Film Production Unit, 1939, d: Mikhail Romm, E.Aron and I. Simkov, s: Aleksei Kapler and Taisiya Zlatogorova.

*Lenin in October*, Moscow Film Production Unit, 1937, d: Mikhail Romm and Dmitri Vasilyev, s: Boris Shchukin, Nikolai Okhlopov, Vasili Vanin and Nikolai Svobodin.

*Li Shizhen* (李时珍), Shanghai Film Studio, 1956, d: Shen Fu, s: Zhang Huijian.

*Lin Zexu* (林则徐), Haiyan Film Studio, 1957, d: Zheng Junli and Cen Fan, s: Lü Dang and Ye Yuan.

*Mine Warfare* (地雷战), August the First Film Studio, 1962, d: Tang Yingqi, Xu Da and Wu Jianhai, s: Liu Qihui, Qu Hongchao and Chen Guangsheng.

*More Generations Will Come* (自有后来人), Changchun Film Studio, 1963, d: Yu Yanfu, s: Chi Yu and Luo Jing.

*Myriads of Lights* (万家灯火), Kunlun Film Studio, 1948, d: Shen Fu, s: Yang Hansheng and Shen Fu.

*New Biography of A Veteran* (老兵新传), Haiyan Film Studio, 1958, d: Shen Fu, s: Li Zhun.

*Nie'er* (聂耳), Haiyan Film Studio, 1959, d: Zheng Junli, s: Yu Ling, Meng Bo and Zheng Junli.

*Nosferatu*, German Film Arts Guild, 1922, d: F. W. Murnau, s: Henrik Galeen.

*Paisan* (Paisà), Arthur Mayer and Joseph Burstyn, 1946, d: Roberto Rossellini, s: Sergio Amidei, Klaus Mann, Federico Fellini, Marcello Pagliero, Alfred Hayes and Vasco Pratolini.

*Pandora's Box* (Die Büchse der Pandora), Süd-Film, 1929, d: Georg Pabst, s: Georg Pabst and Ladislaus Vajda.

*Plains Guerrillas* (平原游击队), Changchun Film Studio, 1955, d: Su Li and Wu Zhaodi, s: Xing Ye and Yu Shan.

*Railway Guerilla* (铁道游击队), Shanghai Film Studio, 1956, d: Chao Ming, s: Liu Zhixia.

*Rather Die Than Surrender* (宁死不屈), 1969, Albania Film.

*Rome, Open City* (*Roma, città aperta*), Minerva Film Spa, 1945, d: Roberto Rossellini, s: Sergio Amidei and Federico Consiglio.

*Saving Private Ryan*, Amblin Entertainment Mutual Film Company, 1998, d: Steven Spielberg, s: Robert Rodat.

*Seahawks* (海鹰), August the First Film Studio, 1959, d: Yan Jizhou, s: Lu Zhuguo, Zhang Yimin, Wang Jun and Wen Da.

*Serfs* (农奴), August the First Film Studio, 1963, d: Li Jun, s: Huang Zongjiang.

*Shangganling* (上甘岭), Changchun Film Studio, 1959, d: Sha Meng and Lin Shan, s: Sha Meng, Lin Shan, Cao Xin and Xiao Yu.

*Stage Sisters* (舞台姐妹), Shanghai Film Studio, 1965, d: Xie Jin, s: Lin Gu, Xu Jin and Xie Jin.

*Song of Youth* (青春之歌), Beijing Film Studio, 1959, d: Cui Wei and Chen Huai'ai, s: Yang Mu.

*Ten O'clock on National Day* (国庆十点钟), Changchun Film Studio, 1956, d, s: Wu Tian.

*The 400 Million*, 1939, History Today Inc., d, s: Joris Ivens.

*The Battle of Algiers*, Rizzoli, Rialto Pictures, 1966, d: Gillo Pontecorvo, s: Gillo Pontecorvo, Franco Solinas.

*The Battleship Potemkin*, Goskino, 1925, d: Sergei Eisenstein, s: Nina Agadzhanova, Nikolai Aseyev, Sergei Eisenstein, Sergei Tretyakov.

*The Birth of A Nation*, David W. Griffith Corp., 1915, d: D.W. Griffith, s: D.W. Griffith, T. F. Dixon (Jr.), Frank E. Woods.

*The Girl Who Sells Flowers* (买花姑娘), 1972, North Korean film.

*The Great Gatsby*, Paramount Pictures, 1949, d: Elliott Nugent, s: Richard Maibaum, Cyril Hume.

*The life of Wu Xun* (武训传), Kunlun Film Studio, 1951, d, s: Sun Yu.

*The Lin Family Shop* (林家铺子), Beijing Film Studio, 1959, d: Shui Hua, s: Xia Yan.

*The Red Shoes*, Eagle-Lion Films, 1948, d: Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, s: Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger and Keith Winter.

*The Savage Heart* (Corazón Salvaje), Mexico, 1968, d, s: Tito Davison.

*The Sentry Under the Neon Light* (霓虹灯下的哨兵), Tianma Film Studio, 1964, d: Wang Ping and Ge Xin, s: Shen Ximeng.

*The Vagabond* (Awaara), RK Films, Chembur, 1951, d: Raj Kapoor, s: Khwaja Ahmad Abbas.

*The War Game*, BBC, 1965, d, s: Peter Watkins.

*Triumph of the Will*, Reichsparteitag-Film, 1935, d: Leni Riefenstahl, s: Leni Riefenstahl, Walter Ruttmann.

*Tunnel Warfare* (地道战), August the First Film Studio, 1966, d: Ren Xudong, s: Ren Xudong, Pan Yunshan, Wang Junyi and Xu Guoteng.

*Unwind Trinidad* (逆风千里), Pearl River Film Studio, 1964, d: Fang Huang, s: Zhou Wancheng and Fang Huang.

*White Haired Girl* (白毛女), North-East Film Studio, 1950, d: Wang Bin and Shui Hua, s: Shui Hua, Wang Bin and Yang Renshen.

*Zhang Ga the Soldier Boy* (小兵张嘎), Beijing Film Studio, 1963, d: Cui Wei and Ouyang Hongying, s: Xu Guangyao.