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Classic Chinese Novels and Global Media Climate: Ecological Form, Affective World-Making and Infrastructural Network

Yim, Tsz Kit

Princeton, NJ : Princeton University

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CLASSIC CHINESE NOVELS AND GLOBAL MEDIA CLIMATE:

ECOLOGICAL FORM, AFFECTIVE WORLD-MAKING

AND INFRASTRUCTURAL NETWORK

Tsz Kit Yim

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the world's global entanglement with China through what I call classic Chinese novels' "global media climates." From the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) to the "rise of China" after the millennium, classic Chinese novels such as *Xiyouji* (*Journey to the West*) and *Sanguo Yanyi* (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*), have circulated around the world in the forms of translations, rewritings, theatrical, and other media adaptations. However, three dominant approaches have thus far limited our understanding of such phenomenon. First, the China-centered approach, which assumes that the novels' spread symbolizes "Chinese influence" over its neighbors. Second, the China-decentering approach, which accentuates how the novels have been re-appropriated or absorbed as "national canons" in, for example, Japan or Korea. Third, the transnational and pluralist approach, which fully acknowledges the portable use of classic Chinese novels in multiple contexts. While this third approach correctly highlights heterogeneity, it still fails to explain why multitudinous agents across times, spaces or even races, have to and want to assert their own "versions" by returning and resorting to, as well as (re)playing with and participating in the very same infrastructure of classic Chinese novels from time to time.

This dissertation suggests that the answer lies with classic Chinese novels themselves – their forms of affect, as well as their affordance of imaginative materials for collaborative world-making. Drawing from new materialism, actor-network theory, ecocriticism, affect theory and infrastructuralism, this dissertation shows how the ecological, formal, affective and infrastructural qualities of classic Chinese novels distinctively afford (i.e. providing materials for) and invite adaptations to globally take place as world-making events. Theorizing *Hongloumeng* and *Jin Ping Mei*'s affordances of ecological forms, affective worldmaking and infrastructural network as "global media climates" in the 20th and 21st century, this dissertation adopts a non-anthropocentric approach in showing how cosmological forms of affect (such as "water" in Daoism, and "wind" as conceived in Chinese and East Asian literature) serially link the original novels to each and all of their adaptations across times, spaces, and cultures, dissolving the human-non-human as well the socialism-and-capitalism dichotomy in the age of Anthropocene and Sinocene. (348 words).

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New York: Seward Park Library, Noodle Village, The Bean in East Village
Hong Kong: Dozy café in Sham Shui Po

Tokyo: Starbucks Coffee Ueno Onshi Park

A small portion of the introduction is drawn from my review essay "Worlding Classic Chinese Novels: Translation, Adaptation, and Affective Network in the Age of Global China." *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*. 44 (2022): 259-267. Some materials of this dissertation have been presented at conferences of Society of Cinema and Media Studies (2021); American Comparative Literature Association (2021, 2022) and Modern Language Association (2023). Lastly, my research has drawn from resources and materials from the following databases and institutions (in alphabetical order):

1) Fung Ping Shan Library (Hong Kong collection) at the University of Hong Kong
2) National Diet Library in Tokyo
3) NewspaperSG, https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/
4) The East Asian Library of Princeton Library
5) The Multimedia Information System (MMIS) of Hong Kong Public Libraries, https://www.hkpl.gov.hk/en/hkcl/info_facilities/mult_system.html

Introduction:

Classic Chinese novels *as* global media climates[1]

In China, we must concede that [great literature such as] *Sanguo Yanyi* and *Shuihuzhuan* are still widely circulating, but that is due to the intended sustaining of ***Sanguo Yanyi*'s *qi/air*** and ***Shuihuzhuan*'s *qi/*air** in the society**.**

中國確也還盛行著《三國志演義》和《水滸傳》，但這是為了社會還有三國氣和水滸氣的緣故。

Lu Xun 魯迅, "Preface for Ye Zi's 'Big Harvest'"
葉紫作《豐收》序 (1935)[2]

Past events may be regarded as categorical commotions of varying magnitudes of which the occurrence is declared by inbuilt signals analogous to those **kinetic energies**…These energies undergo various transformations between the original event and the present. The present interpretation of any past event is of course **only another stage in the perpetuation of the original impulse.**

George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (1962)[3]

Comparative literature scholars such as C.T. Hsia called them "classic" and Andrew Plaks called them "masterworks."[4] Both major critics of what have been called "classic Chinese novels" were taking cues from the canonization of five, or six (if *Rulin Waishi* 儒林外史 [*The Scholar*] is included) Ming and Qing Chinese novels in late imperial and early modern China. Outperforming perhaps all modern Chinese literary canonical works, classic Chinese novels, namely, *Sanguo Yanyi/ "Sanguo"* 三國演義 (*Romance of Three Kingdoms*)*, Xiyouji* 西遊記

[1] Portions of this introduction have been rewritten from my review essay Yim Tsz-kit, "Worlding Classic Chinese Novels: Translation, Adaptation, and Affective Network in the Age of Global China." *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*. 44 (2022): 259-267.
[2] Lu Xun 魯迅, "Yezi zuo 'fengshou' xu" 葉紫作《豐收》序 [Preface for Ye Zi's 'Big Harvest'] In *Lu Xun quanji* vol. 6 [Collected works of Lu Xun vol.6] (Beijing: Remin wenxue chubanshe, 2005): 227-230.
[3] George Kluber. *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962)
[4] C.T. Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968); Andrew Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976) and *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

(*Journey to the West*), *Shuihuzhuan/ "Shuihu"* 水滸傳 (*Water Margin*) and to a much lesser degree, *Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢 (*Dream of the Red Chamber*) and even less*: Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 (*The Plum in the Golden Vase*), have continued to circulate around the world *as* global media. Both within and beyond China, these literary canons continue to thrive as relatable and likeable adaptation materials in different ways and to different degrees in the forms of multi-lingual translations, rewritings, live-action films, TV dramas, animations, comics/manga, video games, travel-reality shows and so forth.

To apprehend classic Chinese novels' afterlives, one must then include classic Chinese novels (conventionally quarantined as "late imperial Chinese literature" in what Wai Chee Dimock calls "synchronic historicism")[5] in the study of modern and contemporary Sinophone, East Asian, Asian American, transpacific, or simply global film and media studies. Before laying out the methodologies and theories that this dissertation employs, the following sections of this introduction will first provide a state of the field review regarding classic Chinese novels' global presence. Then, it will spotlight the limits of some of the current approaches that have been and could be employed to study the "worlding" of classic Chinese novels. The final section will lay out this dissertation's simultaneously formalist, affective, ecological, and infrastructural approach in tracing classic Chinese novels' global circulations as *global media climates*, by way of Lu Xun's prescient attunement to classic Chinese novel's *qi*/air.

[5] Dimock questions the approach of "synchronic historicism" which "hardly acknowledges that the hermeneutical horizon of the text might extend beyond the moment of composition…Nor does it recognize that the passage of time…can give a past text a semantic life that is an effect of the present, rather than of the age when the text was produced." Wai Chee Dimock, "A Theory of Resonance." *PMLA* 112, no. 5 (1997): 1060-1071.

State-of-the-field:

Studies of translations and circulations of classic Chinese novels from the 1980s

While Western and Anglophone literary canonical works, such as Shakespeare, continue to receive book-length treatments invigorated by frameworks such as postcolonial and translation theory, feminist, queer and trans theory, ecocriticism, digital humanities, and crucially also in East Asia studies (see, most exemplarily Alexa Alice Joubin's *Chinese Shakespeare* [2009]; *Shakespeare in East Asia* [2021]),[6] the comparable case of classic Chinese novels in the world has not been proportionately studied and theorized in Anglophone academia. Until recently, Anglophone studies of classic Chinese novel's translational and transmedial circulations have been scant, especially compared to Chinese-language scholarship. On the other hand, mainland Chinese and Sinophone literary criticism and scholarship have been especially invested in studying the novels' circulations from the perspectives of translation and global reception since the late 1980s.[7] Since then, publications on such topics have continued to proliferate in mainland China, often preoccupied with the question of Chinese "influence" over the world or more liberally framing the novels' circulations as "cultural exchange" between nations.[8]

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[6] Alexa Alice Joubin, *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) and *Shakespeare and East Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[7] In Hong Kong and Taiwan, for example, book-length analyses along this line of inquiry appeared as early as the late 1970s. For example, Stephen C. Soong 宋淇's *Hongloumeng xiyouji: Xiping Hongloumeng xin yingyi* 紅樓夢西遊記: 細評紅樓夢新英譯 [*Hongloumeng*'s journey to the West: critical essays on the English translation of David Hawkes] (Taipei: Linking, 1976). In the late 1980s and early 1990s in mainland China, Wang Lina's 王麗娜, ed. *Zhongguo gudian xiaoshuo xiqu mingzhu zai guowai* 中國古典小說戲曲名著在國外 [Traditional Chinese fiction and drama in the world] (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1988), and Hu Wenbin's 胡文彬 *Hongloumeng zai guowai* 《紅樓夢》在國外 [*Hongloumeng* in the world] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993) are some of the earliest treatments of this topic in the PRC.

[8] I am referring to a large corpus of articles published in leading journals based in mainland China, such as *Hongloumeng xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊 and *Ming-Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 明清小說研究. The latter journal, for example, often in each issue publishes several articles devoted to Ming-Qing novels' global translations and circulations.

In the 1980s, when Deng Xiaoping's economic reform took off, Anglophone studies of classic Chinese novels' global circulations also begun. Published in Beijing in 1987 and later translated into Chinese in 1989, Claudine Salmon's edited volume *Literary Migrations: Traditional Chinese Fiction in Asia, 17-20th Centuries* (1987) represents a pioneering international effort in tracking how "traditional Chinese fictions" (including classic Chinese novels) were translated and adapted in East and Southeast Asia.[9] Yet Salmon's volume has not received book-length follow-ups until after the millennium, around the time when China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2003 and hosted the Beijing Olympics in 2008. During such times of increasing Sino-American, inter-Asian and East-West entanglement, discourses surrounding "the rise of China" gained currency (not without ambivalence), and concomitantly, the question of Chinese soft power—what it is, what it has been, or what it might be—came to the fore in public and intellectual inquiries.[10] Echoing such change of currents, in 2013, Salmon's out-of-print volume, long reviewed as significant by premodern Chinese literary scholars such as Robert Hegel and Wilt Idema,[11] warranted a reprint in Singapore for a renewed interested in inter- and intra-Asian exchanges.[12]

[9] See Claudine Salmon, ed*., Literary Migrations: Traditional Chinese Fiction in Asia, 17-20th Centuries* (Beijing: International Culture Publication Corporation, 1987; reprinted in Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).
[10] The concept is originally formulated in discussing American influences over the world; see Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).
[11] See the positive reviews of Robert Hegel, "Literary Migrations: Traditional Chinese Fiction in Asia (17th-20th centuries) by Claudine Salmon (Book Review)," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 13 (December 1991): 187-190 and Wilt L. Idema "Literary Migrations: Traditional Chinese Fiction in Asia (17th-20th centuries) by Claudine Salmon (Book Review)" *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land-En Volkenkunde*, 145 no. 4 (1989): 582–584.
[12] The publisher explained the reprint this way: "Since [Salmon's volume went out of print], more works especially in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Western languages have appeared which are mainly concerned with cultural exchanges between China and the countries of East Asia … a new interest has arisen among scholars from various countries on what has been termed 'Asian translation traditions' and conferences are regularly organized on this topic. Judging from this rising interest in translation history, this book on traditional Chinese fiction in Asia, which sets the question of Asian translations into a general framework, and so far has no equivalent, is still of service to researchers." See ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute's website, https://bookshop.iseas.edu.sg/publication/1928, last accessed 5 March 2024.

Beginning in the 2000s, Anglophone anthologies and edited volumes on the global circulation of classic Chinese novels and Chinese literature have steadily increased and peaked most recently in the 2020s.[13] Book-length studies have paid attention to the circulatory power of Chinese folktales or "classics" such as Hua Mulan, *Liang-zhu* ("the Butterfly Lover"), *Bai-she-zhuan* (the story of the white snake), *Liaozhai zhiyi* (*Strange Tales from Liaozhai Studio*).[14] And of course, the list goes on to include the even more popular cases of classic Chinese novels such as *Xiyouji*,[15] *Sanguo Yanyi*,[16] *Shuihuzhuan*,[17] *Hongloumeng*[18] *Jin Ping Mei*,[19] or discussing them altogether.[20]

Notably, these new monographs have built on while also ventured beyond the usual focus on rewritings of Chinese canons in early modern China (see Martin Huang's pioneering edited

[13] See the following key English volumes which have included classic Chinese novels in their scope of inquiry: Leo Tak-hung Chan, ed. *One Into Many: Translation and the Dissemination of Classical Chinese Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003); Benjamin Wai-ming Ng 吳偉明, ed. *Zhongguo xiaoshuo yu chuanshio zai Riben de chuanbo yu zaicuang* 中國小說與傳說在日本的傳播與再創 [The circulation and reinvention of Chinese fiction and myths in Japan] (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaotong University Press, 2018); Leo Tak-hung Chan, *Western Theory In East Asian Contexts: Translation and Transtextual Rewriting*. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020);; Leo Tak-hung Chan, and Zong-qi Cai, eds. *History Retold: Premodern Chinese Texts In Western Translation.* (Leiden: Brill, 2022); Li Guo, Patricia Angela Sieber, and Peter F Kornicki, eds. *Ecologies of Translation in East and Southeast Asia, 1600-1900*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022); Qi Lintao, and Shani Tobias, eds. *Encountering China's Past: Translation and Dissemination of Classical Chinese Literature* (Singapore: Springer, 2022); Luo Junjie, *Traditional Chinese Fiction in the English-Speaking World: Transcultural and Translingual Encounters*. (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

[14] Lan Dong, *Mulan's Legend and Legacy in China and the United States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011); Sookja Cho, *Transforming Gender and Emotion: The Butterfly Lovers Story in China and Korea* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018)*;* Liang Luo, *The Global White Snake* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021); William D. Fleming, *Strange Tales from Edo: Rewriting Chinese Fiction in Early Modern Japan.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2023).

[15] "Tokushū: "Saiyūki" 特集＝『西遊記』[Special issue: *Xiyouji*]. *Yuriika*=Eureka ユリイカ (September 1998); Isobe Akira 磯部彰, *Tabiyuku Son Gokū: Higashi Ajia no Saiyūki* 旅行く孫悟空 : 東アジアの西遊記 [The traveling Sun Wukong: *Xiyouji* in East Asia].Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 2011); Song Jeong-hwa 宋貞和, *Xiyouji yu dongya dazhong wenhua: yi Zhongguo, Hanguo, Riben weizhongxin* 《西遊記》與東亞大眾文化 : 以中國、韓國、日本為中心 [*Xiyouji* and East Asian popular culture: the cases of China, Korea and Japan] (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2011); Bai Huiyuan 白惠元, *Yingxiong biange: Sun Wukong yu xiandai Zhongguo de ziwo chao yue* 英雄變格 : 孫悟空與現代中國的自我超越 [The changing monkey: Sun Wukong and the self-transcendence of modern China] (Beijing: Sanlian, 2017); Hongmei Sun, *Transforming Monkey: Adaptation and Representation of a Chinese Epic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018); Wenyan Luo, *Translation As Actor-Networking: Actors, Agencies, and Networks In the Making of Arthur Waley's English Translation of the Chinese Journey to the West* (New York: Routledge, 2020); Barbara Wall, *The Dynamic Essence of Transmedia Storytelling: A Graphical Approach to The Journey to the West in Korea* (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

volume),[21] bringing to light the transtemporal, transcultural, and transnational afterlives of these books' global network in between literary text, translation, film, and other different media. These pathbreaking works in Chinese, English and Japanese and other languages have altogether

[16] Zakō Jun 雑喉潤 *Sangoku shi to Nihonjin* 三国志と日本人 [*Sanguozhi* and the Japanese people] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2002); Qiu Ling 邱嶺, Wu Fangling 吳芳齡, *Sanguo yanyi zai Riben* 三國演義在日本 [Sanguo yanyi in Japan] (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 2006); Tanaka Naoko 田中尚子, *Sangokushi Kyōjushi Ronkō* 三国志享受史論考 [An affective history of Japan's reception of *Sanguo*] (Tōkyō: Kyūko Shoin, 2007); Zhao Ying 趙瑩, *"Sanguo yanyi" zai Riben de yijie yu yanjiu* 《三國演義》在日本的譯介與研究 [Translations and studies of *Sanguo Yanyi* in Japan] (Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 2014); Jin Yong 金勇, *Xingsi shenyi–Sanguo Yanyi zai Taiguo de gujin chuanbo* 形似神異—《三國演義》在泰國的古今傳播 [Alike in appearance, different in spirit: *Sanguo Yanyi*'s circulation in Thailand] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2018); Chen Xizi 陳曦子, *Riben liuxing wenhua zhong de Zhongguo Jingdian Juzhu: Sanguozhi yu Sanguo yanyi* 日本流行文化中的中國經典巨著:《三國志》與《三國演義》[Classic Chinese canons in Japanese popular culture: The case of *Sanguozhi* and *Sanguo Yanyi*] (Guangzhou: Jinan University Press, 2019); "Tokushū = 'Sangokushi' no sekai'" 特集=「三国志」の世界 [Special issue: the world of *Sanguozhhi*] *Yuriiia*=Eureka ユリイカ (June 2019); Nagao Naoshige 長尾直茂, *Honpō ni okeru Sangokushi engi juyō no shosō* 本邦における三国志演義受容の諸相 [The reception of *Sanguo* in Japan] (Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan, 2019); Wenqing Peng. *Intertextuality in the English Translations of San Guo Yan Yi* (New York: Routledge, 2021); Hyuk-chan Kwon, *How Three Kingdoms Became a National Novel of Korea: From Sanguozhi yanyi to Samgukchi* (Leiden: Brill, 2023).

[17] Takashima Toshio 高島俊男. *Suikoden to Nihonjin* 水滸伝と日本人: 江戸から昭和まで [*Shuihuzhuan* and the Japanese people: from Edo to Showa] (Tokyo: Daishūkan Shoten, 1991); Inada Atsunobu 稲田篤信, ed. 『水滸伝』の衝撃 : 東アジアにおける言語接触と文化受容 [The shocking impact of *Shuihuzhuan*: language contact and cultural reception in East Asia] *Ajia yūgaku = Intriguing Asia* 121 (March 2010); William C. Hedberg, *The Japanese Discovery of Chinese Fiction: The Water Margin and the Making of a National Canon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019); Wu Rongbin 吳蓉斌, *Shuihu zhuan zai Riben* 水滸傳在日本 [*Shuihuzhuan* in Japan] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2021); Sun Linjing 孫琳浄, *Nihon kinsei ni okeru hakuwa shōsetsu no juyō, Kyokutei Bakin to "Suikoden"* 日本近世における白話小説の受容, 曲亭馬琴と「水滸伝」[Acceptance of colloquial novels in early-modern Japan: Kyokutei Bakin and *Shuihu zhuan*] (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 2021).

[18] Choe Yongchul 崔溶澈, *Hongloumeng zai Hanguo de chuanbo yu fany*i 紅樓夢在韓國的傳播與翻譯 [*Hongloumeng*'s translation and circulation in Korea], trans. Xiao Daping (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018); Fan Shengyu, *The Translator's Mirror for the Romantic: Cao Xueqin's Dream and David Hawkes' Stone.* (Oxon: Routledge, 2022); Chia Jee-luan 謝依倫, *Hongloumeng zai Malaixiya he Xinjiapo de chuanbo yu yanjiu*《紅樓夢》在馬來西亞和新加坡的傳播與研究 [The dissemination and research of *A Dream of Red Mansions* in Malaysia and Singapore (1818-2018)] (Shandong: Shandong University Press, 2023); Riccardo Moratto, Kanglong Liu, and Di-kai Chao, eds. *Dream of the Red Chamber: Literary and Translation Perspectives* (Oxon: Routledge, 2023)

[19] Lintao Qi, *Jin Ping Mei English Translations: Texts, Paratexts, and Contexts* (Oxon: Routledge, 2018); Kawashima Yūko 川島優子, *Kin Pei Bai No kōsō to sono juyō.*「金瓶梅」の構想とその受容 [The conception of *Jin Pin Mei* and its reception in Japan] (Tokyo: Kenbun Shuppan, 2019); Vibeke Børdahl, and Lintao Qi, ed.. *Jin Ping Mei - A Wild Horse In Chinese Literature: Essays On Texts, Illustrations and Translations of a Late Sixteenth-Century Masterpiece*. (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2022).

[20] Kaitokudō Kinenkai 懐徳堂記念会 ed., *Chūgoku yondai kisho no sekai: "Saiyūki, "Sangokushi engi," "Suikoden," "Kinpeibai" o kataru* 中国四大奇書の世界:「西遊記」「三国志演義」「水滸伝」「金瓶梅」を語る [The world of four Chinese masterworks: *Xiyouji*, *Sanguo Yanyi*, *Shuihuzhuan. Jin Ping Mei*] (Osaka: Izumi Shoin, 2003); "Tokushū, Nihon shomin bungei to Chūgoku" 特集 日本庶民文芸と中国 [Special issue: Japanese popular arts and China] *Ajia yūgaku = Intriguing Asia*, 105 (December 2007).

[21] Martin Huang, ed. *Snakes' Legs: Sequels, Continuations, Rewritings, and Chinese Fiction.* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

crossed boundaries of Sinology, area studies, ethnic studies, comparative literature, and media studies, through a genealogical archiving of Chinese storytelling's global potential in making world-connection in their respective language or area focus.

Overall, however, I argue that three approaches have dominated, and thereby limited our understanding of the phenomenon of classic Chinese novels' global circulations. First, the China-centered approach, which assumes that the novels' spread symbolizes "Chinese influence" over its neighbors.[22] Second, the China-decentering approach, which accentuates how the novels have been localized, re-appropriated or absorbed as "national canons" or cultures in, for example, Japan and Korea.[23] Third, the transnational and pluralist approach, which settles on adaptations' multiplicity and heterogeneity (à la cultural studies). But all three approaches or critical dispositions cannot explain why diverse agents across time, spaces or even races have *altogether* found it necessary to assert their own "subjectivity" or "versions" by resorting to or playing with the same set of classic Chinese novels across centuries.

Missing out on the ontology (i.e., what classic Chinese novels *are*, as opposed to what they *mean* and how they got *received, re-presented, re-signified* or *re-invented*),[24] these different forms of scholarships have also neglected the forces of "natures" and "natural elements" in classic Chinese novels, and they have also neglected how such non-human forces continue to impact on modern and contemporary world. For perhaps disciplinary reasons, existing scholarship highlighted above either focused on one classic Chinese novel's circulation or their circulations in one language or nation, focusing mostly on the politics of representations,

[22] Such sinocentric readings are rare in academic writings, but very rampant in popular writings or public discourses in contemporary China.
[23] See particularly, Hedberg, *The Japanese Discovery of Chinese Fiction*; Kwon, *How Three Kingdoms Became a National Novel of Korea*.
[24] The ontological turn, particularly in anthropology, refers to a study of "reality" beyond the culture and nature divide. One approach in going beyond this divide is "animism." See the well-cited Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

translations, and rewritings. Though they collectively enable rediscovery of classic Chinese novels' worldliness, ultimately, they leave us clueless as to why, for example, one form of classic Chinese novels such as *Xiyouji* have crossed national boundaries much more proactively and profusely than *Hongloumeng*, or for that matter, the often-censored *Jin Ping Mei*.[25]

Indeed, why did certain Chinese literary and cultural texts get translated, adapted, "used," and "appropriated" more than others? Most recent scholarship above have productively adopted the approach of contextualizing and recontextualizing of certain "texts" in new "contexts,' but why such "recontextualization" or "reinvention" of classic Chinese novels or texts had to take place in the first place? Why have classic Chinese novels continued to exert ubiquitous global presence despite their premodern as well as Chinese or sinographic origins?[26] Why does any non-Chinese nation and culture, such as Japan, continue to adapt *Sanguo Yanyi* into manga, game, and anime, despite the ready existence of Japanese canons (e.g. *The Tale of Genji*) and the wide availability of by now "original" anime franchises (such as Astro Boy) since the 1960s until the post-millennial present?[27] And why would film adaptations of *Sanguo*, such as s *Red Cliff* (2008-2009, dir. John Woo), find Hollywood investment and be internationally co-produced, ultimately becoming a box-office success all over Asia? Why will a game series adapted from

[25] One recent exception is Barbara Wall, who argues that *Xiyouji*'s very dynamics in global circulation (in her case, 60 adaptations and variations in Korea) is attributed to *Xiyouji* itself, whose "essence" strangely "frees' the adaptation from the "original." See Wall, *The Dynamic Essence of Transmedia Storytelling.*

[26] On using the lens of "Sinographic cosmospolis" in doing East Asian comparative literature, see most recently: Ross King, ed. *Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in the World of Wen: Reading Sheldon Pollock from the Sinographic Cosmopolis* (Leiden: Brill, 2023).

[27] For *The Tale of Genji*'s modern and contemporary reinventions, see Haruo Shirane, ed., *Envisioning the Tale of Genji: Media, Gender, and Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Michael Emmerich, *The Tale of Genji: Translation, Canonization, and World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013). For seminal studies of *Xiyouji*'s manga and animation in Chin and Japan, scholarship is copious, but for the earliest adaptation in the 20th century from Republican China to socialist China as well as imperial and post-war Japan, see; Sean Macdonald, *Animation In China: History, Aesthetics, Media* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016); Hikari Hori, *Promiscuous Media: Film and Visual Culture In Imperial Japan, 1926-1945.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017); Daisy Yan Du. *Animated Encounters : Transnational Movements of Chinese Animation, 1940s-1970s* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019).

Sanguo such as *Sangoku Musou* and *Sangokushi*, while developed by the Japanese, in turn become popular in mainland China and the Sinophone world, affording immersive play to people all over the world as well as leading to business collaboration in East Asia at large?[28]

Instead of being bounded by dichotomies entrenched in the politics of representation (i.e., center and periphery, sinicization and de-sinicization, hegemony and resistance, China and the world), we shall equally ask questions about classic Chinese novels' formal as well as affective capacities: why such "reinventions" – or more precisely, why such *re*-forming, and *de*-forming of Chinese classics had to take *form* in the first place, particularly, on the border of and outside of China? What can explain the world's sustainable *affective* investment in *being attached to* classic Chinese novels? Even when the intentions appear to be "subversive," "resistant" or as some may believe, to become "completely different" from the "Chinese" "original," why can't they leave classic Chinese novels alone and behind?[29]

To answer these questions, we need a new set of vocabulary beyond simply adding more and more new case studies of adaptations in one "area" or one "period" after another. Re-invention of canons is important, but re-invention is always connected to other re-inventions; as such, reinvention is never sovereign and self-sustaining, but collaboratively networked and networking. At the same time, we also need to be cautious about the opposite tendency in valorizing the notion of "fidelity" towards the original.[30] Therefore, instead of fidelity, I argue

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[28] For *Sanguo*'s affordance of "immersion" from novel to games, see Paize Keulemans, "Immersion without Mimesis in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Sangoku Musou (Dynasty Warriors*)" *Nanyang Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture* 3 (November 2022): 127-152.

[29] On the inevitability of being attached even when one claims to detach, see Rita Felski, *Hooked: Art and Attachment.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2020); I also draw from Felski's Latourian approach throughout the dissertation, see also Rita Felski, "Comparison and Translation: A Perspective from Actor-Network Theory." *Comparative Literature Studies* 53, no. 4 (2016): 747-765.

[30] I share the concern of ontology (mostly Bazinian) in adaptation studies scholarship, but the term fidelity does not stress the collaborative nature among originals and adaptations. On fidelity, see particularly these useful volumes: Colin MacCabe, Rick Warner, and Kathleen Murray, eds. *True to the Spirit: Film Adaptation and the Question of Fidelity.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Andrew Dudley, ed. *André Bazin on Adaptation: Cinema's*

that it is high time to think about what Anna Tsing calls "collaborative survival," which signals and cultivates the entanglement between new and old, tradition and modernity, human and non-human, and as we will add: China *being with* the world and the world *being with* China. The challenges are: how can one accurately and affectively describe classic Chinese novels' "kin-making" as international affairs, which are always dynamic, multilateral, and polycentric?[31] Most mind-bogglingly, what, and who, is "behind" such a transhistorical phenomenon as classic Chinese novels' cross-cultural itinerancy, which has been ongoing for centuries, and surely is not going away anytime soon?

Ecological form, affective worldmaking, and infrastructural network

Gesturing towards such unending relationality between China and the world through the aesthetic-political form of classic Chinese novels, this dissertation suggests that the global appeal of these novels should, first of all, be schematized and theorized by going back to the novels' *forms of affects* themselves, as film scholar Eugenie Brinkema suggested elsewhere.[32] This dissertation provides two case studies respectively on *Hongloumeng* and *Jin Ping Mei*, historically tracing and feeling around the two novels' transmedial afterlives through three interrelated rubrics: ecological form, affective world-making, and infrastructural network. The three keywords are not discrete entities. As reshuffle-able team players, each of them will take

Literary Imagination, trans Deborah Glassman and Nataša Ďurovičová (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022).

[31] For the idea of "collaborative survival," see Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[32] I am inspired by Eugenie Brinkema's proposal of "radical formalism" in film studies through which she reads contemporary Euro-American avant-garde and horror films *through* and *as* philosophical and diagrammatic forms in continental philosophy, such as grids, and other diagrams; see Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); see also her follow-up: *Life-Destroying Diagrams* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

turns in spotlighting specific aspects of this worldly phenomenon that we can call classic Chinese novels' *global media climates*.[33]

Theorizing from the ecological forms by turns latent and blatant in these two novels (i.e., "water" in *Hongloumeng* and "wind" in *Jin Ping Mei*), this dissertation will show how classic Chinese novels make kin, as Donna Haraway suggested, *beyond the confines of ancestry and genealogy,* across nations, cultures, and species through affect. I call such kin-making "affective worldmaking."[34] Such affective worldmaking repeats across times, spaces, and contexts, and in this sense classic Chinese novels also serve as "infrastructural network" meditating between China and the world, East and West, the global North and South (e.g., the "Belt and Road initiative (BRI)" in the case of *Xiyouji*), and temporally speaking between past, present, and future.

First, let's begin with "ecological form."[35] In literary studies, form and formal analyses are nothing new; for example, we use literary forms such as meter, stanza, and couplet to study poetry. In Chinese literature, as David Der-wei Wang in *A New Literary History of Modern China* (2017) reminds us, the concept of *wen* 文 in Chinese literature does not simply *mean*, but *manifests* and makes worlds as forms, as "ornament" and "cosmic pattern."[36] But for a theory of form that accommodates both the workings, and sometimes collision between literary and socio-

[33] Since the three terms are relationally intertwined, I could have, for instance, reshuffled the key words as "infrastructural form, ecological worldmaking, and affective network" or "affective form, infrastructural world-making, and ecological network."

[34] Donna Haraway defines kin-making as "something other/more than entities tied by ancestry or genealogy…the kindest were not necessarily kin as family; making kin and making kind (as category, care, relatives without ties by birth, lateral relatives, lots of other echoes) stretch the imagination and can change the story," *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin In the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

[35] For the term, I take inspiration from Philip Steer, and Nathan K. Hensley, eds. *Ecological Form: System and Aesthetics In the Age of Empire.* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019).

[36] David Wang takes cue from Martin Heidegger and suggests how the ancient idea of "literariness" (*wen*) enacts "manifestation—in corporal, artistic, socio-political, and natural terms—in the world." David Wang, "Introduction: Worlding Literary China." In *A New Literary History of Modern China* edited by David Der-wei Wang (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 5.

political forms, I draw from Caroline Levine's influential volume *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015), where she defines form as "*all* shapes and configurations, *all* ordering principles, *all* patterns of repetition and difference." (*emphasis mine*).[37] In her deliberately generalizing model, literary form is no different from – indeed always working together with social-political, architectural, or infrastructural arrangements (e.g. library, restaurant, and airport) in shaping social-political realities through nothing but aesthetics, through nothing but forms. Detecting forms in literature and social world, as Levine argues, will demonstrate the "affordance of forms," which "allow us to grasp … both the particular constraints and possibilities that different forms afford, and the fact that those patterns and arrangements carry their affordances with them as they move across time and space."[38]

Following Levine's trans-contextual and trans-temporal formal approach, we can now walk a less travelled path: how come classic Chinese novels have made worlds while also *enabling* so many different remakes? What "forms" and "materials" (i.e., patterns, arrangements, ordering) have they afforded, to the extent that they have, all over the years, recruited so many participants and co-creators in generating what we can now call their global media climates?[39] '

To grasp form as ecological is to attend to the agency of ecological "things" in classic Chinese novels as what Jane Bennett calls "vibrant matters" and as what Bruno Latour's actor-network theory calls "actants," which manifest themselves as "many metaphysical shades

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[37] Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2015), 3; see also her sequel: *The Activist Humanist: Form and Method In the Climate Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023).

[38] Alive to both possibilities and crucially, constraints, Levine defines materials' affordance with the following examples: "glass affords transparency and brittleness. Steel affords strength, smoothness, hardness, and durability...A doorknob affords not only hardness and durability, but also turning, pushing, and pulling" (6).

[39] Yen Kun-yang 顏崑陽 likewise sees classic Chinese novels as "ingredient" which afford myriad ways in realizing what he calls "diverse" values: see "Zhongguo gudian iaoshuo mingzhu de wenhua yuanliao xing, bu ding shi wenben zaizhi yu duoyuan jiazhi duixian" 中國古典小說名著的文化原料性、不定式文本再製與多元價值兌現 [The cultural ingredient-ability in classic Chinese fiction: A contention of contexts in non-designated eeproduction and negotiation of diverse Values] *Dong Hwa Journal of Chinese Studies* 東華漢學 19 (2014): 281-328.

between full causality and sheer inexistence." As Latour suggests, these non-human actants, while "'determining' and serving as a 'backdrop for human action,' might [also] authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on."[40] Taking cue from Bennett and Latour, our focus on classic Chinese novels' ecological form will therefore allow us to rethink agency as *always already distributed and distributing* among human and also non-human.

Among all miscellaneous forms in each classic Chinese novels, this dissertation suggests that it is their ecological forms which stand out in the affective world-making in between China, East Asia, and the world. Ecological forms abound in Chinese literature (from flowers to mountains, for instance), but one such most important form is *qi* (in Japanese *ki* 気; in Korean *gi* 기), which are variously translated into English as "air," "energy flow," "vital force," "breath," "vapor," "currents," "atmosphere," and "mana."[41] The ecological form of *qi* has been central in Chinese and East Asian discourses on literature, philosophy, science, medicine, art, and all aspects of their civilizations and cosmology.[42] In art and visual culture, for instance, Xie He's 謝赫 (b. 479-502) "Six Criteria" 六法論, which advocates the atmospheric imperative of *qi-yun-*

[40] See Jane Bennett *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-network-theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 72. In Latour's object-oriented account, objects and things cannot be assumed to only be able to, as most sociologist assumes, "'express' power relations, 'symbolize' social hierarchies, 'reinforce' social inequalities, 'transport' social power, 'objectify' inequality, and 'reify' gender relations," *Reassembling the Social,* 72.

[41] On a short history of *qi* in Chinese philosophy see Cheng Chung-ying, "Qi (Ch'i): Vital Force," in *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, edited by Antonio S. Chua (New York: Routledge, 2003), 615–617. For a succinct transcultural archaeology of *qi* (air), *feng (*wind) and mana, see, Yang Ru-Bin 楊儒賓, "Qu de kaigu xue – feng, fengqi, yu mana," 氣的考古學——風、風氣與瑪納 [The archeology of qi: wind, atmosphere, and mana] *Bulletin of the Department of Chinese Literature N.T.U.* 臺大中文學報 57 (2017):59-204. For one non-Chinese anthropological attempt in studying *mana* and mass media, see William Mazzarella, *The Mana of Mass Society.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

[42] For a pioneering and regularly reprinted volume in the study of *qi* or *ki*, see Onozawa Seiichi 小野沢精一, Fukunaga Mitsuji 福永光司, Yamanoi Yui 山井湧, eds. Ki no shisō: Chūgoku ni okeru shizenkan to ningenkan no tenkai 気の思想: 中国における自然観と人間観の展開 [Thinking with qi: conceiving nature and human in China] (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1978); Yuasa Yasuo. *The Body, Self-Cultivation, and Ki-Energy*, trans. Shigenori Nagatomo and Monte S. Hull (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

sheng-dong ("spirit consonance" 氣韻生動), has been influential and has been thoroughly discussed by art historians.[43] Scholars working in the Western traditions have also begun to look at the aerial form as philological, biological and physiological medium on paintings and in literature.[44] Abstract yet geo-material, the East Asian conception of air and *qi*, is ubiquitous in the Chinese and East Asian cosmology, highly specific in its ecological form while also highly general(izing) and generative in its affective world-making.

In the case of classic Chinese novels, such mentioning and sensing of the ecological form and affective world-making of *qi*/atmosphere can be found in one of the great modern Chinese writers Lu Xun's (b.1881-1936) essays. One year before his death in 1936, Lu Xun in a preface written for a fellow left-wing younger writer Ye Zi, mentioned something about the circulation of "*qi*/air" in modern China and the modern world. He further qualifies that such ecological form of *qi* (henceforth interchangeably "air" and "atmosphere") comes from two classic Chinese novels, namely *Sanguo Yanyi* and *Shuihuzuan*.[45] To witness the exceptional generativity of the novels' *qi* as affective world-making, we need to read Lu's meditation in full:

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[43] I take the translation "spirit consonance" from one early sinological treatment by Alexander C. Hoper, "The First Two Laws of Hsieh Ho." *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1949): 412–23; see also canonical essays by Fong Wen, "Ch'i-Yun Sheng-dong: Vitality, Harmonious Manner, and Aliveness." *Oriental Art* XII, no. 3 (1966): 159–64. James F. Cahill, "The Six Laws and How to Read Them." *Ars Orientalis* 4 (1961): 372–81, Art-historical articles abound on Xie He's principles of *qi*/air and aura, but let me emphasize here that *qi* was not immune to trans-culturalization as early as in the 17th century China, see: Liu Lihong, "The Global Air: Atmospherics in Chinese Ink Painting in the Seventeenth Century," in *The Routledge Companion to Global Renaissance Art* edited by Stephen J. Campbell and Stephanie Porras (New York: Routledge, 2024), 431-448; on translations of *qi*, see: Zhang Qiong, "Demystifying Qi: The Politics of Cultural Translation and Interpretation in the Early Jesuit Mission to China." In *Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulation*, edited by Lydia Liu (Durham: Duke University, 1999), 74–106.

[44] In Western art history such attention to winds on painting can be traced in Aby Warburg (b. 1866-1929). See: Georges Didi-Huberman, "The Imaginary Breeze: Remarks on the Air of the Quattrocento." *Journal of Visual Culture* 2, no. 3 (2003): 275-289; "Aer, Aurae, Venti: Philology and Physiology in Aby Warburg's Dissertation on Botticelli." *PMLA* 129, no. 3 (2014): 399–416; see also Eva Horn, "Air as Medium." *Grey Room*, 73, no. 73 (2018): 6-25; and fog in literature, Jesse O. Taylor, *The Sky of Our Manufacture: The London Fog In British Fiction From Dickens to Woolf* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016).

[45] On atmosphere, see the following major studies: Gernot Böhme, "Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics." *Thesis Eleven* 36, no. 1 (1993): 113-126; Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, translated by and Erik Butler (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); on

> Many scholars believe that great literature will last. Okay, **maybe (*ye-xu*)** that's true. But among all great works, I'd choose to read Chekhov and Gorky rather than Giovanni Boccaccio and Victor Hugo. The former two are more up to date, and closer to our contemporary world. In China, to be sure, we must concede that great literature such as *Sanguo Yanyi* and *Shuihuzhuan* are still widely circulating, **but that is due to the intended sustaining of *Sanguo Yanyi*'s *qi* and *Shuihuzhuan*'s *qi*/air in the society.** Technically speaking, the author of *Rulin Waishi* is no worse than Luo Guanzhong, but Chinese students today are flocking to study abroad, "**swarming across heaven and earth." (*man-tian sai-di*)** In this case, **it seems (*hao-xiang*)** that a book about imperial examination such as *Rulin Waishi* might not last and might not be great anymore. Greatness must come from human understanding.[46]
>
> 偉大的文學是永久的，許多學者們這麼說。對啦，也許是永久的罷。但我自己，卻與其看薄凱契阿，雨果的書，寧可看契訶夫，高爾基的書，因為它更新，和我們的世界更接近。中國確也還盛行著《三國志演義》和《水滸傳》，但這是為了社會還有三國氣和水滸氣的緣故。《儒林外史》作者的手段何嘗在羅貫中下，然而留學生漫天塞地以來，這部書就好像不永久，也不偉大了。偉大也要有人懂。(*translation and emphasis mine*)

That Lu Xun and May-fourth intellectuals craved for "new literature" and a "new China" was well known. Most ideologically obvious in this passage was that Lu Xun prefers something "new" in his evaluation between Chekhov/Gorky over Boccaccio/Hugo. Also obvious was that Lu Xun singled out *Rulin Waishi* (The Scholars) as potentially "outdated" despite recognizing it as being "technically" great. But his comment on the two classics Chinese novels stands out as odd. Most indicatively, Lu Xun's entanglement with the world's currents or global climates is encapsulated in his elliptical, but as such all the more telling comment that *Sanguo/Shuihu qi/air* were flowing in the society. On closer reading, such a sentence is also importantly sandwiched between the Western examples of "new" (i.e., Chekhov more "up to date" than Hugo) and the Chinese example of "old" (Wu Jingzi's *Rulin Waishi*), typographically mediating in between the two sets of examples, two sentences, and two seeming opposites (East vs. West; tradition vs. modernity; new vs. old) ambivalently, ambiguously, and as I emphasize, atmospherically and ecologically.

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the "air" dimension of Japanese literature, media and society, see Paul Roquet, *Ambient Media: Japanese Atmospheres of Self* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

[46] Lu Xun, "Yezi zuo 'fengshou' xu," 228.

The key to unlock this passage is not to rely on any ideological opposites and anthropocentricism.[47] As I will show below, this passage should be understood with what we call classic Chinese novels' ecological form, affective world-making and infrastructural network Ecologically attentive, Lu Xun pays attention more on the environment changes rather than the secluded settings of scholar/ship. Note that Lu Xun at the very beginning has distanced himself from the scholars' opinion on literature, many of whom assumes that the "interiority" of literature will unalterably endure despite what we can sum up as "environment changes" in modernity. Attuned to such shifts and turns in modern times, Lu Xun's judgment of literature in this passage (if it can be called that) is also tonally suggestive and tentative, filled with hedging and hesitant phrases such as "maybe" (*ye-xu* 也許) and "it seems" (*hao-xiang* 好像), indicating his opining under an uncertain atmospheric "pressure." To borrow from affect theorist Kathleen Stewart, Lu Xun is "atmospherically attuned" to the weather of thing, describing, for instance, the students going abroad using meteorological language, painting them as "swarming between heaven and earth 漫天塞地."[48]

While his evaluations of European literature and *Rulin Waishi* can be said as socially politically, and culturally determined by the dictates of Western modernity, the cases of *Sanguo* and *Shuihu*'s survival are more enigmatic; the two books, in his descriptions, simply merge with the society as an *atmospheric continuum*, fundamentally *being with* the society as *qi*/air/atmosphere. Even amidst the struggles of modernity, Lu Xun very presciently sensed that the cosmological conception as well as the geophysical air of *qi* from two classic Chinese novels

[47] Though Lu Xun in the end of the passage mentions how important it is for the greatness of literature to be appreciated by "human," as I will show, the passage equally focuses on (sociopolitical and ecological) "currents" as the sculpting force of literary greatness.
[48] Kathleen Stewart, "Atmospheric Attunements," *Environment and Planning. D, Society & Space* 29, no. 3 (2011): 445-453. See also Christina Sharpe's influential volume on weather and blackness: *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

not only penetrated, but surrounded himself and infused modern China, which by then only had to confront the "traumatizing" fact that itself was "just" part of the modern world, and not its (only) center.[49]

Though Lu Xun indicates that "there/this is" (*zheshi* 這是) an "intention" to sustain such air of the novels in the society,[50] the cause of such air's flowing have not, and actually cannot be (adequately) explained. As we can speculate (based on common sense), such air potentially passes through everyone's body. We can of course put words in his mouth and suggest that Lu Xun, under the "historical context" and as matched with the two novels' contents, must be talking about "imperial rivalries" (as in *Sanguo*) and "rebellion" (as in *Shuihu*), but this will be ignoring the open-ended-ecology of such thing as *qi*/air and replacing it with history and ideology. As Lu Xun's awkwardly constructed sentence suggests, the generation of *Sanguo* and *Shuihu's* air strangely escapes the logic of causality (i.e. who spreads the novels' air), linearity (i.e. whether the two classic Chinese novels are "modern" or. "traditional"; "progressive" or "conservative") and teleology (i.e., for what purpose is such air spreading and how should one "use" it). Arguably, Lu Xun simply does not, cannot, or more precisely he was simply dwelling with and thinking with such flowing of air without concluding.[51] What Lu Xun's "atmospheric

[49] Though Lu Xun, for probably gendered reasons, only mentioned or only sensed the air from *Sanguo* and *Shuihu*, we knew that other classic Chinese novels, such as our case studies *Hongloumeng* and *Jin Ping Mei*, as well as *Xiyouji* were also circulating in his times. As early as 1923, it was reported in one newspaper that an opinion polling was done in a teacher's college in Beijing, where more than 800 participants voted; *Hongloumeng* got the most votes as peoples' favorite "old" novel, with *Shuihu* and *Sanguo* coming behind. See Ma Yau-woon 馬幼垣, "Xiaoshuo de minyi ceyan." 小說的民意測驗 [Opinion poll for fiction] In *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shijigao* 中國小說史集稿 [Collected essays on Chinese fictions], 305-310. (Taipei: Shibao wenhua chuban, 1980). For "democratic" choices regarding characters and stars-making, see Chapter One of this dissertation.

[50] *Qi* is a product of what have been called the correlative cosmology in Chinese philosophy, but this is going beyond the scope of this essay.

[51] I therefore translated the awkward clause "但這是為了社會還有三國氣和水滸氣的緣故 " as "due to the intended [*zheshi weile*, 為了] sustaining of classic Chinese novels' *qi*," without imposing a subject on the sentence. Arguably, "Zhongguo" is the subject of the whole sentence, but *shengxing* is by no means conventionally a verb. Lu Xun was simply saying "in China" the two books were popular.

knowing" indicates was simply the phenomenon of the sustaining of such *Sanguo/Shuihu qi* in modern China being in the world, and ecologically on the planet.[52]

If we believe Lu Xun's comment that the society is filled with the air of and from *Shuihu* and *Sanguo,* we may have to accept the radical implication that the two classic Chinese "novels" cannot be simply located as books, as opera and as film adaptations, but more diffusively *as the very atmosphere and environment where one lives, breathes, and eats.* Not only in the air, but also on everybody's lips, inside one's body, or forgotten while still being the ethereal backdrop. What Lu Xun suggests, under the atmospheric pressures and sociopolitical currents of Westernization, appear to be exactly what we will call classic Chinese novels' global media climates, the *yin* and *yang* of which fluctuate between latency and blatancy, submergence and reemergence, as well as calmness and calamity.

We may reasonably ask Lu Xun, though: what exactly is the "content" of *Sanguo*'s *qi/*air and *Shuihu*'s *qi/*air? Why was he so relatively lucid about Victor Hugo and Wu Jingzi's "in" and "out" status as literary writers, but so convoluted and esoteric to the point of invoking *qi* about the two great classic Chinese novels' circulation? But to be fair, how can he (or anyone else) dare to make a conclusion when it comes to something as shareable, circulatory, invisible, geological, and "popular" as *qi* and air? What makes a full interpretation of such thing as *Sanguo*/*Shuihu qi* elusive is that such *qi* circulates "inside" and "outside" so many different people in a modern, modernizing, Westernizing and indeed revolutionizing China when Lu Xun wrote the preface. Before and after this period of what we call modern China, such novels' *qi* has also been "worlding" and "worlded" through translations, adaptations, and in multimedia forms

[52] On "atmosphere as a distinct, affective mode of knowledge" in the context of Sino-Japanese war and Republican China, see Weihong Bao, Hermeneutics of Doubt: Atmospheric Knowing and an Ecology of the Mind" *Representations*. 157, no. 1 (2022): 142–172.

around East Asia and around the world for centuries (**see the state-of-the-field session above**). Understood as an atmosphere or spirit emanating from the novels, such an idea or thing as *qi* are always already no longer simply even Chinese but flowing around the world as global media. This *qi* should therefore not be understood as simply an essentialized, ossified, and reified "tradition," but construed more precisely as one major "ecological form" mediating between China and the world, between Chinese literature and world literature, between now and then, ventilating in between any such construction of "the inside" and "the outside."

With the benefit of hindsight, the *qi*, the air of classic Chinese novels has never disappeared before and after Lu Xun's brief but poignant meditation. To Lu Xun's credit, he may have presciently sensed that these classic Chinese novels had survived and would survive and circulate around the world. Indeed, we may have to admit that classic Chinese novels' *qi* continued to outperform all modern Chinese literature (including Chinese Nobel Prize Winners, for that matter) in circulating around the world in the 20th century,[53] through major mediation of global cultural forms such as Hong Kong cinema and Japan's anime and videogames, and as some may venture, potentially also through contemporary China's creative industry, media platforms (TikTok and Xiaohongshu) and its gigantic consumer market in the 21st century.

Contrary to C.T. Hsia's diatribe against classic Chinese novels' "timidity" in dealing with modern and contemporary issues,[54] we now know that *Sanguo*, *Shuihu, Xiyouji*,

[53] Classic Chinse novels need no Nobel Prize to justify their world status. On China's "Nobel complex," see Julia Lovell, *The Politics of Cultural Capital: China's Quest for a Nobel Prize in Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).

[54] Noting that the popularity of Chinese literature was diminishing in China and the Sinophone Asia in the 1980s, Hsia criticized classic Chinese novel (and the Confucianist, Buddhist and Daoist traditions behind them) for being handicapped in "speak[ing] out against imperial despotism, social injustice, and the maltreatment of women." Hsia further claimed that if Chinese literature had served such (socio-political-gender) justice earlier, "China might have been changed for the better five hundred, a thousand, or fifteen hundred years ago, and the literature written since the hypothetical awakening or renaissance would have been incomparably *richer*." (*emphasise mine*). See "Classical Chinese Literature: Its Reception Today as a Product of Traditional Culture." *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 10, no. 1/2 (1988): 152.

Hongloumeng, and *Jin Ping Mei*'s *qi*, to different degrees and in different ways, continue to encircle not only in the Sinophone world but throughout the world in the form of translations and multi-media adaptations. But the questions brought by Lu Xun's elliptical comment remain: why did and why have such *qi* of *Sanguo* and *Shuihu* remained in the society in the first place, by turns submerging or emerging? What does *qi* do and, can we dispel and cancel it?

I argue that the lesson we could learn from Lu Xun is simply not to pigeonhole such phenomenon into any such thing as "meaning" or "significance." For one thing, when it comes to *qi*/air, do we have to understand it first before breathing? Do we not simply inhale and exhale, consequentially enjoying the life that such air gives? Likewise, for the readers, watchers, and players of classic Chinese novels, does the acquisition and ascertaining of the novels or the stories' "meaning effect" matter more than the novels' bringing forth of the what Hans Gumbrecht calls the "presence effect," such as the "presence-dimension of the typography, of the rhythm of language, and even of the smell of paper into play?"[55]

Referring to what Gumbrecht may call "the presence effect" or what we may call affective world-making, premodern Chinese literature scholar Wai-yee Li notes the immediate priority in attending to the classic Chinese novels' "opening up [of] worlds" beyond the confines of sociopolitical coordinates and contextual specificities:

> Why do classic Chinese novels matter? One can make the argument based on relevance: one needs to know them to gain cultural literacy, understand their role in modern politics, or be attuned to their uses in popular culture. **But perhaps the pleasure of reading ultimately carries more weight. These texts open up worlds where one can roam and get lost; the moral, religious, or political messages can always wait**. [56]

[55] Hans Gumbrecht critiques the predominance of "the culture of meaning" (what he calls "meaning effect") in contemporary criticism and instead makes a case for "the presence effect," whereby feeling and the intense feeling of "being present" should be valued as aesthetic and lived experience; see Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 109.
[56] Wai-yee Li, "Why Classic Chinese Novels Matter," in *The China Questions: Critical Insights into A Rising Power*, edited by Jennifer Rudolph and Michael Szonyi (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 260.

Wai-yee Li's emphasis on affect rather than hermeneutics ties with my reading of or more precisely, breathing with Lu Xun's air highlighted above. Social relevance, cultural literacy, political appropriation, and uses in popular culture, while important, shall all wait; we will get to those. But first, we need to deal with the novels' affordance of *form and affect.* Like Lu Xun, Wai-yee Li here also reorients us from scholars' opinions to our very being *with* Chinese novels in everyday life, as materials for us to *loosen* or even *lose* our self-boundedness in all of the novel's meaning, for sure, but also what Brian Massumi calls affective intensity – that which escapes signification.[57] To rephrase Marshal McLuhan's famous saying "the medium is the message," the *qi*/air is already the message: a message of worlding, feeling, and roaming with classic Chinese novels, not necessarily resulting in any meaning, not to mention social progress.[58] Instead of overinterpreting (such as quarantining its meaning to thousand years of "Chinese" conceptions of *qi* from ancient China to modern China) or narrowing down classic Chinese novels' *qi* to "the psychology and spirit of the Chinese nation and the Chinese people 民族心理與精神的體現,"[59] most Chinese or global readers could all ideally always simply relax their bounded individualities through the *qi*/air of the novels altogether across borders.

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[57] In Brian Massumi's theorization, emotion is qualified content, but affect is different; the latter refers to the a-signifying "intensity" that is unassimilable and not capturable by anything that can be termed as "emotion", see *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (*Twentieth Anniversary Edition with A New Preface* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), XX.

[58] Marshal McLuhan, Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, 2001).

[59] Thus far, scholarly interpretation on the line of "*Sanguo/Shuihu qi*" in Lu Xun's preface have been reductive, by turns psychologistic, culturalist, nationalist or classist. For example, contemporary scholar Liu Yongqiang reduces the "*Sanguo/*Shuihu *qi*" to a manifestation of "national psychology and spirit 是民族心理與精神的體現." Another leading scholar in mainland China, Wang Xuetai flatly reduces the *qi* of the two novels as "*youmin qi*" (the air of hooligan-errant), attributing and equating such *Sanguo/Shuihu qi* to a range of activities in the long history of China: from triad society to the mob-rule led by the Gang of Four during the Cultural Revolution. His socio-political and ideological reading may be right to some extent, but as he admitted, such reading is not Lu Xun's original wordings, which are more open-ended. As I argue, the opening up of *qi*'s the atmospheric diffusion is more important than narrowing and nailing it down prematurely. See Wang Xuetai's original: "所謂 '三國氣'、'水滸氣' 就是我們在本書中要詳細論述的遊民氣、遊民意識，雖然魯迅先生沒有使用這個詞彙。魯迅的論述並沒有過時，十年浩

For our purpose, as Susan Sontag suggests, let's (first of all) go "against interpretation" and suspend hermeneutics for "experiencing the luminousness of the thing in itself, *of things being what they are*" (*emphasis mine*).[60] Let's inhale and exhale, and let's read, watch, play and breath with the *qi* of classic Chinese novels.[61] It bears repeating that it is highly limiting to frame Lu Xun's (ecological and elliptical) formulation of *Sanguo/Shuihu qi* as social, cultural, political formations. What he calls *Sanguo/Shuihu qi*/air is not in itself an instantiation of some reified notions such as "Chineseness" or "traditional values," instead his is an ecological, cosmological, and non-anthropocentric meditation. We must stress that Lu Xun have been much more precise in his formulation that is *Sanguo/Shuihu qi*, prioritizing: (1) the literary form (i.e. specific texture and materiality of classic Chinese novels), (2) ecological form (i.e. *qi*, air, atmosphere) and (3) the novels' altogether affective worldmaking – the "sustained flowing of air" in between texts (i.e. the classic Chinese novels themselves) and shifting contexts (i.e. modern China as entangled with the [Western] world).

In the case of classic Chinese novels, "the context" (from the antiquity to the Tang, the Song, the Yuan, the Ming, the Qing….) for sure has shaped the "texts" of classic Chinese novels in numerous ways, but in Lu Xun's elliptical formulation, "the texts" of classic Chinese novels

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劫當中，「四人幫」…以縱橫裨闔的流氓手段亳尤顧忌地橫行於上・而芸芸眾生卻以委曲的游民作風曲隨於下・舉國若狂，所以才造成長期的全局性的破壞," 23. See Liu Yongqiang 劉勇強, "Zuowei dangdai jingshen wenhua xianxiang de ming qing xiaoshuo, jian lun ming qing xiaoshuo de jian du yu quanshi" 作為當代精神文化現象的明清小說-兼論明清小說的閱讀與詮釋" [Interpreting Ming-Qing fictions as contemporary cultural and spiritual phenomenon] *Ming-Qing Xiaoshuo Yanjiu* 60 no.2 (2001): 27-46; Wang Xuetai 王學泰, *Youmin wenhua yu Zhongguo shehui* 遊民文化與中國社會 [Hooligan-errant and Chinese society] (Shanxi: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2014).

[60] Cited in Alexander Galloway, "Love of the Middle" in Alexander Galloway, Eugene Thacker, and McKenzie Wark, *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2013), 47-48.

[61] As the following chapters will show, in certain political contexts or atmosphere, breathing with and breathing *as* characters in classic Chinese novel was not only disallowed, but it might even lead to deaths; see the cases of *Hongloumeng* and *Jin Ping Mei* during and after the Cultural Revolution. On the aesthetics and politics of breathing, see Ashon T. Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017); Jean-Thomas Tremblay, *Breathing Aesthetics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022).

themselves also shape "the context" (i.e.., "the society") through the leakiness of its air diffusing and seeping throughout every corner of the society. Taking cue from Lu Xun's non-anthropocentric insight, we may venture that classic Chinese novel's mediation of air between the past and present is in every way simultaneously flowing in the air of modern and contemporary world. The contents of all these five classic Chinese novels, for example, have been extracted as self-help manuals in winning friends and business, facilitating romance, navigating workplace and life troubles.[62] Classic Chinese novels' air also, of course permeates across the board all the following: literature, film, manga, and anime in general. Examples range from: the *Hongloumeng* air in Eileen Chang 張愛玲, Pai Hsien Yung 白先勇 and Wang Anyi 王安憶; the *Shuihu* air in Jin Yong 金庸, Chang Ta-chun 張大春, and Mo Yan 莫言; the *Xiyouji* air, Akira Toriyama 鳥山明, Tezuka Osamu 手塚治虫, Stephen Chow 周星馳, Maxine Hong Kingston 湯婷婷, Gene Luen Yang 楊謹倫; *Sanguo* air in Yoshikawa Eiji 吉川英治 and Yokoyama Mitsuteru 横山光輝; the *Jin Ping Mei* air in Jia Pingwa 賈平凹, Lee Bik-wa 李碧華 and in imperial-court drama such as *Story of Yanxi Palace* 延禧攻略 [2018]…and of course most dramatically and world-historically, the *Shuihu*, *Sanguo* and *Xiyouji* air in Mao Zedong 毛澤東 and the Red Guards.

Composing worlds of their own across identities, nations and cultures, classic Chinese novels have helped us to assemble all the above "heroes/heroines" and key texts in contemporary Chinese, Sinophone, Japanese, East Asian, and Asian/American literary, film, popular and political culture. Tradition and modernity, China, and the West, new and old…all these binaries cannot, and should not contain and control the very *qi*/air, the very ecological form, affective

[62] Merve Emre calls such non-academic use of literature in global corporations, diplomatic missions, or exchange programs "para-literary." See her *Paraliterary: The Making of Bad Readers in Postwar America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

worldmaking and as we will the infrastructural network of classic Chinese novels. That is because both sides of such seeming binary oppositions are both sustained and supported by *qi*/air, and as shown in the next four chapters, we will see how classic Chinese novels and the world at large have been infrastructurally supported by water and wind, and other elements *in, through* and *as* the very form, ecology, affect, and infrastructure of classic Chinese novels

As a conclusion, I will end the introduction by turning to the last contribution of Lu Xun's preface to one of this dissertation's keywords: infrastructural network. In addition to the turn towards ecology, post-humanism, formalism, affect and world literature (all encapsulated in my key words "ecological form" and "affective worldmaking"), literary and media scholars increasing reading and theorizing 1) representations of infrastructure in literature and media, and 2) literature and media as infrastructure.[63] In Lu Xun's preface, the obvious infrastructure in *Rulin Waishi* is the imperial examination system, which was abolished in 1905. But as the latest film and media scholarship suggests, *qi*, including the air of classic Chinese novels such as *Sanguo* - is also our infrastructure.

Infrastructure is distinguished from structure. While structure, like form, is often deemed as static, totalizing, constraining, and at times oppressive, infrastructure is enabling in all its formal reliability, and in all its stability allow movements and even freedom of movements to occur. As anthropologist Brian Larkin puts it, "[i]nfrastructures are matter that enable the movement of other matter. Their peculiar ontology lies in the facts that they are things and *also the relation between things*" (*emphasis mine*).[64] Affect theorist Laurent Berlant more broadly

[63] Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42, no. 1 (2013): 327-343; Michael Rubenstein, Bruce Robbins, and Sophia Beal, "Infrastructuralism: An Introduction." Modern Fiction Studies 61, no. 4 (2015): 575-586; Anand, Nikhil, Akhil Gupta, and Hannah Appel, eds. *The Promise of Infrastructure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018); Kelly M. Rich, Nicole M. Rizzuto, and Susan Marjorie Zieger eds. *The Aesthetic Life of Infrastructure: Race, Affect, Environment* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2023).
[64] Larkin, "The Politics," 329.

defined infrastructure as facilitating the "nonsovereign relationality as the foundational quality of being in common."[65] While conventional understanding of infrastructure refers to public works such as electricity school, bridge, dam, high-speed railway and so on, natural elements and nature are increasingly also seen as media as well as infrastructure in terms of their support for "being-in-common" in life. Natural elements (as in John Durham Peters *The Marvelous Cloud: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media* [2015][66] and Weihong Bao's seminal study *Fiery Cinema* [2015]), such as fire, water, and geological matters have now become fertile sites of literary and media theorizations.[67] As the following chapters will show, classic Chinese novels are often associated with infrastructure (Chapter One and Two: "star assembly" and "water" in *Hongloumeng*; Chapter Three or Four: "theme park" and "wind" in "*Jin Ping Mei*"), and indeed several theme parks have been developed around classic Chinese novels such as *Xiyouji* in mainland China.

Building on affect and emotion studies in the field of Chinese literary and cultural studies,[68] this dissertation contributes to the field with heightened attention to formalism,

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[65] What Berlant calls the "nonsovereign…is not here the dissolution of a boundary [but] the experience of affect, of being receptive, in real time." See Lauren Berlant, "The commons: Infrastructures for troubling times," *Environment and Planning. D, Society & Space* 34, no. 3 (2016): 394.

[66] John Durham Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward A Philosophy of Elemental Media* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015); Weihong Bao, *Fiery Cinema: The Emergence of an Affective Medium in China, 1915-1945* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

[67] See the following representative works in literary, cultural and media studies: Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, and Lowell Duckert, eds. *Elemental Ecocriticism: Thinking with Earth, Air, Water, and Fire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Jussi Parikka. *A Geology of Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Melody Jue, *Wild Blue Media: Thinking Through Seawater* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020); Cajetan Nwabueze Iheka, *African Ecomedia: Network Forms, Planetary Politics.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021); Dimitris Papadopoulos, María Puig de la Bellacasa, and Natasha Myers, eds. *Reactivating Elements: Chemistry, Ecology, Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

[68] For studies of affect in modern and contemporary Chinese literature, history and media, see: Rey Chow, *Sentimental Fabulations, Contemporary Chinese Films: Attachment In the Age of Global Visibility* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Eugenia Lean, *Public Passions: The Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Weihong Bao, *Fiery Cinema: The Emergence of an Affective Medium In China, 1915-1945* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Ling Hon Lam, *The Spatiality of Emotion In Early Modern China: From Dreamscapes to Theatricality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018) and most recently, Mila Zuo, *Vulgar Beauty: Acting Chinese In The*

infrastructualism and ecocriticism at the intersection of Chinese and Sinophone studies, East Asian comparative literature, world literature, and media studies. Not incongruent with what Kuan-hsing Chen's call for using "Asia as method,"[69] scholars in the field of film, media and videogame studies have increasingly turned to "premodern" (East)Asian sources (Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism) in decolonizing and deimperializing the field.[70] Using classic Chinese novels as "method," this dissertation participates in such decolonial efforts through theorizing classic Chinese novels' manifestations of the global media climates where "the Sinocene" is playing increasing role in shaping the Anthropocene.[71]

Global Sensorium (Durham : Duke University Press, 2022); Charlie Zhang, *Dreadful Desires: The Uses of Love in Neoliberal China* (Durham : Duke University Press, 2022); Hsiao-yen Peng, *Modern Chinese Counter-Enlightenment: Affect, Reason, and the Transcultural Lexicon* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2023); Tu Hang 涂航, *Qingdong yu Zhong: Dangdai Zhongguo de sixiang zhengming ui qinggan zhengzhi* 情動於「中」：當代中國的思想爭鳴與情感政治 [An emotional state: Public intellectual debate and the politics of affect in contemporary China] (Taipei: Linking Press, 2023).

[69] Chen Kuan-hsing. *Asia As Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

[70] What is more interesting is not the mere *depiction and representation* of tradition in film and media, but tradition itself *as co-participating forms of world-making* in, with, and through art, film and media. In other words, more focus shall be paid to the world-making forces of the nonhuman, instead of considering non-human forces simply as discursive construct, ideological product and social-political formation. Here I only include works that gesture towards such paths. On Confucianist film theory, see Victor Fan, *Cinema Approaching Reality: Locating Chinese Film Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); on Buddhist film and video-game theory, see Sharon A. Suh, *Silver Screen Buddha: Buddhism in Asian and Western Film* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); Francisca Cho, *Seeing Like the Buddha: Enlightenment Through Film* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017); Victor Fan, *Cinema Illuminating Reality: Media Philosophy Through Buddhism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022); Jeffrey G. Snodgrass, *The Avatar Faculty: Ecstatic Transformations in Religion and Video Games* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2023); on Daoist art and film theory, Ellen Johnston Laing, "Daoist Qi, Clouds and Mist in Later Chinese Painting," *Orientations*, 29 no. 4 (1998): 32-39; François Jullien, *The Great Image Has No Form, Or On the Nonobject Through Painting*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009); Sarah Shih-shan Huang, *Picturing the True Form: Daoist Visual Culture in Traditional China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012); Kiki Tianqi Yu. "Cinematic Ideorealm and Cinema Following Dao: Theorizing Film Aesthetics through Daoism." *Screen* 64, no. 4 (2023): 462–484.

[71] Highlighting China's role in the world climate (calling it "the Sinocene"), anthropologist Jerry Zee goes so far as to suggest China itself "has become a weather system." (238) As he writes, "[l]ate socialism thus appears as a process not only weathering the monumental environmental challenges that face China, but also as a profusion of practices wherein the Anthropocene is reconfigured into a Sinocene. It is in the experiments that chart out new permutations of state, landscape, and governance in and downwind of a country that *has also become a weather system*." (*emphasis mine*) See Jerry Zee, *Continent in Dust: Experiments in a Chinese Weather System* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 238.

In the next four chapters we will see how such *qi* of *Hongloumeng* and *Jin Ping Mei* circulate in the world atmospherically combining with other ecological forms such as "water" (*shui*) and "wind" (*feng*) through theatrical, film adaptations and other atmospheric circulations vacillating and mediating in between social, cultural, and political or simply the mood of the weather, our classic Chinse novels' global media climates.[72] Through precise attention to form and affect instead of falling back on any identity categories ("Chinese-ness", "Japanese-ness," "Vietnamese-ness," "Asian-American-ness"…) or any elevated notions such as "tradition" and "classicism" per se,[73] this dissertation illustrates how latent sources of Chinese and East-Asian formulated soft-power – such as "air," "water" and "wind" – have always been "inside" China and "out there" in the world, ecologizing a simultaneous process of China's worlding as well as the worlding of China.

In sum, this dissertation argues that classic Chinese novels' *qi*/air/atmosphere are not designated for any geopolitical destination and ideological detention, but designed for cosmological connection, inter-subjective collaboration, and transnational co-production. What we call classic Chinese novels' ecological form, affective world-making, infrastructural network, and altogether global media climates, remain to be ongoing, and what we need to do is to pay attention. It is towards *Hongloumeng*'s world of waters which we shall now turn.

[72] In the Chinese language, *qi* can be of and flowing with anything, including idiomatically, *shui-qi*/water-vapor 水氣 (meaning "vapor") and 風氣 *feng-qi*/wind-vapor (meaning [social] atmosphere) or 雲氣 *yun-qi*/cloud-vapor, which is often seen in Daoist texts and visual cultures.
[73] Yang Zhiyi, "Sinophone Classicism: Chineseness as Temporal and Mnemonic Experience in the Digital Era." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 81, no. 4 (2022): 657-671.

Chapter One:

Hongloumeng's star assembly: the "one" among the "many"

Next was a picture of two people flying a kite. There was also **a large expanse of sea** with a boat in it and a girl in the boat who had buried her face in her hands and **appeared to be shedding tears.**
…後面又畫著兩個人放風箏，一片大海，一隻大船，船中有一女子，掩面泣涕之狀

The Main Register 正冊 in the Land of Illusion 太虛幻境
(*SOTS* 5:1:134; *HLM* 5:1:78, *emphasis mine*)[74]

Throughout Hong Kong's entertainment history, competitions among film and theatrical adaptations have never been so cut-throat and widely sensational! **The story of *Hongloumeng* alone has singularly created a sensation** spreading over the whole territory. Would **this flooding of "Red Chamber" films** turn into a catastrophe taking its toll?
香港影劇界有史以來，什麼雙包案，三包案的鬥爭從來沒有像今日的尖銳化，廣泛化！如今一個「紅樓夢」故事，就弄到整個香港鬧烘烘的…會不會「泛濫成災」，有人因此滅頂？

"*Hongloumeng* Movies Competing over Audiences" 紅樓夢電影競相推出上映,
Sin Chew Jit Poh 星洲日報 November 2, 1977.[75]

Introduction: beginning to dream in modern Shanghai

Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳 (b.1894-61), Yuan Mei-yun 袁美雲 (b.1918-1999), Zhou Xuan 周璇 (b.1920-57), Xu Yu-lan 徐玉蘭 (b.1921-2017), Wang Wenjuan 王文娟 (b.1926-2021), Ling Bo

[74] The English translations in this chapter are taken from David Hawkes' translation of Cao Xueqin, *The Story of the stone: A Novel in Five Volumes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, [1979]-1987), abbreviated as *SOTS*; and Chinese citations are taken from Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢 (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue chubanshe, 2005), abbreviated as *HLM*. Both abbreviated citations are followed by, consecutively, chapter number; volume number; page number.

[75] "Hongloumeng dianying jingxiang tuichu shangying" 紅樓夢電影競相推出上映 [*Hongloumeng* movies competing over audiences], *Sin Chew Jit Poh* 星洲日報, November 2, 1977.

凌波 (b.1939-), Brigitte Lin 林青霞 (b.1954-), Leslie Cheung 張國榮 (b.1956 2003) … assembled together here are many of the most prominent national or/and global celebrities in the history of Chinese-language opera and film arts. Two things we should note: first, at some point in their careers, these mega-stars have all played cross-dressed and non-binary roles (*fan-chuan* 反串), either on stage or in film. Second, all of them have performed in adaptations of the Qing-dynasty classic novel, *Hongloumeng* (*Dream of the Red Chamber*, henceforth *HLM*). The questions to ask here are: why such a convergence between the premodern literary masterpiece *HLM* and modern stardom? And how do we explain, or more modestly, simply connect the prevalence of crossdressing, or transgendering roles as part of what we might want to call modern and contemporary female, queer and non-binary stardom?[76]

This chapter seeks to answer these questions by tracing the affective power of such stardom back to the form of affect in the classic Chinese novel itself. Though this chapter does not suggest that *HLM* unilaterally *causes* the stardom of this assembly of famous actors, what it does elucidate is how the two—the ancient classic and contemporary queer and non-binary stardom— connect and correlate as processes of network. This chapter contends that from its very beginning, *HLM*'s film adaptations are all networked through the novel itself, crossing temporal and geographical borders, doing so through four distinct forms of affect: "star assembly," "glittering grief," "queerness" and "*trans*-forming seas." In the end, I will show how these forms are already formed, or better, *afforded by* the novel as infrastructural resources across times, spaces, genders, ethnicities, and races. Not all these aesthetic forms necessarily appear in each adaptation. But as will be explained below, these forms will help us schematically

[76] The term "transgender" has already begun to operate in addition to "queer" in studying cross-gender performances even in the field of premodern Chinese history. See, most recently: Matthew Sommer, *The Fox Spirit, the Stone Maiden, and Other Transgender Histories from Late Imperial China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2024)

link up all adaptations serially back to the novel's world-making ecology. As such, they will also serially link to all other adaptations productively across periodizations (ancient, modern, contemporary, futurity…), geopolitical divisions (socialism/capitalism, East/West), medium specificity (opera, theatre, film, TV show…), language barriers (Mandarin, Cantonese, Shanghainese, Amoyese, Teochow or English…**(see Chapter Two**), as well as the human and non-human divides.

Thus connected, we can perform comparative work among all adaptations and trace their ecological form and affective world-making across decades or even centuries of so-called "changes." All these forms of affect will gain clarity as this essay traces them through the novel and its film archive. We may gesture towards the forms of "star assembly," "glittering grief," "queerness," and as will be made clear later "trans-forming seas," by going back to the very beginning of *HLM*'s film adaptation in Republican China; and we will complete our theorization with the affect of "trans-forming seas" as we move – and indeed, migrate, from Republican Shanghai to post-war Hong Kong and lastly, to the present and future of global China, Sinophone Asia, and the world at large.

In 1924, the first film adaptation of *HLM* appeared; it was a short film titled *The Burial of Flowers by Dai-yu* 黛玉葬花, shot in Beijing at the invitation of a Hong Kong film company. In the film, the *dan* actor and Peking opera star Mei Lanfang (b. 1894-1961), who would continue to meet and impress key 20th-century modern Western cultural luminaries (e.g., Walter Benjamin [b. 1892-1940], Sergei Eisenstein [b.1898-1949], Bertolt Brecht [b. 1898-1956], Charlie Chaplin [b.1889-1977]) and toured the world at large (Japan, the Soviet Union, the United States…),

cross-dressed as *HLM*'s Dai-yu.[77] Importantly, as we will see by tracing *HLM*'s form and affect, Mei's gendered participation in *HLM*'s cinematicization has *something* to do with Chinese international and queer stardom – "the premodern" residually re-emerging through "the modern" and "the contemporary."[78] This *HLM* "tradition" of using (while also making) world stars, as well as featuring of queer performances of what I will call "glitter and grief," would only continue in the next round of film adaptations - what I call "the First Red Chamber War" - between the Fudan 復旦 version and Kongque 孔雀 versions in Republican Shanghai in 1927. Mirroring the glitter and grief in *HLM* itself, both films sprinkled the glitter of production values, material excess, and were released with thickly printed special booklets (*te-kan*, 特刊), featuring articles written by literati, informational snippets and colorful images of the cast, film stills, as well as advertisements of local and foreign commodities.[79]

Though main actors/characters did not cross-dress in the Fudan version, crossdressing remains evident in the film's featuring of Grannie Liu 劉姥姥, performed by a male crossdresser.[80] Interestingly, the Fudan version in the 1920s was *the* earliest full-length treatment of *HLM* in modern and contemporary costume (*shi-zhuang*, 時裝). That is to say, contemporary-costume and queer adaptations in the Sinophone worlds (such as the much more recent Hong Kong playwright Edward Lam's 林奕華 theatrical *Awakening* 賈寶玉 in 2011-2013;

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[77] Mei Lanfang's film was produced by Hong Kong Minxin Film Company 香港民新影片公司 . See Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳, *Wo de Dianying Shenghuo* 我的電影生活. (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1962), 13-20. Mei Lanfang's stardom – its gender, and international aspect in relation to modernity and nationalism – has been extensively researched. See Chapter 7-8 in Joshua Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-Creation of Peking Opera, 1870-1937*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Tian Min, *Mei Lanfang and the Twentieth-Century International Stage: Chinese Theatre Placed and Displaced*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[78] Raymond Williams, "Dominant, Residual and Emergent," in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 121-127.

[79] See: He Weiguo's archival findings: He Wei-guo 何衛國, "Zaoqi Honglou dianying yu haipai wenhua" 早期紅樓電影與海派文化 [Early Red Chamber films and Shanghai culture], *Xiandai Chuanbo* 現代傳播 213, no.4 (2014): 96.

[80] He Wei-guo, "Zaoqi," 97.

Hongloumeng: What is Sex? 紅樓夢 in 2015; and *Hello, Bao-yu* 寶玉，你好 in 2021; Starr Wu's 吳星翔 film version in 2018, featuring 12 gay males as "12 beauties of Jinling" in contemporary Taipei) are nothing "new." Rather, such queering is an inalienable feature we can trace back to *HLM*'s earliest film treatment in modern Shanghai.

Long preceding such "play" between past and present (a temporal variation of the sartorial male and female boundary crossing), the screenwriter of the Fudan version, for example, defended the film's "anachronism" not in terms of artistic freedom and vanguardism, but by appealing to the original novel's design, citing one line from Chapter 1 which says the story of *HLM* "…was set in a place, whose dynasty, date, time, and geography were irretrievably lost. …然朝代年紀，地輿邦國卻反失落無考." (*SOTS* 1:1:49, *translation modified*: *HLM*, 1:1:4).[81] After this line, Chapter 1 goes on to privilege the "freshness" of fiction over the need of borrowing historical settings, asking us not to bother with "dynasty" and "dating."[82] Addressing simultaneously past and present, I join the Fudan version's screenwriter in arguing that the indistinguishability between male and female, as well as old and new, is always already foregrounded in *HLM*. In other words, instead of "imposing" such transhistorical framework on *HLM*, the truth is that such a transhistorical framework has always already been installed and operating within the novel.

Noting and theorizing from such transhistorical operation, we may go one step further in adding that *HLM*, to some extent, betrays an "anti-periodization impulse," and such impulse is

[81] The line cited here is probably absent in the version which Hawkes's was based on. Hawkes simply translated this line as "All it lacked was the authentication of a dynasty and date." (*SOTS* 1:1:49)

[82] As the Stone in Chapter 1 said, "…All the romances ever written have **an artificial period setting** – Han or Tang for the most part. In refusing to make use of that stale old convention and telling my *Story of the Stone* exactly as it occurred, it seems to me that, far from depriving it of anything, **I have given it a freshness these other books do not have.** 石頭笑答道：「…若云無朝代可考，今我師竟假借漢唐等年紀添綴，又有何難？但我想，歷來野史，皆蹈一轍，莫如我這不借此套者，反倒新奇別緻，不過只取其事體情理罷了，又何必拘拘於朝代年紀哉！」(*SOTS* 1:1:49, *translation modified*; *HLM*, 1:1:4-5, *emphasis mine*).

transhistorically affective within the text itself – way before "the reception" of posterity and contemporary audiences.[83] This impulse is announced in a couplet at the entrance of the Land of Illusion 太虛幻境 in Chapter 5, which says:

> Ancient earth and towering sky
> Marvel that love's passion should **outlast past and present**
> Star-crossed men and women
> Groan that love's debts should be so hard to pay.
>
> 厚地高天，堪嘆古今情不盡；痴男怨女，可憐風月債難償
> (*SOTS* 5:1:130; *HLM*, 5:1:74, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

Fusing and feeling across heaven and earth, as well as "the past" (*gu*, 古) and present (*jin,* 今), is nothing but sentiment/emotion (*qing* 情).[84] In the case *HLM*, we may agree that the dominant *qing* and sentiment mainly takes the form of grief, a term I argue that cannot be understood without its complement, glitter, which operates with grief in its affective intensity (see **Chapter Two** for "glittering grief" inside the novel).[85] In terms of plot, such grief in *HLM* arises most vehemently as the protagonist Bao-yu is deceived into marrying Bao-chai, when he thinks the bride will be Dai-yu. He does not discover this deception until the last moment when he uncovers the veil of the bride and sees that another cousin, Baochai, has been substituted. Later, he will also discover that Dai-yu has died, in fact, precisely at the moment that he was getting married. In the end he leaves home and becomes a monk. As the book's major plot, it is

[83] On a related process of "dehistoricization" in traditional Chinese novels, see Martin Huang, "Dehistoricization and Intertexualization: The Anxiety of Precedents in the Evolution of the Traditional Chinese Novel." *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews.* 12 (1990): 45-68.
[84] On the interplay between *gu* and *jin* in Chinese art history, see Wu Hung, "Returning to the Past: *Fugu* and Dynastic Time." In *Chinese Art and Dynastic Time.* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2022).
[85] Contrary to the affect of grief, Ling Hon-lam, however, demonstrated with great nuance that these early film Republican adaptations, especially the design of costumes, betrayed anxiety about dynastic transition and ethnic tension, particularly surrounding issues of Han vs. Manchu, the Communist vs. the Nationalists, as well as ancient vs. modernity. See: Ling Hon Lam, "Stone's New Clothes: 'Red Chamber' Films at Recent Present, 1920s and 1950s," *Nanyang Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture*, no.3 (2023): 101-126.

understandable that most adaptations would rely on this grief-giving love triangle, which spells the end of *HLM*'s 120-chapter assemblies.

To understand the attraction of glitter, in the conjunction of glitter and grief, it is helpful to move from the early Republican era to the 1940s, Bu Wan-cang's 卜萬蒼 adaptation in 1944, which, like its predecessors in 1920s, was released with special booklets, that highlighted on the cover the two attractive film stars Zhou Xuan, and Yuan Mei-yun – the latter cross-dressed as Bao-yu. As we will see, film adaptations of *HLM* from the early 20th century to the 21st century, especially those which drew commercial investment and achieved success, all hinged on this love triangle of grief among the major characters Bao-yu, Dai-yu and Bao-chai, all of them sprinkled this affect of grief with a sense of attraction by highlighting the physical beauty of the protagonists, polishing the head-shots of the stars.[86]

Not surprisingly, the above glamorous, commercially oriented early *HLM* film productions were mainly produced in the port-city of Shanghai before 1949.[87] After the founding of the People's Republic of China (the PRC) and the Nationalist party's settling as Republic of China (the ROC) in Taiwan, refugees, and émigré, including literati and film talent continued to settle in Hong Kong during the tumultuous period. Consequently, the British colony became the

[86] Of course, there have always been some exceptions which feature "minor characters." For example, Wang Xi-feng and You-shi(s) are some exceptional characters who had their own feature films, such as *Wang Xi-feng Makes a Disturbance the Ning-Guo House* 王熙鳳大鬧寧國府 directed by Yue Feng (1939) in Republican Shanghai, and *Two You(s) in Hongloumeng* 紅樓二尤 (1951), and *You Sanjie* 尤三姐 (1963) produced in the PRC. Notably, *You Sanjie* was coproduced by Hong Kong Jinsheng and Shanghai Haiyan film company, but its repercussion cannot be compared to the Shanghai Yue-opera film of Xu Yu-lan, which this chapter focus on in later sections.

[87] This is not surprising given how the novel served as role-playing materials for courtesans in Shanghai's semi-colonial foreign settlements since the late 19th century, as Catherine Yeh noted. Courtesan cross-dressed and named themselves after characters in *HLM*. See Catherine Yeh, "Playground Shanghai: Reenacting Dream of the Red Chamber" In *Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals, And Entertainment Culture, 1850-1910*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006.), 136-177; see He Weiguo's 何衛國 study of the film's paratexual materials, "Zaoqi Honglou dianying yu haipai wenhua," 早期紅樓電影與海派文化 [Early Hongloumeng films and Shanghai culture], *Xiandai Chuanbo* 現代傳播, no.4 (2012): 96-100.

major regional center of *HLM* movies in the period of 1950-1978, as one adaptation scholar of *HLM* has asserted.[88]

It is this historical, migratory, and affective flow of *HLM* and its aesthetic affordance which this essay continues to track through the rubric of "trans-forming seas." As will be shown, the motif of waters and seas in *HLM*, converges with the diasporic and global traveling of people between seas, lands, and skies, producing an ecology of stardom in and through *HLM* and its adaptations. Together, star-assembly, glittering grief, queerness, and trans-forming seas, create a network of affect that all brings together overseas Chinese or *anybody overseas* in moments of celebratory stardom, while at the same time mourning the inevitable falling apart of such dream-driven congregations.

To show how these aesthetic forms or forms of affect work across political times, three singular and historical cases will be marshalled to demonstrate this ecology of stardom that permeates *HLM*'s affective and global circulation radiating from post-war Hong Kong: (1) Yue Feng's adaptation in 1952, followed by (2) the Second Red Chamber War in 1958-1962, and the Third one (3) in 1977-1978.

An exemplary interlude: *Modern Red Chamber Dream* (1952) in post-war Hong Kong

[88] He Wei-guo contends that, in terms of production of *HLM* movies on a regional scale, from 1929-49, Shanghai was the production center with Hong Kong playing the supplementary role; from 1950-1978, however, Hong Kong took the center stage. From 1979 to 2010 in the era of reform and market opening, Beijing then assumed the dominant and central role in re-enacting *HLM*. See He Weiguo, "Zhongguo meng yu Honglou qing," "中國夢"與"紅樓情"—香港《紅樓夢》電影芻議 [The China dream and *Hongoumeng* feeling: Exploring Hong Kong *Hongloumeng* films], *Hongloumeng Xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊, no.6 (2012): 217-218.





Fig. 1.1 (left) and Fig. 1.2 (right):

Advertisement posters of Yue Feng's 岳楓 *Modern "Red Chamber Dream"* (1952).

Source: (left) *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, January 24, 1952; **(right)** *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, February 5, 1952.

Source: Source: The Multimedia Information System (MMIS) of Hong Kong Public Library



Fig. 1.3: Film stills from *Modern "Red Chamber Dream"*. **Source:** Yu Mo-wan 余慕雲, *Xianggang dianying shihua juan si: 1950s Vol. 1* 香港電影史話 1950 年代 卷一 [The Historical Stories of Hong Kong Cinema] (Hong Kong: Subculture Press, 2000)

To more fully explore the theorizations hinted at in our preliminary discussion of *HLM* films in Republican Shanghai, such as star assembly and glittering grief, we can turn to the successful case of Great Wall's Yue Feng's *Modern Red Chamber* 新紅樓夢 in 1952.[89] A modern-costume and Mandarin drama, the film is set in Republican China and relied on material excess notwithstanding the left's purported anti-feudalist ideological stance. In its advertisements in *Wah Kiu Yat Pao* 華僑日報 (Overseas Chinese Daily News), for example, Great Wall hyperbolically claimed the film to be "the most glittering and greatest movie in China's film

[89] Great Wall is founded by no one but Zhang Shankun 張善琨 – the previous founder of Shanghai Xinhua 上海新華 which produced *Princess of Iron Fan* (1941). Due to persecution (listed by the Nationalist army as "traitor"), Zhang moved to Hong Kong in 1946. In 1949 at the invitation of Zhang, Yue Feng joined Great Wall and the Hong Kong film industry.

history" and "an unprecedented, splendorous, glorious, unparalleled production 空前偉構絕頂豪華瑰麗無匹曠代輝煌鉅片." (**Fig. 1.1**) Headshots of an assembly of star performers were paraded before the reader's eyes, sparkling "stars" orbiting around the film title of *Modern* "*Red Chamber Dream*" 新紅樓夢, the main actors presented as if taking a seat around a banquet table (**Fig. 1.2 & 1.3**). Listing of casting, screening information, song titles, and singers are all printed in various fonts of different sizes, vertiginously in and out of boxes and frames. Everything stuffed into the posters signify in their particularity, but it is precisely the assembly of images and text that altogether produce a spectacle to behold. The advertisement, which presents a banquet-like assembly of stars and glitter, mimicked the festive occasion of the date of its release. Released on the Chinese New Year, Great Wall's *HLM* film, itself a family of actors gathered (only to be dispersed of course), affords a feast by bringing together stars actors and audience in a single, carefully scripted moment. A feast it really was: *Modern* "*Red Chamber Dream*" became the highest grossing Chinese-language film in Hong Kong in 1952, with high production values and visual splendor attributed as the crucial factors enabling its commercial success.[90]

What was most concerning to the film company as well as the ticket-paying audience was perhaps the visual spectacles of glitter and grief, to be unleashed by the melodramatic plot, good-looking stars, film sets, costumes, and commodities. Left-leaning intellectuals in Republican Shanghai and colonial Hong Kong back then (such as the film company Great Wall) of course harped on how Bao-yu and Dai-yu's "rebellion" served as a critique against "feudalism" and

[90] It took the film one year to finish shooting. Film historian Yu Mo-wan suggests the box office success was attributable to the film's very own high production values: up-to-date fashion, artistic designs (by the legendary animator Wan Lai-ming) and star-studded casting. See: Yu Mo-wan 余慕雲, *Xianggang dianying shihua juan si: 1950s Vol. 1* 香港電影史話 1950 年代 卷一 [Telling the History of Hong Kong Cinema in the 1950s Vol.2], (Hong Kong: Subculture Press, 2000), 90-93.

"tradition."[91] But left-wing critique could not downplay (or maybe even is not possible without) the actual and tumultuous force of the market. Left-wing cinema in Hong Kong – a battle front and meeting place between socialism and capitalism – back then prioritized securing audiences more than propagandistic preaching.[92] Consider how Great Wall perceives the target audience (**Fig. 1.2**): their advertisements poster sensationally drums up the fact that the audience was flooding the cinema, even "inundating" the box office record itself ("觀眾湧潮淹沒所有售座紀錄").

Historian Prasenjit Duara in his proposal of "ocean as the paradigm of history" suggests that "historical processes are not linear and tunneled but circulatory and global, like oceanic currents."[93] We may likewise regard *HLM* films in Republican Shanghai, and, relatedly, Hong Kong's *Modern* "*Red Chamber Dream*," and most crucially, the classic Chinese novel *HLM* per se – as embodying and mediating the ebbs and flows of migratory Chinese, Sinophone and global history (and, by extension, also of seas, and tears). In the rhetoric of the advertisement poster, we may note the audience, brought together, i.e., assembled, were courted as *waves in the*

[91] See Yu's summary of the producer's statement, *Xianggang dianying*, 92.
[92] The leftist film companies in Hong Kong did receive funding from the PRC, but to compete in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia the ideological message was often softened, and entertainment values prioritized, until the Cultural Revolution took place which in turn demanded strict propaganda. On this point see Yip Man-fung, "The End of an Era the Cultural Revolution, Modernization, and the Demise of Hong Kong Leftist Cinema," in *The Cold War and Asian Cinemas,* edited by Poshek Fu and Yip Man-Fung (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020), 273-277. On left-wing cinema in Hong Kong, see Wong Ain-Ling 黃愛玲, ed., *Oral History Series (2): An Age of Idealism: Great Wall & Feng Huang Days* 香港影人口述歷史叢書之二：理想年代——長城、鳳凰的日子 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2001) [bilingual]; Vivian P.Y.Lee, *The Other Side of Glamour: The Left-Wing Studio Network In Hong Kong Cinema In the Cold War Era and Beyond.* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020). On how Hong Kong became an ideological battlefield of cinema in this period, see Wong Ain-ling 黃愛玲, Lee Pui-tak 李培德, eds., *Lengzhan yu Xianggang dianying* [Cold War and Hong Kong Cinema] 冷戰與香港電影 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2009); Poshek Fu, *Hong Kong Media and Asia's Cold War* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2023).
[93] Prasenjit Duara, "Oceans as the Paradigm of History." *Theory, Culture & Society,* no. 7-8 (2021): 143; in the field of Chinese literature see also, Yuanfei Wang, *Writing Pirates: Vernacular Fiction and Oceans in Late Ming China.* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2021); Hui-lin Hsu, *When the Yellow River Floods: Water, Technology, and Nation-Building in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2024).

making. The language of "flood" is striking for its rhetoric mirrors, consciously or not, the influx of Chinese migrants/refugees fleeing to the British colony of Hong Kong from mainland China after 1949, a trend which did not subside until the late 1970s. In modern Chinese language, analogizing crowds to volumes of waves and seas (e.g., *mang-mang ren-hai* 茫茫人海、*ren-chao xiong-yong* 人潮洶湧) might well be mere idiomatic, maybe even too naturalized, and therefore sounding banal. But in terms of migration history,[94] the metaphor and materiality of seawaters invoked here, mediated through a newspaper targeting *hua-qiao* 華僑 (overseas Chinese),[95] specifically addressed the embodied migratory flows of overseas Chinese/ethnic Chinese in and out of Hong Kong beginning in the 1950s. Through a spectacular *HLM* tale of a Chinese family's gathering and dispersing, Great Wall managed to channel these migratory "seas of people" 人海 in the full houses of theatres, synchronizing the audience's real-life "diaspora time" with the aesthetic form of *HLM*.[96]

Cinematic experience, as film theorist Francesco Casetti argues, is not only consumed, but situationally "lived" and "grasped," allowing a "re-aestheticizing" of the audience's lives.[97] Recently, Jie Li and Chenshu Zhou have investigated, for instance, the confluence between on-

[94] Historically, the port-city Hong Kong remained one of the key stations where Chinese, particularly in South China, migrated elsewhere during the period of late Qing to modern and contemporary China. See the following works on migration history which all feature prominently the role of Hong Kong in the long 20th century: Madeline Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Sinn, *Pacific Crossing: California Gold, Chinese Migration, and the Making of Hong Kong*. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013); Laura Madokoro, *Elusive Refuge: Chinese Migrants in the Cold War.* (Cambridg: Harvard University Press, 2016); Angelina Chin. *Unsettling Exiles: Chinese Migrants in Hong Kong and the Southern Periphery During the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023).

[95] See: Ding Jie 丁潔 *Huaqiao Ribao yu Xianggang Huaren Shehui*《華僑日報》與香港華人社會（1925-1995）[*Wah Kiu Yat Po* (Overseas Chinese Daily News) and the Development of Chinese Society in Hong Kong, 1925-1995] (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Company, 2014).

[96] Moving away from stable "identity" and "facticity" of diaspora (or not), Shelly Chan defines "diaspora time" in modern China as "the ongoing process in which a family-based strategy of survival and accumulation unfolded in South China and negotiated with the larger forces of globalization," in *Diaspora's Homeland: Modern China in the Age of Global Migration*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 12-13.

[97] Francesco Casetti, "Filmic Experience." *Screen* 50, no. 1 (2009): 56-66.

screen and off-screen movie-going experiences in socialist China.[98] In this sense, the watching of *Modern* "*Red Chamber Dream* does not merely represent and reflect but *gives forms* to the very lived situations of its diasporic audience in Hong Kong in the fashion of *HLM* in 1952. In the rest of this chapter, we will understand that questions of "home" and "diaspora," as well as "China" and the "world" are already affectively and formally dramatized in the texture of the novel *HLM*. Cyclically, and serially, these main forms of affect above-mentioned ebb and flow from the 18th-century original setting to its 20th-century incarnations, from the author Cao Xueqin's putative "home(s)" in Qing China (starting putatively and [always] arguably from Nanjing) to potentially anywhere in the world inside and outside modern and contemporary China.

To begin, the next section will first tease out how "star assembly" in modern adaptations draws from the novel's very own texture, which will then be followed by a theorization of altogether "glittering grief," "queerness" and "transforming seas," in *HLM*'s fiction as in history, on and off stage.

***Hongloumeng*'s worlding of star assembly: "one" versus/among "many"**

As a start, one may wonder why should we consider most *HLM* films "star assemblies"? To answer this question, we must first theorize the novel *HLM* as a platform of stardom. And to understand the novel in terms of stardom, we may first want to consider the way Eileen Chang's formulates the characters in the novel as an assembly of stars, picked, chosen, and nominated by readers, in her study of *HLM*, *Nightmares of HLM* (*Hongloumeng yan* 紅樓夢魘):

[98] Zhou Chenshu, *Cinema Off Screen: Moviegoing in Socialist China* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021); Li Jie, *Cinematic Guerrillas: Propaganda, Projectionists, and Audiences in Socialist China.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023).

> The most fundamental and common way to appreciate *HLM* is **to lean toward** one of its teenage girls. As in a **pageant contest**, I think [the female character] Shi Xiangyun enjoys the best chances of becoming **the winning star.** Some would think this is simply a modern preference for happy-go-lucky girls, and the good-wife-wise-mother (such as Xue Bao-chai) and wounded beauty (such as Lin Dai-yu) are no longer in fashion. Yet since the very publication of *HLM*, Xiangyun has always been the most convincing favorite of everybody. The strange thing is among all the main characters, there are very few descriptions of Shi's appearance …
>
> 欣賞紅樓夢，最基本最普及的方式是偏愛書中某一個少女。像選美大會一樣，內中要數史湘雲呼聲最高，也許有人認為是現代人喜歡活潑的女孩子，賢妻良母型的寶釵與身心都病態的黛玉都落伍了，其實自有紅樓夢以來，大概就是湘雲最孚眾望。奇怪的是要角中唯獨湘雲沒有面貌的描寫…[99] (*translation and emphasis mine*)

Chang, herself a literary star ever so sensitive to fame,[100] here presents *HLM* as a pageant contest. Written in a post-civil-rights movement California, Chang's idea of "*HLM*" as a "Chinese" star show already presages the presence of multi-racial and diverse audiences.[101] In

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[99] Eileen Chang 張愛玲, *Hongloumeng yan* 紅樓夢魘 [Nightmares of *Hongloumeng*] (Taipei: Crown Publishing, 2010), 300.

[100] One of her most quoted and quotable axioms remain to be this "star theory": "Be famous early! It feels not as great if it came too late.成名要趁早，來得太晚的話，快樂也不那麼痛快" from the forward of the collection *Romances* (*Chuangqi*).

[101] I emphasize the American location where Chang wrote the book because, as will be argued, *HLM* is inextricably linked to Chinese diaspora or *diasporic feeling in general* in the past as in the present (writers such as Pai Hsien-yong and Liu Zaifu, for instance, both expounded on how *HLM* served as a comfort for them when they lived in the U.S.). As Chang moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong and then wrote about *HLM* in a post-civil-rights era California, Chang's *HLM* analysis inevitably lapses into a cross-cultural and inevitably racial lens. While associating her favorite character Xiangyun as a female warrior (*xianu*, 俠女), Chang in the article suddenly digresses into a conversation she had with a black-haired American woman "likely to be a New Left feminist." The woman she recalled was writing a dissertation on Chinese people's seeming contradictory valorization of both female chastity and female warriors. Chang first evaluates the face of this woman ("a beautiful spouse of a professor in Berkeley … her look is beyond compare even among film stars of her caliber"), then goes on comparing women in China with women in Arab and Muslim countries. Her strong comments, by today's standard, could be subject to charge of essentialism or racism. Here I quote this intriguing but problematic passage to demonstrate what I meant by "a diverse audience" in the background, forcing Chang's to see a "Chinese" character comparatively in racial terms: "前兒年我在柏克萊的時候，有一次有個漂亮的教授太太來找我．是美國人讀中國史，說她的博士論文題是中國人的俠女崇拜 - 兼「中國功夫」與女權運動兩個熱門題材 - 問我中國人這樣注重女人的幽嫻貞靜，為什麼又這樣愛慕俠女。這問題使我想起阿拉伯人對女人管得更緊，罩面幕，以肥胖為美，填鴨似的在帳篷用地毯上吃睡，睡吃。結果他們鄙視女人，喜歡男色。回教國家人都這祥。中國人是太正常 ，把女人管得筆直之後，只另在社會體系外創造了個俠女，也常在女孩子中間發現她的面影。那天我沒扯得那麼遠，也還在那間狹小的辦公室里單獨談了三刻鐘模樣。她看上去年紀不上三十，身材苗條，頭髮眼睛近黑色．面貌是差不多的影星都還比不上她，芳名若克蘭．衛特基（報上譯為羅莎妮．衛特克，一作洛克沙尼．惠特基，又作薇特璣）；寄了本《毛澤東革命性的不朽》給我，作為報酬，也只好笑納了，也沒道

the novel itself, female characters (e.g. Grandmother Jia's granddaughter Yuan-chun 元春) are chosen and promoted to the imperial court as concubines, judged and selected by no one but the court and emperor himself, a late-imperial variation of a more "democratic" modern talent show.[102] But by the 1970s, as Chang suggests, it is not the emperor, but the audience's loud acclamation (literally "shout-out," *hu-sheng* 呼聲) and mass gaze (*zhong-wang*, 眾望) that should be ideally spotlighted. If we take pageant contests as star-making talent shows, then stars, for Chang, are the ones that the audience "lean toward" (*bian-ai,* 偏愛). Here, not only stars are brought together in assemblies of affect, so is the audience.

Narrative space, ideally, should be reserved for favorite characters, a role possibly played by any character, but inevitably fulfilled by only the favorite few. Chang, for instance, complains that her favorite Xiangyun does not get enough of a close-up in the book. If we agree that the spotlight always follows the stars, then in *HLM* the stars are first and foremost Bao-yu, Dai-yu, Bao-chai throughout all chapters, taking up more narrative space and enjoying close-ups with their appearances, facial expressions, and bodily presence all exquisitely detailed. Here, Alex Woloch's analysis of the character-system in Victorian fictions in *The One vs. the Many: Minor*

謝。大概他們夫婦倆都是新左，一兩年後雙雙去北平見毛澤東…" Quoted from Eileen Chang, *Hongloumeng yan*, 301-302.

[102] On seeing *HLM* through such the historical, fictional and simply formal phenomenon of "women in contest" see Gōyama Kiwamu 合山究, "Senshū jo' to Min-Shin no gikyoku shōsetsu,"「選秀女」と明清の戯曲小説 [Concubine selection system and Ming-Qing dramas and fictions] *Bulletin of Sinological Society of Japan* 日本中國學會報 51 (1999): 137-151; and on linking *HLM* to contemporary Japanese idol group AKB48, see Ikema Ryoko 池間里代子 "Josei-hinshitsu no shosō: Genji Monogatari, Kōrōmu, AKB48 o megutte," 性品隲の諸相 :『源氏物語』・『紅楼夢』・AKB48 を巡って[The various aspects of women appraisal - focusing on *The Tale of Genji*, *Dream of the Red Chamber,* and AKB48], *Journal of Japan Society of Directories* 日本情報ディレクトリ学会誌, 15 (2017): 124-133. In *HLM*, the prime and only example in *HLM* is the character Yuan-chun, one of the daughters of the Jia family selected to promote as an imperial concubine due to her talent and conceivably also beauty. This is indicated by the first half of Chapter 14's title: "Jia Yuan-chun is selected for glorious promotion to the Imperial Bedchamber 賈元春才選風藻宮…" However, the novel does not depict many details about the procedure of selection, but undeniably she undergoes a selection process winning the approval of the court. Her promotion (and by extension, her talent), is crucial at the structure of the whole novel, for Yuan-chun's winning the contest is part of the reason why the Prospect Garden is built.

Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel (2004) appears to apply well to the *HLM*'s character system. As Woloch writes: "any character can be a protagonist, but only one character is. … the asymmetric structure of realist characterization—which rounds out one or several characters while flattening, and distorting, a manifold assortment of characters—reflects actual structures of inequitable distribution."[103] Assembly of stars/characters, whether in Chang's assessment, Victorian novels, or *HLM* itself are inevitably lop-sided, affect determining the characters that receive the most attention.

Stated differently, *HLM*'s "asymmetric structure" – what I call star assembly, is distinctively processual and interactive in its hierarchy, a selection of stars dependent upon the gaze of a larger audience (or a judge) and equally dependent upon the star's pre-eminence over more "mundane" assemblies of characters. In the big family of *HLM,* where large gatherings occur again and again in repetitive patterns, focalizations of major characters can only happen *in the presence of many minor characters.* Consider Chapter 5, arguably the most important chapter in *HLM* as it sets up the love-triangle between Daiyu, Bao-yu, and Xue Baochai as the latter enters the novel (and the family) for the first time. A sense of a competition is already brewing in between "the ones" (Dai-yu and Bao-chai) among "the many" at the background:

> From the moment Lin Dai-yu entered the Rong mansion, Grandmother Jia's solicitude for her had manifested itself in a hundred different ways. The arrangements made for her meals and accommodation *were* **exactly the same as** for Bao-yu. The other three granddaughters, Ying-chun, Tan-chun and Xi-chun, were relegated to **a secondary place** in the old lady's affections. Bao-yu and Dai-yu both began to feel an affection for each other which **far exceeded what they felt for any of the rest.** During the day, they walked together and sat together; during the night, they rested and went to bed in unison; in

[103] See Alex Woloch's *The One Vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 31-32. Woloch argues that amidst an incipient sense of bourgeois democratization in the 19th century, social stratification and inequality is felt, and narratively distributed through the push-and-pull dynamics between main characters (the "selected few" well-rounded with a sense of freedom of individuality, interiority, depths of a psyche) and minor characters - the "irrelevant many." The latter can only demand reader's attention through their very being subordinated, flattened, and disappearance through the competitive space of narrative.

harmony they thought and talked. **And now suddenly this Xue Bao-chai had appeared on the scene** – a young lady who, though not much older than Dai-yu, possessed a grown-up beauty and aplomb in which all agreed Dai-yu was her inferior. Moreover, in contrast to Dai-yu with her air of lofty self-sufficiency and total obliviousness to all who did not move on the same exalted level as herself, **most people opined that** Bao-chai had a generous, accommodating disposition which greatly endeared her to subordinates. Even the most junior maids like to play with Bao-chai from time to time. Seeing this happening, Dai-yu felt morose, bitter, and wronged – a fact of which Bao-chai herself, however, was totally unaware.

如今且說林黛玉自在榮府以來，賈母萬般憐愛，寢食起居，一如寶玉，迎春、探春、惜春三個親孫女倒且靠後了。就是寶玉黛玉二人的親密友愛，也自較別人不同，日則同行同坐，夜則同止同息，真是言和意順，略無參商。不想如今忽然來了一個薛寶釵，年紀雖大不多，然品格端方，容貌豐美，人多謂黛玉所不及。那寶釵卻又行為豁達，隨分從時，不比黛玉孤高自許，目無下塵，故比黛玉大得下人之心。便是那些是小丫頭子，亦多喜與寶釵頑。因此黛玉心中便有些悒鬱不忿之意。寶釵卻是渾然不覺。(*SOTS* 5:1:124-125; *HLM* 5:1:68-69, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

Grandmother Jia (as the female patriarch) serves as the center/apex of the Jia household. Logically, her presence, movements, and preferences function as the center of other characters' presence. In the above passage, a series of evaluative comparisons and contrasts between female characters is performed by Grandmother Jia. Here she ranks Dai-yu over her very own three grandchildren, Ying-chun, Tan-chun, Xi-chun, who all appear in the sentence just to be pushed out of further elaborations (though, as the novel works through its various rotations of characters become relatively "major" in later chapters.) Dai-yu as a distant relative is exceptionally privileged by Grandmother Jia and Bao-yu, and accordingly the whole household ("the many") has to accommodate her like Bao-yu ("the one"). In Woloch's formulation, then, the opening of Chapter 5 appears to be a battle between "one" (i.e. the chosen ones, the candidates, the protagonists) versus "many" (i.e. minor characters such as servants and "the people" – the indefinite "they.")

But this formulation of a star as the one to be exalted over minor characters has to be qualified in the case of *HLM*. Instead of "one versus many," *HLM* rather displays a character

system of "one among many," as in a star contest in process and progress where many characters are held up for possible selection, but only a few can "win." Like Eileen Chang, the narrator of *HLM* notes what can be called "the public opinion" or "the popularity poll" at the time. But unlike Chang who declares her own individual judgement, the narrator of *HLM* here hides his presence, mostly observing and merely repeating the anonymous humming of "the people." The "many" people (and their judgement) are very abstractly suggested in the phrase "*ren-duo-wei* 人多謂", meaning more literally "as people say/as they say/many would say….". In other words, "the many," such as maids and servants (*xia-ren*, 下人), are exerting their judgement visibly or invisibly mediated through the host of the contest – the narrator, voting with their feet and "leaning towards" (*bian-ai*) their favorite, in this case Bao-chai.

The power dynamics of star assembly is further complicated by the lengthy permutations of the plot of a hundred-twenty-chapter novel in which each chapter has its own focus. Whereas major characters' opinions and sentiments, such as Grandmother Jia and Bao-yu, are more focalized in this passage and throughout the novel, "the many" do not only have a say, but they do have their high moments. Servants, such as Aroma (Xi-ren), Skybright (Qing-wen) to name a few, sometimes steal the show of major characters as these minor characters may briefly rotate to become provisionally "major," sidelining the major characters who now briefly become "minor."

This is not only made possible by the fact that the story is about a family of hundreds of people. Most crucially, the rotation of "major" and "minor" among a host of female characters is made dynamically confusing because the polyamorous protagonist Bao-yu himself cannot weigh them with a sense of final discrimination. As the opening of Chapter 5 continues to tell us:

> As for Bao-yu, he was still only a child – a child, moreover, whom nature had endowed with the eccentric obtuseness of a simpleton. **Brothers, sisters, cousins, were all one to him.** In his relationships with people, **he made no distinction between one person and**

> **another**. If his relationship with Dai-yu was exceptional, it was because greater proximity – **since she was living with him in his grandmother's quarters – made her more familiar to him than the rest;** and greater familiarity bred greater intimacy. And of course, with greater intimacy came the occasional tiffs and misunderstandings that are usual with people who have a great deal to do with each other. One day the two of them had fallen out over something or other and the argument had ended with Dai-yu crying alone in her room and Bao-yu feeling remorsefully that perhaps he had spoken too roughly. Presently he went in to make his peace with her and gradually, very gradually, Dai-yu's equanimity was restored.
>
> 那寶玉亦在孩提之間，況自天性所稟來的一片愚拙偏僻，視姊妹弟兄皆出一意，並無親疏遠近之別。其中因與黛玉同隨賈母一處坐臥，故略比別個姊妹熟慣些。既熟慣，則更覺親密；既親密，則不免一時有求全之毀，不虞之隙。這日不知為何，他二人言語有些不合起來，黛玉又氣的獨在房中垂淚，寶玉又自悔言語冒撞，前去俯就，那黛玉方漸漸的回轉來。(*SOTS* 5:1:124-125; *HLM* 5:1:68-69, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

There is no doubt that Bao-yu prioritizes Dai-yu in the end of this passage (as well as the novel overall). As the first chapter tells us: they were lovers in their past lives "destined" to reunite in their current lives. But it is equally true that despite this seemingly pre-ordained love, Bao-yu cannot make distinctions between all his kin, male or female, by blood or by emotional bonding. Bao-yu is romantically attached to "(perhaps too) many" characters throughout the book, no matter whether they are female or male, relatives, royal members, troupe performers, servants, and nuns. Simply put, even if the narrative prompts a particular attachment to particular characters by the reader, one of the central characters himself seems to refuse any easy discrimination, casting a peculiarly "democratic" and "equalizing" gaze on all others.

Therefore, in this passage of Chapter 5 and *HLM* writ large, major character's judgement are dynamically qualified if not overruled by a large pool of minor characters and vice versa, constituting a star assembly of "one among many" rather than Woloch's formulation "one versus many." Of course, main characters remain "the ones" in the long run throughout the novel; but for the novel to establish such preference, it must disregard the choice made by some of its own central characters. One way in which the novel establishes the "main" and "minor" distinction is

hierarchized in the registers of "Twelve Hairpins" in Land of Illusion, also in Chapter 5.[104] But as encapsulated in this short paragraph of Chapter 5, the jealousy and negative feeling generated by the "many"'s avoidance of Dai-yu already contributes to and foreshadows the final result of the novel, where Bao-chai (and not Dai-yu) is chosen and arranged to marry Bao-yu, in the process of which Bao-yu is "normalized" into hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity (i.e. inheriting the patriarchal assets, taking and exam in entering into officialdom, and becoming a biologically [re]productive "man.") [105] "The many," here as the narrator observes, has already decided that Bao-chai's accommodating temperament wins over Dai-yu's snobbishness. This is also how the tragedy of *HLM* concludes in the end. Dai-yu will die of illness and emotional turmoil. In turn, Bao-yu will renounce kinship with the whole Jia family and flee to the world of diasporic grief (which, till this day, continues to grip contemporary Chinese and global readers).

The above passage in Chapter 5 proves to be a crucially ideological preliminary result in the star show contest, prognosticating the result of the final competition and crowning moment which will not take place for another 90 chapters when Bao-chai finally marries Bao-yu. In between these chapters, Dai-yu and Bao-chai continuously vie in a seemingly never-ending affective competition for Bao-yu, a competition that involves Grandmother Jia, as well as among "people" – a assembly of minor characters. After this passage in Chapter 5, Dai-yu and Bao-chai

[104] Female characters are hierarchized into Main Register and Supplementary Register. As Fairy Disenchantment says, "…but only the most important ones have been selected for recording in the main register, below the cupboard you would find two more registers of lesser importance. Other girls are mediocre; we do not accommodate them. 貴省女子固多，不過擇其緊要者錄之。下邊二廚則又次之。餘者庸常之輩，則無冊可錄矣。(*SOTS* 5:1:132; *HLM* 5:1:75, *translation modified*).

[105] In the Land of Illusion in Chapter 5, though there is no mention of producing babies, Bao-yu's ancestors' wish for the generational succession along the bloodline is clear, echoing what contemporary queer theorist Lee Edelman similarly calls a "reproductive futurism." Edelman defines queerness as that which absolutely resists a logic of futurity enchained to the figure of the Child, which can be a fetishized figuration in both heterosexual and queer coupledom. Bao-yu's initial refusal to inherit the bloodline, then, manifest queerness in resisting the logic of reproductive futurism. See: Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and The Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

are joined by other male and female characters in *HLM*, each competing for our (and Bao-yu's) affection, alternately spotlighted and focalized as the story progress and as characters further assemble.[106] Readers, in contrast to "the people" in the novel, often may side with the pair of Bao-yu and Dai-yu. This is partially a structural effect of the novel's plot, which privileges Dai-yu's emotions, victimhood, and grief, creating a lengthy tragic journey that finally culminates in her death. Indeed, this tragic journey, as well as the constant contest between stars appears to be what the film audience wants to see as shown in choices of film adaptations. The transhistorical phenomenon of "pro-Dai-yu and anti-Bao-chai" (*peng-dai bian-chai* 捧黛貶釵) suggested that Bao-chai, though a star, is almost like a villain; Bao-yu, first of all, and Dai-yu second are the reader's favorites, though many other female characters remain powerful contenders.[107]

As our discussion shifts to modern and contemporary adaptations, the star assembly enacted through the novel, will gain a new twist. If in the novel the voice of the "many" often remains repressed and can only be teased out, almost against the grain, by the eye of the critical reader, in the modern adaptations it is the audience, "the people" and "the many," who determine significantly not only which characters the adaptation to focus on, but also which actors and which stars are to play key characters such as Bao-yu and Dai-yu. As shown in the following segment, the dynamics of star assembly from the novel to adaptation occasion not only "glittering grief" (as in the adaptation's reception) but also repeated rounds of competitive

[106] One critic echoes this view; see Mei Xin-lin 梅新林, "Xuanzhuan wutai de shenqi xiaoying – Hongloumeng de yanhui miaoxie jiqi wenhua yunyi" "旋轉舞台" 的神奇效應—《紅樓夢》的宴會描寫及其文化蘊義 [The magic of "a rotating stage:" descriptions of banquets and their cultural meanings], *Hongloumeng Xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊, 1 (2001): 13.

[107] In socialist China, Bao-chai is understood as "pro-feudalism" while in contemporary world she can be taken as a "conservative" woman. It does not mean she has no fans or supporters, but obviously less than Dai-yu and even others such as Bao-yu's several "major" maids. The fact that in the last 40 chapters of Gao E she got to marry Bao-yu while also winning over and "slaying" Dai-yu, perhaps most quintessentially contributes to her anti-fandom over the years.

cinematic assemblies contending between the (over)seas and (main)lands, as well as flying between home and diaspora.

The Second Red Chamber War in the early 1960s (1958-1962)

Migrating its battlefield over stars, glitter and grief from Republican Shanghai to post-war colonial Hong Kong,[108] what could be called the Second Red Chamber war broke out between adaptations of *HLM* among at least three parties: (1) the Shanghai Opera troupe 上海越劇團, (2) the Shaw Brothers 邵氏兄弟, and (3) MP&GI (Motion Picture & General Investment Company, 國泰／電懋機構), whose rumored adaptation (based on Eileen Chang's [unfinished] scriptwriting) was eventually aborted.[109] Competing for Chinese folklore or historical stories as material for adaptation, by then known as *qiang-pai* ("stealing the shoot" 搶拍), was very common. To some extent, then, one may argue that this iteration of the Red Chamber war was merely one example of the film studios' earlier battles over Chinese themes and historical materials in Hong Kong during this period of time (i.e., the 1960s); there is then nothing too "*Hongloumeng*" about the phenomenon of competing for Chinese materials.[110] But as we will

[108] Historical and cultural accounts of the Shanghai-Hong Kong entanglement in Chinese film history and urban culture are copious. For films, see in particular: Poshek Fu*, Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: the Politics of Chinese Cinemas.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) as well as Stephen Teo, "Early Hong Kong Cinema: The Shanghai Hangover," In *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: BFI Institute, 1997): 3-28.
[109] See Xiaojue Wang, "Eileen Chang, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and the Cold War." In *Eileen Chang: Romancing Languages, Cultures and Genres* edited by Kam Louie (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 113-130.
[110] For example, the war on *HLM* can be seen as a replay of rivalry between the two in the case of filming the story of *Wu Zetian* two years ago. See one source who made this observation: "Shaoshi qiangpai Hongloumeng jiaoyou Yuan qiufeng zhi daoyantong" 邵氏拍樓夢 交由袁秋楓執導演筒 [Shaw Brothers appointed Yuan Chiu-feng to direct *HLM*], *Lianhebao* 聯合報, November 5, 1961. Admittedly, the practice and phenomenon of "stealing the shoot/stealing the show" 搶拍 was not limited to either the Shaw Brothers or film adaptation of *HLM*, but as would be shown, *HLM* magnetizes competitions much more dramatically than other adaptations due to its very format of star assembly in the novel itself.

see below, *HLM* indubitably stands out among all Chinese literary and cultural materials in terms of mediating between home and diaspora. In particular, as argued above, *HLM* excels in such a mediating role because, unlike other key resources such as *Sanguo* and *Xiyouji HLM* films are distinguished by its particular combination of aesthetic and affective forms: star assembly, queerness, glittering grief and trans-forming seas, mediating "home" and "diaspora," as well as China and the world.

Let's begin to read the Second Red Chamber wars historically and politically, but equally importantly, *formally, and affectively*. First, what I call the logic of "star assembly" ("one[s]" versus/among "many," as schematized in the text of *HLM* itself), glittering grief, queerness, and trans-forming seas, persistently characterize all the adaptations concerned in the Second Red Chamber war, including the Shanghai opera troupe from the PRC. Echoing cross-dressing and queerness in Republican Shanghai *HLM* films, the Shanghai Yue opera's *HLM* performance was an all-female affair, with women playing men by default.[111] Consistently featuring two Yue-opera female stars Xu Yu0lan (playing Bao-yu) and Wang Wenjuan (playing Dai-yu), the show first started in Beijing in February 1958, and ran for a consecutive of 54 days and to great acclaim.[112] In 1959, the troupe went to Vietnam, greeted by Ho Chi Minh.[113] In autumn the same

[111] My approach here links their performances to other *HLM* adaptations across history, rather than fixating their performances according to the dictates of a linear history of the yue-opera genre. On a comprehensive history of Yue opera's historical formation in relation to the PRC's opera reforms as well as the gender reconfiguration of the Yue opera in terms of class and gender, see Jin Jiang, *Women Playing Men: Yue Opera and Social Change in Twentieth Century Shanghai.* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).

[112] The show was first conceived and written by the scriptwriter Xu Jin 徐進 in 1955; see Wang Wenjuan 王文娟, *Tianshang Diaoxia ge Lin Meimei: Wo de Yueju Rensheng* 天上掉下個林妹妹: 我的越劇人生 [Sister Lin Daiyu Falling from the Heaven: A Memoir] (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe. 2012), 156, 165; for a collection of Xu's script including the *HLM* play, see Xu Jin 徐進, *Tianshang Diaoxia ge Lin Meimei* 天上掉下個林妹妹 [Sister Lin Daiyu Falling from the Heaven] (Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, 2010).

[113] Shanghai Yue Opera Troupe Records Office 上海越劇院藝術檔案室, "Yueju Hongloumeng dashiji"《紅樓夢》大事記 [Key Events of Yue-opera Hongloumeng: A Timeline" 越劇], *Shanghai Xiju* 上海戲劇, no. 12 (1999): 28+29-31. According to Wang, the troupe visited Germany, the Soviet Union and North Korea before going to Hong Kong in 1960; see Wang, *Tianshang*, 60.

year, the show was the troupe's chosen plays to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the founding of the PRC in Beijing, attended and praised by Premier Zhou Enlai– a fan of their performance, and his wife Deng Yingchao, as well as the Peking opera star Mei Lanfang (the previous crossdresser of Dai-yu).[114]

The next year in 1960, it was Zhou Enlai who decided that the troupe was to visit Hong Kong.[115] As one CCP leader told the actresses involved, "you are using art to fight a political war, go win this war *over there in Hong Kong*! 你們現在是用藝術品打政治仗，要給香港那邊打個勝仗!"[116] (*emphasis mine*) What is "over there" from the perspective of the PRC is, in the words of Wang Wenjuan/Dai-yu, "the capitalist bloc." (資本主義陣營).[117] Clearly, the Shanghai troupe's *HLM* cannot be divorced from politics. As part of the military-theatrical complex, Xu and Wang, as Yue-opera performers, volunteered to provide operatic entertainment for the liberation army and its allies in Pyongyang, for 8 months during the Korean War in 1953.[118]

But politics take the forms of aesthetics: why, for example, fight the "war" with *HLM* and not other classics (e.g., *Jin Ping Mei,* or more likely, *Shuihu*) at this historical juncture? As Lanjun Xu persuasively argued, the PRC utilized opera as cultural diplomacy during this period (1950s-1960s), using art to forge socialist kinship building across geopolitical borders; before *HLM*, for example, similar "diplomatic roles" had been performed with other Chinese traditional stories such as *The Butterfly Lovers (Liangzhu)* yue-opera film (1954), chosen for its regional

[114] Mei reportedly praised the troupe's performance; Wang, *Tianshang*, 169.
[115] Wang Kai 王愷, "Yueju Hongloumeng de danshang" 越劇《紅樓夢》的誕生 (The Birth of Yue Opera Honglouneng), *Sanlian Lifeweek Magazine* 三聯生活週刊, no.25 (2009), 60. Wang Kai's article incorporated direct quotes and interview materials from several main actors in the troupe's *HLM*.
[116] Wang, *Tianshang*, 178-179.
[117] Wang, *Tianshang*, 172.
[118] They stayed in North Korea for 8 months, and played *Xixiang Ji* and *Liangzhu*; Wang, *Tianshang*, 92-117.

"flavor," femininity, softness in gendered representations, as well as "Chineseness."[119] However, when discussing these earlier forms of aesthetic Cold-War diplomacy, a lot of attention has been paid to the state(s) or individual as actors, focusing how they "use" the text, as if the text is inert and inactive and only its contemporary use by individual modern agents matters. Different from, though not totally ignoring such socio-political, historical, "contextual" approach, this chapter, focusing on forms of affect, sees "*HLM* in socialist China" as more fundamentally related to, for example, "*HLM* in the Qing dynasty", "*HLM* in Republican Shanghai" or "*HLM* in colonial Hong Kong" or for that matter, "*HLM* in Japan" or "*HLM* in Asian America," rather than any other nation state, any individual artist or any film studio which "uses" *HLM*. The reason is that each of these "uses" is unwittingly citing from, echoing with, and relying on other "users" synchronically and diachronically, inevitably "networked" with other adaptations through the novel's very own literary and sensory attraction – *its form of affect itself.*

Stated differently, in the beginning, there was *Honglougmeng*… Before so called schools of aesthetics (e.g., realist, socialist, modernist, postmodernist, Maoist …) being "applied" to, or mobilized to "change" the original *HLM*, there is first and above all, *HLM's allowance of and affordance for such changes and changeability*. Instead of fixating on (as well as reinforcing) the fact that "users' and "contexts" make or impose changes on *HLM* through adaptations, this

[119] As Xu shows, Chinese opera was part and parcel of the PRC's cultural diplomacy with Chinese diaspora; its long tradition in cross-dressing, and emphasis on soft feelings and femininity, appealed to diasporic audience. See her article: "The Southern Film Corporation, Opera Films, and the PRC's Cultural Diplomacy in Cold War Asia, 1950s and 1960s." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 29, no. 1 (2017): 239-282. See also Xu Lanjun. "The Lure of Sadness: The Fever of *Yueju* and *The Butterfly Lovers* in the Early PRC." *Asian Theatre Journal* 33, no. 1 (2016): 104-129. For an account which challenges such "hegemonic Chineseness" by the PRC, see Law Ho Chak. "Restaging Zhu Yingtai in Early Communist China: Shaoxing Opera, Color Film, and the 'New Woman'" *TDR : Drama Review* 65, no. 2 (2021): 77-94. On global *Liangzhu* and for that matter global 'white snake' which were all "used" to do cultural and political work by the PRC, see Sookja Cho, *Transforming Gender and Emotion: The Butterfly Lovers Story in China and Korea*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018); Luo Liang, *The Global White Snake* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021). On the earlier premodern connection between late imperial China's cult of *qing* and kinship novels in Chosŏn Korea, see Ksenia Chizhova, *Kinship Novels of Early Modern Korea: Between Genealogical Time and the Domestic Everyday* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).

chapter suggests another form that must also be reckoned with: it is *HLM* which lends itself to "uses" while extending its very own form of affect (such as grief and tears), triggering further circulations across times and political spectrum *in and by itself* across genres, medium specificity, linguistic determination, and geopolitical divisions. Additionally, through arguing that *HLM* forms a transnational adaptation network on its own, what I show in this chapter is that *HLM*, though obviously a novel written in Chinese, cannot be reduced to a mere expression of "Chineseness" due to its cosmological world-making and world-connecting power (i.e., the motif of water and tears), as well as the novel's (and also the Ming and Qing's) ecological, historical and fictional engagement with things *beyond China* (such as the presence and reference of overseas goods, overseas lands, and overseas figures of other races).[120]

[120] One evocative example noted by critics is found in chapter 52, where the character Bao-qin mentioned a certain poem written by a "foreign girl" from a certain "True-true-country" (真真國). After hearing the poem the girl wrote, which refers to a certain "water country" 水國, all the characters praise her poetry as "better than the Chinese 竟比我們中國人還強。" (*HLM* 52:2:709). As Bao-qin evocatively describes the multi-racial-looking girl that is as "foreign" as she is "Chinese": "When I was eight I went with my father on one of his trips to buy foreign merchandise to one of the Western sea-ports and while we were there we saw a girl from 'true-true country.' She was just like the foreign girls you see in paintings: long, yellow hair done into plaits…wearing … a dress of West Ocean brocade and she had a Japanese sword at her side covered all over with jewels and gold … They said that she had a perfect understanding of our literature and could expound the Five Classics and write poems in Chinese…我八歲的時節，跟我父親到西海沿上買洋貨。誰知有個真真國的女孩子，纔十五歲，那臉面就和那西洋畫上的美人一樣，也披著黃頭髮，打著聯垂，滿頭帶著都是瑪瑙、珊瑚、貓兒眼、祖母綠；身上穿著金絲織的鎖子甲，洋錦襖袖，帶著倭刀，也是鑲金嵌寶的。實在畫兒上也沒他那麼好看！有人說，他通中國的詩書，會講五經，能做詩填詞。因此，我父親央煩了一位通官煩他寫了一張字，就寫他做的詩。'眾人都稱道奇異…" (translation by David Hawkes; *HLM* 52:2:709). Sebastian Liao argues that the "true-true country" refers to the Ming-loyalist regime of Koxinga/Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功 (whose father is Chinese and mother Japanese) in Formosa/Taiwan (1661-1683), which was also colonized by the Dutch, hence the ambiguous racial features of the girl's appearance and apparel. See: Sebastian Hsien-hao Liao's 廖咸浩 *Honglou meng de butian zhi hen: Guozu yuyan yu yimin qinghuai* 紅樓夢的補天之恨：國族寓言與遺民情 [Regrets in repairing the sky: National allegory and Ming loyalist sentiments in Hongloumeng] (Taipei: Lianjin, 2017). On other speculations of where "true true country" is (e.g. the Netherlands, Cambodia…etc), see also Shang Wei 商偉, "Hongloumeng zhong de 'Jia' Bao-yu he 'Zhen zhen guo'" 《紅樓夢》中的「假」寶玉和「真真國」[The 'false' Bao-yu in *Hongloumeng* and 'the True-true country'], *Sanlian Life Weekly* 三聯生活周刊, no.21 (2018): 105-109. On references to the foreign in Ming-Qing fiction, see Liu Yongqiang, "The Description Concerning Foreign Affairs and Exotic Imagination in the Fiction of the Ming and Qing Dynasties." *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 2, no. 4 (2008): 531-560.

With the above in mind, what's more surprising in the case of the Shanghai troupe's travel to Hong Kong is probably *not* the socio-political or "contextual" subsumption of *HLM*'s aesthetics, but rather the aesthetic form such politics takes (or allows). As I will show, it is the continued affordance of *HLM*'s form of affect which enables our tracing of an affective network (reunion and separation) *in between* and *across all contexts*, whether it is Republican Shanghai, socialist China, or colonial Hong Kong, whether it is China and the (Sinophone) world. What I call the logic of "star assembly" ("one[s]" versus/among "many," as schematized in the text of *HLM* itself), glittering grief, queerness, and trans-forming seas, all these will persistently characterize all the adaptations concerned in the Red Chamber wars throughout history, including the Shanghai opera troupe from the PRC.

To begin, we can trace the aesthetic-political form of "star assembly" – "one" and "many," in the rise and fall of the Shanghai troupe's *HLM* performances in modern and socialist China. But we may pause here to ask: why would it be *HLM*, at some point, that is thriving in socialist China in the 1950s? How does *HLM* possibly lend itself in support of socialism? In modern and socialist China, to begin with, what I call *HLM*'s logic of stardom – the privileging of "star characters" such as Bao-yu and Dai-yu—evidently contradicts even in the most obviously class-conscious point of view during the early socialist era of the PRC. As such it is interesting that, just as the left-wing film studio Great Wall in Hong Kong released the expensive Yue Feng's *Modern* "*Red Chamber Dream*" (1952) to great acclaim (**see the previous section**), at the same time in 1954, emerging critics such as Li Xi-fan 李希凡 and Lan Ling 藍翎 also used *HLM* to perform a critique of feudalism and capitalism. Most significantly, Li and Lan directed their critiques at the "bourgeois" scholarship by Yu Ping-bo 余平伯.[121] In the end, both Li and

[121] See: Joey Bonner, "Yü P'ing-Po and the Literary Dimension of the Controversy Over Hung Lou Meng." *The China Quarterly* no. 67 (1967): 546-581.

Lan were praised by Mao Zedong – the ultimate "Red Star" – as "minor characters" (*xiao renwu* 小人物) now finally speaking up against the oppression of "bourgeois intellectuals."[122] Even in Li and Lan's anti-bourgeois visions, however, the protagonists Bao-yu and Dai-yu, despite their "aristocratic" privileges, are still considered as "the stars" of the novel ("the ones"), whose tragic "resistance" to "feudalistic marriage," quite paradoxically, represent "the people" and "the many."[123] How do we understand this contradiction between Communist critique of the bourgeois and arguably the love for two characters who seem to represent the most "bourgeois" point of view?

Following this logic of "stardom," the standard interpretation of *HLM* adaptations in the 1950s appeared to be that the story is after all anti-feudalistic, and therefore, suited to the purpose of revolution. The contradiction (i.e., that the protagonists are aristocratic "rebels," and not workers, peasants, and soldiers), however, would become more and more glaring as revolutions gained heat. The revolutionary would start to press further and ask: "after all, are Bao-yu and Dai-yu 'socialist' or 'capitalist'? Why are they the 'ones' and not 'the many' others?" As the Chinese revolution escalated and demanded dogmatic and draconian disambiguation, Bao-yu and Dai-yu's "star" statuses – their ambiguity, and mediating function between "oppressor" and "oppressed," disappeared and dissolved.

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[122] Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York, Grove Press, 1968).

[123] Ironically, Li and Lan's book on *HLM* (*Hongloumeng Pinglunji*) has no chapter dedicated to servants. In one chapter titled "On *Hongloumeng*'s people-ness" 論紅樓夢人民性, Bao-yu and Dai-yu are casted as archetypical rebels that *represent* the revolutionary forces of the people. As they wrote: "The tragedy of Bao-yu and Taiyu are not only the tragedy of two aristocratic youths, but their tragedy actually reflects and refracts the contradictions and conflicts facing the imminent collapse of feudalism, also reflecting a new social force demanding the revolutionizing of feudalism. Here lies the historical significance of *HLM*; here lies the novel's emphasis on the people-ness [*renmin-xing* 人民性]. 他們的悲劇不只是兩個叛逆的貴族青年的悲劇，也反映了即將崩潰的封建社會種種矛盾衝突的歷史現象的折光，反映了新的社會力量變革封建制度的歷史要求。《紅樓夢》的歷史意義就在這裡，它的強烈的人民性也就在這裡 (translation mine). See Li Xifan 李希凡, Lan Ling 藍翎, *Hongloumeng Pinglunji* 紅樓夢評論集 [Criticisms on *Hongloumeng*] (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1973), 140.

And such loss of ambiguity takes place through aesthetics and forms as *HLM*'s "the ones" descends or dissolves into "the many." At first, it may seem taken for granted that, as in the novel, the major characters ("the ones") Bao-yu and Dai-yu are stars and *must* look beautiful, but as political radicalism escalated in socialist China, characters/actors of *HLM* started to be analogized to and lambasted as "stinking" (*douchou* 鬥臭) enemies.[124] As Dai-yu-performer Wang Wenjuan recounted, the tension between what I call "one" and "many" already simmered after the public performance of *HLM*. In their Wuhan performances in 1958, for example, one official considered the troupe reactionary and complained: "Why are you still playing this kind of 'scholar-and-beauty' (*caizi jiaren* 才子佳人) opera such as *Hongloumeng*? 你們怎麼還在演紅樓夢這種才子佳人戲啊？"[125]

Apart from the question whether *HLM* should continue to play, or more radically, whether the play should still *exist* in a revolutionary China, the characters Bao-yu and Dai-yu also needed to "re-form" and "re-structure" themselves physically and corporeally during the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Great Leap Forward. One stance as recalled by Wang, for example, involved the "cleanliness" or "dirtiness" of Dai-yu. At the time, people were encouraged to engage in "thought reform" (*sixiang gaizao* 思想改造) and "self-criticism" (*ziwo piping* 自我批評) of one's privilege; colloquially such self-re-forming act was likened to "washing one's hands and bodies" (*xishao xizao* 洗手洗澡). As recounted in Wang's memoir, a colleague at that time made a joke and pointed at her: "tell your [character] Dai-yu to wash her hands and body! Go check if she still has the two problems of 'being proud' and 'being spoiled'! (*jiao-jiao-er-qi* 驕嬌二氣)." Maintaining that "Dai-yu" should simply be(come) herself, Wang

[124] On the olfactory and scatological rhetoric during the socialist and Maoist period, see Huang Xuelei, *Scents of China: A Modern History of Smell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 219-244.
[125] Wang, *Tianshang*, 167.

off-handedly retorted, "A Dai-yu without 'being proud' (*jiao* 驕) and 'being spoiled" (*jiao* 嬌)? Would you still call her the real 'Dai-yu'? 沒有驕嬌二氣，那還是林黛玉嗎?" (*translation mine*).[126]

Retreating to (rather than revolutionizing) the *form* already formulated in *HLM* (that Dai-yu is, by default, "proud" and "spoiled"), Wang defended herself against the socialist/Marxist "de-famation/de-formation" of Dai-yu, that was jokingly invoked, but realistically simulated by her colleague based on changing political currents. Like Dai-yu claiming that she is "clean and pure" in the novel, Wang insinuated that Dai-yu's high-mindedness was not "dirty" morally and mentally (and therefore not needing the "cleansing" of thought *re*-form). Working under socialist leadership, artists in the Shanghai Troupe however still (had to) "dirty" themselves by participating in steel production during the Great Leap Forward. As Wang recounted, "no matter 'Jia Bao-yu' or 'Lin Dai-yu,' all of us become 'charcoal' (*heitantou*, 黑炭頭) … in the morning we are 'steel workers,' in the afternoon and at night we turn back into 'performers' […]."[127]

As this chapter (and thesis) consistently argues, therefore, we must pay attention to *HLM*'s aesthetic form because the very basic *form* and the very *being* of characters/actors (such as Xu as Bao-yu and Wang *as* Dai-yu) should not be taken for granted as integral or intact in the throes of progressive "changes." (see the below discussion on the Cultural Revolution). As revolutionary radicalism accelerated in the PRC, Shanghai troupe's *HLM*, continued to thrive facilitating *glitter and grieve* between 1958 and 1961. Though, at this point in 1958, *HLM*'s "star

[126] "那一陣子提倡自我批評，思想改造，'稱之為'洗手洗澡'。有一次我們演完《紅樓夢》在後台學習，鄭采君指指我，開玩笑說：'叫你 [演的] 那個林黛玉也洗洗手洗洗澡，查查這驕嬌二氣！' 我聽了啼笑皆非：'沒有驕嬌二氣那還是林黛玉麼? '" (*editing mine*); Wang, *Tianshang*, 167. The highly gendered, and derogatory four-letter idiom "*jiao-jiao-er-qi* 驕嬌二氣" was likely coined by the CCP. The expression remains in use in contemporary China, especially when referring to "a lack of masculinity" in military contexts.

[127] "無論是'賈寶玉'、'林黛玉'，一個個都成了'黑炭頭'…上午是 '煉鋼工人'，下午和晚上變回'演員'。" Wang, *Tianshang*, 167.

assembly" was increasingly "*soiled,*" (i.e. by labor and increasingly, denunciation), its star (Daiyu as well as the actress performing her) remained *spoiled*, drawing on the strength of the aesthetic privilege patronized by the "favoritism" (*bian-ai*) of no one but the CCP leader Zhou Enlai. In Wang's memoir (published in 2012), Zhou is remembered as having said the following after watching the troupe's *HLM* in celebrating of the founding of PRC:

> Premier Zhou half-jokingly said to us: "Everybody knows I love Yue opera. If they don't find your performances and other performances good, they would blame it on me and say I privilege (*bian-ai*) and excuse all of you. Now as I see it, your performance of *Hongloumeng* ... stand its ground." (*translation mine)*
>
> 總理半開玩笑地說：「大家都知道我喜歡越劇，假使沒有好戲，人家都會點到我頭上來，說我偏愛你們。現在一看，你們的《紅樓夢》…真的都站住了。」[128]

Zhou was indeed a fan of the Yue opera throughout his life (according to his wife Deng Yingchao, the bedridden Zhou kept listening to Xu and Wang's singing *HLM* up until the moment he died).[129] With his endorsement, the troupe's *HLM* performance ("one" among "many") continued to thrive, indeed, even reaching its zenith in socialist China from the 1950s to early 1960s; the troupe, as well as the main characters in *HLM*, are the "stars," the "ones" being favored by Premier Zhou Enlai, and officially endorsed on a national platform. The troupe, like individual characters in *HLM,* was "privileged" indeed, continue to perform *HLM* even while the Great Famine in the years from 1959 to 1961.

Amidst this dismal background of the "many," what is astounding is that, as Wang remembered and presented to us in retrospect, Zhou's suggestions for improvement for "the ones" in *HLM* appear aesthetic and formal, rather than political, about *beauty* rather, and more

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[128] Wang, *Tianshang*, 169.

[129] " '文革'結束後，我在北京見到鄧穎超大姐，鄧大姐激動地說：'恩來同志和我都喜歡聽《紅樓夢》，他生病住院時，還要我們放錄音給他聽，'焚稿'、'哭靈'中有些唱詞，他基本上都能背出來。" Wang, *Tianshang*, 171.

than *ideology*. First, paying attention to formal rigor of art, he complained that the troupe's calligraphy of the subtitles (projected on hanging clothes on the stage) as "untidy" and "dirtied by ink spots," citing the counterparts in Mei Lanfang's performance as the gold standard of "art."[130] Also not eye-pleasing enough to Zhou was the costume for the star character Xue Bao-chai, whose crown, disappointingly, did not "glitter." As Wang recounted:

> Premier [Zhou] had two comments on our performance. First, Xue Bao-chai's phoenix-crown (*fengguan*) looked **too shabby and cheap.** At that time, our troupe used a red-velvet crown; Premier found it lacking, saying that the Xue family is one the four prestigious families in the novel, citing the following poem as evidence: "The Nanking Xue family/so rich are they/**that they have pearls as much as others have soil**, and **they have gold as much as others have metal.**" How come you didn't buy her **a crown in good shape (*xiang-yang*)?** Premier Zhou joked further, "if your troupe doesn't have the money to buy it for our Miss Bao-chai (i.e. *Bao gu-niang*), let me pay it for you."
>
> 對於演出總理提出了兩點意見，一是寶釵結婚時的鳳冠太寒酸。我們戲裡原本用的是紅絲絨凰冠，總理說，薛家是四大家族之一，書中形容「豐年好大雪（薛），珍珠如土金如鐵」，怎麼連一個像樣的鳳冠都不買？總理開玩笑說，「如果越劇院沒有錢給寶姑娘買，我來替你們出。」(*poem modified from David Hawkes; translation and emphasis otherwise mine*)[131]

Similar to Wang Wenjuan's recounted memory, Xu Yu-lan in her memoir (published in 1994) remembered a slightly different version in which Zhou even offered to "buy (*mai*) [the crown] for Bao-chai to wear."[132] As this chapter emphasized in the first section, glitter and grief characterize *HLM*'s adaptations in terms of their presence, but in Zhou Enlai's comment we know that glitter and grief remain powerfully glaring even *in their unexpected absence*. Judging

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[130] " 總理看戲很仔細，'台上的戲是藝術'，他指指字幕，對胡野擒說：'這布片上打的字也是藝術。你們有沒有把字幕也看成藝術呢？你看，字寫得不工整，有些地方還有墨汁，不乾淨。看了梅先生演的《穆桂英掛帥》了吧？他們的字幕就寫得很好。'" Wang, *Tianshang*, 169.

[131] Wang, *Tianshang*, 169-170. David Hawkes' translation of these lines in the poem is witty, yet far off the mark in terms of accuracy. He translated "豐年好大雪（薛），珍珠如土金如鐵" as "The Nanking Xue/so rich are they/to count their money/would take all day."

[132] The Chinese original: "紅樓夢確實演得不錯。不過有些人物的頭飾要改觀。薛寶釵的鳳冠那麼寒酸，是否買不起？那就我來買給薛寶釵戴。" (*emphasis mine*) Quoted from the biographer's wordings in Zhao Xiaosi 趙孝思, *Xu Yulan Zhuan* 徐玉蘭傳 [Xu Yulan: A Biography] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1994), 242.

the troupe's costume in terms of what I call *HLM*'s "glitter," Zhou claimed the red-velvet crown as not "*xiang-yang*," meaning "not decent/up to snuff." Or to be more precise, the expression means "unshapely," lacking a form (i.e., not resembling [*xiang* 像] a shape or form [*yang* 樣]). The crown is not in *good shape or good form*, and aesthetically, Zhou implied that the crown should take the ostentatious form of something like "pearl" and "gold," whose overabundance poetically metonymizes the extravagance of Bao-chai's family. More concerned with the affect of theatrical materiality on display rather than the ideology behind such a display, Premier Zhou here focused on what Rey Chow calls "the feminine details," that are often renounced and also - as David Wang puts it – "repressed" in Chinese modernities.[133]

True to the form of "the ones" and "the stars" in *HLM*, Zhou Enlai suggests that Bao-chai's upper-class status should be represented as what it is and *what it should be*: glittering, and pretty, and *that is that*.[134] Respecting the character Bao-chai (calling her Miss Bao) and her "need" of a more expensive phoenix-crown as if it is a necessity, the revolutionary Zhou here cares deeply about a female character that is often read by socialist critics as conniving and "feudalistic," as compared to the intractable Dai-yu. Yet Zhou's comments ignore such simplistic characterization which pits Bao-chai against Dai-yu in the binary framework of "social progress." Not unlike the all-beauty-loving Bao-yu, he cares about the glitter and grief for *both* female characters ("ones"), as well as all the audience in the assembly ("many"). After

[133] Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity the Politics of Reading Between West and East*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).
[134] On modern film criticism's (often politicized and gendered) bias against pretty images, see Rosalind Galt, *Pretty: Film and the Decorative Image*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); on glitter itself as a thing with agency, see Rebecca Coleman, *Glitterworlds: The Future Politics of a Ubiquitous Thing* (London: Goldsmiths Press, 2020).

commenting on "glitter," his next (remembered) comment, addressing the moment Dai-yu dies on stage, faulted the troupe for a lack of "grief":

> Another opinion [of Premier Zhou] was that when Dai-yu died, the festive music (*xi-yue* 喜樂) [of Bao-chai's marriage] set in too fast. Premier Zhou said: "When Dai-yu died, how come you don't grieve her with some **mourning music (*ai-yue* 哀樂)?** …you should first **give forms (*ti-xian* 體現) to the interior feelings** and stirrings of the audience, before contrasting it with the festive music of Bao-yu and Bao-chai's marriage. Otherwise, the audience's **feeling of grief will be blocked**."
>
> 另一個意見是當林黛玉臨終時喜樂就奏起，總理說：「林黛玉死了怎麼連個哀樂都不給？你們或許是為了表現賈寶玉取親時的效果，但這裏應當先把觀眾的內心要求體現出來，然後再用喜樂作對比，否則觀眾的心情轉不過來。」[135]

As this chapter emphasizes all along, the "glittering grief" surrounding the plot of Bao-yu's forced/false marriage with Bao-chai (which kills Dai-yu) is a major concern of most adaptations. Obviously, Zhou here does not favor either Bao-chai or Dai-yu, his main concern is whether such grief can be released among characters *and the audience*, with the right (appropriate) aesthetic choices, props, and music. As in *HLM*, "the ones" will lead "the many" through the former's assembling power. Though obviously favoring the "ones" (the star Yue-opera actresses/the star characters), Zhou nonetheless asks Xu/Bao-yu and Wang/Dai-yu not to forget "the background heroes of the show," "the many" and the masses.[136] "The ones," in "real life" as in *HLM*, are to lead "the many" to release grief and tears in rounds and rounds of assembly (i.e., banquets, poetry clubs, opera watching, kite-flying…)

In 1960, Zhou Enlai, perhaps noting the affective power of such star assembly and glittering grief, decided to send the troupe to colonial Hong Kong, one year after the troupe's

[135] Wang, *Tianshang*, 170.
[136] Wang, *Tianshang*, 170.

HLM celebration of the PRC's birthday in 1959.[137] The mission was clear: to impress the Chinese living outside the PRC who lived in the "capitalist world." Performing "privilege" and acting "pretty," Xu and Wang and the Shanghai troupe, despite the dire economic situation in the PRC, *had to become* "stars": "the ones" leading "many," across both socialism and capitalism. The troupe's performance and ways its assembly of stars would allow it to transcend the gap between socialism and capitalism can be seen in their preparation before their arrival in Hong Kong. First, as the troupe presented itself to the "capitalist" world, the casting of Hong Kong's edition had been upgraded: in addition to Xu Yu-lan and Wang Wenjuan, two "A-list" actresses (Lu Ruiying 呂瑞英, Jin Caifeng 金采風), previously not familiar with *HLM*, were called to play Xue Bao-chai and Wang Xifeng (such is the cast for the film adaptation later.)[138]

Second, despite the fact that the Great Famine (euphemized as "three years of natural disasters" 三年自然災害 in Wang's memoir and official narrative) was raging nationwide from 1959-1961, the very bodies and appearances of *HLM* actresses still needed to be upgraded so that the stars could present their grief with an appropriate sense of glitter.[139] To present a "decent image" (*lianghao xingxiang* 良好形像) to kindred Chinese audiences (*tongbao*, 同胞) in Hong Kong, Yue opera actresses were confined and groomed in a hotel for half a month, doing only three things: 1) rehearsals, 2) "nutritional enhancement" (*buchong yingyang* 補充營養) [as Wang

[137] See: Wang Kai 王愷, "Yueju Hongloumeng de danshang" 越劇《紅樓夢》的誕生 (The Birth of Yue Opera *Hongloumeng*), *Sanlian Lifeweek Magazine* 三聯生活週刊, no.25 (2009), 60. Wang Kai's public-facing article incorporated direct quotes and interview materials from several main actors in the troupe's *HLM*.
[138] "呂瑞英和金采風是被拉進這個劇組的，以前大陸上演的《紅樓夢》「舞台版」里，寶釵和王熙鳳都是普通演員，可是「香港版」卻做出了「全明星陣容」，換上了更優秀的呂瑞英和金采風，這也是日後「電影版」的陣容." Quoted from Wang Kai, "Yueju Hongloumeng de danshang"; see similar comments on the new casting by Wang, *Tianshang*, 172.
[139] Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-1962.* (New York: Walker & Co., 2010); Yang Jisheng, *Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine, 1958-1962* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012).

recounted: "our faces brightened with moisture after the restorative stay"],[140] and 3) what Wang called "manner training" (*liyi peixun* 禮儀培訓) involving what she called "Western etiquette" in dining (such as not producing noise while drinking soup) and most ideologically flexibly: calling people "Miss" and "Mister" in Hong Kong instead of "comrades" (*tongzhi* 同志).[141]

Judging from on-the-ground details of the trip's preparation provided by Wang's memoir, it seems a huge mistake to define Yue opera's *HLM* performances simply according to its socialist/nationalist "context"; their performance of "socialism" in and by the PRC had, as Wang showed, slipped into a semi-"capitalist" form as soon as they had traveled to Hong Kong, which is a "backward" society of "old times" (*jiu shehui* 舊社會) according to socialist progressive rhetoric.[142] On this ambiguity, Wang said the following in the 2000s: "to people like us who once lived in 'the old times,' these [Western manners and etiquettes] are common sense, but to those who grew up under the Red Flag, the training was new and exciting stuff."[143] Neither simply "old," or "new," the troupe's "upgraded" *HLM* in Hong Kong can therefore not simply be reduced to a specified and contextualized performance of a "socialist aesthetic" in the "capitalist context" of Hong Kong itself. Rather, what the troupe's trip performed is more generally a *moveable and moving stage* of *HLM* star assembly harking back to an "older" China (as Wang

[140] Wang, *Tianshang*, 172.
[141] "我們這些赴港演出團成員先被安排住進珠江沙面的老字號賓館，平時除了演戲閉門不出，關了半個月。這半個月的主要任務就是補充營養和禮儀培訓，沒過幾天，大家臉色就紅潤起來。考慮到在香港可能會有許多應酬，還請了專門的老師來教西餐禮儀，比如喝湯不能發出聲音，勺子要往外面的方向舀等等，稱呼上則要把某某同志的叫法忘掉，改稱先生、小姐。" (*emphasis mine*); Wang, *Tianshang*, 172.
[142] Indeed, during the high point of actually existing socialism which is the Cultural Revolution, "Bao-yu"/Xu Yulan and "Daiyu"/Wang Wenjuan would turn from "socialist" to "capitalists," in the eyes of the Red Guards, just as they appear to transform from "socialist" to "capitalist" in their earlier Hong Kong trip; both "transformations" of "Bao-yu" and "Daiyu," of course, carry different historical consequences (**see below discussion**).
[143] "對於我們這些從舊時代過來的藝人，這都屬於基本的常識和禮儀。但對長在紅旗下的青年演員來說，一切都顯得新鮮和陌生，他們覺得十分興奮。" Wang, *Tianshang*, 172.

hinted at) while advancing "anew" in Hong Kong, a city which, like their *HLM* show itself, was bridging socialist China and the capitalist world, as well as past and present.

As artistic mediators, the troupe's performances managed to take place between "this" world and "that" world. Through curating a star assembly of glitter and grief with *HLM* as source material, the troupe's performance therefore *re*-fused the strict binary of tradition/modern, socialist/capitalist, as well as male/female and most true to the form of *HLM*, dream and reality, as well as truth and falsity *on and off stage*. On the one hand, the performers appeared to have "diluted" socialist traits as they blended with western norms. On the other hand, the effect of such "diluting" could result in more people in "the capitalist world" believing that the "socialist" world was doing "well and fine," comparable to or *even better than* the capitalist world.

The question to ask here is one of agency and control. When the performance of *HLM* in HK "diluted" socialism through feminine and queer performances, was it actually the case that the PRC and its performers were asserting control (i.e. by gaining soft power)? Were they, instead, acceding to the needs of collaboration by performing *for*, *with* and *like* "others"? What if agency in *HLM* adaptations cannot by fully attributed to the PRC state's "use" of "culture" in influencing overseas Chinese? What if such a thing as agency cannot also be attributed to the overseas Chinese's "receptive" embrace of the former's propaganda either? What if it is instead the transhistorical (net)work of *HLM*'s form of affect — for example, its specific plot and characters glittering, grieving, and releasing tears—that provides the ingredients and infrastructures in *watering down* dichotomic relations, between male and female, old and new, self and other, socialism and capitalism, as well as China and the world, between "lands" and "seas"?

Back to the trip. Fulfilling the mission of performing between "truth" and "falsity," the *HLM* assembly curated by the PRC and performed in Hong Kong, proved to be a resounding "success" in the sense of creating a great "image" in the hearts and minds of people in Hong Kong and diasporic Chinese in Southeast Asia. As a prelude to their Hong Kong visit, the troupe first performed in Guangzhou and Shenzhen, which already lured audiences from Hong Kong to cross the border and see the shows.[144] Though the troupe themselves lacked resources in times of scarcity in the PRC, they nonetheless became "stars" and "the privileged" during their trip to Hong Kong. Donning tailor-made *qi-pao* and with their hair permed, they got off the train in Hong Kong and impressed everybody; according to both Wang and Xu Yu-lan's memories (as presented to mainly mainland readers in their memoirs), the audience in Hong Kong were all impressed: "How come they said people were starving in mainland China! Look at them [i.e., Xu and Wang], aren't they looking healthy and great?"[145]

Glittering, Xu and Wang's performances enabled a performance of communal grief that included both characters on stage and audience off-stage. From December 1960 to January 1961, the troupe did 37 performances in Hong Kong, 18 of which were on *HLM* – and tellingly, it was *HLM*, and no other plays, which later turned into a film.[146] Audiences were said to have queued up overnight for tickets; those without tickets refused to leave and stayed outside the theater, looked at the posters and enjoyed the sounds flowing from Astor theatre (普慶戲院).[147] Touched by such glittering grief, audiences in Hong Kong (some sojourning in Hong Kong while

[144] Reportedly, there were audience from Hong Kong going to Shenzhen to watch the show. "上海越劇團於上月在深圳公演時，港九觀眾到深圳看戲的很擠擁。該團由於台期關係，在深圳只演出了幾天，未能滿足港九觀眾的要求。這次該團到港公演，將可使港九觀眾大飽眼福。" Quoted from "Xiangyu jilong, zhenrong dingsheng, jumu jingcai, Shanghai yuejutuan houtian ligang …" 享譽極隆　陣容鼎盛　劇目精采　上海越劇團後天蒞港 …[…] Shanghai Theatre Troupe arrived at Hong Kong […]), *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, December 18, 1960.

[145] "誰說大陸沒有吃 - 看她（他）們，不都很精神，很健康嘛？" Zhao. *Xu Yulan Zhuan*, 233

[146] Other plays include *Xixiang Ji*; Wang, *Tianshang*, 174.

[147] Wang, *Tianshang*, 174.

themselves hailing from Shanghai, and Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces at large, who shared the dialect of Yue opera) shed profuse tears when actresses Wang Wenjuan (playing Dai-yu) burnt her manuscripts and Xu Yu-lan (playing Bao-yu) grieved his beloved's death.[148] Reportedly, innumerable audience members cried even after the show ended, only to return the next day so as to watch the film (and re-enact its grief) once again.

Beyond the theater, voices of Xu/Bao-yu" and Wang/Dai-yucwere even broadcast live through Radio Rediffusion 麗的呼聲 from December:

> During the broadcast, listeners are ubiquitous in every corner of Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, in all homes and houses, in all herbal-tea shops and restaurants. That mesmerizing singing and bewitching music, occasionally mixed with resounding applause, activated a lingering aftertaste like those of olives for those who watched Yue opera, and for those who never watched it, they could still hear it with great pleasure. (*translation mine*)
>
> 在播放的時間裏，港九每一個角落，所有住戶、商店、涼茶舖、食肆，到處是傾聽動人越曲的聽眾，那迷人的歌唱、美妙的音樂，加上不時交雜着的轟然掌聲，使已看過越劇的人如啖諫果，回味無窮，使未看過的人也獲得了聽覺上的滿足。[149]

Though performed in a different regional dialect, the assembly that *HLM* created acoustically transcended and diffused beyond the linguistic and generic specificity of any single region. The voices of "Bao-yu" and "Dai-yu", as the left-wing media *Wen Wei Pao* narrates it, seeped into businesses and daily lives as what we might want to call "food for the ears." A feast of

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[148] See the report written by the leader of the troupe after the trip: Yuan Xuefen 袁雪芬, "Xianggang yanchu guilai," 香港演出歸來 [Returning from the Hong Kong trip], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, February 8, 1961. Her Chinese original for reference: "越劇發源於江浙一帶。香港有十多萬江浙人，所謂「他鄉遇故知」，他們對我們的到來，表現出了最大的喜悅。許多幾十年前就熱愛越劇的老觀眾說：「看了你們的演出，感到解放後的越劇同過去相比較，實在進行得無法比擬了。」更多的江浙籍同胞說：「很久沒有看過家鄉戲了，看了你們的演出，就像回到了家鄉一樣的甜蜜」。即使是那些第一次看越劇的許多觀眾，現在也成了越劇迷。一些觀眾說：「看了你們的美好的演出，也就真正體會了祖國戲劇藝術的百花齊放的燦爛輝煌的成就」。他們不是說越劇是紹興戲，他們說：越劇是我們祖國百花盛開的藝術園地裏的一支鮮花。"

[149] The live performances in December were rebroadcasted 2 months later after the troupe left. "Lidejintai jinwen chongbo Shanghai Yueju tuan 'Hongloumeng'," 麗的金台今晚重播　上海越劇團「紅樓夢」*Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, February 26, 1961. On Radio Redeffusion in Hong Kong, see Wang Xiaojue. "Radio Culture in Cold War Hong Kong." *Interventions* 20, no. 8 (2018): 1153-1170.

synesthesia was assembled by radio broadcasting, exceeding the generic specificity of (Yue) opera and medium and spatial specificity of theaters. Tears and grief continued to overspill from the theater to daily life, even reaching squatter houses and slum areas. After the *HLM* shows, the touring "Bao-yu" and "Dai-yu," paid visit to fire-affected squatter houses and eventually raised money for them through charity performances.[150]

Performing as "stars" conflated as "major characters," the show's release of glittering grief appears to have reached audiences on stage and off stage, across class divides, and most crucially, reaching global audiences gathering in Hong Kong. This transnational reach of the troupe's performances is emphasized throughout official and personal memories of Hong Kong visits and *HLM* performances. Most representatively, Yuan Xuefen 袁雪芬 (b.1922-2011), the director of the Yue opera troupe, claimed that their performances successfully reached overseas Chinese (*huaqiao*) coming from more than 10 countries, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Canada and Latin America, many of which flew to Hong Kong purportedly just to watch their show.[151] As Xu Yu-lan similarly recounted in her autobiography, she "heard from the theater staff" that the audience reportedly included people flying from Taiwan and America.[152] As Wang Wenjuan also took pain to emphasize in her memoir, one Indonesian audience member

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[150] "公演結束後，又為救濟九龍山谷山火災受災同胞義演了一場，共籌款十一萬多元。大約有六萬多觀眾看到了我們的演出。" Yuan Xuefen 袁雪芬, "Xianggang yanchu guilai," 香港演出歸來 [Returning to Mainland after performing in Hong Kong], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, February 8, 1961.

[151] Original: "我們的觀眾還有來自馬來亞、印度尼西亞、泰國、加拿大和拉丁美洲等十多個國家和地區的華僑。一些從遠地而來的華僑當天坐飛機來看了戲，第二天又飛走了。一些來訪問我們的華僑殷殷致意地說：「我們來香港不光是看到了你們的演出，而且從你們的演出中看到了祖國文化藝術事業的百花齊放和大躍進。」印度尼西亞華僑還興奮地談到越劇影片「梁山伯與祝英台」在印度尼西亞放映時的盛況。他們說，有一個華僑就在連映二十五場中看了二十四場。華僑對「祖國」這兩個字感到特別的親切和溫暖。在交談中，他們對祖國的真摯感情，常常使到我們激動得禁不住落淚。" Quoted from Yuan s article is printed in *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, reprinted from the PRC's media: Yuan Xuefen 袁雪芬, "Xianggang yanchu guilai," 香港演出歸來 [Returning to Mainland after performing in Hong Kong], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, February 8, 1961.

[152] "服務員還告訴徐玉蘭，樓下排隊購戲票的人群中，有些還是專程從美國、東南亞趕來的華僑和從台灣趕來的同胞呢" Zhao Xiaosi, *Xu Yulan Zhuan*, 233.

(plausibly ethnic "Chinese"), who did not speak Chinese at all, reportedly cried very hard watching Dai-yu dying on stage, affectively touched while totally in the dark about its "meaning."[153] Reportedly, certain female students from Singapore fought for tickets to watch the show during their 48-hour stayover in Hong Kong, on their way home to after traveling in Japan.[154] While these testimonies above undoubtedly were rhetorically inflated for propaganda purposes, the troupe's popularity in Sinophone Asia appears to be evident.[155] As of 2012, Wang An-qi 王安祈, emeritus professor of National Taiwan University who specialized in Chinese opera, admitted that she smuggled cassettes of the troupe's *HLM* performance from Hong Kong to Taiwan when she was young.[156]

[153] "甚至有一位不懂中文的印度尼西亞觀眾，看到孤苦伶釘的林黛玉最終含怨死去時，也情不自禁地哭起來。別人問他為什麼這麼悲傷？他答道：「雖然我聽不懂唱詞和對話，但完全能體會人物的感情。」." Quoted from Wang, *Tianshang*, 174-175,

[154] On Hong Kong becoming an aviation hub in Asia, see John D. Wong, *Hong Kong Takes Flight: Commercial Aviation and the Making of a Global Hub, 1930s-1998.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2022). The Singaporean students made a stopover in Hong Kong according to the article: "一群新加坡的學生，利用寒假的時間到日本遊玩，回程船經香港有四十八小時的逗留，他們一上岸，才從報紙上知道今天晚上是越劇團演「紅樓夢」的最後一次了，連飯也不吃，大夥兒湧向戲院的票房買票；但是，票早已賣完了，他們是多麼的失望，長久的不肯走開，後來只好出幾倍的價錢，向買到的人情讓，即使出了最貴的價錢，買到的還是最便宜的，但他們卻如獲至寶的高興。" Quoted from Luo Man 羅漫,"Kangxi jji," 看戲記 [Watching opera], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, February 6, 1961.

[155] On the CCP's soft propaganda in Southeast Asia through Hong Kong, see Florence Mok, "Disseminating and Containing Communist Propaganda to Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia through Hong Kong, the Cold War Pivot, 1949–1960." *The Historical Journal* 65, no. 5 (2022): 1397-1417. On the Cold War and Chineseness in Southeast Asia, see: Jeremy E Taylor, and Lanjun Xu, eds, *Chineseness and the Cold War: Contested Cultures and Diaspora in Southeast Asia and Hong Kong.* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021); for history of Southeast Asia Chinese in relation to the PRC, see most recently, Zhou Taomo, *Migration In the Time of Revolution: China, Indonesia, and the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019); Kung Chien-Wen, *Diasporic Cold Warriors: Nationalist China, Anticommunism, and the Philippine Chinese, 1930s-1970s.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022).

[156] "戲曲學者王安祁表示，她從小就在紅樓看越劇，曾從香港偷渡上越紅樓夢錄音帶，聽第一代演員徐玉蘭、袁雪芬詮釋的寶哥哥和林妹妹。" Quoted from "Shanghai yuejuyuan 5 duo meihua 6 yuedi dengtai," 上海越劇院 5 朵梅花 6 月底登台 [5 stars from Shanghai Yue opera arrived at Taiwan in June], *Lianhebao* 聯合報, May 23, 2012.



Fig. 1.4: Farewell to the Shanghai Yue opera troupe at the Tsim Sha Tsui train station.
Source: *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, February 2, 1961.

From stage to screen: the flow of water and tears

Targeting Chinese overseas as well as more broadly "the capitalist world," the *HLM* star assembly in Hong Kong on stage presented and packaged "the stars" to shine, to glitter and to grieve in colonial Hong Kong. This assembly of glittering grief worked theatrically, but also called for further investment cinematically. As the troupe left Hong Kong by train in February 1961, tears and grief suffused audiences lining the border. *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報 "reported" on the hope for a re-union between what they called the "host" and "guest" (*zhu-ke shuang-fang* 主客相方) (**Fig. 1.4**).[157] Noting *HLM*'s popularity and capacitating assembly, left-wing film companies

[157] "Gejie songbie bushing yiyi yuejutuan zaiyu guiqu, xianhua huiwu zhangsheng leiming chuxian dongren changmian, zhuke shuangfang xianghu dingning xiwang zaori zaijian," 各界送別　不勝依依　越劇團載譽歸去　鮮花揮舞掌聲雷鳴出現動人場面　主客雙方相互叮嚀希望早日再見 [Shanghai opera troupe holding our admiration in departure … hosts and guests remind each other to have reunions soon], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, February 2, 1961.

such as Fenghuang and Great Wall, soon competed to make a film adaptation.[158] Right before the troupe left for Shanghai, a day of preliminary shooting took place on a film set, the shooting itself a spectacle attended by a string of film stars.[159] However, the CCP officials in Shanghai later decided that, for political reasons, the shooting could not be done in Hong Kong.[160]

In the end, the shooting had to be done in Shanghai and the film became a co-production between Shanghai's Haiyan film company and Hong Kong's Jinsheng, to be directed by Cen Fan, a protégé of the famed director Zhu Shilin 朱石麟 (b. 1899-1967).[161] Comparable to the expensive *HLM* adaptation and cross-dressing stars in Republican China (e.g., Mei Lanfang, Zhou Xuen, Yuan Meiyun…), *HLM*'s form of affect continued to exert itself in this "socialist Shanghai" and "capitalist Hong Kong" co-production. Due to the luxurious film set as required by the story, as Wang recounted, the film became the most expensive production since the founding of the CCP, costing 800 thousand renminbi, which was 100 thousand more than what was usually subsidized at the time.[162] Whereas filming was done by Shanghai's Haiyan film company, the film reel was imported from Germany (unclear as to East or West Germany) and provided by Hong Kong's Jinsheng; the reel that was left was used to shoot other movies. In summer 1961, just when the film production was about to begin, North Korean leader Kim Il-

[158] Wang Kai, "Yueju" 62.
[159] Wang, *Tianshang*, 179.
[160] Hong Kong was a battleground of ideologies among the CCP and the KMT. Indeed, the troupe's success in Hong Kong was highly curated and managed by the CCP. As Wang recalled, the troupe were guarded by a 100-people "support group" organized by Xinhua News Agency in Hong Kong. For fear thir own safety, the troupe's performers dared not even eat the (potentially poisoned) food, until leaders of the party allowed it. Wang recounted the paranoia at the time: "rumor had it that the staff in the hotel we stayed were affiliated to the Nationalists… we first made sure no one hid inside the wardrobe or under the bed…we almost never went out;" Wang Kai, "Yueju", 62, 172. As Xu Yulan vaguely echoed, "the situation was complicated at the time, of course they wouldn't let us stay there [in Hong Kong] for so longl" Wang Kai, "Yueju", 62.
[161] Originally, it was Zhu Shilin who were supposed to be a director, later it changed to his protégé Cen Fan. The reason could be political; back in 1958 when his film *Sorrows of the Forbidden City* 清宮秘史 was screened, Mao Zedong already saw the film as "unpatriotic" and antirevolurionary. For a study of Zhu's films, see Wong Ain-ling 黃愛玲, ed., *Guyuan Chunmeng: Zhu Shilin de Dianying Rensheng* 故園春夢 : 朱石麟的電影人生 [*Zhu Shilin: A Filmmaker of His Times*] (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2008).
[162] Wang, *Tianshang*, 179.

sung paid a visit to Hangzhou. Knowing that Xu and Wang served the Chinese army during the Korean war, the troupe was invited to perform *HLM* in Pyongyang in September 1961. As a result of the trip to Korea, filming was stalled.

During the troupe's lapse in film production, however, news media reported that two other film companies, the Shaw Brothers and MP&GI, were planning to exploit the craze for *HLM* which was first ignited by Xu and Wang. As the Shanghai troupe's resumed shooting after their return from North Korea to Shanghai in November 1961, at the same time in Hong Kong the Shaw Brothers held a press conference and announced that they were starting a film adaptation, a *huangmei* opera version of *HLM*; they claimed that they had the *HLM* idea as early as three years ago.[163] In response, MP&GI kept promoting that their *HLM* was on its way as well, with Eileen Chang as the script writer.[164] Consistent with *HLM*'s logic of star assembly, MP&GI tried to make sure their future *HLM* would have the right stars assigned to the right character, therefore they sent out post-screening questionnaires (expected to be to 200,000 in number) to audiences watching their films, asking them to circle and match actors with specific characters in *HLM*.[165] To make the competition worse, rumors had it that two more adaptations –

[163] "Shaoshi Hongloumeng zuoxing kaijingli nanbei yingxing hezuo yangchu," 邵氏紅樓夢昨行開鏡禮　南北影星合作演出, [The Shaw Brothers started film shooting of Hongloumeng film; stars from the North and the South collaborate], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, November 21, 1961.

[164] See the story of Chang's aborted *HLM* script in Wang Xiaojue, "Eileen Chang, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and the Cold War"

[165] 12 female stars and 6 male stars were listed as options: "電懋刻正在都城、仙樂兩家戲院隨「星星月亮太陽」上映時附送「紅樓夢」人物表選圈名單，上面列出了十二位女明星計尤敏、林翠、葛蘭、夷光、李湄、葉楓、王萊、丁皓、蘇鳳、張慧嫻、李芝安、劉小慧，六位男明星計張揚、雷震、喬宏、洪洋、田青、劉恩甲，以供觀眾選圈何人適宜飾演「紅樓夢」中的那個角色。電懋公司將在彙收到二十萬份選圈單後，加以統計以作決定「紅樓夢」卡司脫的參考。" Quoted from "Xianggang yingquan Dianmao choupai Hongloumeng, jue qing Yi Guang yan yijiao" 香港影圈電懋籌拍紅樓夢 決請夷光演一角"[MP&GI's *HLM* prepares for shooting *HLM* …], *Lianhebao* 聯合報, December 14, 1961.

one made in Cantonese, one in Teochew, were being flagged as potential contenders, catering to diasporic Chinese speaking the dialects.[166]



Fig. 1.5: Promotional materials of the Shaw Brother's adaptation (dir. Yuan Chiu-feng), in which Dai-yu/Loh Ti was the center of promotion while Bao-yu/Ren Jie (second from the left in the lower group portrait) was sidelined. **Source:** *Southern Screen*, no. 50, April 1962, scanned at Fung Ping Shan Library at University of Hong Kong



[166] These dialect adaptations however never realized in this round of Red Chamber war. "國語片的邵氏、電懋公司宣佈要拍「紅樓夢」之後，林鳳的懋林公司又宣佈要拍粵語片「紅樓新夢」，東山影業公司也跟着說要拍一部潮語「紅樓夢」。" Quoted from "Hongloumeng sibao an sijia gongsi qiangpai dianying shaoshi jinri zhaodai jizhe" 紅樓夢「四包」案　四家公司搶拍電影　邵氏今日招待記者 [Four adaptations of *Hongloumeng* in competitions; Shaw Brothers Studio today holds a press conference], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, November 20, 1961.

Fig. 1.6: Promotional materials of the Shaw Brother's adaptation (dir. Yuan Chiu-feng), with stars in high definition, colors and enhanced materiality and Betty Loh focused on the assembly. **Source:** *Southern Screen*, no. 48, February1962, 9; scanned at Fung Ping Shan Library at University of Hong Kong.



Fig. 1.7 (above) & Fig. 1.8 (below): Stars in high definitions and colors, with Betty Loh Ti focused on the assembly, **Source:** *Southern Screen*, no. 52, 1962; scanned at Fung Ping Shan Library at University of Hong Kong.

In the end, the Shaw Brothers managed to finish their *HLM* the earliest, before the Shanghai Troupe's version appeared. Once again, in their promotion of the Shaw film (**Fig. 1.5-1.8**), we see the dynamic of the star assembly at work as a process of differentiating "one" amongst and by "many": "the chosen one" can only foreground their star status by being differentiated against the background of "the many," a process we see at play both within and outside the novel and its adaptations. In the Shaw Brothers' own promotional platform *Southern Screen* (*Nanguo dianying* 南國電影),[167] the studio stressed that to produce the film all male and female stars in the studio had been "collectively mobilized ("男女明星集體出動") (**Fig. 1.5**) by the director Yuan Chiu-feng 袁秋楓. The casting included a Bao-yu cross-dressed by a new actress Ren Jie 任潔, while Dai-yu was played by a more well-known star at the time Loh Ti 樂蒂. The studio further stressed the film was shot in color (I.E. Eastman color) and had "the biggest cast ever seen in a Mandarin production." Not unlike the special booklets published with *HLM* films in early republican Shanghai, *Southern Screen* spotlighted the glitter of their stars, this time not literally by sprinkling stars, but rather with high-definition colors. Most actors and characters received an equal-sized frame of introduction, yet only the pages with "the chosen ones" (major characters and stars) were expensively printed in color, even if accompanied by "many" others whose subordinate status was emphasized in the other illustrations through their appearance in black and white. "The chosen ones" carried more weight visually and materially, magnified in large-sized, spreadable color print (*caise jufu cha ye* 彩色幅巨插頁), even if backgrounded and surrounded by "the many." (**Fig**. **1.5-1.8**).

[167] A partially bilingual film magazine (some contents are translated, some are not), *Southern Screen* circulated throughout Southeast Asia. As indicated in the page of publication details, *Southern Screen* had distributers in Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

In July 1962, hearing the news that the Shanghai troupe's version was slated to release, MP&GI, already lagging behind the Shaw Brothers in terms of schedule, first postponed and eventually aborted the film adaptation, realizing that potential audiences would likely be "taken" by their earlier competitors.[168] Critics then turned to comparing the Shaw Brother's Bao-yu (played by Ren Jie) to the veteran Xu Yu-lan's, as both were women crossdressing as Bao-yu.[169] Alarmed by the troupe's enduring popularity in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia,[170] the Shaw Brothers accelerated their production and successfully released Yuan Chiu-feng's *HLM* film in August 1962, ahead of the Yue opera troupe's adaptation (directed by Cen Fan) in November 1962.

The Shaw Brother's *HLM* did moderately well commercially, but Cen Fan's version of *HLM* successfully built on Xu and Wang's previous success of Yue opera performances in Hong and Kong and proved to be the ultimate winner. Estimated by left-wing media to be "one million in numbers," [171] Xu and Wang's fans signaled they were planning to watch the film multiple

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[168] "目前電懋公司已決定將八月份開拍「紅樓夢」之期延後了，準備等到邵氏與匪片的「紅樓夢」在香港上映之後的票房收入情形再加以研究，如果這兩部「紅樓夢」的票房都不理想，電懋就放棄拍「紅樓夢」的計劃。票房好也要視好到怎麼樣的情形再考慮拍「紅樓夢」。 在電懋公司內部，對這種處理，也有兩種不同的意見：有的人說電懋再三的表示不因邵氏搶拍「紅樓夢」而放棄拍「紅」片，且發動十萬觀眾選圈「紅」片的角色，如果不拍了，信用聲勢上的損失是無可彌補的，因此主張不計任何困難，不受任何影響而要拍這部「紅樓夢」；有些人認為，邵氏搶拍「紅樓夢」的事已過去將近一年了。電懋拍不拍「紅樓夢」，社會上已不再那麼注意，這種沒有把握的仗，電懋何必一定要意氣用事的去打，畢竟百萬港幣的投資每張都是能買東西的鈔票，為了面子問題而使一張張鈔票飛出去不飛回來是太不值得的傻瓜行為。" Quoted from "Xiangang yingquan Hongloumeng de zhandou," 香港影圈紅樓夢的戰鬥" [The Fights over Red Chamber Wars in Hong Kong cinema], *Lianhebao* 聯合報, July 5, 1962.

[169]"徐玉蘭主演的越劇歌唱「紅樓夢」，是今日港九人一致矚望着的。尤其注意那部「紅樓」動態的是邵氏公司。雖然邵氏以三十萬元購星馬版權，但香港方面這遭遇戰可難打。任潔任你如何也不夠大名鼎鼎的徐玉蘭一擊。因之，要拚命趕着圓夢，也希望在大陸攝成的「紅樓夢」未映之前，在此排期先映，期「近水樓台先得月」。「三笑」、「紅樓」都成了「雙包」。當然，觀眾們在看戲之餘，兼有一番熱鬧可看。——看誰真的笑？" Quoted from " … Kan honglou youfan renao," 看「紅樓」有番熱鬧 […Watching *HLM* movies compete with each other is fun], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, April 27, 1962.

[170] See: "Kan honglou youfan renao". To fend off the troupe, the Shaw Brothers even secured the "property rights" of adaptation *HLM* in Singapore and Malaysia.

[171] "Hongloumeng, meng Honglou" 紅樓夢。夢紅樓 [Dream of the Red Chamber; Dreaming about the Red Chamber], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, November 14, 1961.

times, even before the film was released. Their fans and audiences included other stars. Just as Mei Lanfang attended the Xu and Wang's performance of *HLM* in Beijing in 1959, Xu and Wang's advance screenings in Hong Kong were likewise attended and applauded by luminaries and film stars, including actors from Yue Feng's earlier 1952 film *Modern* "*Red Chamber Dream*," such as Yan Jun (who played Bao-yu) and Li Lihua (who played Dai-yu).[172] As *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報 colorfully narrated the story, people bought tickets in dozens and a hundred for their relatives, neighbors as well as for whole factories, schools and various regional associations.[173] To avoid queuing and give easier access to tickets, some audience members suggested a monthly pass should be available for all relatives to watch on the same designated seats. Others suggested ticket-selling vehicles should be sent to the countryside, as the British colonial government did for the population census.

Star assemblies surrounding Xu and Wang thus created rippling effects of more communal assemblies overspilling the actual cinema theater (just as earlier radio broadcasts had transcended the opera theater). Xu and Wang, both female, were praised in the press for bringing the characters alive and their voices brought tears to the satisfaction of audiences at large. In the scene of Xu/Bao-yu grieving the dead Wang/Dai-yu, the close-up of the cross-dressing Xu/Bao-yu's faces, which were not visible in live theatrical performances and simply non-existent in

[172] Reportedly, stars of the day Yan Jun 嚴俊 (playing Bao-yu) and Li Li-hua 李麗華 (playing Dai-yu) in Yue Feng's 1952 adaptations, were at the audience; see Huang Ziling 黃子玲 , "Hongloumeng qingdao zhongsheng Shanghai yueju tuan jupian shiying ceji" 紅樓夢傾倒眾生——上海越劇團巨片試映側 [Advance screenings of *Honglouemgn* fascinates everybody], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, November 12, 1962.

[173] "更有熱心觀眾向戲院頗多建議，有兩則甚為新奇；發行月票，辦法略為指定每日某場之某一座位連看一月，如此可使親友輪流欣賞而免不時輪飛之苦；荃灣沙田觀眾希望戲院仿人口登記局例，派出流動車開赴郊區售票，以利四鄉觀眾。據攝製該片之金聲影業公司經理韓雄飛表示：觀眾熱情，實深感奮，曾與院方商談該二建議；（一）為稅務關係，礙難過早提前售票；（二）流動車需特別裝置，且須經有關當局同意，限於時間，只得留待他日實行云。" Quoted from "Yue ju Hongloumeng dingzuo you qiwen you guanzhong jianyi mai yuepiao" 越劇紅樓夢　訂座有奇聞　有觀眾建議賣月票 [Odd request for a monthly pass amidst the Yue opera *Hongloumeng* craze], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, November 18, 1962.

audio recordings, "made everybody in the cinema cry."[174] Though undoubtedly enhanced by rhetorical hyperbole, left-wing media's "reports" on the wave/rave/crave for Xu/Wang's *HLM* was not entirely untrue in its affective sensory-making. The film indeed went on to become the highest grossing film in Hong Kong in 1962.[175] A shortened version of the film was further re-screened in Hong Kong's theaters in 1963 and 1964, and, as will be shown in Chapter Two, even a decade later in 1977 in the Third Red Chamber War.[176]





Fig 1.9 (Left) and Fig 1.10 (Right): As in the promotion of 1962, even on contemporary jackets of DVDs Ren Jie/Bao-yu continued to be deleted and deemphasized, whereas Dai-yu/Loh Ti remains the focus. **Left:** Yuan's *Dream of the Red Chamber*, Taiwan edition DVD. **Right:** Hong Kong edition, DVD.

[174] "Hongloumeng qingdao zhongsheng"
[175] "Guochanpian yu Guoyu qunian maizuo pojilu Yueju Hongloumeng liewei sanda maizuo yingpian zhishou" 國產片與國語片去年賣座破紀錄…越劇紅樓夢列為三大賣座影片之首 [Chinese-made films and Mandarin films last year broke box-office records, Yue opera *Hongloumeng* became the highest grossing movie], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, February 14, 1963.
[176] "Wubu caipian yejiang chongying, Jinsheng de Hongloumeng zhunbei suoduan wei liang xiaoshi chongying" 五部彩片也將重映 ... 金聲的「紅樓夢」準備縮短為兩小時重映 [Five color films to be re-screen … Jinsheng's *Hongloumeng* to be shortened into two hours], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, March 7, 1962; "Yuejupian 'Hongloumeng' 'Qishi erjia fangke' to be rescreened," 越劇片「紅樓夢」 「七十二家房客」 兩部佳片將重映 [Yue opera film *HLM* and … two great films to be re-screened], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, January 10, 1964.

In retrospect, why did the Shaw Brothers lose the war? Had this anything to do with their being "capitalist" and Xu and Wang's version being "socialist"? Not exactly. This essay argues that it is *HLM*'s forms of affect that provided, above all, the winning formula. The main question is what version most effectively releases *HLM*'s particular forms of affect through its use of the novel's affordances, i.e. star assembly, glittering grief, queerness, and trans-forming seas. As such, one of the possible answers is found in the stars chosen as central to the affective assembly. As newspaper sources suggest, whenever the audience cried, it was most of the time triggered by Xu Yu-lan's acting in the scene of "Bao-yu grieving Dai-yu. 寶玉哭靈." One of the keys for commercial success hence appeared to hinge on whether the performers of Bao-yu could pull off the release of splendid grief. It is this grief, channeled by the "appropriate" stars, that diasporic audiences altogether craved for in the cinematic adaptations. In contrast with the Yue troupe opera film, the Shaw Brothers did not focus on Bao-yu, which proved to be a mistake. At the time, the Shaw Brothers' Loh Ti (who played Dai-yu) was a much bigger star, and accordingly received more promotional spotlight, than Ren Jie (who played Bao-yu). As if to confirm Ren's lack of appeal as "the one" among "the many" audiences, she faded out from the show business right after the film had been released.[177] Indeed, up until this day Ren continues to be deemphasized on or even deleted from the film's contemporary DVD covers (**Fig. 1.9 and 1.10).** On the other hand, the Yue opera's Xu at the time proved to be the right star as Bao-yu. Her voice was able to unleash tears, signs of both glitter and grieve in *HLM*. It was Xu's cross-

[177] Ren Jie later "downgraded" into a supporting character – a female servant – in Li Han-hsiang's *Love Eterne* (1963); Ren did not want to take this role but accepted it knowing that parts of the production would guarantee a trip to Japan. Ultimately, Ren faded out from the film industry. Yet Ren Jie did not seem to be on bad terms with Loh Ti. Both Ren and Loh were from Shanghai, and they spoke Shanghainese among themselves. At the 40th anniversary of *Love Eterne* in 2003, Ren also joined Ling Bo in Taiwan to celebrate the occasion. For details, see a recent interview of Ren: Yuen Tsz-ying, "An Interview with Ren Jie: Sister Lin and *Dream of the Red Chamber* in the Eyes of Jia Bao-yu" (bilingual in Chinese and English) in *Hong Kong Film Archive Newsletter* 81 (Aug 2017): 8-10; . Here I want to acknowledge Po-shek Fu for directing me to this source.

dressing that was said to be so moving and convincing that the audience simply exclaimed: Xu (a female) *is* Bao-yu (a male)!

Diasporic audiences gathered to watch and listen to this story of the lover's separation repeatedly, paradoxically triggering more and more gatherings centered on separation. Take, for example, the testimonial of Li Han-hsiang 李翰祥, the renowned director who later adapted *HLM* himself (to appear in the Third Red Chamber war detailed below), who describes sitting in the audience during the Yue Troupe's opera performances. As he reminisced in an essay titled "Hooked on *HLM* performances 看《紅樓夢》表演愈看愈過癮," watching Xu's singing in December 1960 to early 1961 was transformative, urging him to host another star assembly himself:

> I couldn't quite accept Xu Yu-lan appearance at first, thinking [this] Bao-yu was a bit chubby, and a bit too old. But the scene of her shattering of Bao-yu's jade makes you forget all flaws: **she is the Jia Bao-yu penned by Cao Xueqin**! Xu's singing style is graceful and melodic, sometimes muscular and soaringly erective, and sometimes meandering and calmly elastic. While grieving and singing, Xu mournfully cried: "I am late, my dear Dai-yu!" Under the stage all was silence. You could hear other audience members breathing… In real-life you simply cry your hearts out and may even sneeze while doing so, but on the stage, you not only have to perform authentically but also skillfully and beautifully. When your emotion turns tumultuous, it is like **a thousand miles of rivers cascading into the mountains through ups and downs, rapid when it needs to be rapid, slow when it needs to be slow. Your singing key sometimes soar into the cloud and sometimes sink deep into the sea** …. After the performance I couldn't sleep all night, thinking **I wish I could turn this opera into a movie!**
> *(translation and emphasis mine)*
>
> 本來對徐玉蘭一出場還是有些不能接受，總覺得寶玉胖了些，年齡也實在太大了些，可是一場摔玉表演下來，這些缺點全忘得一乾二淨，覺得她就是曹雪芹筆下的賈寶玉。她的唱腔旋律優美，有時剛勁、挺拔，有時委婉、柔和，哭靈時一聲悲切而哀怨的『林妹妹我來遲了！』動人心弦 … 普慶台下，靜得連隔鄰觀眾的呼吸聲都聽得到。王文娟的黛玉焚稿 … 看她全心全意的投入角色的表演，幾疑舞台就是瀟湘館。… 生活中的哭，是悲從中來，難以抑制 …可是舞台上的哭是通過了技巧的表演，非但要哭得真，更要哭得美 … 唱又要陰陽分得清，輕重分得美，感情激動時，如江河一瀉千里，但山迴路轉，當急則急，當緩則緩，調門兒也有時高可入

雲，有時又低沉海底…看過戲回家，徹夜難眠，我真希望把這一台戲搬上銀幕。[178]

That Xu and Wang through their performance *became* the characters themselves is a cliché repeated in most reviews, promotional materials, and news coverage, earning them the names "the reincarnated Bao-yu and Dai-yu (*huo Bao-yu*, *huo Dai-yu* 活寶玉 活黛玉). Yet note Li Han-hsiang's emphasis on emotion, in particular grief in the segment translated above. Despite her initially jarring physiognomy, it was the affect of grieving and crying that allowed the female Xu to transform into a male Bao-yu, in turn moving the audience and finally touching the director Li. In Li's experiential retrospection; it was Xu's voice, both episodically and simultaneously masculine/erective/*yang* and feminine/elastic/*yin* (有時剛勁、挺拔，有時委婉、柔和 … 唱又要陰陽分得清), that stunned the audience into silence. It is this silence, in turn, which enhances the spectacular effect of Xu's queer affect of beauty, spontaneity, and natural effects of authenticity: is it a boy (Bao-yu) or woman (Xu) mourning Dai-yu? Or is it "they" (the "trans-gendering" actress/character) together with us (the audience/the writer/the reader)?

Shared affect, here, becomes a way of addressing diasporic separation and reunion. In the quote above, for instance, Li describes how, mirroring his and the Hong Kong audience's own diasporic trajectories, the songstresses Xu and Wang, themselves touring the territories, employed glittering grief to transport Li into the ecological/emotional realm of rivers, skies, and mountains. Notably, Li's nature-filled description mirrors Xu's own account of her "voice

[178] Li Han-hsiang 李翰祥, *Sanshinian xishuo congtou Vol. 2*, 三十年細說從頭 (二) [Thirty years of filmmaking: A memoir vol.2]. (Hong Kong: Cosmos Book, 1987), 215.

design" which also stresses diasporic feelings, freedom of movement and endless, but beautiful grief that connects one's kin from afar.[179] As Xu writes:

> …approaching the scene of Bao-yu grieving Dai-yu, characters had to erupt into being like birds breaking cages and fish slashing nets …the word **'return'** has to be sung as if one is summoning their kin and their loved ones **across mountains, valleys and sea waves.** *(translation and emphasis mine)*
>
> …「哭靈」起唱前的人物出場，猶如沖開牢籠的鳥，劈開羅網的魚 …「千呼萬喚喚不歸」的「歸」字 … 要唱出一種高山峽谷裡，在大海浪濤中呼喚親人的寂寥高遠意境.[180]

HLM in this case calls forth and relies on the assembly of audience through the medium and maintenance of stardom, but, drawing on the affordances of the novel itself, presents such assembly as global and traveling. In fact, it can be argued that, at their most successful assembling of diasporic audiences, the Shanghai opera troupe mirrored the diasporic experience of the characters in the novel itself. Like, Bao-yu, the Shanghai opera troupe also left home (*chujia*, 出家), if only to return – feeling and fusing binary oppositions as well as shuttling and touring between China and the world (**see Chapter Two**). Unleashing tears and grief, the Shanghai opera troupe's "Bao-yu" and "Dai-yu" held successful assemblies and generated full houses in 1962 in Hong Kong, but also in mainland China, and as shown above, Korea.

Yet, just as Xu and Wang's border-crossing star assembly cinematically released glitter and grief, releasing "overseas" tears in and through Hong Kong, the troupe's *HLM* began to crumble and de-*form* in the PRC. As Xu recalled in her memoir, at the time of the film's release

[179] Performing in a regional Chinese and socialist tradition, Xu and Wang certainly relate to, but ultimately differ from the more cosmopolitan phenomenon of songstress traced by Jean Ma in her *Sounding the Modern Woman: The Songstress in Chinese Cinema*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

[180] Xu Yu-lan's emphasis in this scene is diasporic and ecological; see her: "Woshi ruhe sheji *Hongloumeng* zhong Jia Bao-yu kuling zheduan changqiang de?" 我是如何設計《紅樓夢》中賈寶玉「哭靈」這段唱腔的? [How did I design the voice in the sequence of 'Bao-yu grieving'?], *Shanghai Xiju* 上海戲劇 2 (1989), 44.

in 1962, she wondered why the film was not shown in Shanghai, even after screenings in neighboring cities such as Suzhou and Wuxi. Later, she would learn that it was in Shanghai where the Cultural Revolution began. What was already brewing in 1958 (i.e., criticisms levelled at the rise of the troupe's *HLM*) began to gain greater momentum. In 1963, the troupe was asked to stop playing "anti-socialist" "talent scholar and beauty" opera such as *HLM*, now reduced as an example of "*feng-zi-xiu* 封資修" (i.e., "feudalism-capitalism-revisionism").

As a prelude to the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), in the early and mid 1960s the Yue-opera groups had already begun to be persecuted and disband; it became simply wrong to be the "stars" in *HLM*. As Wang Wenjuan recalls, during the Cultural Revolution she had to confess to the Red Guards: "I am Wang Wenjuan, I served the artistic 'black-line' against the party [*wen-yi hei-xian gang-jian*]…*I played a role in HLM*…").[181] Forced to delink and detach themselves from *HLM*'s "feudalistic" and "oppressive" star characters, the troupe as well had to disavow its former role and start performing "modern" and socialist themes focused only on workers, peasants, and soldiers (*gong-nong-bing*, 工農兵) since 1949.[182]

Yet once again we should note that, just as we should not simply afford agency to the PRC agents that staged the *Yue Troupe* triumphant socialist spectacle in Hong Kong, we should not simply ascribe agency to the political actors of the Cultural Revolution without taking the affordances of the novel into consideration. Instead of saying that *HLM* is banned or "destroyed" in socialism, we may equally suggest that, true to the spirit of the novel itself, Mao and his rebels had productively *activated* the end of *HLM*, where the Jia family financially, politically, and demographically disintegrates. Here I suggest that the "demise" of *HLM* in the PRC during this

[181] Original: "我叫黃文娟，是文藝黑線幹將，專演封資修的戲，我演了《紅樓夢》…"Wang, *Tianshang*, 229.
[182] Zhao, *Xu Yulan Zhuan*, 241.

period should therefore not only be attributed to ideology (i.e., Marxism, socialism, Maoism) or the wrong-headedness of specific individuals (e.g., Mao Zedong, the Gang of Four), but *also* according to the formal and affective logic of *HLM* itself.

Several readings would support this thesis. First, during the Cultural Revolution, *HLM*'s star assembly collapsed: "the ones" in *HLM* dissolved into "the many" – mirroring the ending of the original novel where the Jia family is ransacked (for example, Wang Wenjuan's home was raided and her [glittering] jewel "taken away").[183] The "many" (i.e. the masses and in particular the assemblies of Red Guards) instead of gathering to enjoy glitter and grief, started to cancel *HLM*, re-forming, or even de-forming "Bao-yu"/Xu and "Dai-yu"/Wang and turning them into "servants."[184] Such revolutionary *de*-forming (rather than simply denouncing and "deleting") took place, for example, in 1966, when Xu and Wang were asked to keep "cleaning" *HLM*'s props, and dismantled the opera stage where they played *HLM* and other tear-releasing plays such as *Xixiangji* (The Western Wing), all now considered anti-party "black plays" (*hei-xi* 黑戲).[185]

Second, as exemplified in the couplet of the Land of Illusion which was echoed in republican Shanghai's "modern costume" adaptation of *HLM* (introduced in section 1 of this chapter), *HLM*'s emotion/*qing* should be regarded as transcending time itself, outlasting both antiquity (*gu*) and contemporaneity (*jin),* with "glittering grief" serving to merge between "then" and "now," between tradition and modernity. The Cultural Revolution, however, radicalized the call for rupture latent already in the May Fourth movement, abnegating *HLM*'s affective, "tear-

[183] Original: "沒過多久，越劇院的人那也上門抄走了家裏的金銀首飾和存折。我心想一這些東西是我多年積蓄，勞動所得，將來問題查清了總會還給我，所以全拿了出來交給他們。直到平反，那些財物只還一小部份，大部份去有去無回。" Wang, *Tianshang*, 225.

[184] See Tie Xiao's study of the revolutionary version of crowds in modern China: *Revolutionary Waves: The Crowd in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017).

[185] Zhao, *Xu Yulan Zhuan*, 246.

jerking" glue between past and present by emphasizing the binary thinking of "feudalism" vs. "revolutionary." The (im)possibility of (with)holding such grief took place when Xu and Wang, for the very first time, saw the final product of their very own *HLM* performances during the "struggle session," (*pidouhui*) where the Red Guards gave lectures on ideology critique. As Wang recounted her first watching of himself playing Dai-yu on screen, we witness how *HLM* de-forms and *returns to forms* through affect:

> The rebel groups denounced me and Xu Yu-lan, saying "listen up, let's see how we the revolutionary crowd denounce your Yue-opera film – the poisonous weed *Hongloumeng*!" The lights dimmed; we entered and sat in the last row. This was the first time I saw the film adaptation of our performance on a big movie screen, but I couldn't anticipate that I would watch the film **as such kind of person (*zheyang de shenfen*) under such a situation (*zheyang de qingkuang*).** I felt so conflicted watching as the film credits appeared. **When I heard the line "Dai-yu Sister Lin has arrived!" My tears almost spilled, but I suppressed them** for fear that the rebellious group (*zaofan pai*) would see it.
>
> 造反派對我和徐玉蘭訓話說：「你們今天好好聽聽，革命群眾對大毒草《紅樓夢》是怎麼批判的！」燈暗後，我們入場坐在最後一排。這是我第一次在大銀幕上看到這部作品的最後「成品」，但沒想到是在這樣的情況下以這樣的身份觀賞。當片頭出現時我心中已是百感交集，一聲「林姑娘來了」響起，幾乎淚眼盈眶，生怕被造反派看到，拼命忍住不讓眼淚落下。(*translation and emphasis mine*)[186]

Pushed to the back row and indistinguishable from the theater's dense "background," the erstwhile *HLM* "stars" Xu and Wang had now dissolved into something indefinite, someone (but no longer "the one") *formless*; Wang could not name *what exactly Dai-yu had become* until she "herself" appears as "Dai-yu" on screen, unleashing grief and releasing tears in her eye. Against such identification on the part of the audience, the Rebel groups aimed to denounce Bao-yu and Dai-yu on screen, calling the star characters "hooligan" (*a-fei* 阿飛). Yet their coercive interpretation fell on deaf ears, as *HLM*'s form of affect – cinematically reactivated in Xu and

[186] Wang, *Tianshang*, 231.

Wang's version – exerted itself against ideological critique, revolutionary interpellation, and semiotic closure:

> As the plot unfolded, the audience became **entranced while entering the story**. They became quiet, some of them were even **sobbing.** At that moment some audience members noticed me and Xu Yu-lan sitting in their midst. They turned their heads looking at us, gossiping sotto voce. (*translation and emphasis mine*)
>
> 但隨着劇情的進展，觀眾們都漸漸入了戲，座中鴉雀無聲，甚至開始傳來了陣陣抽泣。此時有觀眾發現我和玉蘭大姐也在坐中，一些人頻頻回頭看我們，一邊小聲議論著。[187]

In Wang's recollection, the audience became silent as the story went on moving towards the "tragic" marriage between Bao-yu and Bao-chai; they become "entranced" while also "entering the movie" (*ruxi*, 入戲). Wang heard some crying, and the "soft power" of the film's affect-glittering grief, queerness, and trans-forming seas – initially blocked, now *beckoned* as the movie "released" feeling.[188] Transforming a struggle session aimed at *HLM*'s "star assembly," the audience started to notice "the stars" return to some *form* in their midst. Could they be crying and asking, "as Bao-yu and Dai-yu would leave this world on screen as in the novel, would Wang and Xu be the same?" The rebel groups, threatened by the affective radiance of "the ones," ultimately dismissed the audience for fear that the movie would restore the "stars," the privileged, the pretty, the glittering and grieving performers of queerness; the "ones" that previously enacted "trans-forming seas" in mediating between opposing worlds from "socialist" Vietnam, North Korea, the PRC to "capitalist" Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, and the "diasporic" world at large.

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[187] Wang, *Tianshang*, 231.

[188] On tears' affective power, see Haiyan Lee, "Tears That Crumbled the Great Wall: The Archaeology of Feeling in the May Fourth Folklore Movement." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 64, no. 1 (2005): 35–65; Teri Silvio, "Crying Songs and Their Fans: The Material and Affective Economy of Taiwanese Opera, 1945–1975." *positions: asia critique* 25, no. 3 (2017): 469–505.

Prompted by the troupe's affective performance, sessions intended to "critique" ended up giving way to *HLM*'s "form of affect," *tearing down* (with tears) and *watering down* the walled binary between socialism/capitalism, self/enemy, and me/you, activating what I call "trans-forming seas." While grief and tears caused by the spectacle of feudalist glitter were supposed to be blocked in the PRC during the Cultural Revolution, Xu and Wang's voices continued to virtually and portably "network" with diasporic audiences, or better, *turning audiences into feeling diasporic* in the fashion and form provided by *HLM*. Linked by *HLM*, tears, and what I, exploring the notion further in Chapter Two, call "trans-forming seas," Wang's crying in the mainland, while seemingly "at home" and not "diasporic", was therefore affectively connected to diasporic audience's crying watching the movie, *moving* in between *HLM*'s infrastructural network within and beyond the PRC.

Conclusion

In sum, Bao-yu and Dai-yu's "star statuses" – their moral ambiguity, their mediating function between "oppressor" and "oppressed," could no longer be guaranteed during the Cultural Revolution, at least not in the way Wang remembered it years later. At the risk of stating the obvious, it was at this historical juncture during the Anti-rightist Campaign (1957-1959), the Great Leap Forward (1957-1960) moving towards the Cultural Revolution (1967-1977), where *HLM*'s star assembly and its major forms of affect, such as "glittering grief," while appearing and shining, were threatened with being made impossible in, and outside of the PRC. Significantly, however, the Shanghai troupe's success provided an "affective" model for later adaptations during and after the Cold War; it showed, for example, to the Shaw Brothers that

there was a huge market potential for *HLM* among diasporic Chinese audiences in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia to say the least; this will become clearer as we move to the Third Red Chamber War.

Affect, the result of the glamor of stardom, queer cross-dressing, and the tragic affair of Bao-yu and Dai-yu, was the hallmark of the diasporic audience's reaction to the Yue opera film, resulting in audiences assembling for a "banquet" of cinematic and operatic spectacle. Therefore, instead of harping on how the PRC used *HLM* for their own "socialist" purpose, or inversely harping on how the Shaw Brothers "depoliticized" or "commercialized" *HLM* during the period), the case of the troupe's trip in Hong Kong allows us to depart from "contextualist" approaches which simply interpret according to the dictates of geopolitics and Cold War rhetoric in compartmentalizing and separating "areas" from each other. Rather, *HLM*'s affect of grief, if successfully made grieavable, proved to be connecting areas supposedly separate from one another, precisely because the story of *HLM* itself pivots on the affect produced by the separation and disintegrations of families.

Paying long-overdue attention to the agency of *HLM*'s very form of affect, I will therefore begin to show in the next chapter, the capacitating role played by the classic Chinese novel *HLM* itself. After all, it was nothing but *HLM*'s form of affect which affords the possibility of a potentially global star assembly, whose glittering grief and queerness would successfully fuse oppositions (main/land and over/seas audiences; East and West, socialism and capitalism) through gathering "overseas" participants in releasing tears across socialist China, colonial Hong Kong and by extension Sinophone (Southeast)Asia or even the whole world's global media climates.

Chapter Two:

Hongloumeng's glittering grief, queerness, and *trans*-forming sea in the Red Chamber adaptation wars (1961-1978)

Introduction

Before approaching what I call the Third Red Chamber War (1977-1978), and arguably also the last edition of such wars in Sinophone Asia before the 2000s, this chapter will read the affective forms presented above (star-assembly, glittering grief and queerness, transforming seas) back into *HLM* the novel itself. What I have called *HLM*'s forms of affect is by no means invented out of vacuum, instead they are rubrics drawn from the novel itself. A full theorization of *HLM*'s form of affect will prepare us to fully engage with the climax of the Third Red Chamber war as mirroring the very form of assembly in the novel. It will show how star assembly as a possibility is already foregrounded in the novel's repeated rhythms of gatherings. The leave and return of Bao-yu's "world tour," in diasporic ways enacted by other global *HLM* stars across history, will be demonstrated to be already exemplified in the novel itself. Most critically, a return to *HLM* will restore to us how star power assembles people in *HLM* takes place through what I call "trans-forming seas" between land and skies, between home and diaspora in the 18th-century when the novel was first written as well as in modern and contemporary transmedial adaptations proliferating in the 20th- and 21st century.

Through reading the key Chapter 43, we will complete our theorization of *HLM*'s adaptations through the novel's form of affects, each of which is distinct from yet also working in tandem with each other. Whereas female scholars such as Louise Edwards, Angelina Yee,

Maram Epstein have citied Bao-yu's feminine appearances and behavioral antics (i.e. eating cosmetics) as evidence of his androgyny and bisexuality, few have emphasized how Bao-yu himself performs or embodies queerness or transness in *HLM*.[189] Adding to studies of *HLM*'s rewritings (Keith McMahon, Ellen Widmer),[190] this section in addition offers not only *textual* but also *textural* readings of the novel. Doing so will help delineate the affective affordance of the novel and allow us to recognize the network that reaches into and recurs in contemporary adaptations. As will be shown that network is nothing but the star's queer glittering grief that anchors an assembly in the midst of diasporic flows between seas, lands, and skies.

Chapter 43: *Hongloumeng*'s ecological form of water-mud exchange

Consider the assembly in Chapter 43, titled "An old woman's whim is the occasion of a birthday gathering/And a young man's remorse finds solace in a simple ceremony 閒取樂偶攢金慶壽 不了情暫撮土為香." The title couplet foregrounds a series of opposites that will play out in the chapter: whims/cathexis, occasion/eternality, happiness/mourning, and birthday/death, manifesting what Andrew Plaks calls "complementary bi-polarity," probably a less Sinocentric

[189] See: Angelina Yee, "Counterpoise in "*Hunglou Meng'*." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 50, no. 2 (1990): 613-650; Louise Edwards, "Gender Imperatives in *Honglou Meng*: Bao-yu's Bisexuality." *Chinese Literature, Essays, Articles, Reviews* 12 (1990): 69-81; Maram Epstein "Reflections of Desire: The Poetics of Gender in *Dream of the Red Chamber*." *Nan Nü*, 1, no. 1 (1999): 64-106; Zhou Zuyan, "The Dream of the Red Chamber: A Shattered Dream of Androgyny," in *Androgyny in Late Ming and Early Qing Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 155-194. Most recently, Epstein mentioned that Bao-yu could be and have been seen by some of her students as queer, see "Making Sense of Bao-yu: Staging Ideology and Aesthetics," in *Approaches to Teaching the Story of the Stone (Dream of the Red Chamber)* edited by Andrew Schonebaum and Tina Lu. (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2012), 317-333. As an exception, Japanese sinologist Gōyama Kiwamu asserts that Bao-yu has "gender dysphoria," which is a medicalizing term that could be alternatively described simply as transgenderism. See Gōyama Kiwamu 合山究, *"Kōrōmu":Sei dōitsusei shōgai sha no yūtopia shōsetsu*.「紅楼夢」: 性同一性障碍者のユートピア小説 [*Hongloumeng*: A transgender utopia] (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 2010)

[190] Keith McMahon, "Eliminating Traumatic Antinomies: Sequels to *Honglou meng*" and Ellen Widmer, "*Honglou meng* Sequels and Their Female Readers in Nineteenth Century China" in *Snakes' Legs: Sequels, Continuations, Rewritings, and Chinese Fiction*, edited Martin. W. Huang (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

term translated from the Chinese equivalent *yin-yang*. As Plaks magisterially pointed out, "non-events" such as banquets constitute the cyclical and dense texture of the novel, which is structured by the endless vacillation between dualities such as movement and stillness (*dong-jing*, 動靜), joy and sorrow (*bei-xi*, 悲喜), union and separation (*li-he,* 離合/ *ju-san,* 聚散).[191] Gatherings in *HLM* exemplify this dynamic as repeated assemblies move *HLM*'s narrative forward. The Prospect Garden (*daguanyuan* 大觀園), the centerpiece of the novel, hosts assemblies of all kinds: banquets, flower-viewings, poetry contests, riddles guessing, birthday parties, funeral and so on.

Let's be more specific. In Chapter 43, Grandmother Jia wants to hold a birthday party for her granddaughter-in-law Xi-feng. As Grandmother Jia nonchalantly suggests: "all of us are here together this year and it doesn't look as if there is likely to be anything else happening, I propose that we should get together and make a day of it. 今年人又齊全，料著又沒事，咱們大家好生樂一日." (*HLM* 43: 576). Pleasure, leisure, and co-participation motivate this assembly. After Bao-yu's mother (Lady Wang) concurs, Grandmother Jia became:

> … **at once (*yi*-fa)** still more animated. Let Aunt Xue and Lady Xing be invited without delay, she told them. Let Bao-yu and the girls be sent for. And You-shi from the other mansion. And why not Lai Da's wife and some of the more respected older members of the female staff? **Infected by her enthusiasm,** the maids and older women-servants went scurrying off in all directions to summon or invite. In less time than it would take to eat a meal, **all those invited, young and old, mistress and servant, had been assembled forming a dense blackness filling the whole house (*yi-wu-zi*).**[192] Aunt Xue and Grandmother Jia sat on their own facing the multitude, Lady Xing and Lady Wang on chairs at the opposite side of the room beside the door. Bao-chai, Dai-yu, Xiang-yun and the Three Springs sat in a row at the back of the *kang* behind Grandmother Jia and Aunt

[191] See Andrew Plaks, "Allegory in *Hsi-yu Chi* and *Hung-lou Meng*," in *Chinese Narrative Critical and Theoretical Essays*, edited by Andrew Plaks (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) and his "Complementary Bipolarity and Multiple Periodicity," in Andrew Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory In the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).

[192] Hawkes' translation: "[…] all those invited, young and old, mistress and servant, had been assembled and *the room was packed*." (*emphasis mine*)." This translation missed out on the original Chinese's description of the room's "dense blackness" (*wu-ya-ya*, 烏壓壓).

> Xue. **Bao-yu half reclined in his grandmother's lap, with a multitude of people overflowing the whole floor (*yi-di*).**
>
> … 賈母聽說，一發高興起來，忙遣人去請薛姨媽邢夫人等：又叫請姑娘們並寶玉和那府裡的尤氏和賴大家的，及有些頭臉管事的媳婦也都叫了來。眾丫頭，婆子見賈母十分高興，也都高興，忙忙的各自分頭去請的請，傳的傳，沒頓飯的工夫，老的，少的，上的，下的，烏壓壓擠了一屋子。只薛姨媽和賈母對坐，邢夫人王夫人只坐在房門前兩張椅子上，寶釵姊妹等五六個人坐在炕上，寶玉坐在賈母懷前，地下滿滿的站了一地。(*SOTS* 43:2:345; *HLM* 43:1:577, *emphasis mine and translation modified*)

As if waiting for a play or a movie to begin, the audience ("the many") assembles to look up and listen to Grandmother Jia ("the one") in a room, darkened by their undifferentiated presence. Not unlike the audiences flooding the theatre of the Shanghai Yue-opera's *HLM*, the attendees at the Grandmother Jia's party dissolve into a background "forming a dense blackness filling the whole house,"[193] ("烏壓壓擠了一屋子") with "a multitude of people overflowing the whole floor 地下滿滿的站了一地." Despite (or maybe because) of Grandmother Jia and Bao-yu playing the central role on the stage, the biggest audience remains the anonymous crowds, namelessly classified as an assembly of "the more respected older members," "the young and old," "mistresses and servants." The rhetorically repetition "*yi*, 一," in Chinese meaning "the whole/one/once,"[194] sensorially suggests the synchronic envelopment of "the one" and "the many" in both the event and environment. A star assembly here has reached "a full house" (*man-zuo* 滿座) status in theatrical, and cinematic terms, hosting "many" in and as "one."[195]

[193] My own translation here.
[194] The emphasis on "one" (*yi*) is repeated in phrases such as "*yifa gaoxing*" 一發高興, *"yi wuzi*" 一屋子, "*yidi* " 一地.
[195] I suspect the emphasis on "one" (*yi*) here may even have cosmological and philosophical particularly, particularly but not exclusively in the Daoist tradition, which says *dao* is "*tai-yi* 太一." See Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Oneness: East Asian Conceptions of Virtue, Happiness, and How We Are All Connected.* (New York, NY, United States of America: Oxford University Press, 2017); Philip J. Ivanhoe, et al, eds., *The Oneness Hypothesis: Beyond the Boundary of Self* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

To enhance the participatory nature of the assembly, Grandmother Jia proposes that the party this time is crowd-funded by everyone according to their budget, departing from the previous norm of sending gifts individually. With that said, the audience's affective response turns more spontaneous. As the narrator senses it:

> Grandmother Jia now smilingly announced **the one proposal (*yi-xi-hua*)** that she had already outlined to Lady Wang. **And who [in the audience] wouldn't fall in with it?** Some were on good terms with Xi-feng and some were genuinely happy to give her pleasure; some because they were afraid of her and welcomed this as an opportunity of getting themselves into her good books, and **all because in any case they could afford to do so**. Accordingly, as soon as Grandmother Jia had finished speaking, **once (*yi-wen*)** they heard it they all enthusiastically agreed**.**
>
> 賈母笑著把方才一席話說與眾人聽了。眾人誰不湊這趣兒？再也有和鳳姐兒好的，情願這樣的，有畏懼鳳姐兒的，巴不得來奉承的：況且都是拿的出來的，所以一聞此言，都欣然應諾。(*SOTS* 43:2:346; *HLM* 43:1:577, *emphasis mine and translation modified*)[196]

A star assembly ("the one" among "the many") as theorized above is here created, centering around this chapter's "stars" and "(chosen)ones" (Grandmother Jia, Xi-feng, and later Bao-yu), yet also affectively invested and "voted" for by the "many." The "many" spectators listen to, watch, and ultimately pay for the real show (the next assembly) in concert and *en masse*. Oneness (*yi*) is again emphasized (一席話/一聞此言), affectively linking "the ones" and "the many."

Like cinema as a form of mass entertainment, affordability is one factor uniting all people in the audience paying for the fun gathering, despite heterogenous intentions, mixed emotions, and actual content. No one knows the exact programs of the gathering, but collective happiness is promised and shared already through the excitement of assemblies. And yet, despite the

[196] I modified Hawkes' translation. He translated "眾人誰不湊這趣兒？" as "All present, it need hardly be said, were willing to fall in with it." (*SOTS* 43:2:346)

emphasis on totality, crowds, and total gatherings, the show is simultaneously directed by and centered on "the ones." Two other females, Xi-feng and You-shi, logistically administer the party while Grandmother Jia throws out the idea.[197] As the second half of Chapter 43 shows, Xi-feng, the birthday star, retreats to run the entire proceedings, off the stage, directing from behind of the show. It is *HLM*'s protagonist Bao-yu who eventually will steal the show – turning and rotating a gathering of birthday party into an occasion of mourning, performing grief as if on a theatrical stage.

In the middle of Chapter 43, amidst the joyous birthday gathering, we are told Bao-yu leaves home to grieve one of the family's maids on the day of her death. One year earlier (in Chapter 30), the maid called Golden had been exiled from the family and in turn committed suicide. We are told Golden had been punished by Bao-yu's mother, Lady Wang, for seducing Bao-yu, but in fact, it had been Bao-yu who had been flirting with the girl and she only innocently reciprocated. As a mixture of grief and guilt, sexual flirtation and emotional transgression, this trip of mourning is structurally significant because Golden's is only one of many moments of departure and death in the novel. Though arguably unique (like each such occurrence of death in the novel), Golden's suicide (and Jia Bao-yu's moment of grieving her) are paradigmatically important, each death offering a general significance by being serially linked to others.

As such, consider how the mood of dispersal, starting from Chapter 30,[198] continues to spread to other characters serially *because of* Golden and Bao-yu in Chapter 31:

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[197] Two female characters run the show: Xi-feng and You-shi, Xi-feng, the presumed protagonist in the birthday party, asked You-shi to organize it according to Grandmother Jia's liking. Xi-feng herself fastidiously deals with finances and cheque books, which appears to be all she is interested in.

[198] The beginning of Chapter 30 already starts with Dai-yu joking about her death and Bao-yu his becoming a monk; both turned out to be true. The chapter ends with Bao-yu kicking Aroma (Xi-ren) spitting blood.

> Lady Wang, observing Bao-yu's dejected appearance, **attributed it to embarrassment about yesterday's episode with Golden** and ignored him even more pointedly than Bao-chai. Dai-yu, seeing how morose Bao-yu looked assumed that it was because Bao-chai was offended with him and, feeling resentful that he should care, at once became as morose as he was. Xi-feng, having been told all about Bao-yu and Golden the night before by Lady Wang, could scarcely be her usual laughing and joking self when she knew of her aunt's displeasure and, taking her cue from the latter, was if anything even more glacial than the others. And Ying-chun, Tan-chun and Xi-chun, **seeing everyone else so uncomfortable, soon began to feel just as uncomfortable themselves**. The result was that after sitting for only a very short time**, the party broke up.**
>
> 王夫人見寶玉沒精打采，也只當是金釧兒昨日之事，他沒好意思的，越發不理他。林黛玉見寶玉懶懶的，只當是他因為得罪了寶釵的原故，心中不自在，形容也就懶懶的。鳳姐昨日晚間王夫人就告訴了他寶玉金釧的事，知道王夫人不自在，自已如何敢說笑，也就隨著王夫人的氣色行事，更覺淡淡的。賈迎春姊妹見眾人無意思，也都無意思了。因此，大家坐了一坐就散了。(*SOTS* 30:2:346; *HLM* 31:1:418, *emphasis mine and translation modified*)

Following this passage is Dai-yu's long mediation on dispersal (*san*, 散).[199] Right after it, Bao-yu, realizing that every girl included in the family's gathering eventually will have to depart and marry one day, throws a tantrum over a fan with Skybright (Qing-wen). In turn, Skybright then protests the servants' disposability and bitterly mocks Bao-yu's status as a disposer. Bao-yu significantly replies: "No worries! Our gathering will end one day! 你不用忙，將來有散的日子！" (*SOTS* 31:2:346; *HLM* 31:1:419). The words spoken turn prophetic. In later chapters, Skybright will be exiled and die, just like Golden, followed by the other girls, ultimately leading

[199] See the passage: "Dai-yu had a natural aversion to gatherings, which she rationalized by saying that since the inevitable consequence of getting together was parting, and since parting made people feel lonely and feeling lonely made them unhappy, ergo it was better for them not to get together in the first place. In the same way she argued that since the flowers, which give us so much pleasure when they open, only cause us a lot of extra sadness when they die, it would be better if they didn't come out at all. Bao-yu was just the opposite. He always wanted the party to go on forever and flowers to be in perpetual bloom; and when at last the party did end and the flowers did wither – well, it was infinitely sad and distressing, but it couldn't be helped. And so today, while everyone else left the party with feelings of gloom, Dai-yu alone was completely unaffected. Bao-yu, on the other hand, returned to his room in a mood of black despondency, sighing and muttering as he went." 林黛玉天性喜散不喜聚。他想的也有個道理，他說，人有聚就有散，聚時歡喜，到散時豈不清冷？既清冷則生傷感，所以不如倒是不聚的好。比如那花開時令人愛慕，謝時則增惆悵，所以倒是不開的好。」故此人以為喜之時，他反以為悲。那寶玉的情性只願常聚，生怕一時散了添悲；那花只願常開，生怕一時謝了沒趣；只到筵散花謝，雖有萬種悲傷，也就無可如何了。因此，今日之筵，大家無興散了，林黛玉倒不覺得，倒是寶玉心中悶悶不樂，回至自已房中長吁短嘆。(*SOTS* 31:2:346; *HLM* 31:1:418).

to Bao-yu's own departure. Returning to Chapter 43, we can now recognize how here the assembly, while still ongoing, also slowly progresses towards the diasporic ending of the novel. At this point, Bao-yu's leaving is just temporary and he will return home before the end of the chapter, but eventually his leaving home will become more permanent.

Symbolically, even if the mission is defined by an offering to a girl, the leaving of the home is initially *unleashed through* (but not defined by) the masculine. To make sure the trip works, for instance, Bao-yu keeps girls and women in his family away from the secret mission. The episode of home-leaving mourning is an all-male affair between male servants (Tealeaf and Li Gui), performed in the name of none but his friend of bromance Prince Bei-jing 北淨王, who, we should note, is also significantly named Shui-rong 水溶 (meaning "water flowing"):[200]

> "I want you to be waiting for me outside the back gate with two horses ready saddled. No one else is to accompany me but you. **Tell Li Gui that I am going to the Prince of Bei-jing's,** and that he must stop anyone going out to look for me. He can tell them that the Prince is keeping me and that I shall come back as soon as I can get away"….before dawn next morning was waiting with two horses ready saddled outside the rear gate of the Garden. As soon as it was light, Bao-yu, **dressed in heavy mourning, emerged from the postern, leaped onto one of the waiting horses, and crouching down over the reins, set off at a brisk trot down the street – all without uttering a single word**…And by applying the whip he made his horse shoot on ahead, and presently, after a couple of turns, **had left the city gate behind him.** Tealeaf, more mystified than ever, followed him as closely as he could**.** When they had galloped **without stopping for two or three miles and** there were less people, **Bao-yu finally reined to a halt** and turned back to ask Tealeaf…
>
> 「明日一早要出門，備下兩匹馬在後門口等著，不要別一個跟著。說給李貴，我往北府里去了。倘或要有人找我，叫他攔住不用找，只說北府里留下了 」… 天亮了，只見寶玉遍體純素，從角門出來，一語不發跨上馬，一彎腰，順著街就趟下去，焙

[200] Crucially linked to mourning is Prince Bei-jing is also named Shui-rong 水溶 (Water flowing). He was also present in the mourning of Qin Keqing in Chapter 15. He sends gifts to Bao-yu, and Bao-yu in turn finds him beautiful. For a queer reading of homosexual relations among Bao-yu, Prince Beijing, Qing Zhong and others, see Chapter 5 of Giovanni Vitiello, *The Libertine's Friend: Homosexuality and Masculinity in Late Imperial China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.) Also see Pai Hsien-yung's 白先勇 reading on Aroma's heterosexual marriage with Jiang Yuhan as a queer connection with Bao-yu: "Jia Bao-yu de suyuan: Jiang Yuhan yu Hua Xire - jianlun Honglou meng de jieju yiyi" 賈寶玉的俗緣：蔣玉函與花襲人兼論紅樓夢的結局意義 [Bao-yu's secular attachment through Jiang Yuhan and Hua Xiren: an essay on *Hongloumeng*'s ending] *Lianhe wenxue yuekan* 聯合文學月刊 15 (1986): 25-30..

茗也只得跨上馬，加鞭趕上…說著，那馬早已轉了兩個彎子，出了城門。茗煙越發不得主意，只得緊緊跟著。一氣跑了七八里路出來，人煙漸漸稀少，寶玉方勒住馬… (*SOTS* 43:2:356; *HLM* 43:1:582-583, *emphasis mine translation modified*)

In contrast with Bao-yu's usual indolence and lack of masculine vigor, here the protagonist's physical prowess and mental decisiveness (rather than fancy clothes, poetry and sentimentalism as usual) are uncharacteristically on show. The fitness of his body, particularly his waist (*yiwan yao*, 一彎腰) is undeniably on display in his breathless, effortless and unstoppable horse-riding (*yiqi*, 一氣). True to 18th-century standards of masculinity, Bao-yu's competent body and core muscles, though implied, are not described, just as his "male" physiological/privilege/prowess sometimes is obscured by his non-binary appearance throughout the book. Yet note how once again, the emphasis on "one/once/*yi* 一" in the whole passage echoes that of the pre-party, making this chapter of assembly altogether animating and as shown below conducive to spontaneous *trans*-formation.

As shown in this action scene, males and masculinities are involved in the process of producing glittering grief. Here Bao-yu has mobilized his masculine, imperial connections (Prince Beijing) and the Jia family's patronage to the Temple to pull off the trip of mourning. Losing his direction and with nowhere to perform the mourning ceremony, Bao-yu consciously calculates that the Temple of Water Spirit (*shui-xian an*, 水仙庵) is under the patronage of his family and therefore must accommodate him. As the Jia's family is connected to the imperial court, this privileged connection explains why even though he is dressed in plain and mourning attire he arrives at the Temple like "a bouncing dragon descending from the sky" (竟像天上掉下個活龍來的一般) in the eyes of the old nun; dragons traditionally symbolize the emperor's

imperial status in Chinese history and culture.[201] But the rule/reign of Bao-yu, as shown throughout *HLM*, is not defined by imperial ambitions and territorial expansions (unlike *Sanguo Yanyi*), but instead defined by the endurance of *qing*/sentiment, beauty, and grief. Unlike his usual self who feels inferior to girls' beauty and purity, Bao-yu on the trip is indeed leading all the way, but like stars assembly in contemporary Chinese societies, Bao-yu leads only as a star in *glittering* and *grieving*, not conquering and controlling, through nothing but water.

To witness how this glittering grief is produced, consider how Bao-yu initially scorns the temple's vulgarity and inauthenticity:

> The reason I normally feel that way about it," said Bao-yu, "is because I hate the silly, senseless way in which vulgar people offer worship and build temples to gods **whose origin they know nothing about**. Ignorant old men and women with too much money to spend heard the name of some god or other – they've no idea who it is, but the mere fact that they've heard it from the lips of some ballad-singer or storyteller seems to them incontrovertible proof of the god's existence – and go founding temples in which these fictitious deities can be worshipped. Take this Temple of the Water Spirit. The reason it's called that is because the divinity worshipped in it is supposed to be the Goddess of the River Luo. **Now in point of fact no Goddess of the River Luo ever existed.** She was an invention of the poet Cao Zhi. But that didn't stop a lot of people making an image of her and worshipping it. The only reason I feel differently about this temple today is because the idea of a water-goddess just happens to fit in with the thing that is at the moment uppermost in my mind; **so, I'm glad to make use of it for my own purpose.**
>
> 寶玉道：「我素日最恨俗人不知原故，混供神，混蓋廟。這都是當日有錢的老公們和那些有錢的愚婦們，聽見有個神，就蓋起廟來供著，也不知那神是何人，因聽些野史小說，便信真了。比如這水仙庵裡面，因供的是洛神，故名水仙庵。殊不知古來並沒有個洛神，那原是曹子建的謊話。誰知這起愚人就塑了像供著。今兒卻合我

[201] My reading here will simply emphasize the dominant association of dragon with "imperial authority," "nobility" and "greatness" in China, even though the meaning of dragon in the long history of Chinese culture varies greatly from contexts to contexts. See the following representative work: Marinus Willem de Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan.* (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1913); Schuyler V. R. Cammann, *China's Dragon Robes* (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1952); Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Ornament: The Lotus and the Dragon* (London: British Museum Publications Limited, 1984); J. Keith. Wilson "Powerful Form and Potent Symbol: The Dragon in Asia." *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 77, no. 8 (1990): 286–323; Zhao Qiguang, *A Study of Dragons, East and West*. (New York: P. Lang, 1992); John Hay, "The Persistent Dragon (Lung)," in *The Power of Culture: Studies in Chinese Cultural History*, edited by Willard J. Peterson, Andrew H. Plaks, Ying-shih Yü (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1994), 119-149; Martin J. Powers, *Pattern and Person: Ornament, Society, and Self in Classical China* (Cambridge: Harvard Asia Center, 2006); Patricia Ebrey, "Huizong and the Imperial Dragon: Exploring the Material Culture of Imperial Sovereignty," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 清華學報 41, no. 1 (2011): 39-70.

的心事，故借他一用。(*SOTS* 43:2:3; *HLM* 43:1:583-584, *emphasis mine and translation modified*).

Bao-yu's disdain for the "ignorant" masses/messes (*hun* 混; *suren*, 俗人) is not uncommon among literati and intellectuals as a case of "the one" discriminating against "the many." Similar forms of elitist charges have been levelled at some film and other adaptations of *HLM*, calling them "insulting" or "distorting" the original. Even the last 40 chapters of *HLM* have been considered inferior, "compromised," "diluted" when compared to the "authentic" 80 chapters by the "real" author/star Cao Xueqin. But *HLM* and Bao-yu, including Cao Xueqin, who most likely wrote this chapter, here offer their very own theory on the "adaptation" of the real. Bao-yu first critiques the mass people's superstition in believing in the male poet Cao Zhi's 曹植 (b.192-232) "invention" of the Goddess. Gripped with grief on that day, however, he himself suddenly feels *mixed*, not going but now going to the Temple, eventually also *mixing* and *making* things up in using and borrowing this temple of "impure and chaotic origin/*hun* 混."[202]

Ignoring genealogical exactitude, historical authenticity and ritualistic orthodoxy, things however could turn *real*. Just as Anthony Yu urges us to discern the power of fictionality of *HLM* rather than treating the novel as simply a historical representation and cultural specimen,[203] "fiction" in this episode can become "real." As if to confirm the oft-cited couplet at the entrance of Land of Illusion in Chapter 5 which says: "Truth becomes fiction when the fiction's true/Real becomes not-real when the unreal's real. 假作真時真亦假，無為有處有還無," this affective,

[202] On how Bao-yu embodies the Daoist philosophical concept of chaos/*hundun*; see Zhou Zuyan. "Chaos and the Gourd in the Dream of the Red Chamber." *T'oung Pao* 87, no. 4 (2001): 251-288; Liu Zaifu 劉再復, "Hundun er de zangge" 渾沌兒的贊歌 [In praise of the child of chaos] *Dushu* 7 (2013): 110-119.
[203] Anthony Yu, "History, Fiction and the Reading of Chinese Narrative." *Chinese Literature, Essays, Articles, Reviews* 10, no. 1/2 (1988): 1-19.

queer and trans moment of glittering grief appears as Bao-yu's eyes touch the Temple's statue of the Goddess of River Luo:

> Bao-yu went on inside. Instead of bowing down, he stood and contemplated the status of the Goddess appraisingly. **Though the goddess was made of mud,** to Bao-yu, her form was really:
>
> swept along lightly like startled swan,
> was sinuous as the swimming dragon,
> glowed like a lotus emerging from the green water,
> shone like the morning sun rising above the mist-bank
> **tears spontaneously coursed down Bao-yu's cheeks.**
>
> 寶玉進去，也不拜洛神之像，卻只管賞鑒。雖是泥塑的，卻真有「翩若驚鴻，婉若游龍」之態，「荷出綠波，日映朝霞」之姿。寶玉不覺滴下淚來。
> (*SOTS* 43:2:358; *HLM* 43:1:584, *emphasis mine and translation modified*)[204]

The description of the Goddess's appearance – her aesthetic form (*tai* 態) - is itself a selection and *re-mix* of the Cao Zhi's "*Fu* on the Goddess of the River Luo. 洛神赋." [205] As Wai-yee Li pointed out, the genre of *hanfu*'s dominant motif is the evocation of sensuous plenitude in encountering an enigmatic goddess.[206] As the myth goes, the Goddess of Luo died in a well; Bao-yu's maid Golden did the same. Instead of confining this poem to its literary "origin," we may have to follow Bao-yu's lead in seeing how he is activating and activated by the Temple. In

[204] The quoted passage from Hawkes is modified with Stephen Owen and not David Hawkes's translation of Cao Zhi's *fu*. See his: Cao Zhi, "Cao Zhi (192-232), The Goddess of the Luo," in An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911 edited and translated by Stephen Owen (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996). 194-197.

[205] While the first two lines "翩若驚鴻，婉若游龍" are from the original *fu*, the next two lines of the Goddess's description "荷出綠波 日映朝霞" are paraphrased and as I would say re-mixed from the original, which is longer and involves a shifting of viewing distances. The cancelling of viewing from distances can be understood, as I have argued, as Bao-yu himself already trans-ing and fusing with the scenery and the goddess. See the original lines from the *fu*: "…When I gazed on her from afar, she shone like the sun through morning clouds mounting; when nearer I viewed her, she glowed like a lotus coming out of clear waves.…. "遠而望之，皎若太陽升朝霞。迫而察之，灼若芙蕖出淥波。" (trans. Stephen Owen)

[206] As Wai-yee Li writes, "the fu writer uses an elaborate aesthetic surface to create and manipulate illusions. This rhetoric directed toward pleasure comes to be associated with sensuality and unrestraint, and is sometimes represented as an excessively adorned woman," 19. See her discussion on the genealogy of enchantment and the "ambiguous divine woman," in Wai-yee Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993).

the description of the goddess, one notices that all four lines contain Chinese characters with radicals of water or rain (*hong*, 鴻; *you*, 游; *bo*, 波; *xia*, 霞), with additional emphasis on both femininity (*wan*, 婉) and imperial masculinity often associated with dragon (*long*, 龍). To interpret this scene of queer and trans- formation, one could recall here a famous line by Bao-yu cited by critics as evidences of his preference for nascent femininity: "girls are flesh made of water, and men are flesh of mud 女兒是水做的骨肉，男人是泥做的骨肉."[207] But it is more than femininity that is at stake here. What is most striking in this scene, then, is how two seemingly discrete elements such as mud (coded as masculine) and water (coded as feminine) are dancing and shining indistinguishably in this brilliance of grief.

Made out of mud, the statue conjures vividly the Goddess of the River Luo and Golden emerging up through water *as* flora (lotus flower), fauna (swan and dragon), and lastly tears from flesh (Bao-yu), flying/sweeping/gliding (*pian*, 翩) and traveling/swimming/floating (*you*, 游) between mud/water, lands/seas, and air/skies as natural beauty: "like the morning sun rising above the mist-bank 日映朝霞." Mesmerized altogether in grief and beauty, Bao-yu's release of tears connects him to and conflates him with the Goddess of River Luo, his dead maid Golden, as both the deity and the servant Golden died drowning in water.[208] Water in the well (where the Goddess and Golden were drowned) wells up in Bao-yu's eyes as tears. Tears connect him from mud (taken from soil and lands) to rivers and seas, and I would add: the *trans*-forming seas. Human and non-human are entangled in a tango here not in their inter-action (i.e. water encountering mud), but what feminist theorist Karen Barad calls *intra*-action, whereby matters in

[207] My translation here. This line is quoted in Chapter 2 of *HLM*.
[208] As Golden dies in a well, Tealeaf, telepathically sympathetic to Bao-yu's mind or coincidentally, suggests Bao-yu make his offering placing the incense-burner on the stone platform of the well. This explains why Bao-yu, though still in tears, does not kowtow but made only a half-bow as one would do to a servant in his offering to Golden near a well, while Tealeaf, as a fellow servant, can kowtow several times,

themselves (such as mud, and water) are dynamic and relational, always already non-discrete and entangled.[209]

However briefly, Bao-yu is affectively conflated with the water-spirits through the water, rivers, and the release of tears *inside* his "muddy" body to the *outside*, spontaneously performing a process of glittering grief. Being together with, rather than objectifying the female water spirits, Bao-yu *reunions* rather than *reveres* water-spirits. (After all, as told in *HLM*'s beginning, Bao-yu and Dai-yu were spirits in their past lives). This explains why Bao-yu just half-bows to the statue, not as a sign of disrespect, but a sign of contiguous intimacy and levelling grief in alliance.

That "mud" (masculinity) and "water" (femininity) fuses together in becoming queerness and trans-ness is a point that acquires further clarity considering Tealeaf's eulogy on behalf of Bao-yu right after the moment of glittering grief. In the name of helping Bao-yu speak his mind, Tealeaf's eulogy is extremely pivotal in illustrating this chapter's as well *HLM*'s most manifest "manifesto" on not only masculinity, femininity, androgyny and bi-sexuality as previous scholars pointed out, but also more generally and inclusively on queerness, transness and shared grief among all in an assembly. As Tealeaf and Bao-yu are going to perform a mourning ceremony near a well in the temple, Tealeaf hastens to pray for his master:

> O spirit, in all the years I have served Master Bao this is the first time he has ever kept anything from me. But though I don't know who you are, O spirit, and don't like to ask, one thing I do know, and that is you are sure to be **some wondrously beautiful, refined sister of our own**.[210] And since Master Bao isn't able to tell you out loud what he wants of

[209] Karen Barad writes: "The neologism 'intra-action; signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. That is, in contrast to the usual 'interaction' … the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action … 'distinct' agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense, that is, agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements," in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 33.
[210] Hawkes translates "Jiejie meimei 姐姐妹妹" as "young female," missing out on the undertones of kinship embedded in the original phrase.

> you, I, Tealeaf, am praying to you on his behalf. I beseech you, if you still have feelings as you used to when you were on earth, watch over my master from time to time, O spirit. I know you are in **the world of the dead (*yin*) separated from our life world (*yang*)** now, but as we are all **friends and our kind who know each other (*zhi-ji*),** that I'm asking this, please do it if you can, spirit, for old time's sake. And please use what influence you can to see that Master Bao is **reborn in his next life as a girl,** so that he can spend all his time with **all of you**; and don't let him be reborn as one of those horrible Whiskered Males he is always on about.
>
> 我焙茗跟二爺這幾年，二爺的心事，我沒有不知道的。只有今兒這一祭祀，沒有告訴我，我也不敢問。只是受祭的陰魂，雖不知名姓，想來自然是那人間有一，天上無雙，極聰明清雅的一位姐姐妹妹了。二爺的心事不能出口，讓我代祝：若芳魂有感，香魄多情，雖然陰陽間隔，既是知己之間，時常來望候望候二爺，未嘗不可。你在陰間保佑二爺來生也變個女孩兒，和你們一處相伴，再不可又托生這鬚眉濁物了。(*SOTS* 43:2:359; *HLM* 43:1:584-583, *emphasis mine and translation modified*)

To explain Bao-yu's non-differentiating grief for girls, we must remember that Bao-yu most famously is a character of extreme *yi-yin* 意淫, a non-differentiating kind of *both* emotion and lust, though the novel prominently disproportionately emphasizes more the former.[211] Crucially, the word *yin* 淫 in Chinese literally means "an excess of water." In Daoist philosophy, water, importantly, embodies *dao*, and is the highest principle of goodness in *Daodejing*.[212] Equating water to girliness, Bao-yu of course echoes such a Daoist view, but what has not been made clear in previous scholarly accounts is this the book not only praises and valorizes "one" sex and gender (women and femininity), but more generally suggests that the grief of and for femininity could affectively impact all, because without Bao-yu's glittering grief, the broadly defined "family" (including, the servants) of Jia would fall apart and chaos ensue.

In this pivotal scene of mourning in Chapter 43, for example, Bao-yu's servant Tealeaf makes it clear that Bao-yd's grief is directed to singularities in solidarity. Echoing the all-

[211] For a sustained treatment of eroticism in the book, see Wu I-Hsien, *Eroticism and Other Literary Conventions in Chinese Literature: Intertextuality in the Story of the Stone* (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2017).
[212] C.f. 上善若水. On water in early Chinese thoughts, see Sarah Allan*, The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997); also see Zhou Zuyan, *Daoist Philosophy and Literati Writings in Late Imperial China: A Case Study of The Story of the Stone* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2013).

pervasive grief of water as mediated by Bao-yu, Tealeaf's eulogy makes it clear that the grieving through the Goddess of the River Luo is not only the singularity of Golden (*wu-shuang*, 無雙) but simultaneously such singularity is generally attributable to *all single* idiosyncratic sisters, referring ambiguously to both specifically "her" (*yiwei*, 一位) and generally "them" (*jiejie-meimei*, 姐姐妹妹.). As Tealeaf makes this even clearer in the end, he addresses the water spirits as plurally "all of you" (*ni-men,* 你們), only to continue that. Bao-yu wants to be with and transform into a "them" in his next life. Schematized and even summarized already by the prognostication in the Land of the Illusion in Chapter 5, Tealeaf's emphatic mourning of singularities in solidarity ties with how the death and subsequent grief of Golden, as shown in Chapter 30 and 31 (see the above discussion), is to be serially linked to other female characters' fate in the novels.

Viewed thus, Tealeaf's statement made in the name of Bao-yu, here then enacts a much more generally applicable grieving than it seems. Also crucial is that he addresses girls not as the other sex to be either objectified, idolized or fetishized, but as his and Bayou's kin (*zhi-ji*, 知己): their *very own* (and not otherized) older and younger sisters (hence there is water in mud and mud in water; boys and girls are not that separate). Neither outside nor inside but *beside* each other, Tealeaf and Bao-yu's grieving here therefore assembles girls named and nameless across separations between death/female/*yin*, and life/male/*yang* (*yin-yang jiang-g*e 陰陽間隔) through the transhistorical mediation of the Goddess.[213] Instead of casting this episode as male grieving female, what takes place is more accurately male-and-female grieving altogether and *beside* each other, bonded by and through a neutralizing sense of queerness and transness. The Chapter 43

[213] For one attempt in bridging ancient Chinese concept of *yin-yang* from *Yi-jing* to contemporary "decolonial" transgender theories, see Xiang Zairong, "Transdualism: Toward a Materio-Discursive Embodiment," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (2018): 425-442.

event of glittering grief therefore *re*-fuses and *trans*-forms gender and life-and-death boundaries, mediating an interdependent sense of loss, dispossession, and vulnerability, to borrow from Judith Butler.[214]

What is theorized above as the glittering grief continues as Bao-yu returns home, after his "diasporic" leave-taking. The scene of him together with the Goddess, scintillantly crystallized in the moment of the *fu* 賦, captures spontaneity and beauty that mirrors Bao-yu's very own freedom of movement between "home" and "diaspora." His exceptional ability (alternately and simultaneously masculine, feminine, queer and trans – thoroughly non-binary) to travel and leave home renders him just like another mud-water-mixing statue crossing seas, lands and skies. If his visiting the Temple renders him arriving like a dragon, his returning home is equally trans-human. Changing his mourning attire to a glamorous outfit, he returns to the partying room glittering, flying, and then landing like a phoenix:

> Bao-yu quickly took off his **mourning clothes** and put on **a glamorous outfit.** "Where is the party?" he asked the old women as soon as he had dressed … As he approached the gallery, he came upon Silver [i.e. Golden's sister], sitting under the eaves of the covered way and crying. She left off hurriedly when she saw him coming. '**Here comes the phoenix (*feng-huang*) at last!'** she said sarcastically. 'Hurry up and go inside. If you stay away much longer, **there'll be a riot**!' Bao-yu smiled at her sympathetically. 'Guess where I've been.' She ignored his question and turned away from him to wipe her eyes. When he entered the hall and greet his grandmother and his mother, **he really appeared as a phoenix to everybody.**
>
> 寶玉聽說忙將素服脫了，自去尋了華服換上，問在什麼地方坐席…只見玉釧兒獨坐

[214] I borrow the idea of "beside" oneself from Judith Butler. Provocatively, Bao-yu's gender and sexuality is probably most accurately described not only as queer and trans, but as a kind of "ec-static" relation of "grief" per se, which relationalizes all (gender) identities. Judith Butler describes the affect of grief this way: "As a mode of relation, neither gender nor sexuality is precisely a possession, but, rather, is a mode of being dispossessed, a way of being for another or by virtue of another…To be ec-static means, literally, to be outside oneself… to be transported beyond oneself by a passion, but also to be *beside* oneself with rage or grief. I think that if I can still address a "we" …I am speaking to those of us who are living in certain ways *beside ourselves*, whether in sexual passion, or emotional grief, or political rage." (*emphasis mine*), Judith Butler, *Precarious Lives: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), 23.

> 在廊檐下垂淚，一見他來，便收淚說道：「鳳凰來了，快進去罷。再一會子不來，都反了。」寶玉陪笑道：「 你猜我往那裡去了」？玉釧兒不答，只管擦淚。寶玉忙進廳里，見了賈母王夫人等，眾人真如得了鳳凰一般。(*SOTS* 43:2:361-362; *HLM* 43:1:585-586, *emphasis mine and translation modified*)

The phoenix (*feng-huang* 鳳凰) in China traditionally signifies auspiciousness associated with the arrival of king and the sage; Confucius, for example, once took the non-arrival of *feng-huang* as himself being rejected by the heaven.[215] However in *HLM* (a book more Daoist and Buddhist than Confucianist), it is the queer and non-binary *feng-huang*, such as Bao-yu, that *affectively* rules the household with his *soft-power*.[216] Though modern and contemporary usage tends to associate dragon with masculinity and phoenix as femininity, etymologically the word *feng* 鳳 refers to male phoenix and *huang* 凰 female.[217] In *HLM*, this distinction between male and female phoenix is indeed maintained – only to be also intentionally confused/re-fused in key characters. Most representatively, Wang Xi-feng, the birthday party's protagonist is transgenderingly called a "female *feng*" (*ci-feng*, 雌鳳, a "female-male-phoenix") in the Registers of the Land of Illusion.[218] Like Bao-yu she herself also queerly trans-gresses gender boundaries

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[215] Most representatively, Confucius equates himself to *feng-huang*, and sees the absence or the arrival of phoenix/*feng-huang* as indicative of his own disuse during his times: "The Master said, 'The *feng* (i.e., the male phoenix) bird does not come; the river gives forth no chart. It is all over with me! 子曰：鳳鳥不至，河不出圖，吾已矣夫" (translation from James Legge). See James Legge, *The Chinese Classics.vol.1. Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of Man* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), 219. Some scholars consider "phoenix" as a mistranslation of the Chinese cognate *feng-huang*; here I keep both phoenix and *feng-huang* to suggest comparability rather than Chinese exceptionality. For a comparative survey of Chinese phoenix, see Joseph Nigg, "Royal Bird of China," *The Phoenix: An Unnatural Biography of a Mythical Beast*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 19-32; Michael Marder, "Generativity and Generationality in Confucianism," *The Phoenix Complex: A Philosophy of Nature.* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2023), 175-195.

[216] He has been called "King of chaos" (*hun-shi mo-wang* 混世魔王) by Grandmother Jia.

[217] In modern and contemporary Chinese and Sinophone world, it appears to this author that the word *feng* 鳳, often already metonymically representing phoenix/*feng-huang* itself, is overwhelmingly used to name female rather than male.

[218] The whole judgement for Xi-feng in Chapter 5 is quoted below:
"Next was an iceberg with a female phoenix perched on the top of it, and these words:
This phoenix in a bad time came;
All praised her great ability.
'Two' makes my riddle with a man and tree:
Returning south in tears she met calamity."
後面便是一片冰山，上面有一隻雌鳳:

in taking up a traditionally masculine leadership role in the household as a female. As partners-in-crime, the party was organized by Xi-feng, but Bao-yu has really stolen (half of) her show through his star power by displacing her and appearing like the real phoenix in return. Mediating between *feng* (male) and *huang* (female), as well as changing costumes between grief mourning attire (*su-fu*, 素服) and glittering clothes (*hua-fu*, 華服), Bao-yu's comeback (on stage) is a matter of life-and-death and correspondingly *yang*-and-*yin.* His presence is obviously a sign of profound privilege, but his death-mourning is also lifesaving as a source of mass pleasure, even for "many" that are "oppressed" and "underprivileged." One example is Golden's sister Silver 玉釧兒, who has no choice but to comment that: had the queer and trans-forming Bao-yu not returned, the family would be turned upside down: a riot would take place and things would be turned upside down (*fang-le*, 反了).

Absent the "nonhuman" Bao-yu (i.e., he is originally also a stone) queering and trans-ing, as well as glittering and grieving,[219] banquets dis-band. Previous scholarship has tended to cast the Prospect Garden as a female utopia of freedom, but as shown also in this chapter, to the protagonist Bao-yu's mission of glittering grief, it is the female that appears to threaten to punish Bao-yu for his leave-taking and indeed queerness – neither listening to male or female dominant protocols. First, Bao-yu faces punishment upon his return by the female-led poetry club (called by Li Wen) and more seriously, by his father, as Grandmother Jia threatens: "If this happens

凡鳥偏從末世來，都知愛慕此生才。
一從二令三人木，哭向金陵事更哀。" (*SOTS* 5:1:135 *emphasis mine*; *HLM* 5:1:78).

[219] On Bao-yu as a stone medium, see Wang Jing, *The Story of Stone: Intertextuality, Ancient Chinese Stone Lore, and the Stone Symbolism in Dream of the Red Chamber, Water Margin, and The Journey to the West*. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992); see also, Chapter 2 of Shaoling Ma, *The Stone and the Wireless: Mediating China, 1861-1906* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021). On theorizing queerness, transness with the non-human, see Eva Hayward, and Jami Weinstein. "Introduction: Tranimalities in the Age of Trans Life." *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (2015): 195-208; Dana Luciano, and Mel Y. Chen. "Queer Inhumanisms." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 25, no. 1 (2019): 113-117.

again, I shall tell your father when he comes back and get him to give you another beating." (*SOTS* 43:2:362).[220] We tend to associate authority in the novel with the male patriarch, but female authority here is no less prohibitive than the patriarch Jia Zheng.[221] Indeed, at this moment of the novel, Grandmother Jia here invokes the patriarch only to manage but not at all suppress Bao-yu's wayward queerness. She is happier than ever to first lose Bao-yu and have her dragon back returning like a phoenix, even more loveable and charitable after he flies and then come backs home:

> Grandmother Jia had in fact been extremely worried and her anxiety had made her angry. Now that Bao-yu was back. Anger is all gone, and she can't be more delighted. All she cares about now is that Bao-yu may have been unduly distressed by his visit, or have failed to eat enough while he was away, or have been involved in some accident on the way there or back. **As a result, she spoils him further in all sorts of ways.**
>
> 賈母先不放心，自然發狠，如今見他來了，喜且有餘，那裡還恨，也就不提了；還怕他不受用，或者別處沒吃飽，路上著了驚怕，反百般的哄他。(*SOTS* 43:2:361-362; *HLM* 43:1: 568, *emphasis mine and translation modified*)

Grandmother Jia invokes the patriarch just to make sure the star/"the one" stays within her reach and her favoritism, but at this point, she is not really restricting his freedom and asking him to change his queer "star quality" – this will happen only in the end of the novel. He can continue to shine and sometimes run off only if he returns to the family. Grandmother Jia both indulges in the queer, in turn paradoxically frustrated by Bao-yu's departure/diaspora, and concomitantly all

[220] In the Chinese original: 。賈母王夫人都說他不知道好歹，「怎麼也不說聲就私自跑了，這還了得！明兒再這樣，等老爺回家來，必告訴他打你。」(*HLM* 43:1:586).

[221] The management of queerness in this Chapter 43 is serially linking at least two other chapters. First, in the Land of Illusion in Chapter 5, where the Fairy Disenchantment collaborates with the Jia patriarchs in getting rid of Bao-yu's *yiyin* (excessive lust), trying to inculcate Bao-yu's heteronormative masculinity by arranging a sex scene. between him and a mysterious female character Jianmei. Second, in Chapter 33, Bao-yu's father Jia Zheng beats Bao-yu up for his scandalous relations with not only Golden but Jiang Yuhan – a male cross-dressing performer that Bao-yu is also romantically attached to. Like Golden, and like Bao-yu in this chapter (and in the end of the novel), Jiang was also forced to leave his "home" and live elsewhere due to this queer affair. In all these three episodes male authorities, to different degrees, join with female authorities in the Jia family/Land of Illusion so as to discipline Bao-yu's wayward desires. On Bao-yu and Jiang Yuhan, see Pai Hsien-yung, "Jia Bao-yu de Suyuan."

the more delighted and relieved with his return. Major female characters such as Dai-yu and Bao-chai likewise already had a sense that what Bao-yu was up to in this trip and remain silent waiting for his return. As the narrative of *HLM* goes further, Bao-yu continues to shine in other grieving ceremonies of girls' death and departure (e.g. Skybright/Qingwen, Dai-yu), but incrementally his "star power" and "soft-power" in holding assemblies will dwindle towards the end of the assembly and the book, where he first takes up a heteronormative masculine roles in marriage and civil exam, and in the end negating all this through leaving home – the star's stage – in a de facto diaspora.

Star assembly and glittering grief, as theorized in Bao-yu's trans-formative trip of waters in this chapter, therefore can be understood as queer and trans. The above analysis should add that the Garden is, sure, a female utopia, but also a queer utopia. Or, to borrow from Howard Chiang, the Prospect Garden is perhaps best understood as a "trans-topia" mediating between what Yu Ying-shih calls "the two world" of reality and ideal in *HLM*.[222] Spearheaded through the privileged Bao-yu, *themselves* already a mixture beyond the two worlds of male and female (his gender pronoun is probably: "them"), the garden allows for both female and male to be both uninhibited and indulgent across male/female boundaries; in this sense, there is no surprise that the enigmatic commentator Red Inkstone (Zhiyanzhai) calls the non-binary Bao-yu "the champion of all beauty" 諸艷之冠/貫 among all female characters.[223] Transitioning and

[222] I borrow the term from Howard Chiang, *Transtopia in the Sinophone Pacific.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021); also Yu Yingshih 余英時, *Hongloumeng de liangge shijie* 紅樓夢的兩個世界 [*The Two worlds of Hongloumeng*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2002).

[223] The so-called *qing-bang* ("the feeling ranking") does not really exist per se, but it is mentioned by Zhiyanzhai, and most major critics presume that such a ranking exists. Major critics such as Stephen Soong, Yu Ying-shih and Zhou Ruchang all discuss and debate on the ranking. However, all concur with Zhiyanzhai's comment that Jia Bao-yu tops the tanking, serving as "the champion of beauty [*guan*]" 諸艷之冠. But some suggest that the original diction of the Zhiyanzhai, *guan,* is actually the character *guan*/貫 (connecting) and not *guan*/冠 (winning). For example, Wu Shih-chang cites one *HLM* edition arguing that Bao-yu should be understood as the "super-connector 貫" who inks up with all the beauties in the book. Either way, Bao-yu's centrality appears undeniable. No matter "winning" 冠, or "connecting," 貫 Bao-yu remains a supreme nodal point in the Prospect Garden's affective world-

transforming between human and non-human, dragon and phoenix, mud and water, male and female, truth and falsity, as well as home and diaspora/exile, Bao-yu proves to be a star of queer and trans affect: performing as "shimmering" aesthetics of change (Eliza Steinbock), as "politics of transitivity" beyond identity (Jack Halberstam).[224] His ability to move, a privilege given and gifted, is also an ability to be moved, and to be *moving* in what I call glittering grief in a star assembly.

If a missing or departed Bao-yu would lead to chaos and upheaval, then a Bao-yu that eventually returns unveils a problematic of stardom in gendered transformation, enabling an affective assembly pivoted around glittering grief that conjures a concatenation of qualities: beauty, spontaneity, queer- and trans-ness. All this is most exemplified in Chapter 43 by Bao-yu's shuttling between land/mud and sea/water, as "dragons" or/and "phoenixes" traveling and touring between home and world. No surprise then "stardom," in particular that of Bao-yu but also including others in the assemblies, is a major problem for adaptations to contend with: who can successfully glitter and grieve with feminine, queer and trans sensibilities and physicality?

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making and infrastructural network. Emphasizing his non-binary excellence, Bao-yu was also named by his family as "the King of Chaos" 混世魔王. If the "the champion of beauty" seems feminine and sounds equivalent to that of a "beauty queen," his another identity as "King of Chaos" appears simultaneously masculine; in this sense, Bao-yu is a non-binary queen-and-king par excellence. For debates on the ranking, see Stephen Soong 宋淇, "Lun jia Bao-yu wei zhuyan zhiguan" 論賈寶玉為諸艷之冠 [On Bao-yu as the champion of beauty] *Hongloumeng shiyao : Song Qi Hongxue lunji* 紅樓夢識要：宋淇紅學論集 [Stephen Soong on *Hongloumeng*] (Beijing: Zhongguo Shudian, 2000): 39-78; Yu Yingshih 余英時, *Hongloumeng de liangge shijie* 紅樓夢的兩個世界 [*The Two worlds of Hongloumeng*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2002): 47-49, 90-118. Zhou Ruchang 周汝昌, following Hu Shih, claims that *HLM*'s "feeling ranking" takes its cue from *Shuihu*'s "ranking of 108 heroes," and he even created a complete ranking of 108 beauties in *HLM*, see *Honglou Xiaojiang* 紅樓小講 [Short essays on *Hongloumeng*] (Beijing: Beijing Chubashe, 2002), 54-10. See also David Rolston's discussion on rankings, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing between the Lines.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 191-208

[224] For a cognate theory of "shimmering" images as trans cinema, see Eliza Steinbock, *Shimmering Images: Trans Cinema, Embodiment, and the Aesthetics of Change*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019); for theorization of "trans" beyond identity politics, see Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore. "Introduction: Trans-, Trans, Or Transgender?" *Women's Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 3/4 (2008): 11-22; Jack Halberstam, *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

Which stars can generate a global circuit of "full houses" on and off screen, across seas, lands, and skies?

The Third Red Chamber War in 1977-1978

As a continuation – a recurrent ebb and flow of "trans-forming sea" - of the Second Red Chamber war (1958-1962), the Third Red Chamber war involved at least a total of nine *HLM* film and media productions in the short period of 1977-1978. As we will see, it is a follow up on or even a "sequel" to the second one, on a transnationalizing scale, involving Hong Kong, mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Macau, and to some extent Japan, Korea and America. If in Chapter 43 we see Bao-yu flying across the seas and skies successfully through his star assembly of grief, the water he faced here is more treacherous. In 1977, a Malaysian Chinese newspaper *Sin Chew Jit Poh* 星洲日報 sensed that a war was happening in Hong Kong across the South China sea:

> Throughout Hong Kong's entertainment history, competitions among film and theatrical adaptations have never been so cut-throat and widely sensational! The story of *HLM* alone has singularly created a sensation spreading over the whole territory. **Would this flooding of "Red Chamber" films turn into a catastrophe?** People in the industry nodded: "Very likely! In this great power struggle, you must reach the shore as fast as possible, or you die from drowning. **Who would sink into this bitter sea of hell?** Needless to say, we know who we are talking about.
>
> 香港影劇界有史以來，什麼雙包案，三包案的鬥爭從來沒有像今日的尖銳化，廣泛化！如今一個「紅樓夢」故事，就弄到整個香港鬧烘烘的，真已到了「紅潮泛濫」的地步，會不會「泛濫成災」，有人因為滅頂？圈中人都點頭說：「大有可能！在這一場大鬥爭中，未能趕快「上岸」的，就有滅頂之虞！」是哪些人可能「沉淪苦海」？也不必指名道姓，誰都心裡有數。(*translation and emphasis mine)* [225]

[225] "Hongloumeng dianying jingxiang tuichu shangying" 紅樓夢電影競相推出上映 [*Hongloumeng* movies have started to compete], *Sin Chew Jit Poh* 星洲日報 November 2, 1977.

HLM adaptations clashed as a "flood" (*fang-lan,* 泛濫), as this article sensationalized it. The metaphor of "reaching the shore" or "landing" (*shang-an*, 上岸) appears to mean surviving and succeeding in the box-offices, asking: can the "Bao-yus" land home or will they be drowned in the bitter sea of grief? As demonstrated in Chapter 43, Bao-yu at the height of his power not only did not drown in the sea and its water, but he also floats and *trans*-forms with it through glittering grief "like a swimming dragon." Xu Yu-lan was one such exemplary case in the early 1960s. In the late 1970s, the winning Bao-yu is another queer Bao-yu and cross-dresser - Ling Bo.

But Ling's beginning with *HLM* dated back to the previous Second Red Chamber war (1958-1962). One must first start with the director Li Han-hsiang – her enabler-turned-competitor in the Third Red Chamber war. In the early 1960s, Li Han-hsiang, by then an established director of box-office successes such as *Kingdom and the Beauty* 江山美人 (1959), was once recruited by Zhu Shilun (the ultimate art director of Cen Fan's adaptation) to cinematize the Shanghai troupe's *HLM*. As noted above, Li was a fan of Xu and Wang's *HLM* performance. Knowing that Li watched several times the troupe's *HLM* performances, Zhu Shi-lin, an old acquaintance of Li arranged a dinner for Li with the troupe's Wang and Xu. Due to Zhu's affiliation to a pro-communist film company Feng-huang 鳳凰電影, Li hesitated. But his wife, a fan wanting to meet Wang and Xu, suggested that the dinner could be just art and not politics.[226] Zhu offered to collaborate. However, Li, equivocated. In a cold war context where the communist government (the PRC) faced off the nationalist government (the ROC) in Taiwan, Li worried problems would arise with the Taiwanese market if he agreed.[227] After initial

[226] Li, *Sanshinian*, 221.
[227] Indeed, he could not go back to Taiwan several years later because he started making films in the PRC in the 1980s.

consultation, Li's potential collaboration with Xu and Wang was not approved by Run Run Shaw 邵逸夫 of the Shaw Brothers, by then his employer at that time, despite the fact that the company was a distributor of Fenghuang's films in Singapore and Malaysia.[228] Later, the Shaw Brothers withheld information from Li when he was in Japan shooting other films, appointing another director Yuen Chiu-feng to direct *HLM*, starring Loh Ti and Ren Jie (see Chapter One).

Though Yuen deferred to Li's opinion in the final cut, Li still complained in his memoir about this preemptive set-up by the "small-minded people" (*xiao-ren*, 小人) to prevent him from directing *HLM*. Commenting on his own star status ("the one") being sidelined by "the many" in the previous Red Chamber War, Li mentioned how Ling Bo (previously named Xiao-juan, 小娟) suffered the same as the backstage singer in Yuan's *HLM* in 1962:

> Xiao-juan backstage singing as Bao-yu is the only saving grace in Yuan's adaptation of *HLM* …Indeed Xiao-juan sing and look better than Ren Jie (任潔), **why wasn't Xiao-juan to play Bao-yu and the lead?** It was a colossal mistake. Maybe Xiao-juan felt wronged and put down by this. **Maybe that was also why I insisted on casting her for the film *The Love Eterne*. Maybe that's also why Ling Bo wanted to play Jia Bao-yu so much later [in Jin Han's adaptation]?** …
>
> 秋楓老弟導演的《紅樓夢》，最成功的也是小娟的幕後代唱 … 我唯一不明白的是小娟既然能唱，外型又比任潔好得多，為什麼不用小娟演寶玉，而要用任潔呢？我當時認為失策。可能也是小娟心裏不平的時候，這可能是我堅持找小娟演梁山伯的原因，也是日後凌波要演賈寶玉的原因吧？[229] (*translation and emphasis all mine*)

The craze for the film *Love Eterne*, therefore, has a thus far obscured origin, which is the classic Chinese novel *HLM*. Star assembly, as shown above, is what *HLM* affords: from minor to major or vice versa, decided by "the many" – the audience and those who surround the stars/"the one".

[228] Li, *Sanshinian*, 217-218.
[229] Li, *Sanshinian*, 221-222.

As Li further details, Ling was not allowed to play Bao-yu because of her projected "minor" status as a third-tier star in dialect films:

> In casting Xiao-juan for *The Love Eterne,* I finally found out why Xiao-juan wasn't cast as Bao-yu in Yuan's adaptation: investors from Singapore opposed it, opining she was only **a second or third-tier actress in Amoy-dialect movies** and people would not like her in Mandarin-productions … I insisted on my view to Mr. Shaw [i.e. Run Run Shaw]. Xiao-juan's acting must be good because her backstage singing is so full of emotion … As long as her appearance and performance fit, why care about her social background? Mr. Shaw agreed … that was how Xiao-juan **changed her name to Ling Bo and starred in *The Love Eterne*.**
>
> 到後來我才知道沒有找小娟影賈寶玉的原因，是新加坡方面堅決反對。他們認為用任何人都可以就是不能用小娟，因為他在觀眾的眼中是廈語片的二三流明星，演國語片一定沒有人看 … 但我 [對邵逸夫] 堅持自己的看法，認為這論調是不合時宜的老土看法。我指出小娟的戲一定演得好，因為他幕後代唱時的感情濃郁，喜悅時輕鬆俏皮，悲切時沉渾激動，選演員只要他外型能適合，表演可成勝任就可以，英雄何論出處？… 六先生當時也認為是對的 … 就這樣小娟才改了藝名凌波，拍了他第一部黃梅調影片《梁山伯與祝英台》。[230] (*translation and emphasis all mine*)

Since most scholarship on this classic film do not take a long durée view of how *HLM* networks with stardom, they fail to accentuate that without Li noticing Ling's queer and star potential as Bao-yu, Ling would have remained as "Xiao-juan," a third-tier star acting in Amoy-dialect movies, but not the more marketable Mandarin movies.[231] By 1963, one year after Yuan's *HLM*, Xiao-juan was "reborn" and trans-formed as Ling Bo, through nothing but the smash hit *The Love Eterne* 梁山伯與祝英台 (*Liang-zhu*).

We might trace Ling's rise to stardom by reference the story of *Liang-zhu*, but as I will show, it is more productive and transhistorically accurate to trace her stardom making by referring to the original star-maker *HLM*. (And as will be shown below, Ling Bo remained persistent in wanting to perform as Bao-yu [and not simply as a singing voice] long after her

[230] Li, *Sanshinian,* 222.
[231] See the definitive study of the genre: Jeremy Taylor, *Rethinking Transnational Chinese Cinemas: The Amoy-Dialect Film Industry in Cold War Asia*. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011).

being marginalized in Yuen Chiu Feng's version in 1962). As Li Han-hsiang biographically noted, it is precisely Ling's voice *singing as Bao-yu* that make Li and later Run Run Shaw, the boss of the Shaw Brothers, believe that diasporic audiences ("the many") in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southeast Asia would buy her ("the one"). To this, the "overseas" diasporic audience relocating from mainland China to Taiwan (in what Dominic Yang called "a great exodus"), agreed.[232] Ling's cross-dressing performance of *The Love Eterne* brought record-breaking box-office success particularly in Taiwan, with the audiences repeatedly watching the star-crossed lovers' "glittering grief." Described as a "cyclone" (*Ling Bo xuan-feng* 凌波旋風) landing in Taiwan, her arrival in the airport and her tour in the city was guarded by military police and surrounded by fans, most passionate of whom were school girls and housewives. Mirroring the female characters in the novel, especially Grandmother Jia's indulgence of Bao-yu in the novel, dozens of female diasporic fans in Taiwan even claimed Ling as their "lost" daughter.[233] As Zhang Zhen has astutely pointed out, Ling's biographical orphan status sets her apart from other cross-dressing actresses in the business. She writes: "[Ling Bo's] orphan origin in the mainland, now beyond reach behind the iron curtain of the Cold War, along with Nanyang as the rumored destination for her biological parents after her abandonment, endows her stardom with loaded geopolitical meanings and extra mythic dimensions."[234]

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[232] Dominic Meng-Hsuan Yang, *The Great Exodus from China: Trauma, Memory, and Identity in Modern Taiwan.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

[233] On a psychoanalytic reading of Ling's star-fan relation with female audiences (ranging from homoeroticism, lesbianism, and mother-daughter affection) and Ling's queer legacy in Taiwan irrespective of Ling's "straight" self-identity and marriage, see Wang Chun-chi. "Eternal Love for *Love Eterne*: The Discourse and Legacy of *Love* Eterne and the Lingbo Frenzy in Contemporary Queer Films in Taiwan" *NCU Journal of Art Studies*, 11 (Dec 2012): 169-238. Also on how Ling Bo and *The Love Eterne* in terms of queerness, see Jasmine Yu-Hsing Chen, "Queering" the Nation?: Gendered Chineseness, Cross-Dressing, and the Reception of *Love Eterne* in Taiwan" *Prism* 18, no.1 (2021): 49–69; Tan See-kam, "Huangmei opera films, Shaw Brothers and Ling Bo" *Jump Cut*, 49 Spring (2007). https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc49.2007/index.html

[234] Ling was born in Xiamen and later moved to Hong Kong with foster parents. See Zhang Zhen, "Ling Bo: Orphanhood and post-war Sinophone film history," in *Chinese Film Stars*, edited by Mary Farquhar and Yingjin Zhang **(**New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 121-138. See also film scholar Edwin W. Chen's latest historical account:



Fig. 2.1. Ling Bo staying "afloat," making waves of people in Taipei amidst the *The Love Eterne* craze on October 31, 1963. **Source:** Hsu Chung-mao Studio 徐宗懋圖文館, recaptured in "70 years after the restoration of Taiwan: The craze for *The Love Eterne* and Huangmei opera" 【時光走廊】台灣光復七十年紀事(8) 梁祝與黃梅調熱潮, *The Merit Times*, April 4, 2017, https://www.merit-times.com/NewsPage.aspx?unid=469505

With no "real" home to speak of, Ling initially fled from mainland China through colonial Hong Kong and later claimed both national (i.e. calling the ROC her motherland/*zuguo* 祖國) and regional identities (i.e. Xiamanese/Fujianese) speaking to the press in Taiwan. The origin of her name, as some theories posit, was due to its association with the regionality of the port city Ning Bo 寧波. Under strict control from her foster mother, Ling managed to continue her acting career only after she found a home, not unallegorically, in the Shaw Brother studio – a

Women de dianying shenhua: Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai 我們的電影神話：梁山伯與祝英台 [Our Film Legend: *Love Eterne*] (Taipei: Azure Publishing House, 2023).

dream factory of cinema.[235] (Ling recalled "it's a life that she misses most" living in the Shaw Brother's dormitory.)[236]

It is here crucial to remember that *HLM* itself is a book about dream and reality, not unlike the oneiric cinematic experience. Particularly in the Land of Illusion in Chapter 5, we are told that, one day, Bao-yu falls asleep and is invited by his nephew's wife, Qin Shi, into her room. Arriving at the chamber, he exclaimed:

> What a delightful place!' [Bao-yu] thought. 'If only I could spend all my life here**! Who cares if that makes me homeless!** How much nicer it would be than living under the daily restraint of my parents and teachers!
>
> 這個地方兒有趣！我若能在這裡過一生，雖然失了家也願意，強如天天被父母先生管束呢！ (*SOTS*, 5:1:128; *HLM* 5:1:71, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

Bao-yu's desire and destiny for diaspora is consciously displayed in his excitement: his home could be, to him, oppressive and he prefers to travel in the realm of fantasy (*you huanjin* 遊幻境). And in Chapter 42, as shown above, Bao-yu left home again to grieve and consequentially transform.

In the case of Ling Bo as Bao-yu, a "loss" of "real" home and wandering on screens, Ling's temporary travel (as in a world tour) and personal/performative diaspora enacts flows of queer, and relatable soft power, as in Bao-yu's queer and trans- circulation particularly in

[235] The Shaw Brothers re-hosted Ling in their dormitory to prevent interference from Ling's foster mother. Allegedly, she was re-named as "Ling Bo" in a dinner with Run Run Shaw. According to several accounts: first, they thought her sing so well, reminding them of the Ling Bo fairy 凌波仙子 in Chinese mythologies. Second, Run Run Shaw was ancestrally from Ning Bo, and it was reported that Ling Bo could speak Ning Bo dialect. See "Ling Bo gushiwai yi zhang Yuan Qiufeng kou zhong de Liang Xiong Ge" 凌波故事外一章 袁秋楓口中的梁兄哥 [Another story of Ling Bo according to Yuan Qiufeng's], *Lianhebao* 聯合報, October 29, 1963.
[236] "Zhai Haoren 翟浩然, "Zuokan lingbo xiongyong shi" 坐看凌波洶湧時 [Days of Ling Bo making waves] *Guang yu ying de jitihuiy*i 光與影的集體回憶 V [Collective Memories of Lights and Shadows] (Hong Kong: Ming Pao Weekly, 2015), 199.

Chapter 43. Even the change of her artist name demands attention for its ecological and gender transformation, for the highly feminine name Xiao-juan 小娟 in Chinese means "petite beauty," while Ling Bo 凌波 means "surfing the waves," unleashing the ecological form and affective worldmaking possibility of what would later be shown as "glittering grief" and "trans-forming seas." Indeed, the invention of the stage name Ling Bo is coincidentally yet resonantly already a citation, a performative "reinvention" from the "*Fu* of the Goddess of the River Luo" which is featured in Chapter 43 *HLM.* Embodying buoyant and itinerant movements of female, queer and trans- sensibilities, her name's "wavy" and hydraulic connotation the media is always poised to punned on. Her fans, for example, are called "fans of waves" (*bo-mi* 波迷).

Like Bao-yu transforming with water and sea waves, Ling was not only a new iteration of the Goddess of River Luo, but to many, she *is* the Goddess herself. One article titled "Welcoming Ling-bo 迎凌波" in Taiwan's pro-KMT *Lianhebao* 聯合報 even explicitly cites Cao Zhi's poem in describing Ling*:*

> "Her delicate footsteps swept over the waves/and dust rose from her stockings of gauze." (quoting from **Cao Zhi's "Fu on the Goddess of the River Luo**"). Today Miss Ling Bo's arrival at Taiwan is a great news to fans of *The Love Eterne* (*Liang-zhu*)! To be sure, Ling Bo's 'delicate footsteps' would trigger **tremendous waves of people (*ren-chao*)**…
>
> 「凌波微步，羅襪生塵」。（曹植「洛神賦」）小姐今日來台，這對自祖國「梁祝迷」、「凌波熱」的觀眾們，是多麼值得鼓舞「福音」啊！可以想見的是：「凌波微步」的經過之必掀起洶湧的人潮 ...[237]

[237] See "Ying Ling No" 迎凌波 [Welcoming Ling Bo], *Lianhebao* 聯合報, October 3, 1963. The original quotes from the ode, consistent with Chapter 43 and Chapter 5's appearance of goddess, emphasizes body movement, unpredictable transformations as well as agility and itinerancy, see an excerpt from the *fu*:
"....體迅飛鳧 Her body, more fleet than ducks in their flight,
飄忽若神 flitted past in a puff, like the goddess she was.
凌波微步 Her delicate footsteps swept over the waves
羅襪生塵 and dust rose from her stockings of gauze.
若危若安 To her motions there was no set pattern:
動無常則 as if apprehensive, then as if at her ease.
進止難期 And her movements were hard to predict:

Echoing the centuries-long transmedial tradition of reconstructing the Goddesses of the River Luo in Chinese literature, calligraphy and painting (including Bao-yu's conflation and congregation with her "sculpture" in *HLM*),[238] the cinematic Ling Bo likewise fuses sea/water and land/mud across the skies in releasing and composing grief among diasporic flows of people (**Fig. 11**). Not unlike the filtered promotion of Xu Yu-lan on the PRC's *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報 in Hong Kong during the 1960s, Ling Bo's was certainly welcomed by the ROC state in her assembling power of glitter and grief. With *Love Eterne*'s success, Ling even got to meet Soong Mei-ling 宋美齡, the wife of the by then Kuomintang President Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石, more than once.[239]

In the state-sponsored Golden Horse Award in Taiwan, like Bao-yu's mud-water exchange in grieving, Ling's cross-dressing performances earned her a what can now be called a "queer/trans/non-binary" category of her own: she was given an unprecedented "Best Actor Special Prize" (*zui-jia yan-yuan te-bie-jian* 最佳演員特別獎) for her ambiguous gender and unambiguous popularity.[240] As the story goes, the jury was "confused" as to which gender category under which Ling should be assessed. The media also called Ling by the name of the

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若往若還 she would seem to go off, then seem to turn back … " (*emphasis mine*) See Stephen Owens' full translation: "Cao Zhi (1 92-232) , The Goddess of the Luo," in *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* edited and translated by Stephen Owens (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996); 194-197.

[238] On this transhistorical, transmedial and interactive phenomenon among artists from so many periods of time throughout Chinese history, see Shih Shou-chien 石守謙, "Luoshen fu tu: Yige chuantong de xingsu yu fazhan" 洛神賦圖：一個傳統的形塑與發展 [The Goddess of the Luo River: The Shaping of a Tradition] *Taida Journal of Art History* 國立臺灣大學美術史研究集刊, no. 23 (2007): 51-80; Chen Pao-chen 陳葆真, *Luoshenfu Tu yu Zhongguo Gudai Gushihua* 洛神賦圖與中國古代故事畫 [The Goddess of the Luo River and Traditional Chinese Painting Narrative] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2012).

[239] Ling Bo was twice invited to the President's House of Soong; see Zhai Haoren, "Zuokan," 191.

[240] *Lianhebao* 聯合報 reports on the opinion of the juror: "Ling Bo is a male impersonator, and her identity is unclear… Undeniable, however, was her unprecedented box-office success and popularity, so we gave her a special award." ("其中凌波女扮男裝，身份不明，被議不宜當選… 凌波得了特別獎一座，沈劍虹在會中表示，凌波在台灣造成的賣座成績以及引起觀眾的空前歡迎，是不容抹殺的事實，所以，特別給了她一座獎。") "Jinmajiang gongbu pingshen ceng jibian" 金馬獎公佈 評審曾激辯 [Golden Horse Award announced amid jury's heated debates], *Lianhebao* 聯合報, September 5, 1963.

character Liang Shanbo, "Brother Liang" (*liang-xiong-ge*, 梁兄哥). For fear that Ling's highly marketable androgynous and queer image after *Love Eterne* would be tainted, the Shaw Brothers even burned her first film produced by the studio, *Romance of the Western* Chamber (*Xi Xiang-ji* 西廂記), in which Ling inconveniently played Cui Yingying, nothing short of an iconic feminine-only role.[241] Her cross-dressing became a coveted style as other star actresses of the studio fought hard to grab Ling's cross-dressing opportunities, and her queer stardom overwhelmingly eclipsed that of the actress Loh Ti who played only female roles in both *HLM* (as Lin Dai-yu) and *The Love Eterne* (Zhu Yingtai). Such is *HLM*'s affordance of winning stardom, glittering grief, queerness, and trans-forming seas.

Like Bao-yu, *HLM* stars such as Xu Yu-lan and Ling Bo thrived on circulation that generated but also capitalized on not only gender fluidity and queerness, but also the twinning and trans-ing affect of homelessness and mobility – that of transitory return *and* departure in staging affective assemblies. In the early 1960s, Xu and Ling's queer voice, performance, and embodied circulations, both centrally initiated affinitively through Bao-yu and *HLM*, as well as mediated through *huangmei* opera, made waves differentially, and as shown below, *also* competitively across the PRC, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southeast Asia and global Chinese diaspora in Sinophone Asias.

Whereas Xu and the Shanghai opera trope's adaptation was demonized and not screened in Taiwan, Ling Bo was not as (well-)known as Xu in the PRC either: the two winning "Bao-yu(s)," which one would guarantee full house across lands and seas? Who can hold border-crossing tours, like the queer Bao-yu in *HLM*? Both Xu Yu-lan and Ling Bo's circulation touch on the aesthetics and politics of "glittering grief" that are politically instrumental for, yet to

[241] Zhai, "Zuokan," 190.

different degrees irreducible to both state apparatuses of the PRC (Xu) and the ROC (Ling). Both pass through the treaty port of colonial Hong Kong because ultimately, it is the affective passage of "water" (femininity and transness) and the "sea" (overseas circulation), as well as their "landing" fluency on the soil that would unleash tears and joys in the assembly of mass audience across the straits and the world. As we know there are two Bao-yus in *HLM*, the major and rebellious Bao-yu's family name is Jia 賈, rhyming with *jia*/假/"false", and the minor and conforming one is called Zhen 甄, rhyming with zhen/真/"true." In modern and contemporary Red Chambers wars, then, which one, then, is "real"?

Towards a global banquet: star assembly on and off screen

Table 1: A timeline of films' release dates in the Second and Third Red Chamber Wars:
To provide a sense of temporal order of theatre releases, films involved in the Second and Third Red Chamber Wars are listed from top to bottom according to their chronological order of releases in Hong Kong. Chiu Kang-chien's adaptation was listed at the bottom since it was not screened anywhere outside Singapore.

HLM film and TV adaptations	Director/ Production	Release or Screening Date(s)			
		Hong Kong	Taiwan	The PRC	Singapore
Dream of the Red Chamber 紅樓夢	Yuan Qiufeng 袁秋楓	(1) Aug 3, 1962.[242]	(1) N/A (2) 1977	N/R	N/A
Dream of the Red Chamber 紅樓夢	Cen Fen 岑範	(1) Nov 22, 1962[243]	N/R	(1) N/A 1978	(1) N/A 1977

[242] Hong Kong Film Archive, "The Dream of the Red Chamber 紅樓夢" (Yuan Chiu-feng) https://mcms.lcsd.gov.hk/FAMS_ipac/cclib/search/showBib.jsp?f=e&id=65537599040005
[243] Hong Kong Film Archive, , "The Dream of the Red Chamber 紅樓夢" (Cen Fan) https://mcms.lcsd.gov.hk/FAMS_ipac/cclib/search/showBib.jsp?f=e&id=65537114534405

		(2) Oct 27, 1977[244]			
Dream of the Red Chamber 金玉良緣紅樓夢	Li Han-hsiang 李翰祥	(1) Oct 26, 1977[245]	(1) Dec 3, 1977	N/R	N/A
Dream of the Red Chamber 紅樓夢	Commercial Television (CTV) 佳藝電視	(1) Oct 31, 1977	N/R	N/R	N/R
Dreams of Eroticism 紅樓春夢	Ho Meng-hwa 何夢華 Hua Shan 華山 Sun Chung 孫仲 Mou Tun-fei 牟敦芾	(1) Nov 18, 1977[246]	N/R	N/R	N/R
Erotic Dream of the Red Chamber 紅樓春上春	Chin Hsin 金鑫	(1) Jan 19, 1978[247]	N/R	N/R	N/R
Dream of the Red Chamber 新紅樓夢	Jin Han 金漢	(1) May 18, 1978[248]	(1) Dec 8, 1977[249]	N/R	N/R
Waken from a Dream of Chamber	Chiu Kang-chien 邱剛健	N/R	N/R	N/R	(1) Jan 6, 1977[250]

[244] Before the official re-release on the 27th Ocrober, however, there were several premier screenings. "Yueju Hongloumeng jiang gongying" 越劇《紅樓夢》將公映 [The Yue opera film *Hongloumeng* on show soon in theatre] *Ta Kung Pao*, October 19, 1977.

[245] "Shaoshi gongsi kuaiyibu zai gang tuichu *HLM*" 邵氏公司快一步 在港推出紅樓夢 [The Shaw Brothers takes the lead in the market of *HLM* film in Hong Kong], *Lianhebao* 聯合報, October 17, 1977.

[246] Hong Kong Film Archive, "Dreams of Eroticism 紅樓春夢" https://mcms.lcsd.gov.hk/FAMS_ipac/cclib/search/showBib.jsp?f=e&id=655371125939205

[247] Hong Kong Film Archive, "*Erotic Dream Of Red Chamber* 紅樓春上春" https://mcms.lcsd.gov.hk/FAMS_ipac/cclib/search/showBib.jsp?f=e&id=655371115929605

[248] Hong Kong Film Archive, "*Dream of the Red Chamber* 新紅樓夢" https://mcms.lcsd.gov.hk/FAMS_ipac/cclib/search/showBib.jsp?oai=Y&f=e&id=65537111590405

[249] "Duli yingzhan shaoshi lianhuan gongshi Jin Han zai tai tuqi yangmei Xinhongloumeng quansheng zoujie" 獨力迎戰邵氏連環攻勢 金漢在台吐氣揚眉 新紅樓夢全省奏捷 [Jin Han alone braved the Shaw Brothers' attack, *New Dream of the Red Chamber* sounded victories all over Taiwan], *Wah Kiu Yat Po* 華僑日報, December 15, 1977.

[250] "Hongloumeng xing siuan jinqi xianyig," 紅樓夢醒四院今起獻映 [*Waken from Dream of the Red Chamber* on show in four cinemas today], *Nanyang Siang Pau* 南洋商報, January 27, 1977.

紅樓夢醒					

(1)= The date of release
(2)=The date of re-release
N/R=Not released
N/A=Not known, not available

As in *HLM*, assemblies end and begin again. It is difficult to tell when did the Third Red Chamber war exactly start. First, Red Chamber wars historically began in the republican Shanghai. Second, every participant in the Third Red Chamber Wars claimed that they had the idea first; and every participant had something to do with the previous Second Red Chamber war (1958-1962). Overall, we can safely assert that the Third Red Chamber war "recurred" in 1977. The participants of the star assembly in the early 1960s, like banquets in *HLM*, rotated with old and new participants joining in the late 1970s. (**See Table 1**)

We can begin the story of Third Red Chamber war with Ling Bo. As argued above, Ling shot to stardom with her Bao-yu voice in *HLM* (leading to Li Han-hsiang's discovery of her and consequentially her meteoric rise in *The Love Eterne*. By 1977, Ling left the Shaw Brother, but she and her husband Jin Han remained committed and attached to *HLM* as adaptation materials and a stardom platform after more than 15 years.[251] In the early 70s, Ling missed out on an opportunity to play Bao-yu. At that time Li Han-hsiang was assigned to direct another *huangmei* opera film of *HLM* but he refused; the project was altogether aborted, but never taken off as a possibility.[252] Though Ling was already a well-established star based on the success of *Liangzhu*, in the 1970s Ling had aged and her popularity, while still high, already dwindled.

[251] Jin Han the maintained in a 2008 interview that Ling is the ideal actor for Bao-yu; Zhai, "Zuokan," 195.
[252] Li thought Ling Bo was by then already too old for the role; he preferred an actress whose real age matches with Bao-yu's real age. Li, *Sanshinian,* 223.

In this context, it is remarkable that the lure of *HLM*'s form of affect, its affordance and promise of "star assembly," remained appealing to her, and indeed, to many stars and stars—infrastructurally working its wonder across time-periods and geopolitical contexts. In 1974, after leaving the Shaw Brothers, Ling and Jin set up their own film company Jinri 今日 in Taiwan. Being the boss, Ling could now play the major character Bao-yu and her husband Jin Han would be the director. Yet during the early production stage, the Shaw Brothers, now represented by and collaborating with Li Han-hsiang, decided to "resume" their aborted *HLM* project and "steal the shoot." (*qiang-pai*) as they similarly did with MP&GI in the 1960s.[253]

But the stakes went even higher: as in the Red Chamber war in the 1960s, the duel between *HLM* (the Shaw vs MP&GI in 1962; the Shaw vs. Jinri 1977) was again triangulated by the same challenging party on the PRC front, nothing other than Xu and Wang's yue-opera film. In the PRC, after the fall of the Gang of Four, previously suppressed local operas could re-emerge. As discussed in the above session, Cen Fan's Yue-opera version was briefly screened in 1962, before being publicly banned during the Cultural Revolution. In 1977, Hong Kong's Jinsheng film company announced that Xu and Wang's smash hit *HLM* in 1962 would be re-released to join the Third Red Chamber war.

The Shaw Brothers and Li Hang-hsiang heard the news of the PRC's re-release of the yue-opera film only when they started to film a new *HLM* in July 1977. Facing the resurgence of Xu/Wang's still popular *HLM*, the Shaw Brothers rushed the production, and resorted to

[253] Li Han-hsaing claimed that if he knew Ling Bo and Jin Han were making *HLM* at the time, he wouldn't have made *HLM* with the Shaw Brothers: "後來她在邵氏鬱鬱不得志的離開，自己想爭啖氣，組織公司拍幾部自己喜歡的戲，當然都是理所當然的。可是發生「紅樓夢」的雙胞事件，還真是始料不及的，也許我們中間走得太遠的關係，如果我早知道她和金漢在籌拍「紅樓夢」，我連拍這個戲的念頭都不會有。 可是她對邵氏的製片情況，仍不明白，雖然我未拍「紅」片而改拍了「大軍閥」，但邵氏公司和我拍攝「紅樓夢」的念頭，一直沒有打消過，自由公會的片名登記也一直沒有中斷過，這都是有案可稽的事，不是空口說白話的事。" Quoted from Li, *Sanshinian,* 225.

transborder filmmaking to try to win by an earlier release. To get ahead of both Xu/Wang (based in the PRC) and Ling/Han (now based in Taiwan), the Shaw Brothers reshuffled its established inter-Asian film network and cancelled a planned 10-day location shooting in Korea.[254] They also performed a fast-track sound recording in Tokyo to rush for completion. While shooting, however, the Shaw Brothers discovered that they had forgotten to renew their registration of the film title "*Hongloumeng*" with Hong Kong and Kowloon Cinema & Theatrical Enterprise Free General Association Limited (港九電影戲劇事業自由總會*)*.[255] The registration would be necessary if films were to release in Taiwan. As seen from the record, Jin Han had preemptively registered three film titles in both Hong Kong Taiwan, respectively *Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢, *New Hongloumeng* 新紅樓夢 and *Jia Bao-yu and Lin Dai-yu* 賈寶玉與林黛玉 in both Hong Kong and Taiwan by April, 1977, thinking that doing so would defeat Shaw Brother's "appropriation" of his original" idea of shooting *HLM* in this round of Red Chamber War.[256]

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[254] "可是，這一切都成了幻想，在我剛拍到大觀園的外搭景時，南方公司忽然推出越劇舞台藝術片「紅樓夢」，這使得在港的滬籍人士，如久旱逢甘霖般的歡躍，因為四人幫的統治下，把所有的傳統劇種，摧毀殆盡，除了八個樣板戲就一無所有，越劇「紅樓夢」的上映，無異於一聲春雷，令得我只好打消到韓國拍攝十天外景的計劃，把分好的八十八個鏡頭，併成了八個，一個下午就草草結束，匆匆的趕在越劇的「紅樓夢」之前上映." Quoted from Li, *Sanshinian*, 251. On the Shaw Brother's inter-Asian network, see Kinnia Yau Shuk-ting, *Japanese and Hong Kong Film Industries: Understanding the Origins of East Asian Film Networks.* (New York: Routledge, 2009), especially Chapter 4. Further on the Shaw Brother's "copying" and coproduction with Japanese during this period, see Stephanie DeBoer, *Coproducing Asia: Locating Japanese-Chinese Regional Film and Media*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), especially Chapter 2. Emphasizing the Cold War origin and context of the inter-Asian film network which the Shaw played a major role, Sangjoon Lee, with more emphasis on the American and Korean connection, observed that the vibrant inter-Asian network disappeared by the end of late 1970s; see *Cinema and The Cultural Cold War: US Diplomacy and the Origins of the Asian Cinema Network*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

[255] According to Li, the registration of film title had to be renewed every 6 months. "邵氏在自由總會的片名登記冊上，非止一次的繼續繳費保留權利(總會規定每六個月為期)，偏偏在我拍「金玉良緣紅樓夢」的期間，公司忘記了延期，金漢就趁邵氏疏忽的當兒登了四個「紅樓夢」的片名(金漢是總會的執行委員，常在總會中行走)，邵氏的六先生和方小姐一直還蒙在鼓裡." Quoted from Li, *Sanshinian*, 252.

[256] "今日影業公司已將「紅樓夢」、「新紅樓夢」及「賈寶玉與林黛玉」三個片名，分別在台港兩地向中華民國電影製片協會及港九影劇自由總會登記，以防他人搶用，預計今年上半年內在台開拍。" Quoted from "Lingbo Jinhan wei xinpian banbing, fuqi dang pai Hongloumeng" 凌波金漢為新片搬兵 夫妻檔拍紅樓夢 [Ling Bo and Jin Han produce *Hongloumeng* as a couple]. *Lianhebao* 聯合報, April 7, 1977.



Fig 2.2: Ling Bo's backstage singing becomes "the lead," sidelining Ren Jie who played Bao-yu. **Source**: Advertisement for Yuan's adaptation in *Zili Wanbao* 自立晚報 1977, recaptured from Su Yongzhi 蘇詠智, "Honglou dahunzhan Lin Qinxia yan Bao-yu zui junqiao Zhang Guoron zhan qingse zui xisheng" 紅樓大混戰 林青霞演寶玉最俊俏 張國榮沾情色最犧牲 [張國榮沾情色最犧牲 [Messy wars on *Hongloumeng*; Brigitte Lin is the most handsome Bao-yu as Leslie Cheung suffered from sexualization] *Lianhebao* 聯合報, June 15 2018, https://stars.udn.com/star/story/10090/3200345

In the end, the Shaw Brothers scheduled the film to be released in Hong Kong on 26th October and sent the copies to Taiwan on 27th October 1977.[257] But to their surprise, Jin Han and Ling Bo, who only started filming in August 1977, filed a complaint to Taiwan's KMT government, accusing the Shaw Brother and Li of "plagiarizing" "a Communist bandit's" production" (*fei-pian*, 匪片).[258] Stalled by Taiwan government's film censorship, the Shaw brothers decided to re-release an old *HLM* adaptation of Yuan Qiu-feng's from the previous war in 1962 into Taiwan's market.[259] To exploit the lingering popularity of Ling further, they spotlighted Ling Bo's name and called her the lead in the advertisement (**Fig 2.2**) when in fact,

[257] Here I rely on Li Han-hsiang's detailed account on dates.
[258] "沒料準負責做金漢「紅樓夢」宣傳工作的傳播公司，一口咬定李翰祥抄襲匪區的「紅樓夢」，意識上有問題，鬧得新聞局發出公函要各有關單位會檢，這下子，搞得邵氏「紅樓夢」搶先不成，金漢這一邊暫居上風。" Quoted from "Liangbu Hongloumeng zhengxian shangying, guanggao qi zhengzhi," 兩部紅樓夢・爭先上映 廣告起爭執 [Two *Hongloumeng* movies fight for an earlier release and cross fire over posters], *Lianhebao* 聯合報, November 26, 1977.
[259] Yuan's film was released in Hong Kong in 1962, but its release date in Taiwan was probably 1964, since this advertisement and other source suggested it was released "13 years ago" in 1977.

as we already know, she was just a backstage singer.[260] This somewhat misleading strategy of using "the early 1960s Ling Bo" to compete with "the late 1970s Ling Bo" was geared towards occupying the market and preempting Jin from using the title *Hong-lou-meng*.[261]

Though Jin Han registered the title *Hongloumeng*, according to the rules set by the film regulatory organ in Taiwan, an earlier registration got the priority This meant that Jin Han could not use the same title. As Taiwan's film policy dictated, Jin had no choice but to change it to "*New Dream of the Red Chamber*" (*Xin Hongloumeng*, 新紅樓夢) to comply and avoid confusion. On the other hand, the Shaw Brothers in turn, changed the Chinese title of their new *HLM* (directed by Li Han-hsiang) to *Jinyu Liangyuan Hongloumeng* 金玉良緣紅樓夢 (in English: "The fated encounter of Gold and Jade in Hongloumeng") to avoid confusion with their 1962 *HLM* (directed by Yuan Chiu-feng).[262]

While the above historical details suggest that the Third Red Chamber War involved politics between film talents, film studios, as well as the Cold War politics between the CCP and the KMT, we must note that the war done in the name of *HLM* always aesthetically involved the form of affect that I outlined: star assembly, glittering grief, queerness, and transforming-sea. First, the Third Red Chamber wars' rivalries remained held by the logic of stardom, which takes the form of actor recruitments across geopolitical borders. For example, to appeal to younger audiences, the Shaw Brothers and Li, decided to use young and rising actress Brigitte Lin to

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[260] Ling was even described as "the lead" (*ling-xian*, 領銜) in subsequent advertisement. Diplomatically, the Shaw Brothers claimed it was a mistake made by the typesetter. "Liangbu Hongloumeng zhengxian shangying, guanggao qi zhengzhi," 兩部紅樓夢・爭先上映 廣告起爭執 [Two *Hongloumeng* movies fight for an earlier release and cross fire over posters], *Lianhebao* 聯合報, November 26, 1977.

[261] The book *HLM*, likewise, had many alternative titles throughout history.

[262] "由於邵氏拿出袁秋楓導演的舊「紅樓夢」，依據製片協會片名登記先後順序規定，金漢便不能再用「紅樓夢」作片名，因此這部預定十二月底推出的影片，必須重定片名。" Quoted from "Hongloumeng shui xianjue? Liangjia faxing pian shang hu bu xiangrang, Ling Bo zida dui tai huibudangchu" 紅樓夢・誰先覺? 兩家發行片商・互不相讓 凌波自打對台・悔不當初 [Who would first quit dreaming? Two distribution companies fight over adaptations; Ling Bo shall regret], *Lianhebao* 聯合報, November 19, 1977.

cross-dress as Bao-yu, with Sylvia Chang playing Dai-yu. This dealt a blow to Jin because Brigitte Li had allegedly agreed to join his *HLM* adaptation.[263] To compete in foregrounding new faces, Jin recruited Zhou Zhiming 周芝明, an ethnic Chinese actress from America (dubbed as "the foreign/overseas Dai-yu [*yang Dai-yu* 洋黛玉]) to play Dai-yu. [264] Also "returning" from America after migrating there was Ling and Jin's retired old friend, Li Li-hua 李麗華, who agreed to play Grandmother Jia in their new adaptation.[265] Not coincidentally, Li Li-hua had played Dai-yu twenty-four years eaerlier in 1953 in Yue Feng's *HLM* adaptation *Modern* "*Red Chamber Dream*" in Hong Kong (see the first section of this essay). On the same stage with Li Li-hua and Ling Bo was another award-winning actress Li Ching 李菁, playing Bao-chai. As advertised in Hong Kong and Taiwan's media, Ling and Jin had assembled three "movie queens" (*ying-hou,* 影后) across generations to stage a new *HLM* (**Fig. 2.3**), forming nothing but a star assembly.[266]

[263] When asked about this in an interview, Lin said she could not really remember. See Zhai, "Zuokan", 199
[264] "Jin Han paixi you xuetou, Zhou Zhiming shi yang Dai-yu," 金漢拍戲有噱頭 周芝明是洋黛玉 [Jin Han films with a gimmick; Zhou Zhiming is a foreign Dai-yu], *Lianhebao* 聯合報*,* August 19, 1977.
[265] On Li Lihua's Sino-US crossing, see Chang Jing Jing. "China Doll in Flight: Li Lihua, World Today, and the Free China–US Relationship." *Film History* 26, no. 3 (2014): 1-28.
[266] "這支外景隊的最大特色，是剛好連貫了「四代」廣受歡迎的演員－－李麗華、凌波、李菁，以及飾演林黛玉周芝明。飾賈母的李麗華，短短的頭髮、鬆鬆的長衫，看起來仍是風韻十足，這株有名的影壇「長青樹」，不在乎這回演出白髮蒼蒼的老旦." Quoted from "Sidai yanyuan xieshou heyan Honglumeng, renma daoqi, xiangshi yinghou dahuichuan" 四代演員・攜手合演紅樓夢 人馬到齊・像是影后大會串, [Four generations of actors joined hands in *Hongloumeng*], *Lianhebao* 聯合報*,* August 19, 1977.



Fig. 2.3: Advertisement poster for Jin Han's *HLM* in Hong Kong, which says, **"**movie queens assembled" and "the most 'Hongloumeng-ish" Hongloumeng," also spotlighting the new actress Zhou Zhiming. **Source:** *The Kung Sheung Daily News* 工商日報, May 19, 1978. **Source:** The Multimedia Information System (MMIS) of Hong Kong Public Libraries.

The Shaw Brothers managed to get their *HLM* screened earlier than both the Shanghai troupe's as well as Ling and Jin in both Hong Kong and Taiwan. But in terms of Taiwan's box-office, Ling and Jin declared victory. Calling their *HLM* adaptation the most "*Hongloumeng*-ish" *HLM* (最紅樓夢的紅樓夢) [**Fig. 2.3**] Ling and Jin's off-screen assembly mirrored gatherings in *HLM* itself, not only in terms of the focusing on glittering grief, but in their very embodying of the banquet through real-life re-gathering of "the ones" among assembled diasporic audiences

("the many"). What makes the third Red Chamber war *Hongloumeng*-ish, then, is that most competitors were all "relatives" or old acquaintances at some point: Jin Han, Ling Bo, Li Li-hua, and Li Ching were all ex-employees of the Shaw Brothers, now combating and coming back to face not only their ex-colleagues and ex-companies – the Shaw Brothers – but also the returning of Xu Yu-lan and Wang Wenjuan in Cen Fan's 1962 adaptation. What happened on and off screen in the Third Red Chamber wars was actors, directors, friends, colleagues, and companies gathering, confronting, and parting with each other through multilateral yet concerted acts of adapting *HLM*, with Bao-yu's non-binary stardom as the anchoring radius.



Fig. 2.4: Advertisement poster for the Shaw Brother's omnibus pornographic adaptation *Dreams of Eroticism.* **Source:** *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, November 19, 1977
Source: The Multimedia Information System (MMIS) of Hong Kong Public Libraries.



Fig. 2.5: Chin Hsin and Ng See-yuan's pornographic adaptation *Erotic Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, January 14, 1978. **Source:** The Multimedia Information System (MMIS) of Hong Kong Public Library.



Fig. 2.6: Minor and obscure characters receiving close-ups and credits in *Dreams of Eroticism* 紅樓春夢. **Source:** Screen captures by the author.



新加坡電影發展創業影片
红楼梦醒经杀青
不久將推出献映

发出通告
催收年捐

Fig. 2.7: A photo taken on set of Chiu Kang Chien's *Waken from a Dream of Chamber*
Source: "Xinjiapo dianying fazhan chuangye yingpian Hongloumengxing jing shaqing bujiu jiang tuichu xianying" 新加坡電影發展創業影片 紅樓夢醒經殺青 不久將推出獻映 [Singapore Film Development Company's *Hongloumeng* adaptation was finished with shooting and ready for screening soon] *Xinming Ribao* 新明日報, December 5, 1976.
Source: NewspaperSG, last accessed 14 Mar 2024, https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/digitised/article/shinmin19761205-1.2.45

On the Hong Kong front, Li's adaptation was released slightly earlier than the re-release of Xu and Wang's Yue-opera first screened in Hong Kong in 1962, now re-released in Hong Kong in 1977. This re-release is notably earlier than its counterpart in the PRC.[267]

[267] In the PRC, Xu and Wang's Yue-opera was first re-screened exclusively to foreigners in 1978, which was followed by sudden, yet impactful public screenings in 1979. See: "一部中國與外來電影公司合作拍攝的影片，今天在北京放映。這是文化大革命以來的首次。影片《紅樓夢》是放映給獲特別邀請的外國居民觀看." Quoted from "Beijing ying Hongloumeng zhaodai waiguo jumin," 北京映紅樓夢招待外國居民 [Hongloumeng movie screened in Beijing for foreigners], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, February 4, 1978. For the official date of the public rerelease in 1979, my dating comes from this source: See: "1979 年上海 36 家電影院突然在同一天放映《紅樓夢》，徐玉蘭聽到小道消息說是宣傳部又要批判這電影，有人說賈寶玉當和尚就是不革命，沒階級意義。但是群眾不管階級不階級。半夜 1 點，電影院就開始排隊買票，有一家電影院門口掃出了一堆擠掉的鞋。" Quoted from Wang Kai, "Yueju," 64.

Whereas the adaptations discussed above are all opera movies focusing on "the one" and the glittering grief of *HLM*'s love triangle, other contenders in the *HLM* banquet in the Third Red Chamber war were more "vulgar/vernacular" or "localized" in terms of genre, language and casting, venturing towards the pornographic, the comedic (or the non-tragic), and the episodic. These films, admittedly not without some fidelity to the novel's heterogenous non-grief affects, either highlight minor characters or deviate from the mainstream love triangle.[268] For example, Chin Hsin 金鑫 and Ng See-yuan 吳思遠, previously working for the Shaw Brother but now supported by the rising film company Golden Harvest 嘉禾, decided to make a "trendier" *HLM* (*xin-chao* 新潮, literally meaning "new wave.") Shot in Cantonese instead of Mandarin, their adaptation *Erotic Dream of the Red Chamber* 紅樓春上春[269] sported nudity, comedy and sexual jokes. (**Fig. 2.4-2.5**)

To compete with this "lewd" adaptation, the Shaw Brothers assembled four directors (Ho/Hwa/Sun/Mou) to produce an omnibus *HLM* film *Dreams of Eroticism* 紅樓春夢, also with sex as selling points (**Fig. 2.5**), spotlighting a host of minor episodes, characters and actors (**Fig. 2.6**).[270] Cheaper in production cost and "minor" or "lower" in "taste," they perverted the fixation of stars and glittering grief, but accordingly also not (intendedly) "winning" the war in terms of reputation and box office. Another obscure contender Chiu Kang-chien's 邱剛健 *Waken from a*

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[268] On the rise of "minor character" as a marketable genre, see Jeremy Rosen, *Minor Characters Have Their Day: Genre and the Contemporary Literary Marketplace.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

[269] "Ng See-yuan jueding yingpeng Shaoshi lianri ganpai xinchao Honglouemeng" 吳思遠決定 硬碰邵氏 連日趕拍 新潮紅樓夢 [Ng See-Yuan decided to brave the Shaw Brothers' challenge], *Xinmin Ribao* 新明日報, November 2, 1977.

[270] Critics criticized these films as "shitty," gimmicky, messing up with the great, and "decent" and "beautiful" original. Noted Hong Kong film critic Sek Kei opined that both erotic adaptations were cheaply made and full of obscenities, yet he found it regretful that Cheung and Wong, the leads of Chin's *HLM*, were the most fitting actors for Bao-yu and Dai-yu. Sek described the situation as "flowers stabbed on cow dung 鮮花插在牛糞上," meaning "talents went wasted," January 25, *Ming Pao Evening News* 明報晚報, cited in "1978 Honglou chun shan chun" in *Zhangguo Ruo de Dianying Shijie* 張國榮的電影世界 vol. 1 [*Leslie Cheung's Movie World* Vol. 1, edited by Editorials of *Film Bi-weekly*] 電影雙周刊 (Hong Kong: Film Bi-weekly Press, 2013), 16-21.

Dream of Chamber 紅樓夢醒 was a box-office disaster which went on show for only two days in Singapore, never picked up by any distributor anywhere else.[271] Notably, Singaporean investors preferred local actors and local setting in Singapore, aiming to nurture a local, even national film industry. (**Fig. 2.7**)[272] Due to disagreement on the use of stars and locations, the director seat changed hands from Yue Feng, the director of *Modern "Red Chamber Dream"* (1952), to a younger film scriptwriter Chiu.[273] Deviating from the glittering grief, this avant-garde adaptation "dared" to turn the sad ending into a happy one.[274] The absence of grief, always expected, together with the low production value, could be some of the reasons why none of the young cast

[271] The script of this adaptation has recently been published. For an analysis of the script, see Liu Qing 劉嶔, "Shidai cuoguo de ganying yu guanzhao" 時代錯過的感應與觀照 [Forgotten Resonance and Reflection] in *Xiongyanzhe de sexiang ui meidian – Qiu Gangjian biandao dianying juben* 雄艷者的色想與美典——邱剛健編導電影劇本集 [Erotic Thoughts and Aesthetic Canon of Sensuous Men: An Anthology of Chiu Kang-chie's Film Scripts] edited by Liu Qin (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Critics Society, 2021).

[272] On filmic network between Hong Kong and Singapore: see Grace Mak 麥欣恩, *Xianggang Dianying yu Xinjiapo : Lengzhan shidai Xing-Gang Wenhua Lianxi, 1950-1965* 香港電影與新加坡 : 冷戰時代星港文化連繫, 1950-1965 [Hong Kong Cinema and Singapore: A Cultural Ring between Two Cities, 1950–1965] (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018); and on Singaporean film, see Hee Wai-siam, *Remapping the Sinophone: The Cultural Production of Chinese-Language Cinema in Singapore and Malaya before and during the Cold War* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2019).

[273] The first appointed director Yue Feng, the director of *Modern "Red Chamber Dream"* (1952) disagreed, arguing that Singapore lacked a film studio for a costume drama. Later Yue changed the film's setting into a modern one. Investors were however concerned about the cost, so they hired local actors in the end and hired Chiu to shoot the film. See "Wu gudong yijian fenqi Yue Feng zuoyou zuoren nan, Xin Hongloumeng gaiyong Xinjiabo yiren" 五股東意見分歧 岳楓左右做人難 新紅樓夢改用新加坡藝人 [Investors' opinions differ; new Adaptation of *Hongloumeng* casts Singaporean actors] *Nanyang Siang Pau* 南洋商報, September 25, 1976.

[274] *Lianhebao* 聯合報 in Taiwan reported on Chiu's film in the amidst the Li-Jin battle. According to the article, Chiu transported *HLM* to the context of twentieth-century Singapore in his modern-day comedy, hiring a cast of fresh, local Singaporean actors of the average age of around 22. The film, with a happy ending of Lin Dai-yu rebelling, was a box-office disaster in Singapore. See "Ni keceng tingguo Hongloumeng xing qiugangjian jiu paile zhebu guaixi." 你可曾聽過「紅樓夢醒」邱剛健就拍了這部怪戲 [Chiu Kang-chien shot a weird film: Have you heard of *Waking from Dream of the Red Chamber*?], *Lianhebao* 聯合報, November 3, 1977. In Li Han-hsiang's account, Chiu's film was not well-taken by Run Run Shaw, and it was on show in Singapore only for two days; see *Sanshinian,* 244-246. Chiu (1940-2013) was born in Xiamen, moved to Taiwan in 1949. Invited by Shaw Brother's head of scriptwriting Stephen C. Soong (a *HLM* critic himself, see first half of this chapter) in 1965, Chiu wrote several scripts for Chang Cheh (Zhang Che) and left the company in 1974. Later, he wrote scripts for notable films such as Ann Hui's *Boat People* (1982) and Stanley Kwan's *Roug*e (1987), and most recently Feng Xiaogang's *The Banquet* (2006), etc.

succeeded in shooting into stardom. Ultimately the avant-garde film itself failed to travel across overseas.

Despite the deviances and diversities in genres, there is no doubt that all these *HLM* films in the period of 1977 and 1978 altogether constitute proliferating assemblies altogether in the form of many banquets all in the name of the larger banquet *HLM* – "many" in "one". Indeed, this kind of diversity only mirrors the assemblies in the novel itself. In Chapter 43 alone, we already see several assemblies within one:

> In a twinkling the second of the ninth was upon them. The denizens of the Garden had been informed that You-shi was planning an impressive variety of entertainment: **not only the customary plays, but also juggling, acrobatics, story-telling by blind ballad-singers** – in short, everything one could possibly think of that might contribute to the success of the occasion and the pleasure of the participants. Li Wan reminded the cousins that the second of the month was also one of **the regular meeting-days of the poetry club.** Xi-chun was, of course, excused. 'But why hasn't Bao-yu turned up?' she asked. 'I suppose he's so intent on enjoying the fun that he has **forgotten his former enthusiasm for these more civilized amusements!** …
>
> 展眼已是九月初二日，園中人都打聽得尤氏辦得十分熱鬧，不但有戲，連耍百戲並說書的男女先兒全有，都打點取樂頑耍。李紈又向眾姊妹道：「今兒是正經社日，可別忘了。寶玉也不來，想必他只圖熱鬧，把清雅就丟開了。」 (*SOTS* 43:2:353-354, *HLM* 43:1: 352-354, *emphasis mine*)

As highlighted by Li Wan, there are more than one table, one genre and one assembly happening simultaneously in the larger banquet of *HLM*; some more elegant and "civilized" (such as poetry club) than others. When Bao-y returns, he joins Grandmother Jia and other girls in watching a play. This is the realm of star and glittering grief, but at the same time nearing the end of the party, Xi-feng's husband Jia Lian is having a sexual affair as shown in the next Chapter (Chapter 44). The "low brow" *HLM* adaptations in this sense serves as a continuum and not a rupture with the so-called "highbrow" ones, both simultaneously hosted by the larger *HLM* assembly.

More generally, the onstage enactment of "artistic" affect is complemented by the orality of off-stage eating.[275] Food indeed appears in both the birthday party and the Temple of Water Spirits. Grandmother mentions soup and congee at the start,[276] and Tealeaf mentions the importance of eating before leaving the Temple.[277] In Chapter 43, we learn that in this party watching plays and eating food are also of a piece:

> Not feeling sufficiently energetic to sit with the rest, however, she had retired to the inner room with Aunt Xue, reclining on a couch there in a position from which it was still possible to watch the players**. A small selection from the dishes which had covered the two tables laid for her outside had been set down within easy reach where she could pick at them while conversing with Aunt Xue**. The remainder she had made over to the maids and older women on duty who had not been catered for, **bidding them take their banquet outside on to the verandah where they could sit down and enjoy themselves without restraint.**
>
> 本來自已懶待坐席，只在裡間屋裡榻上歪著和薛姨媽看戲，隨心愛吃的揀幾樣放在小几上，隨意吃著說話兒；將自已兩桌席面賞那沒有席面的大小丫頭並那應差聽差的婦人等，命他們在窗外廊檐下也只管坐著隨意吃喝，不必拘禮。王夫人和邢夫人在地下高桌上坐著，外面幾席是他姊妹們坐。 (*HLM* 44:58, *emphasis mine*)

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[275] For food in Chinese literature, see Isaac Yue, and Siufu Tang, eds., *Scribes of Gastronomy: Representations of Food and Drink in Imperial Chinese Literatur*e. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014).

[276] At the beginning of Chapter 43, Grandmother Jia commented extensively on foods: "I've had a sip or two of the "pheasant stew you sent me. It was very tasty. I ate some of the meat in it and enjoyed it very much … If there's any of the meatstill left, I'd rather like a few pieces of it fried. It has a pleasant, salty tang that goes well with the rice-gruel I am taking. The stew is very nice, but stew and gruel don't go very well together." 賈母道：「今日可大好了。方才你們送來野雞患子湯，我嘗了一嘗，倒有味兒，又吃了兩塊肉，心裡很受用。」王夫人笑道：「這是鳳丫頭孝敬老太太的。算他的孝心虔，不枉了素日老太太疼他。」賈母點頭笑道：「難為他想著。若是還有生的，再炸上兩塊，咸浸浸的，吃粥有味兒。那湯雖好，就只不對稀飯。」(*SOTS* 43:2:344; *HLM* 43:1:576).

[277] Extensively, Tealeaf talks about food this way: " 'I've already spoken to the nun about getting you some food,' he told Bao-yu as they were going in together. 'I told her you hadn't eaten yet. You ought to get something inside you. I realize that you came out here because there's a big party and lots of racket at home today and you wanted some-where peaceful where you could do this. But I think just staying out here in the quiet all day is showing all the respect you need to this person you've just made the offering to. You don't need to fast all day as well. That's out of the question.'" 'That seems reasonable,' said Bao-yu. 'As I'm missing the party all the time that I'm here, I am in a way abstaining already; so, I suppose there can be no harm in my taking a bit of vegetarian stuff ... still talking, they made their way to the old nun's parlour, where they found she had set out a table of vegetarian food. Bao-yu ate a bit, and so did Tealeaf." 茗煙起來收過香爐，和寶玉走著，因道：「我已經和姑子說了，二爺還沒用飯，叫他隨便收拾了些東西，二爺勉強吃些。我知道今兒咱們裡頭大排筵宴，熱鬧非常，二爺為此才躲了出來的。橫豎在這裡清淨一天，也就盡到禮了。若不吃東西，斷使不得。」寶玉道：「戲酒既不吃，這隨便素的吃些何妨。」...說著二人來至禪堂，果然那姑子，收拾了一桌素菜，寶玉胡亂吃了些，茗煙也吃了。(*SOTS* 43:2:4; *HLM* 43:1:585).

The Red Chamber wars were similarly "fought" like a banquet; indeed, they are of a piece, acting as "complementary bi-polarities" in Andrew Plaks' term. As in all other cases of competition over the same story (*qiang-pai*) in this period of Chinese films history, media in Hong Kong described the fighting between companies and directors as a situation of "fighting over the first taste of soup." (*cheung-tau-daam-tong* 搶頭啖湯).[278] The Cantonese phrase refers to "people wanting to taste the benefits from the same pool ahead of others." Li Han-hsiang in his memoir recounted how two other *HLM* adaptations[279] plotted to release the films earlier and "steal the taste" before Ling Bo/Jin Han and the Shaw Brother "drink" it. Li wrote:

> When Chiu Kang-chien was shooting his *HLM* in Singapore […] he was trying to get ahead of the Shaw Brother's and Ling Bo's adaptations, launching a sudden attack to us. […] At the same time, Chin Hsin in Hong Kong, claiming to be my own student (actually he was just an assistant in my film production) was supported by another film company to produce a pornographic adaptation of *HLM*. **Chin was also trying to throw a sprat to catch a mackerel, getting ahead of everybody in sipping 'the first bowl of soup.**
>
> 邱剛健在新加坡拍攝「紅樓夢醒」的時候，是以明修棧道，暗渡陳倉的方法，希望在邵氏和凌波的兩部「紅樓夢」未演之前先上片，來一個偷襲珍珠港。同時香港的金鑫也打著我學生的名號（其實他祇在我導的戲中，拍過特約戲而已），在另一家大公司的幕後支持下，開拍了一部黃色紅樓夢，片名叫「紅樓春上春」，準備以小博大，以快打慢的速戲速決飲一碗「頭啖湯」。 *(translation and emphasis mine)*[280]

[278] On theorizing taste (such as sourness, sweetness, spiciness), Chinese femininity and cinema, see Mila Zuo *Vulgar Beauty: Acting Chinese in the Global Sensorium* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022).

[279] According to an article in *Sin Chew Jit Poh* 星洲日報, Li started shooting in July; Jin Han started in August in Taipei. In September Ng See-yuen's 吳思遠) Seasonal Film Corporations, supported by Golden Harvest, announced the shooting of *Fengyue Baojian*, later retitled *Erotic Dream of the Red Chambe*r. In October, reacting to Ng's admittedly erotic and gimmicky production, Shaw Brothers summoned a team of directors and soft-porn actresses (肉彈, literally "flesh bombs") to shoot an erotic film called *Dreams of Eroticism* to compete; see "*Hongloumeng* zi zheng bai-ri hua" 紅樓夢之爭白熱化 影視兩路紛紛出爐 [The *Hongloumeng* war turns white-hot], *Sin Chew Jit Poh* 星洲日報, October 26, 1977.

[280] Li, *Sanshinian*, 245

Ling Bo likewise described their box-office victory in Taiwan over the Shaw Brothers in terms of the colloquial idiom of soup drinking:

> The Shaw Brothers tasted the soup [i.e. reaped the benefits] first; but theirs was no more than some standard broth they serve in an average local restaurant. What we have now is Ginseng chicken soup. Its aftertaste lingers deeply - a great boost to our health.
>
> 邵氏雖飲頭啖湯，只是例湯，自己現在飲的是人參雞湯，又甘又補。(*translation mine*)[281]

The Red Chamber wars have therefore always been a transmedia phenomenon – a "banquet" form of cinematic experience which metaphorically or literally, involves dinner tables.

In this iteration of Red Chamber war, televisual adaptation is also a competitor with movie adaptation. The most telling manifestation of Red Chamber war as a banquet is exemplified in Commercial Television's (CTV) 佳視's televisual *HLM*.[282] Partially shot in Korea, CTV's 100-episode *HLM* adaptation is the second attempt of its kind in Hong Kong, before counterparts appeared in Taiwan (Chinese Television Services [CTS] 華視 in 1978) and in the PRC (CCTV, 1987).[283] Though one may assume that the audience of TV and cinemas were not the same, but they were competing.[284] This is demonstrated by the fact that on the 31st

[281] "Xin Hongloumeng zai tai shoude Ling Bo Jing Han fangxia xin lai" 新紅樓夢在台收得 凌波金漢放下心來 [New *HLM* with good box-office in Taiwan, Ling Bo and Jin Han feeling relieved] December 28, *Wah Kiu Yat Po* 華僑日報, 1977.

[282] CTV was launched in 1976 and closed in 1978. For a brief history of television in Hong Kong in relation to identity and (de)sinicization, see Eric Ma, *Culture, Politics and Television in Hong Kong.* (London: Routledge, 1999).

[283] A brief history of *HLM*'s TV adaptations is instructive here. In Hong Kong, *HLM* was adapted as TV drama first by Television Broadcast Limited (TVB) 無線電視 in 1975 (5 episodes); and then by Commercial Television (CTV) 佳藝電視 in 1977 (100 episodes). Later in Taiwan, the novel was adapted by Chinese Television Services (CTS) 華視 in 1978 (73 episodes); the second time in 1983 (16 episodes) and the third time in 1996 (69 episodes). Dozens of journal articles focused on the PRC's TV adaptation in 1987, but historically it was preceded by TV adaptations in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

[284] On the "localization" of the Shaw Brother's diasporic cinema, see Poshek Fu's seminal article: "Introduction: The Shaw Brothers Diasporic Cinema," in *China Forever: The Shaw Brothers and Diasporic Cinema*, edited by

October of 1977, which was the first day of the *HLM* drama's airing, CTV, the Shaw Brothers, and Jinsheng film company of Wang and Xang's Yue opera all placed advertisements in *Wah Kiu Yat Po* (**Fig. 2.8-2.11**), competing for attention altogether. Aesthetically, all three posters deploy calligraphic fonts, traditional seal stamps, as well as their company logos in the graphic designs. Simultaneously modern and traditional-looking, all claimed their *HLM* the most authentic (*zhen-ben*, 正本) or the most worthy to contemporary audiences.

As a sign of fierce competition among TV companies, CTV placed a front-page advertisement for their *HLM*, which takes the form of an invitation card, saying "on show tonight; all of your family members are invited (*hefu tongqing*, 闔府統請)" during the prime time (i.e., 6:55 pm). The dinner time off screen then mirrors the banquets and foods of *HLM* on screen.[285] More broadly, on screen and off screen *HLM* also mirror each other in terms of financing and consumption. In the original novel, as Grandmother Jia instructed, the party in Chapter 42 is crowdfunded; half of Chapter 42 details how Xi-feng and You-shi collect money from and return money to people in the household. As if answering to this part of the novel, in the lower section of CTV's invitation card are displayed local, national and international brands, sponsoring nothing but a contemporary adaptation of *the* Chinese literary masterpiece *HLM*.[286]

Poshek Fu (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 1-25. Indeed the Shaw Brothers shifted their movie empire to producing TV dramas after the 1980s in the name of TVB 無線電視, as they could no longer satisfy the increasingly localized and transnationalized Hong Kong audiences with period pieces of imaginary, cultural and mythical China. Film companies like Golden Harvest became the leading film company in Hong Kong increasingly in the 1980s, displacing the Shaw Brother's previous dominance.

[285] The practice of family dining with the television was a social phenomenon in Hong Kong when television became a companion or even part and parcel of the meal, as encapsulated by the Cantonese idiom "mixing rice with the television sauce." (*din-si jap lou-faan* 電視汁撈飯) starting from the late 1960s. The Cantonese phrase was a hyperbolic expression referring to people's fervent consumption of television programs (analogized as "TV sauce") while eating at home.

[286] The products include cigarettes (Kent, Winston), alcohol (Shanxi Chu Yeh Ching Chiew 山西竹葉青酒), electronics (SONY and National [present day Panasonic]), cosmetics (Shiseido), cars (Honda and Blaupunkt) and air flights (Cathay Pacific), as well as department store (Wing On) and banking (HSBC).



Fig. 2.8: The front-page advertisement of CTV's 100-eposide TV adaptation.
Source *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, October 31, 1977, from the Multimedia Information System (MMIS) of Hong Kong Public Libraries



Fig. 2.9: Advertisement poster for Li Han-hsiang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*
Source: *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, October 31, 1977, from the MMIS of Hong Kong Public Libaries





Fig. 2.10 (Left). Advertisement poster for Cen Fen's adaptation featuring Xu Yu-lan and Wang Wenjuan **Source:** *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, October 31, 1977, from the MMIS of Hong Kong Public Library

Fig. 2.11 (Right): Advertisement poster for Cen Fen's adaptation emphasizing simultaneous screenings in port cities such as Macau, Singapore, and Hong Kong
Source: *Wah Kit Yat Po*, November 5, 1977, from the MMIS of Hong Kong Public Library

Invested in "the dream" of *HLM*, these foreign, overseas and flowing sources of capital from America, Japan, the UK, and Germany, in turn seek the audiences' consumption of their products. Therefore, while the show was in Cantonese, it was nonetheless a star assembly that is trans-pacifically and globally invested, as well as collaboratively created, mirroring Hong Kong's take off and its future facilitating of China's world trade (in particular Sino-US trade).[287] These products were sent to and through Hong Kong in the 20th century – what Prasenjit Duara calls a "global frontier" and "interface of China, Asia, and the World" – through cars, railways, ships and planes across seas, lands, and skies.[288]

Not unlike the novel *HLM* which catalogues the luxurious glittering inner lives (and indeed featuring imported goods: clocks, mirrors, scissors...) of an upper-class family in the 17th century,[289] the foreign goods advertised alongside a *HLM* banquet invitation card serves not only contemporary viewers, but equally the characters of *HLM* - if they lived in Hong Kong in the 1970s. The "Jia family" in Hong Kong would, first, need food (i.e., Lion and Globe 獅球嗱) and alcohol (i.e. Shanxi beer 山西竹葉青酒) for banquets (indeed right after Chapter 42 in Chapter 43 where the party ends, Xi-feng gets drunk and beat her maid up, suspecting her of adultery). The family would surely need cosmetics (i.e., Shiseido), since Bao-yu and girls in the Garden use that often. For traveling and fleeing the family or country in diaspora, especially for those "star" and

[287] See Peter E. Hamilton, *Made in Hong Kong: Transpacific Networks and a New History of Globalization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).
[288] Prasenjit Duara, "Hong Kong as a Global Frontier: Interface of China, Asia, and the World," in Priscilla Roberts, Mary, and John M Carroll, eds. *Hong Kong in the Cold War* (Hong Kong, China: Hong Kong University Press, 2016), 211-230.
[289] On foreign and imported goods in the novel *HLM*, see a seminal article by historian Fang Hao 方豪, "Cong *Hongloumeng* Suoji Xiyang Wupin Kao Gushi de Beijing" 從紅樓夢所記西洋物品考故事的背景 [A study of *Hongloumeng*'s setting through depictions of Western goods] in *Fang Hao liushi zidinggao [shang]* 方豪六十自定稿 (上) [Fang Hao: Selected Works] (Taipei: Taiwan Xuesheng Shuju, 1969), 413-496; Chow Tse-chung 周策縱, "Hongloumeng Wangqia Yangyan Kao" 紅樓夢 汪洽洋煙考 [A Study on Imported Cigarettes in Hongloumeng] *Hongloumeng An: Qiyuan Hongxue Lunwen Ji* 紅樓夢案:棄園紅學論文集 [The Case of Hongloumeng] (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2001), 157-167.

"first-class characters" who did not die like Golden (such as Bao-yu), they would need cars (i.e., Honda and Blaupunkt) and planes (i.e. Cathay Pacific). For financial difficulties and bankruptcy, which plague the Jia family near the end of the novel, they need a bank (i.e., HSBC). Most importantly, they need a television (i.e. Sony and National), for watching plays and dramas.

Far from being anachronistic and presentist, this kind of transhistorical, transtemporal, transmedial reading, as shown also in Bao-yu's affective worldmaking of mud-water exchange with the Temple's statue, *is exactly what HLM's banquet invites us to contemplate*. Indeed, reading the story on stage as one's very own story off stage is exactly what characters in *HLM* do: it's the novel's very own "contemporaneity."[290] Consider, still, Chapter 43, where the Jia family resumes watching plays after Bao-yu returns home:

> …the rest of the company resumed the play-watching which [Bao-yu's] arrival had interrupted. The play being performed on this occasion was *The Wooden Hairpin.* Grandmother Jia and the other ladies found it greatly affecting, shedding copious tears in the course of it and sighing or cursing in the appropriate places.
>
> 大家仍舊看戲。當日演的是《荊釵記》。賈母薛姨媽等都看的心酸落淚，也有嘆的，也有罵的。(*SOTS* 43:2:363; *HLM* 43:1:586)

With Bao-yu's glittering grief of returning, a star assembly is reestablished: tears can be dropped even though it is also grief which brings people back together. But who would have thought that the Jia family are watching themselves, as well as grieving for themselves in and through the play *The Wooden Hairpin*? Dai-yu's ironic comment on the play is illustrative of *HLM*'s overall strategies in blurring the real and the false, which surely carry over to transmedial adaptations:

> A play being performed on this occasion was *The Wooden Hairpin*, and it chanced that they had reached that section of it popularly referred to as 'The Husband's Offering', in which the hero Wang Shi-peng, believing that his wife has drowned herself, goes with his

[290] For an argument on the "presentness" in late imperial Chinese literature, see Paize Keulemans, "Onstage Rumor, Offstage Voices: The Politics of the Present in the Contemporary Opera of Li Yu." *Frontiers of history in China* 9, no. 2 (2014): 165–201.

> aged mother to the river Ou-jiang to make offerings to her soul. At this point Dai-yu, who was able to guess what the real purpose of Bao-yu's early-morning excursion had been, turned to Bao-chai and remarked, in a voice loud enough for Bao-yu to overhear, that she thought Wang Shi-peng a 'very silly sort of fellow'. **"He could have made his offering anywhere. Why was it necessary for him to go rushing off to the riverside to make it?** They say that "objects aid recall": well, **since all the water in the world comes ultimately from a single source, a bowlful of it scooped up anywhere should have sufficed.** His feelings could have been just as effectively relieved by weeping over a bowlful of water as by rushing off to the banks of the river." Bao-chai made no reply. Bao-yu, who had certainly heard her, got dumbfounded.
>
> 話說寶玉和姐妹一處坐著，同眾人看演《荊釵記》，黛玉因看到《男祭》這齣上，便和寶釵說道：「這王十朋也不通的很：不管在那裡祭一祭罷了，必定跑到江邊上來做什麼？俗語說：『睹物思人』，天下的水總歸一源，不拘那裡的水舀一碗，看著哭去，也就盡情了。」寶釵不答。寶玉聽了卻又發起獃來。(*SOTS* 44:2:364-365*; HLM* 44:1:588, *emphasis mine and translation modified*)

As Dai-yu intuited and sarcastically commented in Chapter 44, what happens on stage (a male, Wang Shi-peng, mourning a female beloved and drowned), *is exactly what happened off stage* (Bao-yu mourning Golden outside home). Characters in *HLM*, as shown in this small passage, are simultaneously on stage and off stage, mirroring each other fusing reality and performances through tears. Similarly in the Red Chamber wars, star assemblies on screen extend to the "real" world. If as Dai-yu suggests, "all the water are of the same source," then glittering grief, that which performed and mediated through Bao-yu's mud/water and land/sea exchange, percolates portably and relatably *anywhere* (*buju nali* 不拘那裡), unbounded by borders. Such global, affective and ecological world-making between lands, skies and waters and the seas have been seen in the novel itself, as demonstrated in Bao-yu's ecological *trans*-formation in Chapter 43. It follows that *HLM*'s Prospect Garden (*daguanyuan*) of the Jia family as well as the Temples of Waters Spirits can become globally portable as long as infrastructural connection to "waters" and "sea" is possible (such as online *streaming* services). Cinemas and theaters everywhere in principle can then play *HLM* and release glittering grief, channeling flows of people, diasporic or

simply global, into tears on and off-screen fusion through assembling stardom of queerness and trans-ness.

Stardom and glittering grief have been historically demonstrated in this essay in how *HLM* films have migrated from Republican Shanghai to Hong Kong and elsewhere. The cases of the PRC's Xu Yu-lan and Ling Bo also demonstrates the portability of grief as stars travel around the world – before and after such movements were aborted by their "internal diaspora" in the Cultural Revolution. Beyond geopolitical borders, glittering grief then can ideally be fluidly processed and performed anywhere: inside as in outside, at home as in diaspora, as long as mud/water and land/sea exchanges can fuse with each other elegantly and *intra*-actively as in the cases of Bao-yu and the Goddess of the River Lo in *HLM,* as well as (future) global stars performing Bao-yu in the "real world."

To conclude, in the last but most dramatic and energetic Red Chamber wars, this affective and ecological connectivity can be illustrated with the three films released together on the same day in *Wah Kiu Yat Po* – a newspaper for diasporic and ethnic Chinese overseas. First, CTV's advertisement demonstrate how global capital can invest in a supposedly "Chinese" and localized dream in the adaptations of a literary masterpiece, just as local citizens can go global by consumption and migration, exemplifying one case of land/sea, and mud/water fusion. Second, Xu and Wang's *HLM*, itself a Hong Kong-Shanghai coproduction, continued to magnetize audience from the early 1960s to the late 1970s. With its re-release in post-Cultural revolution China, its posters in the Third Red Chamber war promised a globally diasporic connection – one that was promising and aborted in the 1960s, as it spotlighted the film's simultaneous screenings in other port cities (*bu* 埠) such as Macau and Singapore (*buji lianying*, 埠際聯映) (**Fig. 2.10-11**).

Thirdly, Li Han-hsiang and the Shaw Brother's *HLM*. poster exemplifies *HLM*'s stardom format of "the one" among "the many," featuring Bao-yu and Dai-yu (**Fig. 2.9**). Above the two stars are extensive "quotes," plausibly all simulated positive feedback from a wide spectrum of social class and social types: housewives, students, lovers, grandmas and grandpas, brothers and sisters, factory workers, and professional women. As if rehearsing the assembly in Chapter 43, the gathering this time has "invited," most curiously "foreign dudes" (*ngoi-kwok-lou*, 外國佬) similar to *gwei-lo* 鬼佬 in Cantonese, and 老外 *lao-wai* in contemporary Mandarin) **[Fig. 2.9**]. Most likely referring exclusively to English-speaking British colonials, Euro-Americans and white populations in the context of colonial Hong Kong, these "foreign dudes," both intimately and sometimes derogatively named in gendered terms (*lou* 佬, meaning "dudes") were imagined to be sitting in a corner among all the diasporic and global audiences, saying in Cantonese: "Good! Very good! [original in English] Even if one can't understand the language and can't sing along, the costumes and film sets alone are worth the ticket price!"[291] As if echoing what Dai-yu suggests, "objects" such as costumes and film sets already have the power to make people "recall" people they miss and love already (*duwu siren*, 睹物思人.) Hoping to transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries through beautiful objects, spectacles and acoustics, this Shaw Brother's *HLM* poster further imagines, if not successfully hosts, a global star assembly based on *qing*/sentiment, through glitter, grief and tears. As it prays (just as it hopes the audiences pay): "May every one with a heart under the heaven would cry a handful of tears 願天下有情人一掬同情淚," presumably for our star-crossed two protagonists, the only "ones" featured on the poster surrounded by "the many." Here lies the importance of tears, waters, and seas in turning *HLM*'s

[291] The original line (the second from the left) is written in English and Cantonese: "Good! Good Job! 就算唔識聽，唔識唱，單係睇的 [sic] 咁靚嘅服裝、佈景、道具就已經值番票價啦！"

into global assemblies. This is a lesson offered by the Red Chamber wars (1961-1978), and as suggested by *HLM* itself, the connective conjuring of star assembly, glittering grief, queerness and trans-forming seas would be an endless and timeless task crossing the thresholds of time. To end this section on a speculative note, I would like to cite (again) a couplet the entrance of the Land of Illusion 太虛幻境 in Chapter 5 of *HLM*. Future possibilities of *HLM*'s adaptations are trans-temporally sealed and concealed here, to be assembled:

> Ancient earth and towering sky
> Marvel that love's passion should outlast past and present
> Star-crossed men and women
> Groan that love's debts should be so hard to pay.
> 厚地高天，堪嘆古今情不盡
> 痴男怨女，可憐風月債難償
> (*SOTS*: 5:1:130; *HLM* 5:1:74, *translation modified*)

Conclusion

> Mean hovels and abandoned halls
> Where courtiers once paid daily calls:
> Bleak haunts where weeds and willows scarcely thrive
> Were once with a stage of songs and dance
> In such commotion does the world's theatre rage:
> As each one leaves, another takes the stage.
> In vain we roam: Each in the end must call a strange land home.
>
> 陋室空堂，當年笏滿床
> 衰草枯楊，曾為歌舞場
> 亂烘烘，你方唱罷我登場，反認他鄉是故鄉…
>
> Zhen Shi-yin, "Won-done Song 好了歌" (*SOTS*, 1:1:64-65: *HLM* 1:1:18)

One may ask what exactly is the *ultimate cause* for "a Red Chamber war" in late 1977? What rekindled the war after an almost 15 years of hiatus since the previous war of 1962? Several lenses can be deployed to analyze the above materials: geopolitical, commercial, and industrial,

and all relatedly, cultural. Geopolitically, Cen Fan's and Xu/Wang's adaptations, like other opera tours at the time, sought to employ and enact China's soft power to profile itself globally in assembling empathetic audiences listening to socialist China. As shown, Xu and Wang also went to not only Hong Kong but also North Korea playing *HLM*. No surprise that the Shanghai theatre troupe's popular tour from the PRC was viewed with caution if not alarm not only by film companies such as the Shaw Brothers, MP&GI, but also the colonial government in Hong Kong and vilified by the ROC state of KMT in Taiwan.[292]

Second, an economic, cultural, and sociological argument would suggest that the Red Chamber wars were driven by flows of capital and the will to dominate the "diasporic" Chinese market. According to this logic, *HLM* was only one Chinese classic amongst many that confirm this pattern of cultural nationalism. The Red Chambers wars, accordingly, can be seen as symptoms of a perennial "cultural nostalgia" among Chinese diaspora across respective historical periods, each new iteration, each new spectacular *HLM*, helping audiences connect to the "homeland" of "China." This marketing of cultural nostalgia for an imagined homeland indeed informed the Shaw Brother's business model and cultural vision. As Poshek Fu has argued, the Shaw Brother's Chinese-customed period films all drew full houses with the reimagining of a mythic homeland.[293] The profit driven logic examined by Fu in the Shaw Brother's production in turn also sheds light on less market-centered forms of argument. As such, the Red Chambers wars as competitions of "Chineseness" also illuminate the logic of

[292] For instance, *Lianhebao,* a major newspaper affiliated with the Kuomintang (KMT, the Chinese Nationalist Party) described the popularity of the Shanghai troupe and its film adaptation in Hong Kong as a product of the CCP's "united front" (*tongzhan*, 統戰). See "Fei pai yueji Hongloumeng dianying, yi yin neihong er xuaogao tingzhi," 匪拍越劇紅樓夢電影 已因內鬨而宣告停止 [The Communist bandits' cinematization of Yue opera halted by internal factional struggles], *Lianhebao* 聯合報, December 12, 1961.
[293] See Poshek Fu "Introduction: The Shaw Brothers Diasporic Cinema," in *China Forever*.

center/peripheries in Tu Wei-ming's argument on "cultural China," or more critically in Shu-mei Shih's term "Sinophone articulation."[294]

Yet instead of expounding on how *HLM* and its adaptations have been shaped by socio-political contexts, I more emphatically ask how *HLM*'s 18th-century formal and affective dynamics, re-enacted through so many remediations across the twentieth century, persist in shaping, fashioning while also constraining historical, cultural and political formations through several affective forms: star assembly, glittering grief, queerness and trans-forming seas. Eschewing a straightforward adoption of any of the above approach, this essay seeks to discuss the Red Chamber wars through a formalist and affective lens, using the worldliness of "Hongloumeng-ness" (what makes *Hongloumeng* "*Hongloumeng*") in lieu of Chineseness in demonstrating affective world-making and infrastructural network afforded by the 18th-century masterpiece.[295] The otherwise correct and lucid frameworks above, all applicable to the case of Red Chamber war, are insufficient in covering the mess, as well as the aesthetics and politics of Red Chamber wars as star assemblies/banquets. As I argue, socio-political readings have to be recalibrated by the textual/textural specificities and affordance of the classic Chinese novel *HLM*. Only if we imagine these various wars in terms of what I above called the "banquet" style of inviting audiences to participate in the star assembly of affect (glittering grief), and only if we understand such a style of banquet invitations in terms of the affordance of the novel itself, can we begin to understand the affective dynamisms of "the ones" (protagonists and stars) among "many" (minor characters and the audiences) across lands and seas, and China and the world.

[294] See Wei-ming Tu, "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center." *Daedalus* 120, no. 2 (1991): 1-32; Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
[295] See for example, one representative volume: Jeremy E Taylor, and Lanjun Xu, eds, *Chineseness and the Cold War: Contested Cultures and Diaspora in Southeast Asia and Hong Kong* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022).

For this reason, this chapter has reconstructed the affective textures and tensions of the repeated Red Chamber wars, reading and curating archival sources, trying not to streamline and flatten the messy, sensory phenomena to a mere case study confirming socio-political-cultural hypotheses of only one place and one time. Instead, I suggest we need to apprehend an aesthetic-political formalism infrastructurally, repeating across localities, temporalities, and even media. All the above frameworks, this chapter argues, can be re-described and recast (and not negated) through a more transhistorical, formal rubric generated from *HLM*'s textual source: the affective assemblies of banquets centering on star assembly, glittering grief and queer/trans-ness through the ecology of land/sea and mud/water.

Banquets and assemblies of many characters are depicted in basically all classic Chinese novels, but this essay contends that among all of its peers, only *HLM*'s adaptations and affective network often readily assumes the form embodied by the Chinese banquet. As the novel and its remediations show, such banquets are defined by relatives or guests gathering together, eating, chatting, celebrating, even while harboring resentment, devolving into bickering, or as is the case of the various *HLM* cinematic battles described above, turning into cultural wars. Colorful and noisy, such gathering celebrate togetherness (even while preparing for the mourning of departure) by producing senseless but sensible noises/gunfire/*renao* 熱鬧. Indeed, as we have seen, in the Red Chamber wars, the notion of the banquet is reenacted not only on, but also off screen through adaptations, filled with music and food, tears and joys, bitterness and ambivalence, competition and alienation, all centering on the celebration of the ultimate dispersal through "glittering grief."

As a conclusion, I would like to suggest future directions of research based on current findings, specifically following up on the Red Chamber wars of 1977 by zooming in on

contemporary China (the PRC) and a different media, television. After the Third Red Chamber wars which connected Hong Kong, Taiwan, the PRC, Southeast Asia and other parts of the world, the craze for adapting *HLM* into movies disappeared among the Chinese diaspora and Sinophone Asia. The exact reasons need to be explored further, but one can be sure the diasporic craze has "migrated" from the former overseas back to the PRC. From the late 1980s onwards, Beijing became the center of *HLM* adaptations. The PRC's craze for *HLM* was dramatized first on a national scale in the contemporary China's "classic" TV adaptation, Wang Fu-lin's 王扶林 televisual adaptation of *HLM* of 1987. Produced by China Central Television (CCTV), it is considered by many in the PRC as a classic. As a re-enactment of the earlier search for finding the perfect star to enact the perfect role (or to find the perfect girl to serve as the perfect bride for Bao-yu), the 1987 production also staged a dramatic *hai-xuan*, searching for and training actors from different provinces of China, many of whom remain popular and memorialized in the PRC until this day.[296]

Yet to zoom out from this further from the scale of the national to the global, one may note that the "origin" of CCTV's 1987 adaptation is motivated not only by national passions but also global concerns: the director Wang proposed the adaptation after witnessing the popularity of the BBC's Shakespeare TV dramas in his trip to the Britain.[297] This exposure to the outside world kindled Chinese sentiments of a lack of (or a lag in terms of) cultural infrastructure, sentiments which, after the end of Cultural Revolution and in the midst of reforms and opening, were shared by the Communist Party (the CCP) leadership. As put by one redologist Hu Wen-bin

[296] For a first hand record of what went into the production and reception of the 1987 drama, see the volume: Ouyang Fenqiang 歐陽奮強, *1987 Wo men de hongloumeng,* 1987,我們的紅樓夢 [1987, Our Dream of the Red Chamber] (Beijing: Zhongguo qinggongye chubanshe, 2017).
[297] Xueping Zhong, "*The Story of the Stone* on Television," in *Approaches to Teaching the Story of the Stone (Dream of the Red Chamber)*, edited by Andrew Schonebaum and Tina Lu (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2012), 427-441.

胡文彬 in a special issue of the leading mainland-baased *Hongloumeng Xuekan* (*The Journal of HLM Studies*) on the 1987 TV drama, the genesis of the TV adaptation was a positive phenomenon against the backdrop of "the flooding popularity of *wu-xia*, adventure and action films from Hong Kong and foreign countries" in post-socialist China.[298] Foreign and "outside" influences, like sea water, were felt as an overabundance, a flood (*fanlan,* 泛濫) that threatened to drown China. Inspired by and in response to the foreign production of cultural goods invading China, Hu was gladdened by the "*HLM* fever" generated by the PRC TV adaptation which, he claimed, reached a historical high in China and overseas (*hai-neiwai,* 海內外). With a tone of pride, he cited the high ratings (approximately 70%) of the show in Deng Xiaoping's designated special economic zone – Shenzhen, where normally TV programs and popular culture of Hong Kong (at that point still a British colony) dominated.[299] Global consciousness shows both in the "BBC" and "Hong Kong" moments in the story of the PRC's 1987 adaptation: with forces of "the sea" and overseas perceived as both inundating volatilities ("a flood") and also circulating opportunities ("overseas impact").

[298] Hu wrote: "Five years ago, our comrades in the party noticed our very lack of development in cultural infrastructure on screens and stages; *wu-xia* and action-adventure movies from Hong Kong and foreign countries have been in full flood, in the face of which our comrades suggested: 'China has so many writers and classics, why don't we develop our very own products with our own cultures to satisfy the audience? That was how adaptations of classics (such as *HLM* and *Journey to the West*) came into being. Hu's original paragraph in Chinese is: "五年前，鑒於我們的銀屏和舞台上節目貧乏，香港和外國的武俠片、驚險打斗片到處泛濫的實際狀況，中央領導同志曾經指出: 中國有這麼多作家，有這麼多名著，我們為什麼不能搞一點具有民族特色的東西，搞一些能夠滿足廣大觀眾需要的東西.' 《紅樓夢》的改編（也包括《西游記》等其它古典文學名著的改編），就是在這樣的一個背景下應運而生." See Hu Wen-bin 胡文彬, "Danshi tansuo qishi: dianshiju *Honfloumeng* yinghou ganyan" 膽識 探索 啟示 - 電視劇《紅樓夢》映後感言 [Courage, exploration, revelations: Comments on the airing of the TV drama *HLM*], *Hongloumeng Xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊, no. 4 (1987): 212.

[299] See Hu "Danshi," 217. However, Hu's description of the drama's reception in Hong Kong – the only representative of the what Hu calls "overseas" - is carefully qualified, saying only that 'the rating of *HLM*'s drama is one of the best two highest rated program in this TV channel (i.e. ATV, Asia Television Limited, 亞洲電視)." Yet, ATV, unlike TVB, was not and have never been the leading TV channel in Hong Kong.



Fig. 2.12 Maps from the media conference of *Dreamers in Dream of the Red Chamber*. Ten zones were designated, with Taiwan initially zoned into hosting overseas contestants (and not included in the news articles title, hence 9 instead of 10 zones); later, the so-called overseas candidates competed in Shenzhen instead. **Source:** "Exclusive: Nine competition zones designated for the *HLM* talent show: a strategy guide" 獨家： 紅樓夢中人 9 大賽區確定 參賽攻略詳解, *Sohu*, October 16, 2006, last accessed 20 March 2024, https://yule.sohu.com/20061016/n245810096.shtml

Around twenty years later, this coveted yet volatile reach for, and rechanneling of the "overseas" elements were not lost in yet another nation-wide *HLM* adaptation. In 2006, Beijing

Media Network organized a media campaign, *Hongloumeng Zhongren* 紅樓夢中人 (*Dreamers in Dream of the Red Chamber*; hereafter *Dreamers*), claiming to recruit new talent for the upcoming TV adaptation, which ultimately resulted in Li Shaohong's 李少紅 50-episode drama in 2010.[300] Major media outlets including *People's Daily*, extensively followed the 10-month talent show from start to finish. Despite the hype, the process and outcome were plagued by controversies: several major roles were left vacant, other winning contestants made it to the final production but not in the roles they competed for, all of which raised doubts and triggered speculation about rigged results and underhand dealings.[301] Directors, initially Hu Mei and later Li Shaohong, asserted auteurist power in casting, claiming the talent show was not their own idea. What commands our concern here, however, is that the overhyped and ultimately disappointing recruitment of *Dreamers* was also branded to be global and reaching out to the so called global/overseas Chinese (*quanqiu huaren* 全球華人/*haiwai huaren* 海外華人) beyond mainland China. Indeed, the show's target of overseas aesthetic appeal had a markedly global and political overtone: its adoption of the *hai-xuan* format (海選, "sea selection") originating in

[300] The campaign comprised interactive platforms between TV programs, mobile phones and online activities such as voting, blogging and commenting. The contestants, recruited and catalogued according to their provincial origins, mainly competed for three roles: "Jia Bao-yu," "Lin Dai-yu" and "Xue Bao-chai," with some contending for the role of "Granny Liu."

[301] Several newspaper sources alleged the problems of rigging and even corruption, see for example: "Honglou xuanxiu bei zhi shexian qizha qianwan duanxin toupiao dashuipiao" 紅樓選秀被指涉嫌欺詐 千萬短信投票打水漂 [*HLM* talent show alleged to be a scam: millions of SMS votes nullified], *Sohu*, June 14, 2007, http://news.sohu.com/20070614/n250567701.shtml. Many suspected the show was simply a marketing stunt, a gimmick, a load of hot air (in Chinese, *chao-zuo* 炒作). Most controversially, only one winning contestant made it to the TV adaptation itself, with the director (first Hu Mei, later changed to Li Shao-hong) insisting on their casting autonomy. Fans of Wang Fu-lin's inaugural televisual adaptation of *HLM* in PRC history often harp on how all the actors, most prominently Ouyang Feng-qian's Bao-yu and the late Lin Xiao-xu's Dai-yu, are "irreplaceable," citing their "unsurpassable" excellence as one insurmountable difficulty in new adaptations.

post-socialist China's village elections, rhetorically casting the sea of human talent as political potentialities of open-endedness, inclusivity and democracy.[302]

In the case of the *Dreamers* show, all contestants were arranged to compete in 10 competition zones: Taiwan serving as one zone alongside Shanghai and Beijing (**Fig. 2.12**); special administrative regions such as Hong Kong, Macau, were lumped together with what has been called overseas Chinese, competed in the zone of Shenzhen.[303] Nevertheless, from the stages of competition to production, from the *Dreamers* show to the eventual tv-remake of *HLM*, the production remained largely "PRC/(main)land"-based, with some but overall negligible participations of Hong Kong, Taiwan and the so called overseas Chinese or diasporic talents.[304] More ethnocentrically was the assertion that no Japanese and Korean actors should be cast for this Chinese classic.[305] In this case, no sensational complaint, however, was made regarding this

[302] The nomenclature "*hai-xuan*" is an inclusive-sounding term originating in post-socialist China's village elections, later widely applied to describe voting mechanisms in phenomenal star shows such as *Super Girls* 超級女星. It encodes the self-governing ideals of direct democracy in village elections, where candidates are filtered stage by stage through theoretically broad-based, open and unfiltered participations, metaphorized as the sea (*hai* 海,) *Baidu Baike*, the Chinese equivalent of Wikipedia, explains *hai-xuan* as that of "freely selecting the chosen one among a uncensoring pool of candidates as boundless as the sea." ("就是茫茫人海中挑選符合特定條件的那個人。 "海" 還有 "極多" 和 "漫無邊際" 的意思，表示在海選時不指定候選人，想選誰就可以提名誰。（2）由選民直接提名、確定候選人進行選舉，猶如從大海中撈取珍珠一樣選擇自己信任的." See, https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%B5%B7%E9%80%89/391166. On village election in relation to democracy, see Robert A. Pastor, and Qingshan Tan. "The Meaning of China's Village Elections." *The China Quarterly*, 162, no. 162 (2000): 490-512.

[303] "Shenzhen as a 'window city' serves again as a window through which Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Macau and overseas Chinese (*huaqiao*) and ethnic Chinese (*huayi*) competing in the Shenzhen zone." See "Hongloumeng Shenzhen juesai zhouliu daxiang Beijing weishi xinlang tongbu zhibo" 紅樓夢深圳決賽周六打響 北京衛視新浪同步直播 [*Hongloumeng's* Shenzhen zone begins its final on Saturday; broadcast live on Beijing & Radio Television and Sina], *Sina*, February 8, 2007, http://ent.sina.com.cn/v/m/2007-02-08/13381443341.html

[304] The Oscar-winning Hong Kong art director Timothy Yip Kam-tim 葉錦添 played a significant role in Li's adaptation. Under his direction, the costumes and make-up of female actresses' forehead in the drama drew heavy criticism in mainland China.

[305] Netizens were quoted as having entertained the possibility that Korean actor Lee Joon Gi could play Bao-yu, but it was reported that many opposed the idea of having non-Chinese actors in *HLM*. See: "新版《紅樓夢》不用日韓明星，與新版《水滸》總導演吳子牛要用日韓明星組成國際明星陣容形成了鮮明對比。而實際上，新版《紅樓夢》去年在北京啓動時也表示不排除邀請日韓明星，李俊基出演賈寶玉一下成了網上推薦的熱門人

problematic lack of "inclusion and diversity," as Li Shaohong's drama did not (perhaps also not genuinely intended to) make a big impact overseas, and did not receive sufficient attention outside mainland China. Put metaphorically, in *Dreamers* the (main)land and (over)seas failed to transfuse and materialize relatably and reliably. Not surprisingly, the issue of Chinese soft power, both within and outside China, was not lost on media reports of the drama's "hard (but not soft) landing" in audience reception and global circulation, notwithstanding the promise of its "globally open" sea-election ("*hai-xuan"*).

History, however, suggested alternative routes between lands and seas. Our affective and historical study of Red Chamber Wars is one counterexample. As seen in the first section, film adaptations of *HLM*'s appeared most vibrantly in Republican Shanghai and colonial Hong Kong, and multiple regional "centers" exist before Wang Fu Lin's Beijing-based adaptation in 1987 and several others that followed it. Therefore, Wang's and Li Shao-hong's TV adaptions, irrespective of their received artistic merits and their national popularity, are historically preceded by at least four televisual adaptations of *HLM* in colonial Hong Kong and Taiwan,[306] not to mention dozens of cinematic adaptations in Hong Kong film history that remain largely unconsulted as comparable kin.

Why are these Bao-yu(s) – and his kins, friends, and alliances – missing? Or have we failed to locate them? Indeed, in the post-millennium era of Li Shaohong's TV adaptation, there

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選，只是由於國內反對聲浪太大，《紅樓夢》現在終於明確了放棄日韓明星的方案…不盲目追捧日韓明星，既不失為明智之舉，同時也顯示了文化的自信 " Quoted from "Hongloumeng xiang rihan yanyuan shuo 'bu'" 紅樓夢向日韓演員說「不」[*HLM* says no to Japanese and Korean actors], *Xinmin Wanbao*, 新民晚報, November 3, 2007.

[306] Dozens of journal articles focused on the PRC's TV adaptation in 1987; a brief history of TV adaptations outside mainland China is in order here. In Hong Kong, *HLM* was adapted as TV drama by Television Broadcast Limited (TVB) 無線 in 1975 (5 episodes); and then by Commercial Television (CTV) 佳藝電視 in 1977 (100 episodes). In Taiwan, the novel was adapted by Chinese Television Services (CTS) 華視 in 1978, (73 episodes); the second time in 1983 (16 episodes); the third time in 1996 (69 episodes).

was also no dearth of notable and comparable adaptations, mostly modern theatrical performances beyond mainland China. Renowned playwrights such as Edward Lam 林奕華 (*Awakening*, 2011-2013; *What is Sex?* in 2015; Bao-yu), as well as Asian American David Henry Hwang 黃哲倫 and Taiwanese American Stan Lai 賴聲川 (2016-2018), continued the circuit of *HLM* across the Sinophone pacific and Asian American communities, even touring or "returning" to cities in the PRC with considerable media exposure. How do we historically understand and trace the affective glue that link all these relaying cases of adaptations bordering between what has been called "mainland" and "overseas" – which are otherwise all respectively contextualizable – networking with each other by default through theater, cinema and other transmedial adaptations? My essay has suggested a formalist and affective answer: star assembly, glittering grief, queerness, and trans-forming seas.

Geopolitically, *HLM*'s assembly as a banqueting aesthetic platform mediates but is not meant to resolve the fraught intimacy/intimidation nexus that informs *HLM*'s "star contest." As shown in the 2007 star show and elsewhere, tensions must remain between contemporary China and the world with originally multiple, but increasingly unilateral "centers" of adaptations competing and striving for "the real Bao-yu." The key of "success" for adaptations, as per *HLM* as a whole and shown particularly in Chapter 43, lies with the queering and trans-ing – crucially as well as the "landing" and materializing of water through not only global mobility but also the capacity to deploy both mud and water in crafting aesthetic containment, or contentment, or entertainment that is assembling, composing, and consoling the masses (*zhong* 眾). However, spectators eyeing contemporary China are increasingly global, cautious, and anxious. Can *HLM* cross the seas while the participation of overseas Chinese, Sinophone communities or people

from other nations and races, still true to the spirit of Bao-yu "mixing" with mud-and water, where "impurities" turn out to be beautiful and even real in Chapter 43?

While other classic Chinese novels' affective networks (such as *Sanguo* and *Xiyouji* provide often trans-racial and cross-ethnic alternatives mediating the processes of worlding China, *HLM* in contrast so far remains an indoor affair of "a family." Theoretically there is no geopolitical determinism in valorizing diasporic communities as better equipped than land-locked populations in articulating glittering grief and holding affective assemblies. Dai-yu, for one, has suggested "all water are from the same source." Our Red Chamber wars suggested such affective assemblies and stardom making were once and would always be possible, and the future remains uncertain.

In sum, *HLM*, again and again, serves as an infrastructural platform of queer and trans(-forming) star-making in process; Mei Lanfang, Yuan Meiyun, Zhou Xuan, Xu Yu-lan, Ling Bo, Brigitte Lin, Leslie Cheung … all mega stars in post-war Chinese and Sinophone film history rising from minor characters transforming into queer and non-binary stardom. Could it then really just be a coincidence that, all these stars were once summoned as a medium by and through, or simply *as* Bao-yu in *HLM*?

To briefly revisit the representative queer stardom *HLM* has produced and intersected from the 20th century: Mei Lanfang, the star par excellence of modern China in the early 20th century who once cross-dressed as Dai-yu, "impersonates China" to the world until a mustache appeared on his face due to patriotism, as David Wang has reminded us.[307] Xu Yu-lan performed as Bao-yu, and Wang Wenjuan as Dai-yu in Hong Kong releasing diasporic Chinese's tears until

[307] David Der-wei Wang, "Impersonating China," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews.,* 25, (2003): 133-163; and Kim Suk-young, "From Imperial Concubine to Model Maoist: The Photographic Metamorphosis of Mei Lanfang." *Theatre Research International* 31, no. 1 (2006): 37-53.

the Cultural Revolution set in. Yet since the reform era in 1980s, Xu and Wang, as well as the *HLM* adaptations produced in the PRC and its "star-making," did not seem to make any impact on Hong Kong, Taiwan and Sinophone Asia. But even younger Bao-yus and Dai-yus in later mainland adaptations, such as Ouyang Fengqiang 歐陽奮強 (b. 1963) and Chen Xiaoxu 陳曉旭 (b.1965-2007) in the TV adaptation in 1987, while considered canonical in the mainland, did not (or perhaps did not want to or need to?) seem to achieve "global" star status beyond mainland China. Why is that? And is "global stardom," particularly one that involves *HLM*, a problem at all? For those who are concerned with China's soft power (as compared to Hong Kong cinema in Hong Kong, manga and anime in Japan, K-pop and K-drama in Korea, Hollywood and Disney in America), the answer could be "yes," it should be a concern. If "soft power" is not a concern, then maybe no, these often nationally funded and organized adaptations do not need to travel and be relatable to, not to mention "conquering hearts and minds" of the "outside" world.

We might not want to just resort to geopolitical framework (e.g., the so-called binary between socialist/capitalism, as well as authoritarianism/liberal democracy) in framing the issues of a (im)possible "global" Bao-yu and Dai-yu from the PRC, which reeks of the Cold War legacy of confrontation. Here instead of binaristic "hostility," we may look at what I call "the volatility of tears" in Xu Yu-lan and Wang Wenjuan's case in terms of *HLM*'s forms of affect. By the time Xu and Wang returned to the stage of HLM from the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s, both opera stars already had passed their prime and were already in their 50s. As Wang recalled, during the Cultural Revolution she could not say a line (basically, a slogan) wrong, or it would turn into a political mistake that invited denunciation. As a result, right after the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1977, she lost her art and needed to, in her own words, "find her feelings

back 找回感覺."[308] On the stuckness of emotional flow, Wang's very own description of her post-revolutionary condition, particularly, her maritime and hydraulic metaphor, is worth our close attention:

> **I couldn't retrieve feeling of the past.** The stage doesn't seem to be mine… My heart is like **a small boat self-spinning at the center of river.** I keep reciting the script, but my body was all tied up, my action mechanical, and my expression deadened.
>
> 但我卻完全找不到過去的感覺，這個舞台好像不再屬於自己…心裏像是江心打轉的小船，一刻不停地背着台詞，手腳卻像被捆綁住了似的，動作機械僵硬，表情十分呆版。 (*translation and emphasis mine*) [309]

Crucially, Wang suggested that her feelings inside her heart was like a stuck "little boat" "self-spinning," in, please note, "a river." We may ask: does this "boat" connect to the (over)seas, if it does not even float in "a river"? The blockage of *HLM*'s waters, and tears (as we noticed in the above section) during the Cultural Revolution appear to remain in post-socialist China. Later in 1979, their *HLM* film returned to screen; audiences rushed to cry over this tragic story on, and off screen. In 1980, Xu and Wang visited Hong Kong after two decades of hiatus (their last previous visit was in 1960). There the troupe delivered 24 full-house performances. she encountered several fans in Hong Kong, whose tears poured upon seeing her. She wrote:

> After our performance, two young and passionate female fans ran to us and held our hands. Their Cantonese was breathlessly fast; **tears were streaming down their faces**. After someone "translated" for us, we learned that they watched our *HLM* film 30 times over the years. They said, "Finally, **we have met brother Bao-yu and sister Dai-yu**!" Language barriers dissolved **in our laughter.**
>
> 後台奔來兩位熱心的女觀眾，緊握着我倆的手，她們講得廣東話又急又快，臉上還留着淚，經過「翻譯」，才知道他們說自己前後看了 30 遍電影《紅樓夢》，「今天

[308] Wang, *Tianshang*, 238.
[309] Wang, *Tianshang*, 239.

> 真的見到寶哥哥、林妹妹了！」，語言的障礙在彼此的歡笑聲中消失了。 (*translation and emphasis mine*) [310]

Though in this visit they did not play *HLM* but *Xiyuan Ji* 西園記 (The Story of the West Garden), their fans still called them by "Bao-yu" and "Dai-yu," testifying to *HLM*'s formal and aesthetic endurance and survival across contexts, as this chapter suggests. But affectively speaking, what is peculiar in Wang's description is that it is laughter, *and not tears*, that dissolve the limits of identities. As shown in the next paragraph, Wang seems to take the grief of *dedicated audiences* (i.e., audiences who looked up to them as "stars" in the first place) ideologically and geopolitically, as deriving from if not equivalent to something like a Cold War "bias":

> At that time **Hong Kong** still understood mainland China according to the frame of the Cultural Revolution; their image of us carried **a "demonizing" tone** … [a colleague of mine] also a met female fan that she knew long time ago. That little girl cried so hard while hugging [my fellow performer], and she said we must have suffered a lot…**some audiences from Taiwan** saw us and hesitated to inquire about the following: "you must have suffered a lot! I heard you got beaten and they forced you to kneel…" We explained to them, that these **belong to the past**. Now the policy has changed, and the mainland has changed a lot too. I persuaded them to visit mainland China and take a look.
>
> 那時香港對內地的認識仍停留在「文革」上，印象有些「妖魔化」...[另一個團員]有一個過去認識的小姐妹，見了面抱着就大哭起來，說你們受苦了。幾個台灣觀眾見了我們怯怯地問：「這些年你們吃了很多苦吧？聽說還打你們、罰跪…我們耐心地解釋這些都是過去的事了，現在政策變了，勸他們有機會也回來看看，現在大陸變化很大呢。(*translation and emphasis mine*) [311]

Grief and tears, only belong to the "past," but also strangely not shared and shareable in Wang's perception. At this point in her descriptive account, Wang appeared to be severed from her own suffering during the Cultural Revolution, and simultaneously severed from the Hong Kong and Taiwan audiences "imagined" or "real" suffering between "home" and "diaspora" during the

[310] Wang, *Tianshang*, 253.
[311] Wang, *Tianshang*, 253.

same period. Tears therefore do not form a continuum of muds and waters, as in Bao-yu's trip in Chapter 43.[312] From the beginning of *HLM*, Bao-yu and Dai-yu would almost never stop to (productively or unproductively) grieve, until Bao-yu got overtly "political", taking the imperial examination (i.e. paving way for being officials), becoming "a man," and starting to lose his queer capacity in unleashing "trans-forming seas" and tears in the Prospect Garden. We may wonder if this the same is happening in Wang's description of her encounter with their Hong Kong and Taiwan fans (the most plausibly sympathetic audiences of theirs), whose grief, as perceived by Wang, cannot but be understood as some products of Cold War bias against "communism" in modern and contemporary China. In the name of national policy changes and social progress – this time not only socialist, but post-socialist and capitalist progress – the *HLM*'s infrastructural basis of common and shared queer grieving across land and seas appeared to be traumatically *stilled* and *stunted* in Wang's description.

As the Shanghai yue opera troupe slowly recovered from the trauma yet still "self-spinning at the center of the river" (in Wang's own analogy) in the 1980s, other *HLM* emerged during the hiatus between 1960s to 1980s. Many other Bao-yus and Dai-yus, such as Ling Bo, and later Brigitte Lin and Leslie Cheung, took the center stage of *HLM* in Sinophone Asia and the global world at large, *surfing on waters* and *serving tears* in assembling audiences, be they "local" or considered "overseas" in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, or global Asia in general. First, Ling Bo rose to the occasion. Starting from the 1960s, her queering sensibilities gathered seas of people during and after the Martial Law of KMT in Taiwan. (In her 70s and 80s,

[312] Later, some of their fans from the overseas visited mainland China, Wang treated them dinner in the canteen of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (政協食堂), but some refused to go inside the canteen. It appears that overt politics, or a certain kind of political assembly (as in the Cultural Revolution) deactivates rather than activates *HLM*'s aesthetic-political form of stardom assembly and glittering grief across "home" and "diaspora"; Wang, *Tianshang*, 253.

Ling was still flying to and fro from her country of retirement Canada to Hong Kong and Taiwan, reuniting with nostalgic audiences until the first decade of the millennium.)

After Ling Bo, Brigitte Lin and Leslie Cheung took the lead as inheritors of *HLM*'s Bao-yu, glittering and grieving as "virtual" Bao-yu(s) or Dai-yus(s) in Chinese-language cinema in general. In important ways, *HLM* launched the mega-stardom of Brigitte Lin in Li Han-hsiang's *HLM*, as well as Leslie Cheung playing Bao-yu in Chin Hsin's adaptation, a film which Cheung in fact hated.[313] In that pornographic film, "glittering grief" eluded him, instead he was surrounded by female nudes. Yet it was with the imprinting of this debut *HLM* film that Leslie Cheung was first invested as a future star, as he himself expected this film to be functioning as a platform to become a lead actor. [314] In particular, Cheung's cross-dressing (and by now possibly understood as also trans-gendering) role as Peking opera actor/actress Chen Die-yi in the 5th generation director Chen Kaige's Palme d'Or-winning *Farewell My Concubine* 霸王別姬 (1992) (itself indebted to female Hong Kong writer, Lilian Lee's namesake novel) may have marked a highpoint of *HLM*'s often obscured infrastructural contribution to what can be now called LGBTQIA+ stardom. [315] To this day, despite Cheung's own dislike of how the film portrays Jia

[313] It is one reason why the film is not further circulating and rereleased in DVD forms. The film's VHS and VCD forms have been out of print. However, it remains elusively possible to buy a Japanese copy, which, true the logic of stardom, features only Leslie Cheung on the cover.

[314] In Chin Hsin's adaptation, both Leslie Cheung (Bao-yu) and Wong Hang sau (Dai-yu), hoping to be the leads and collaborate with another (both were rising stars catching attention). Yet both turned out to hate the movie *Erotic* since a cheap porn was not what they were promised. Cheung denied and discounted this as his debut film, while Wong said she was not even invited to the premiere and never saw it. According to Zhai's interview, Wong played the maid Skybright in another Hong Kong adaptation by TVB in 1975. At the time actors Ng Wai-kwok 伍衛國 played Bao-yu and Liza Wang 汪明荃 played Dai-yu. There was already suggestion that Wong should play Dai-yu instead of Wang since the latter's aggressive personality does not match with Dai-yu. Yet Wong was considered too new and therefore not chosen (105). Wong discovered she was cheated when she was only directed to "wake up from a dream" and acted "very scared," when the sex scenes were performed by extras. Wong found that an "insult" since she never needed extras even in martial art movies. Wong was not consulted before the film went into the market, though she was promised she would be. See Zhai Haoren 翟浩然, "Huangxingxiu yitan huiyilu" 黃杏秀藝壇回憶錄 [Memories of Wong Hang-sau in show business] in *Guang yu yuing de jiti huiyi vol. V* 光與影的集體回憶 V [Collective Memories of Lights and Shadows] (Hong Kong: Ming Pao Weekly, 2015), 104-111.

[315] For a representative queer and trans reading of both Lin and Cheung's works, see Helen Hok-sze Leung, "Trans on screen," in *Transgender China*, edited by Howard Chiang (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 183-198.

Bao-yu, fans and critics keep insisting that the late Cheung is the most ideal actor performing Jia Bao-yu given his looks, wealthy family background (like Cao Xueqin's family background in the textile industry, Cheung's father is a famed Western-style tailor; Cheung himself studied textiles at the University of Leeds in the UK) and later coming out as gay and queer: "a glittering me," as his coming-out biographical song "*Me* 我," says.[316]

For Brigitte Lin, Li Han-hsiang's *HLM* is the only film in her oeuvre that is adapted from a premodern Chinese literary classic. In 2023, Lin received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Golden Horse film festival. Despite the fact that, curiously, the 3-minute interview video of hers failed to mention her role as "Bao-yu" in Li's pivotal adaptation, Lin was nonetheless shown reading and highlighting a copy of *HLM* (**Fig. 2.13-14**).[317] The poem that Lin highlights on screen, as well as on pages, makes it clear that the whole book of *HLM* is "penned with hot and bitter tears."



[316] The lyric of the song (which has Mandarin and Cantonese versions) is penned by the legendary Hong Kong gay lyricist Lin Xi 林夕. The biographical song is often understood as a self-affirmation of his sexuality and in general human diversity. One line of the lyric glitters, and it goes like, "I am what I am (i.e., original in English)…我就是我 / 是顏色不一樣的煙火 (I am myself, a special kind of firework)…." Here I am referring to the Mandarin version.
[317] Lin discusses her "fate" linked with *HLM* in several articles in her essay collections, Lin Ching-hsia 林青霞, "Wo ye meng Honglou" 我也夢紅樓 [I also dream about Red Chamber] *Yunqu Yunlai* 雲去雲來 [Clouds come and clouds go] (Taipei: Shibao, 2014), 72-75.

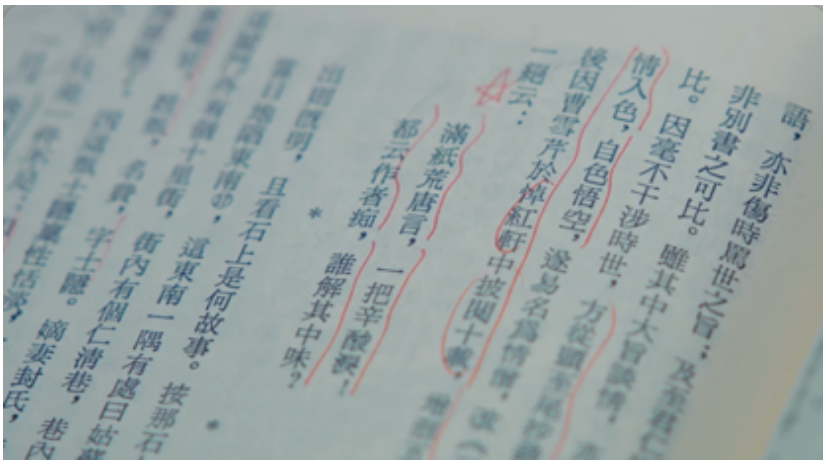

Fig. 2.13-2.14: Brigitte Lin reading *HLM* in a promotion video of Golden Horse Award in 2023: **"**Pages full of idle words/penned with hot and bitter tears/All call the author fool/ None his secret message hears." 滿紙荒唐言，一把辛酸淚。都云作者癡，誰解其中味？ (*SOTS*, 1:1:151; *HLM*: 1:1:7) **Source:**
"Lifetime Achievement Award ─ Brigitte Lin", The Golden Horse Awards' YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLYwcFHCkIs

This chapter has hopefully and historically restored the world-making power of *HLM* in kick-starting global star assembly, such as Lin's. All these stars' successes (or failures), as suggested above, depends not only on playing in *HLM*, but whether they, under lived circumstances, could prove to activate and embody the *mud-water exchange* as formulated in Chapter 43. Their star-power could be innate within the stars themselves (as "talents"), but as in the novel *HLM*, such innate power may exude and expand (as in Chapter 43) but may also extinguish itself (as in the ending of the novel) according to the sociopolitical circumstance, and also according to the aesthetic-political logic of *HLM*.

Could there be a queer/trans Bao-yu acting on screen, when effeminate men or "Boy's Love" face the risk to be removed, or encouraged to be "a man" re-producing babies?[318] Can

[318] On the queer turn in contemporary China, see: Alvin K. Wong, "Towards a Queer Affective Economy of Boys' Love in Contemporary Chinese Media." *Continuum* 34, no. 4 (2020): 500-513; Song Geng "'Little Fresh Meat': The Politics of Sissiness and Sissyphobia in Contemporary China." *Men and Masculinities* 25, no. 1 (2022): 68-86; for a

"land/mud" interact beautifully with "sea/waters" evincing a transformative queer, and trans-forming (i.e. forming trans-ness) power in the forms of grief unleashed by border crossing stars? As more and more artists and singers from Sinophone Asia, East Asia, and also the Western world now work in and work for the entertainment industry in mainland China, we may wonder if the snippet of Wang Wenjuan's termination or disavowal of grief represents a larger *global media climate* of grief disavowal within and beyond mainland China, across lands and seas, ebbing and flowing with *HLM*'s aesthetic form: star assembly, glittering grief, queerness and trans-forming seas.

Yet all this, however, is not totally new, as *HLM*'s network of transhistorical grief tells us. Contemporary sorrow, as *HLM* told us, probably has an ancient origin in the past. It is therefore no surprise that contemporary adaptations keep returning to the form *HLM* in talking about their contemporary lives; the two are one and the same in a continuous series and relays of affective assemblies. For what we call queer and non-binary stardom, for example, we may note that in Wai-yee Li's magistral work *Women and National Trauma in Late Imperial Chinese Literature* (2014), she already showed that transgendering performances among writers and intellectuals (i.e., male impersonating female; female impersonating male) remained a dominant mode in mourning "national trauma" in the Ming-Qing transition (not long after which *HLM* was first written), extending the modern China (in the figure of Chen Yinke 陳寅恪, for instance).[319] As this chapter shows, such gendered trauma of "loss" (the content of which, as Sigmund Freud suggests, remains expansive, sometimes ambiguously associative) continues from time to time,

stringent critique, see Charlie Zhang, *Dreadful Desires: The Uses of Love in Neoliberal China.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022).

[319] Wai-yee Li, *Women and National Trauma in Late Imperial Chinese Literature.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014).

varying from context to context, but all related, and relayed through grief and tears blocked and unblocked through *HLM*.[320]

Can tears of all be released, and grief be altogether grieved across ancient and premodern, China, modern and contemporary China, Sinophone Asia and the world at large? Can we expect a future border-crossing Bao-yu "arriving like a phoenix" in the future world as in Chapter 43, *watering down* and *dissolving* (if not *resolving*) binaristic relations and oppositions through nothing but maintaining and sustaining all kinds of assemblies, as in *HLM*, on and off screen? As this chapter suggests, the ecological form of water, its affective world-making and infrastructural network as afforded bu *HLM* remains the key in unblocking tears spontaneously flowing in between "hearts and minds" that are wanting in, as well waiting for grief and grievability. Promising the assembly and re-assembly of stars, *HLM* remains an open book written in tears that shine through a seemingly endless re-constellation of glittering grief, queerness and trans-forming seas. One can only always start again, to feel the stars grieving and glittering from the beginning, after the ending begins.

[320] Therefore, throughout this chapter, I never specified what is being "grieved" and what constitutes "loss," instead I try to show grief and tears are simply related to each other, no matter what and who leads to such *HLM*'s tears. In the context of modern and contemporary China and Sinophone Asia, such thing as "loss" can be anything on Freud's list: "Mourning is regularly the reaction to **the loss of a loved person**, or to **the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on.**" (*emphasis mine*) See Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *Collected Paper vol. IV* (London; The Hogarth press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953): 152-153.

Chapter Three:

Jin Ping Mei's wind-curtain fluttering: Li Han-hsiang's atmospheric cinema

I am afraid we have still not walked away from the world of *Jin Ping Mei*. That is to say, our contemporary experience is part and parcel of the social, historical and cultural great divergence that took place 400 to 500 years ago.

我甚至疑心我們至今尚未走出《金瓶梅》作者的視線。換句話說，我們今天所經歷的一切，或話正是四五百年前就開始發端的社會、歷史、文化大轉折的一個組成部份

Ge Fei 格非, *Snow-concealed Egrets: Sensuality and Nothingness in Jin Ping Mei* 雪隱鷺鷥 : 金瓶梅的聲色與虛無 (2014)[321]

Is not the most erotic portion of a body **where the garment gapes**? … it is intermittence … which is erotic: the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing (trousers and sweater), between two edges (the open-necked shirt, the glove and the sleeve); it is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance.

Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975) (*emphasis mine*)[322]

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Introduction

In China as in the world, the 17th century erotic novel *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (in Chinese, *Jin Ping Mei*, hence *JPM*) has been the least adapted classic Chinese novel among its canonic peers, the *Four Masterworks* of late-imperial fiction. Owing to the book's sexual content, the erotic novel faced issues of expurgation, censorship, and heavy editing ever since its first appearance in late imperial China, extending to its 20th and 21st century book circulation, its

[321] Ge Fei 格非, *Xueyin Lusi: "Jin Ping Mei" de shengse yu xuwu*. 雪隱鷺鷥 : 金瓶梅的聲色與虛無 [Snow-concealed Egrets: Sensuality and Nothingness in *Jin Ping Mei*] (Nanjing: Yilin chubanshe, 2014), 1-2.
[322] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 9-10.

translations and visual adaptations. This chapter does not read the novel, however, as a passive victim of imposed socio-political censorship; rather, prior to any "imposed" censorship from editors or emperors, the story of *JPM in and by itself already* produces perilous pleasure through its very own curation of sexual/sensual/sensorial covering and uncovering, which is ambiguously indistinguishable from and co-extensive with what we may now conveniently call censorship.

Spotlighting the inevitable conflation of *the sensorial* with *the censorial*, this chapter makes an intervention in the study of *JPM* and its afterlife by focusing on ecology and affect rather than power and ideology alone (i.e., discursive, institutional, gendered). Taking our cue from new materialism in emphasizing the agency of non-human and material actants, we extend our critical vocabulary beyond the limiting framework of censorship in tracking how the original novel's very own immanent staging of affect between the force of "wind" (*feng*) and the texture of "curtain" (*lian*) projects itself and perpetuates in Li Han-hsiang's atmospheric remakes as well as other *JPM* visual adaptations. In seeing how the novel *JPM* demonstrates to us the surrounding agency of the "wind" enveloping both individuals or the states, we attune to how the novel itself suggests a larger non-human force of "the environment" in decentering the anthropocentricism latent in our understanding of *JPM* and its affective circulation. In tandem with "wind," we also track how "curtains" in *JPM* exert its very own textural power in both conveying and constraining patterns of visibility and invisibility. As opposed to the metaphoric/material/digital/infrastructural "wall" fending off the inside from the outside (such as the Great Wall or the firewall) in the long history of Chinese empire,[323] what the novel *JPM* re-

[323] The wall is arguably the central metaphor or material manifestation of state power in Chinese history from past the present. See, for example: Carlos Rojas, *The Great Wall: A Cultural History* (Cambridge.: Harvard University Press, 2010); William A.Callahan, "The Politics of Walls: Barriers, Flows, and the Sublime." *Review of International Studies* 44, no. 3 (2018): 456-481; Li Jinying. "Toward a Genealogy of the Wall-Screen." *Differences.* 33, no. 1 (2022): 28–59.

enacts is a distinctive material form at once porous, semi-transparent but also opaque, that of "the curtain," fluttering in sync with an environmental form: "wind."

For the sake of convenience and conciseness, I call this non-anthropocentric form of affect in *JPM* "wind-(and)-curtain fluttering" (in Chinese *feng-lian-ju-dong* 風簾俱動), whose configurations will be explained in detail below. To fully theorize this affect of wind-curtain fluttering, this chapter focuses on Li's enterprise since it best exemplifies *JPM*'s form of affective circulation in our contemporary mediascape. The first section of this chapter details Li's life journey that led him to produce and reproduce adaptations of *JPM*. Remarkably, in spite of the book's contentious nature, Li singularly adapted *JPM* (itself adapted from *Shuihuzhuan*) into movies five times across three decades from the 1970s to 90s, namely a short film *Huilian* 惠蓮 in his omnibus film *Illicit Desire* 風流韻事 (1973), *Golden Lotus* 金瓶雙艷 (1974), *Tiger Killer* 武松 (1983), *The Golden Lotus "Love and Desire"* 金瓶風月 (1991), and lastly *The Amorous Lotus Pan* 少女潘金蓮 (1994). Pivoting around Li's case study, I would show how "wind-curtain fluttering" incessantly punctuates Li's experience of *JPM*: from trying to gain access and read a "complete" *JPM* copy in his childhood, to becoming a filmmaker who traveled from Republican China to (post)Cold-war East Asia, eventually passing away in mainland China after several failed attempts in making *JPM* movies there.

Curtain and curtaining in Li Han-hsiang's experience with *JPM*

In 1985, film director Li Han-hsiang published a book titled *Jin Ping Mei Trilogies* 金瓶梅三部曲 in Hong Kong. The book collected film scripts of three adaptations based on the 17th

century erotic novel *JPM*.[324] Remarkably, while Li has produced movies out of many traditional, historical and mythical Chinese stories, this *JPM* anthology is the only book he published besides his three volume memoirs. Indeed, after the publication of these *JPM* screenplays, Li would go on to make two more *JPM* movies in the next decade.[325] One may ask: why was *JPM* so fascinating for Li? To trace how this obsession began, we may look at the opening essay of Li's anthology, where he recollects his primal encounter with *JPM*, an experience filled with frustration but concomitantly, pulsating desires:

> I first read *JPM Cihua* when I was about 12 or 13 [i.e., in 1938 or 1939].[326] It was an expurgated version available on the market. I was on the cusp of beginning to understand about the birds and the bees and had heard great things about the episode of Pan Jinlian creating a spectacle at the grape arbor. So, I thought it would be even more spectacular than the "Brocade Pelted Rat escapes from the Copper Wire Trap" episode in *The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants*. But, after reading it, I found it nowhere as exciting as *Shuihuzhuan*. When I reached the age of 18 or 19, I purchased another copy of *JPMCH* available on the market, found it much more readable than the other expurgated versions. **Yet at key moments, the content remained □□□□, followed by parenthetical notices such as "(18 words deleted below)" and "(78 words deleted below)" throughout the whole copy** …
>
> 開始讀金瓶梅，大概是我十三歲的時候吧，看的是市上可以買到的普通刪節本，因為剛剛懂事兒，聽人家說「潘金蓮大鬧葡萄架」如何如何，還以為比七俠五義的「錦毛鼠大破銅網陣」還熱鬧呢。但是看了以後，也不覺得比「水滸傳」好到那兒去。到了十八九歲，又買到了市上賣的一本「金瓶梅詞話」，覺得比一般「金瓶梅」的刪節本就好看得多了，不過看到節骨眼兒的時候，就□□□□起來，並注明：（以下刪十八字），（以下刪七十八字）…[327]

Li, it appears, experienced a series of censorship. Intrigued by *Jin Ping Mei's* reputation as a "spectacular" read, he is frustrated in his early teens when the expurgated edition he reads does not measure up. Then, years later nearing his twenties, when he gets his hands on a more

[324] A short film *Huilian* in his omnibus film *Illicit Desire* (1973), *Golden Lotus* (1974), and *Tiger Killer* (1983).
[325] *The Golden Lotus "Love and Desire"* (1991), and lastly *The Amorous Lotus Pan* 少女潘金蓮 (1994).
[326] Li was born in 1926.
[327] Li Han-hsiang 李翰祥, *Jin Ping Mei Sanbuqu* 金瓶梅三部曲 [*Jin Ping Mei* Trilogy] (Hong Kong: Benma chubanshe, 1985), 7-8.

scholarly and supposedly complete edition (i.e., *Jin Ping Mei Cihua*), he is frustrated that, even in the much more readable copy now in his possession, each Chinese character in the sexual paragraphs had been replaced by a device that is □. Li, not surprisingly, tells how he was incensed by the substitution of □ for sexual content. But it is worth noticing Li did not straightforwardly present himself as a victim of imposed "censorship." For some crucial reasons, he carefully presents to the reader the exact □ he saw on pages, which is followed by parenthetical notices that are not only obstructive but also instructive; for one thing, the editor clearly stated to the reader how many words are deleted following a series of □.

I ask that we take Li's reconstruction of the censorial scene not only ideologically but *sensorially*. Like Li's sticking with □, I would not rush to presume the □ is necessarily a sign or a symbol meaning anything; on the other hand, I also would not assume that it represents a "blank" meaning nothing: it is "something" censorial/sensorial in between the two, which would go on to assume many different forms in our tracing of *JPM*'s affective circulation. As Li describes further his frustration, he analogizes the □ to "circles"/○ in a song lyric:

> … The □ would have been harmless if it were a one-off thing as in that "circle" in "My longings for you I long to convey but to no avail, let a circle be drawn instead." But gosh, I didn't expect that (she would continue to) "draw circles all the way through." I was mad as fucking hell, wishing I could find the bookstore owner so **I could kick her ass, just like how Ximen Qing kicked Pan Jinlian in *JPM***." (*translation mine*)
>
> …若是「相思欲寄無從記，畫個圈兒替」的一個圈兒，倒也無所謂，偏偏它「一路圈兒畫到底」，真他媽的無名火起三千丈，恨不得找到書店闆，像西門慶踢潘金蓮一樣，也狠狠的踢他兩腳。[328]

Referencing a pop song titled "Quan'er Ci 圈兒詞 (Song Lyric of Circles)," Li analogized the presumably repressive □ /"squares" to some emotionally expressive ○/"circles," the latter of

[328] Li, *Jin Ping Mei*, 7-8.

which the female persona uses to express her longings for her lover.[329] Echoing what Paulo Varsano calls "the rhetoric of hiddenness" in traditional Chinese aesthetics, Li could tolerate this aesthetic of politics, until it becomes endlessly unforthcoming.[330]

Evidently, Li is both annoyed but also excited by these two "content-deleting" devices. Even more intriguingly, through encountering □ and ○, Li appears to *have become* Ximen Qing upon encountering these multiple layers of "censorship." In expressing his desire and frustration, Li imagined himself to be Ximen, the uncouth merchant in *JPM,* wreaking violence on both the bookshop owner and Pan Jinlian – both covering up (while also troublingly promising the uncovering of) the "content."

Why would censoring devices (supposedly only *imposed on* the novel) in turn re-enact and recreate a scene *drawing from* and *echoing with* the novel itself? Following Li's lead, I argue

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[329] Li did not mention the source of this citation, but he seemed to assume that this reference was famous, and the reader should be able to "get it." The line he cited can be found in a song by a female folk singer from Taiwan called Bao Meisheng 包美聖, who released a song titled "Quan'er Ci 圈兒詞 (Song Lyric of Circles] " in 1980. Official credits attribute the lyric to an anonymous author (i.e., "清・無名氏") in the Qing-dynasty. The full lyric of Bao's song goes like this: "My longings for you I long to convey but to no avail, let a circle be drawn instead/My words are outside the circle and my heart inside/ I draw more and more circles and you are warm to my affection more and more/One circle is me, double circles are you/A whole circle is union and a broken circle is separation/Uncountable are my longings drawing circles all the way through. (*translation mine*) 相思欲寄從何寄 畫個圈兒替/話在圈兒外心在圈兒裡/我密密加圈兒 你須密密知儂意/單圈兒是我 雙圈兒是你/整圈兒是團圓 破圈兒是別離/ 還有那數不盡的相思 把一路圈兒圈到底." See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATlmdteOaRs." Since Li wrote the article in the late 1980s, I would presume that he was referring to Bao's song. Misleadingly, dozens of online sources from mainland China overwhelming suggest that "Quan'er Ci" is written by a famed Song-dynasty poet called Su Shuzhen 朱淑真, but literally none has provided a legitimate citation. Also, such a poem is nowhere to be found in one electronic edition of an authoritative anthology of Su that I have located, titled *Zhe Shuzhen Jizhu* 朱淑真集注 edited by Ji Qin (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2008). No academic articles can be found about this poem either. The authenticity of this poem/*ci* goes beyond the scope of this essay, but comparable contents of "Quan'er Ci" can be traced in some Qing-dynasty sources; for an informative argument that it is a "fake" traditional poem, or a poem wrongly attributed to Su, see netizen Lin Shan 林杉, "Wangluo wei shi kao diyi dan – huage quanquan zuzhou ni zhi Zhushuzhen de Quan er ci" 網絡偽詩考第一彈——畫個圈圈詛咒你之朱淑真的《圈兒詞》[Fake poem online vol.1 – Drawing circles in cursing you: Zhu Shuzhen 'Quan'er Ci'], *Weixin*, last accessed February 24, 2024, https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzI1NzAxNTUxMw==&mid=2651861278&idx=1&sn=4b93faf84495dbb5b2dc45cd62e6e9dc&chksm=f1f97aa8c68ef3be7608b61f8a9d5bec241adc9255bb43d94d02bdb2852ce52c17ea758dc0bf&scene=21#wechat_redirect.

[330] After all, what has been called "the rhetoric of hiddenness," as termed by Paula Varsano, has a long tradition in Chinese literature, a tradition Li Han-hsiang, the art school trained director, was well-versed in, See Paula Varsano's collection on "hiddenness" in Chinese literature and culture *The Rhetoric of Hiddenness in Traditional Chinese Culture*, edited by Paula M. Varsano (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016).

that we should understand and locate the censorial and sensorial affect produced by □ and ○ (and many other cognate "censorial" devices, as explained below) as the very form of affect – what I call "wind-curtain fluttering" – that is locatable inside *JPM*.

What I will do in the rest of the chapter is to read each and indeed every adaptation of *JPM* within the scope of discussion as fundamentally *related to* and *enabled by* such form of affect called wind-curtain fluttering. Due to the limit of space, my job in this chapter is less to suggest that each adaptation is self-sufficient and self-discrete in their contextualized meaning-making, which is a case that certainly can be made. Instead, my intervention is more specifically connective and fundamentally alliance-building; I show how *JPM* and its global circulations adaptations are *all related to the novel* (how can it not be?) across geopolitical, temporal, cultural, and sensory (linguistic, visual, acoustic, haptic) and medium divides (literary, material, cinematic, infrastructural, etc.) through the affective ecology of "curtains" and "winds." In doing so, I show how *JPM*'s very own aesthetic, formal, as well as ecological world-making; the book therefore plays a pivotal or even primordial role in contributing to worlding Chinese literature and media, rather than being merely a carrier or tool serving human (e.g., individual artists), institutional (e.g., state-level censorship) or socio-economic forces (e.g. capitalist globalization).

To begin apprehending *JPM*'s wind-curtain fluttering, we need to first turn to the text of the late 17th century novel itself. In the opening couplet of Chapter 2, as in some other chapters, Pan Jinlian is described as covered up by the curtain. Noting Pan's architectural liminality, the narrator locates that Pan: "…attracts the attentions of those, beyond the door, outside the curtain

惹起門旁簾外心."[331] Her habit of censoring herself within a curtain, in turn, sensorially seduces and assembles the (mostly male) public:

> Every day, after she had seen Wu Da out the door, this woman would stand **within the curtain,** cracking melon seeds with her teeth, and revealing her tiny golden lotuses for all to see. Such conduct **attracted the aforesaid young gentlemen**, who gathered on her doorstep day after day, strumming guitars and ukuleles and giving voice to every indecent suggestion their fertile imaginations could invent.
>
> 這婦人每日打發武大出門，只在簾子下磕瓜子兒。一徑那一把對小金蓮故露出來，勾引的這夥人日逐在門前彈胡博詞、抆兒機，口裡油似滑言語，無般不說出來。
> (*PIGV* 1:1:29; *JPMCH,* 1:1:13, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)[332]

As this scene from the novel shows, the curtain – what German media theorist Bernhard Siegert would have called a "cultural technique" distinguishing the inside and outside– is separating the Pan from those being seduced, a host of young gentlemen.[333] As what Siegert calls "the materiality of the symbolic," it is precisely the curtain and the way it allows small parts to be

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[331] The English quotes throughout his chapter are taken from David Roy's English translation of, *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), abbreviated as *PIGV*; the Chinese quotes are taken from Lanling Xiaoxiaosheng 蘭陵笑笑生, *Jin Ping Mei Cihua: Meng Mei Guan Jiaoben* 金瓶梅詞話 : 夢梅館校本 edited by Mei Jie 梅節, revised edition of the first printing (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2009), abbreviated as *JPMCH*. Both citations are followed by, consecutively, chapter number; volume number; page number.

[332] David Roy translated *lian* sometimes into "screen" or "blind." For the sake of consistency, I would translate all appearance of *lian* into "curtain" throughout this chapter. See the full quote of this mentioning of curtain: "In making this match, the Old Man under the Moon has made a mistake
Displaying her talents, P'an Chin-lien flaunts her beauty.
Merely because she dreams of assignations under the moon, beneath the stars;
She attracts the attentions of those beyond the door**, outside the curtain.**
Tempted by greed, Dame Wang employs a crafty scheme;
Peddling his fruit, Yün-ko becomes the object of rancor.
How can she foresee that a later day will bring domestic disaster
That her blood will spatter **the standing curtain** and make the whole floor red?"
月老姻緣配未眞，金蓮賣俏逞花容。只因月下星前意，惹起門旁簾外心。
王媽誘財施巧計，鄆哥賣果被嫌嗔。那知後日蕭牆禍，血濺屏幛滿地紅。(*PIGV* 2:1:43; *JPMCH*, 2:1:25, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

[333] Curtains, like Siegert's example of doors, "thematize this distinction [between inside and outside] and thereby establish a system that is made of the operations of opening and closing. Doors thus pertain to architecture as a whole and as a cultural system; that is, as something that surpasses the individual building." (8). *JPM*'s curtain, as it turns out, also operates as another cultural system not reducible to one individual *JPM*, but all. See Bernhard Siegert, "Doors: On the Materiality of the Symbolic." *Grey Room* 47 (47): 6-23.

revealed—tiny golden lotuses, the sound of melon seeds being cracked—while still hiding the figure, that sets in motion the act of seduction and its corresponding male assembly. As the poem suggests, the (male) hearts (*xin* 心) are stirred by the suggestion of the curtain itself. Like these young gentlemen gathering behind the curtain, Li Han-hsiang is seduced, not by actually seeing pornographic content, but rather by the promise thereof, which, ironically, is hinted at precisely by the curtain which hides.[334] In the case of Li, the curtain is nothing but the □, and their formal affinity is made clear on one page of his anthology *Jin Ping Mei Trilogies.* On the same page where Li recounted his experience of *JPM*'s censorship, a series of □ altogether appear to echo with the curtains in a film still, where the character Li Ping-er (played by the Shanghai-born, by now Canadian citizen Tanny Tien 恬妮, b. 1948-) lurks behind, as well as being surrounded by or with(in) curtains (**Fig. 3.1**).



• 潘金蓮色迷不住，忍春中的李瓶兒猜斷自羞。

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[334] In other films still of the anthology *Jin Ping Mei Trilogies* that Li had included photos of himself not only directing, but also acting like and acting alongside with actors of Ximen Qing, Pan Jinlian and other characters.

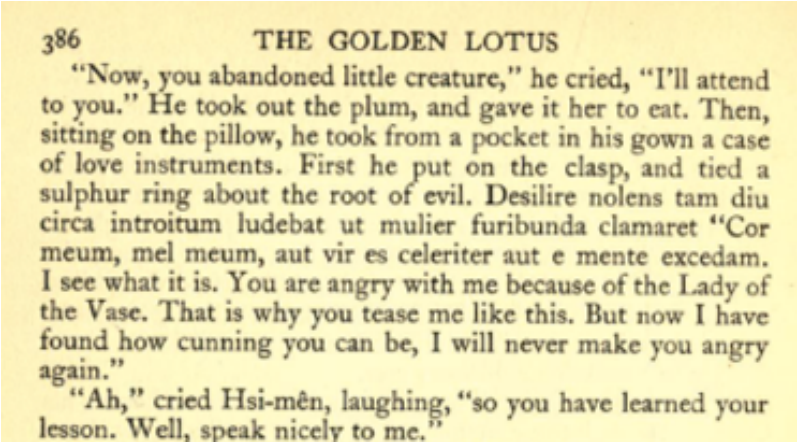
Fig. 3.1: The (un)intentional juxtaposition of □ and curtain(ing), as the caption says: "the erotic garden is fully blossoming; the auto-erotic Li Ping-er cannot contain herself" in Li's *Jin Ping Mei Trilogy*

Veiled in all her (un)availability in between lights and shadows, the film still presents to us what we call curtaining. Following the analogy of Li's layers of censorship being like a series of suggestive curtains, I propose to understand the modern and contemporary censorship of *JPM* as more precisely an aesthetic-political form of curtain and curtaining. By curtain, I specifically refer to the invocation of varied kinds of curtains frequently described in the domestic setting of the novel *JPM*; by curtaining, however, I more generally refer to all kinds of aesthetic and political, as well as material and symbolic arrangement which gives forms to visibility *with*/*in* and *through* invisibility, as well as transparency *with*/*in and through* opacity. While certainly there exist different specific ways to censor or hide the novel *JPM*, my approach here accentuates their affective affinity to the novel's very texture of curtain rather than analytically insisting on their separability and detachability. By doing so, I argue that any censorship of *JPM* could only be one specific (yet serially linked) extension of Pan's very own curtaining of herself in the novel's environmental infrastructure.

In fiction as in history, this chapter argues that such "censorship" is *not outside of* or *imposed on the text*. Like Pan behind the curtains, Li's *JPM* has been historically covered up, and more precisely serially "curtained." When Li grew up in Republican China in the 1930s, for instance, *JPM* was actively sold and circulating, though not without, as we have seen, different forms of sometimes erratic censorship of so-called obscenity.[335] Yet such censorship never was a

[335] See: Geng Yushu, "What Is Obscenity? Morality and Modernity in 1920s China." *China Perspectives*, no. 3 (122) (2020): 9–18; Zhao Wei 趙韡, Zhao Xingqin, 趙興勤. "Shenbao suozai wanqing minguo Jinpingmei de liaobo" 《申報》所載晚清民國《金瓶梅》的流播 [The circulation of *Jin Ping Mei* in the late Qing and Republican China: The case of Shen Bao] *Tribute of Social Sciences* 社會科學論壇 no. 3 (2016): 169-188.

full act of complete suppression of visibility. Zhou Shou 周劭 (b. 1916-2003), a senior and esteemed editor of Shanghai Classics Publishing House 上海古籍出版社 recalled how in 1930s Shanghai, a publisher of *JPM* would secretly hand to customers a supplementary book where words deleted could be cut and paste onto the □ in the parent copy.[336] If the □ first covered up the "indecent words" to be censored, they also neatly demarcated the places where the supplementary text could be inserted. In so doing, the curtain drawn by the □ hinted at a supplementary text that, supposedly at least, would allow a full view of what was hidden behind the □.



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"Now, you abandoned little creature," he cried, "I'll attend to you." He took out the plum, and gave it her to eat. Then, sitting on the pillow, he took from a pocket in his gown a case of love instruments. First he put on the clasp, and tied a sulphur ring about the root of evil. Desilire nolens tam diu circa introitum ludebat ut mulier furibunda clamaret "Cor meum, mel meum, aut vir es celeriter aut e mente excedam. I see what it is. You are angry with me because of the Lady of the Vase. That is why you tease me like this. But now I have found how cunning you can be, I will never make you angry again."

"Ah," cried Hsi-mên, laughing, "so you have learned your lesson. Well, speak nicely to me."

Fig. 3.2: "Desilire nolens tam diu circa"…one latinized passage "hidden" in the midst of an otherwise, English paragraph in Chapter 27 of Clement Egerton's 1939 translation
Source: *The Golden Lotus* (London: G. Routledge, 1939), 386.

Transculturally translatable, similar aesthetics of curtaining have been employed in English translations of *JPM*; as per conventions at the time, Clement Egerton's pioneering

[336] See Zhou Shao 周劭 "Xueye bimen du jinshu," 雪夜閉門讀禁書 [Closed-door reading of banned books on snowy nights], *Dushu* 讀書, 10 (1994): 132. Original: "到了三十年代，出版（（金瓶梅））便花樣翻新了。福州路有一家著名書店的老闆是一位律師，他公然出版（（金））書，用大字排印，凡應刪地方都代以□□，顧客去購他的書，暗地贈送一本另冊，另冊中文字正和 □□ 一般大小，只須花些功夫剪貼上去，便成為全璧。"

English translation published in 1939, toned down but also cloaked the obscene passages "intact" in Latin, reserving the pleasure of uncurtaining only to educated readers **(Fig. 3.2).**[337] Delighted by this curtaining strategy common in the England and applied in *JPM*, a well-known bibliophile in the Republican era Zhou Yue-ran 周越然 (b. 1885-1962) endorsed curtaining and even proposed that: "if our country China in the future reprints *JPM*, we no longer need to delete passages; we can follow Egerton and replace obscene passages with the ancient style of seal scripts."[338] For those who can read the Latin or seal script, curtaining takes the form of libidinally charged linguistic deciphering, but for those who cannot, the archaic scripts are nothing linguistic at all; they are just some "stuff" and "gibberish" that stick out, or at its aesthetic best, some incomprehensible or ornamental graphs.

In both cases of linguistic or graphic curtaining, censorship goes beyond the censorial reduction of something to nothing; rather, it takes effect through sensorially acquiring the texture of curtains or curtaining, arranging as well as deranging visibility *through* invisibility. Uncertain or even unnecessary in its signification and therefore politically unsettling, the use of □ itself was banned at different point in Qing, Republican and contemporary China.[339] The □ appears to enact, then, not only an institutional and discursive replacement of display, but also an aesthetic, formal, and material display of replacement. Noting the □'s vacillating affective and political

[337] They were both referring to Clement Egerton's pioneering English translation published in 1939. For studies of Egerton's translation, see Junjie Luo. "Translating *Jin Ping Mei*: A Preliminary Comparison of the *Golden Lotus* and *The Plum in the Golden Vase*." *Perspectives, Studies in Translatology* 22, no. 1 (2014): 56-74; Lintao Qi, *Jin Ping Mei English Translations: Texts, Paratexts and Contexts.* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018).
[338] See: Zhou Yue-ran 周越然 "Ping Shuo," 瓶說 [On *Jin Ping Mei*], in *Zhou Yueran Shuhua* [Zhou Yuran's essays on collecting books] 周越然書話, edited by Chen Zishan 陳子善. (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin meishu chubanshe, 1999), 235. The Chinese original: "…吾國將來復印瓶書，其實不必缺文，可采用艾氏之法，以篆書代替."
[339] See Thomas Chen's such a genealogy account: "Blanks to be Filled: Public-Making and the Censorship of Jia Pingwa's *Decadent Capital*," *China Perspectives*, 1 (2015): 15-22. As Chen points out, Lu Xun once commented that the □ can be traced to the transcription of missing words in bamboo strips of Chinese antiquity, and therefore it is a "domestic" form compared to "……" imported from the West.

consequences, Thomas Chen has stated that the use of □ in Chinese contexts mediate "worlds of meaning as well as yearning."[340] In the case of *JPM*, one may even venture that what □ designates is not only a *fill-in-the-blank* space but also *feel-in-the-blank* space, specifically, of curtain and curtaining.

Curtains, as we will show, move with winds. Li managed to "overcome" censorship by changing the environment through migration and global traveling. In November 1948, Li went from Shanghai to colonial Hong Kong and became involved in film production and direction in 1948.[341] In Hong Kong, where "East" meets "West" as the cliché goes, Li saw another *JPM* copy - a relatively more "complete" version in an antique market. The book was displayed and kept inside a wooden box in red color, on which engraved four letters stated: "an all-time masterpiece" (*gujin qishu*, 古今奇書). The price of this book set had been reduced, Li was told, because 4 out of 20 volumes were missing. Nonetheless Li opened the lid, flipped through the book and noticed the chapter he had been hoping to see in full (i.e., the infamous Chapter 27 where Pan Jinlian, Pang Chunmei and Ximen Qing have sex in the grape arbor) appeared intact.[342] Li described his delayed yet pleasurable uncurtaining this way:

> …I brought the book home, and fastidiously perused what had been □ in the copy I used to read. This was like reading a supplementary book on *JPM*. **I read 18 words if they deleted 18, and 70 words if they deleted 70. Finally, my frustration was released.** While reading, my blood circulation heated up, my mouth dried up and my tongue got stuck; my face reddened, and neck thickened. I was young and single, and I was almost losing control of myself. (*translation mine*)
>
> … 把書買到家中，先把以前「畫個圈兒替」的地方，從頭到尾看個仔細，等於看「 金瓶梅補遺」，刪十八未看十八字，刪七十字看七十字，打開了多年以來的悶葫

[340] Chen, "Blanks to be Filled," 22,
[341] Born in Liaoning in northern China, Li studied oil painting in Beijing and drama in Shanghai before moving to Hong Kong, joining the film industry and becoming a film director.
[342] Li, *Jin Ping Mei*, 8. This incomplete boxset costed him $60 Hong Kong dollar; as Li emphasized, at that time $10 was enough for a day of spending.

> 蘆，一路看來還真有些血脈賁張口乾舌燥。那時年輕氣盛，加上孤家寡人一個，還真有點臉紅脖子粗的不能自已。[343]

Li's repetitive desire to read and purchase a "more complete" *JPM* stemmed from the fact that the version he read in Republican China was expurgated in parts.[344] As can be inferred from Li's exceptional encounter, an uncensored (or less obviously expurgated) version of *JPM* was openly displayed in the 1940s in the British colony of Hong Kong. Li happened to find such a copy in a different environment, a place where a different kind of air and social atmosphere reigned due to him crossing the border from mainland China to colonial Hong Kong. Geographical dislocation blew open the curtain for him, thus ventilating his pent-up frustration, invigorating his blood circulation, and providing him with an erotic charge: "his mouth dried up, his face reddened and his neck thickened."[345]

However, the version he found in Hong Kong, though unexpurgated and un-curtained, was still an incomplete copy. As Li moved on, making films not only in Hong Kong but East Asia in general, he further searched for *JPM* in a myriad of social-political milieux, in each of which *JPM* circulated differently. In 1961, while shooting films in Tokyo, he saw another set of *JPM* which was the same edition as the one he had bought in Hong Kong, a Kangxi-yihai edition (康熙乙亥本).[346] This version, however, was complete and offered two additional volumes of illustrations. The price was high - an equivalent to one-fourth of his salary; he did not buy it.[347] Around three years later in 1964, he temporarily left the Shaw Brothers to set up his own film

[343] Li, *Jin Ping Mei*, 8.
[344] The exact location where he read the version of *JPM* he referred to is unclear. My conjecture here is a temporary speculation based on the fact that Li grew up in Shanghai early.
[345] Li, *Jin Ping Mei*, 8.
[346] Li's essay was published in 1984, and he referred this discovery in Tokyo as something that happened "23 years ago." Li mentioned it was a time when he had outdoor shooting with films of *The Magnificent Concubine*/*Yang Guifei* 楊貴妃 (1962) and *Empress Wu Tse-Tien*/*Wu Zetian* 武則天. Accordingly, I projected that the date was 1961.
[347] The price of the book was 150,000-yen, which Li calculated as equivalent to 2250 Hong Kong dollars. The salary he received for shooting one movie was 8000 HK dollars at the time. On average, he shot less than 3 movies a year.

company Grand Motion Picture (Guolian, 國聯) in Taiwan.[348] In Taipei, near the site of his film company, he saw yet another set of *JPM*, once again incomplete, but the volumes of which would seem to supplement and complete the first set he bought in Hong Kong. Yet, when put together, the two sets varied in sizes and printing materials, and as a result they did not sit well together on the bookshelf (the former was woodblock printing and the latter lithographic printing).[349] The frustration of "seeing" the novel in a single, complete form remained.

Li's heart remained obsessed with the complete edition he saw in Japan. In the same year of 1964, another movie shoot brought him to Japan once again. After long weeks of film production, he went to Tokyo again looking for an intact edition of *JPM* in the Kanda-Jinbōchō district 神田神保町, a famous area of second-hand bookstores even today. To his surprise, he found the same copy and the price had remained the same as before. As he got hold of the complete copy, the affective dynamic of the "wind curtain" once again got hold of Li. And, just as he had inhabited the protagonist Ximen Qing when buying the *JPMCH* edition in the 1930s, on this occasion, breathing "fresh air," while walking Tokyo, he once again likened himself to Ximen Qing:

[348] Li mentioned that he was 38 years old at that time; in this calculation it was 1964. Li also mentioned it was the time after he set up his own company Guolian, which was in 1963. I decided to project the date as 1964. On Li's career in Taiwan, see Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, "Cong shaoshi dao guolian – huangmei diao yingpian de zaidihua" 從邵氏到國聯——黃梅調影片的在地化 [From Shaw Brothers to Grand Motion Picture: Localisation of Huangmei Diao Films]. In *Fenghua xueyue Li Hanxiang* 風花雪月李翰祥 [Li Han-Hsiang, Storyteller] edited by Ai-lin Wong 黃愛玲 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2007), 98-107; Peggy Chiao 焦雄屏, *Gaibian lishi de wunian* 改變歷史的五年 [The five years when Guolian changed Taiwanese film industry] (Taipei: Wanxiang tushu, 1993)

[349] Li, *Jin Ping Mei*, 10-12. "…台灣拍戲，在牯嶺街的地攤上，看見了幾本散置的石印小字「金瓶梅」，也是缺了好幾本，可是無巧不成書，剛好補足了我原有的十六本，總算是湊足了一部。不過心裏總有些不舒坦，木版石印大小不一，長短不齊的擺在一起怎麼看都不順眼，下次再遇見完整木版大字的「金瓶梅」，借貸典當也要把它買下來。" It is unclear from the passage whether he bought that copy in Taipei. As he later recounted the issue of confiscation of his *JPM* landing Taiwan from Japan, it remains unclear why he could then bring the copy to Hong Kong, if he bought it. If he bought it, it would be due to the randomness of confiscation policy, which Li does put his finger on in the essay.

> …I felt great spending all the money. I felt so refreshed **like fresh wind/air was blowing; my eyes and hearts brightened up.** Holding the books in my hands I secretly giggled on my way back. The happiness cannot be described with mere ink and pen. All at once it felt like laying my hands on Pan Jinlian, Li Pinger, Wang Liu-er…I couldn't verbally describe this exhilaration. (*translation and emphasis mine*)
>
> …馬上財去人安樂， 一下子神清氣爽，心明眼亮。一路捧著書回書店，一路偷笑，好像一下子把潘金蓮、李瓶兒、王六兒、林太太都弄到手，那種高興勁兒，還真是筆墨難以形容。[350]

The curtain was lifted again as he obtained, finally, a "complete" edition of *JPM*, through traveling and purchase in Japan. Li here emphasizes a changed environment both in terms of space (Japan, more specifically Tokyo) as well as atmosphere ("fresh air"), which has a clear physical and spiritual affect, i.e., "illuminated eyes" and "refreshed spirit". In turn, the physical and affective response is marked as indescribable with words and ink and therefore beyond linguistic and non-representational: words that are not words, i.e., a ☐ that blocks and reveals.[351] Finally, once again, we see how opening up and passing through the curtain allows Li Han-hsiang not simply access to the book, but rather to inhabiting the central male protagonist in that book; it allows him a fantasy of "getting his hands on the female characters in the novel."

It should not surprise us at this point that Li's feeling of being Ximen Qing - and owning his female characters through getting a "complete" version of *JPM* - did not last long; the fantasy of hyper-masculinity (Ximen is after all the "Don Juan of China" and inhabiting his persona a strong aphrodisiac for Li Han-hsiang) could not sustain itself. As if returning to the Republican era of censorship when he grew up, his copy bought in Japan was confiscated in the custom office as he returned to Taiwan from Japan:

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[350] Li, *Jin Ping Mei*, 10-12.

[351] Li emphasized the pleasure was indescribable and beyond linguistic mediation, but he nonetheless analogized it in haptic and corporeal terms, as an experience of "laying hands on" (弄到手, *nong-dao-shou*) Ximen's female character.

> Human calculations can never outwit that of the Heaven's (*tian-xuan*). I brought the copy back to Taipei. Once the custom officers saw my *JPM*, they got excited and wouldn't let go of it. Yet they didn't know how to deal with it, so they went to their seniors and had a group conference for almost half a day. In the end, they gave me a bill saying that I brought prohibited items into Taiwan. They confiscated my book and added: "if you were not the director of *Love Eterne*, we would have fined you as well. Now you are good to go." (*translation and emphasis mine*)
>
> 可是人算不如天算，帶着書回到台北的時候海關上的稽查，一看這部古本第一奇書的「金瓶梅」，馬上就紅了眼愛不釋手，但自己又不知如何處理，走到旁邊和他的上司們開了個小組會議，交頭接耳的嘀咕半天，結果給我寫了張條子，說我私帶違禁品人現，把書沒收充公， 若不看我是「梁山伯祝英台」的導演， 一定還要罰錢。[352]

The □ that Li saw on pages so long ago in Republican China,[353] now emerge as an embodied, institutional, and state-level curtaining in Taipei. But note that this is curtaining, a protracted dance of veils, and not censorship *tout court*. After all, as Li's account makes clear there were always ways to negotiate and there were no hard-and-fast rules in place. Like curtains, the operation of the state-level security check, it turns out, could be very undisciplined. Officers in Li's descriptions were, for example, *hesitating* and *faltering* in their response as to how to deal with this mesmerizing book. Trying to negotiate with the officers, Li requested sending *JPM* to his home in Hong Kong but to no avail. As a last resort, Li provocatively suggested: "What about we burn the book right now, on the spot?" The leader of the officer team frowned and put down the book: "Director Li, we have been very kind to you. Don't talk non-sense and just observe the law."[354] Clearly, the point of the custom check is not the outright banning or destruction of the book; rather it suggests a hiding or "safe keeping" of the book, the suggestion being that somewhere, somehow the book would still be accessible.

[352] Li, *Jin Ping Mei*, 12.
[353] The exact place where he read is not mentioned.
[354] Li, *Jin Ping Mei*, 12.

As Li's biography shows, the book *JPM* is best understood not as simply censored (not to mention destroyed), but rather as *curtained* and *re-curated* each time. Director Li would eventually find his own copy after its official confiscation. One day he serendipitously chanced upon a familiar-looking *JPM* copy at a back alley near his film company in Taipei. He examined the pages upon which he once made corrections with a red pen: it turned out to be his copy. Li believed it was leaked or sold to the market through back doors. Surprised that the copy was openly displayed, Li asked the owner:

Li:	This is a banned book. How dare you openly display it?
Shop owner:	(Smiling) Depends on who. If Director Li [李導演] were interested, of course you can purchase it.
Li:	Why can I?
Shop owner:	Aren't you a director? Surely this can be your reference book. [Li thought the owner was probably clueless. He told the owner about the confiscation.]
Shop owner:	(Eyes opened in disbelief) How dare they do that! They just should have given it back to you when asked!
Li:	Forget about it! If they got angry, they may call me a criminal and send me to the Green Island 綠島.[355]
Shop owner:	(Shaking his heads and unconvinced) What a joke. In that case how dare they call Taiwan a "Treasure Island of Freedom"? [笑話，那還叫什麼自由寶島][356]

(*translation and emphasis mine*)

The lived experience of Li exposes the insufficiency of understanding censorship as top-down, static, repressive, and all-powerful. Rather, the so-called apparatus of the censor could equally

[355] "Green Island" hosted political prisoners during the martial-law era of Taiwan (1949-1987), especially those identified as communists.
[356] For easier reading, I presented the conversation in the form of a dialogue; see Li, *Jin Ping Mei*, 12-14.

flail, fail or flutter like a curtain, be it hard(lined) or soft(handed) in execution. In the case of Li, the surprising insight is both the antique shop owner (a civilian) and the officers (representing the government) took "Li" and "film" seriously, either excusing him from fines (because of Li's mega hit *Love Eterne*, released around the moment of confiscation, **see Chapter 1 and 2**) or expecting a *JPM* movie from him. Therefore, different individuals, materials and "wind directions" would generate numerous nuanced ways of "curtaining," some(times) harder, some(times) softer. For example, Li successfully retrieved his *JPM* copy back in the antique shop, meaning there were loopholes in the confiscation, without which he could not have gotten his copy back. Second, the surprising result of the confiscation was that his *JPM* copy not only survived but returned enhanced with a nicer binding: the antique shop owner intimated that the copy was reconstructed with a sophisticated binding by a veteran diasporic specialist hailing from Beijing now settled in Taipei. Pages of the copy were further protected in between by some delicate rice paper (*xuanzhi,* 宣紙), known for its resistance to discoloring and weathering.

These shifting environments, from Tokyo's antique shops to Taiwan's borders and eventually to yet another antique shop in Taipei, showed to Li Han-hsiang the contingency of censorship as political climates changed. Drawing a broader, more explicitly political and legal lesson from his experience. Gesturing towards the "wind" element in "wind-curtain" fluttering, Li wrote:

> Thus far, the laws in China [i.e., the ROC] are nebulous, capricious, and contingent upon each circumstance … Just consider yourself unlucky if the person of law enforcement happened to **have a bad mood [*xin qing* 心情] and act like "monks holding umbrellas" Their mood affects their judgements**, and they are always right because there are loopholes in the law, and their on-the-spot judgment rules. I am not certain if the custom offices in Taiwan legislated specific laws in prohibiting *JPM* from entering Taiwan. If so, how come now we see them openly on sales in bookstores? Which specific line of the law has changed, so that now different versions of *JPM* have been released from presses recently? I wish the police and law enforcement in Taiwan government could openly tell

> me, which specific line of the law stipulated that *JPM* had to be confiscated – and how come (and since when) this line had been changed now?
>
> 我們中國還有些法律條文不夠完善、清晰， 所以「現官不如現管」， 一旦碰見那位持法人員，心情略微不愉快的時候，就活該「當事人」倒霉，和尚便打傘，無髮（法）無天。他怎麼說便怎麼對，因爲他的話，就可以補充法律之不足。我不知台灣海關上，有否明文規定帶「金瓶梅」入境， 犯第幾條第幾欵的條文，如果有， 爲什麼在台灣境內，又可以公開出售各式版本的「金瓶梅」？ 也許如今那些條文更改了？所以不僅有了聯經出版事業公司酌量印行的明萬曆本丁巳刻本的「金瓶梅詞話」，也有了魏子雲教授重新標點的新著。眞希望台灣警備總司令部，能夠公開的答覆我一下，海關沒收「金瓶梅」是何時規定的？ 而這條法律又何時更改的？[357]

Li used an idiom *heshang da san*, *wu-fa wu-tian* 和尚打傘, 無髮無天 to criticize the KMT's lawlessness, analogizing the latter to "monks holding umbrellas," in which case there the monk has no 'hair' [*fa* 髮, punning on *fa* 法, "the law"] and do not see the sky [*tian* 天, "the workings of the heaven"] either. Indeed, Mao Zedong famously used this idiom to describe his very own freedom from laws, superstitions or other constraints in 1970.[358] Be it exaggerated or not, Li appeared to be comparing the censorship of martial-law-era Taiwan to that of Maoist China, which is not surprising given that both authoritarian regimes across the straits began to loosen up and "liberalize" in the 1980s (**see Chapter Four)**. In the case of Taiwan, *JPM* began to be popularized in 1980 after a cheap version became available.[359] As of 1982, the book's "banned"

[357] Li, *Jin Ping Mei*, 15.

[358] Mao once said, "I am never sacred of saying something wrong, I am just *wu-fa wu-tian*; I don't have *fa* (hair) [*fa*, i.e. the law] and I don't see the *tian* (sky) either [*tian*, i.e. heaven] 我不怕說錯話，我是無法無天，叫‘和尚打傘’，無髮（法）無天，沒有頭髮，沒有天。" Mao appeared to mean that no such thing as law (*fa*) and heaven (*tian*) applies to him, and no such as thing as heaven (*tian*) scares him. Reportedly, Mao said this with an American journalist Edgar Snow. See Qin Zhang 秦章's defense of Mao's saying in "Mao Zedong yiju 'Wo shi heshang da san, wufa wutian youwu qingshi fazhi" 毛澤東一句"我是和尚打傘，無法無天"有無"輕視法治"？ [Does Mao's saying of "*wufa wutian*" mean ignoring the rule of law?] *Central Institute of the Party History and Literature* 中共中央黨史和文獻研究院, November 15, 2016, last accessed Mar 2, 2024, https://www.dswxyjy.org.cn/BIG5/n1/2019/0621/c428059-31174504.html

[359] As one newspaper article of *The China Times* precisely dated *JPM*'s fraught book history in Taiwan, the book began to be reimported from Japan in 1973, gradually people could see the whole version; yet different copies of *JPM* remained expensive. It was only in 1980 when a cheaper version became widely circulating. Lao Yin 老隱 "Doushi Jin Ping Mei re de huo," 都是金瓶梅惹的禍 [Blame it on *Jin Ping Mei*] May 8, *The China Times* 中國時報 1982.

status (while circulating as "licensed publication") was only nominal, to the point that conservative lawmakers still tried to push for a strict banning in the Legislative Yuan.[360]

The KMT's fluctuating policy corroborates Li's account. He almost got prosecuted and suddenly he sensed the air of "progress." To Li's surprise, new editions of *JPM* were now suddenly allowed to be published. To Li, this was a perplexing "change" in the environment, as things, or as we would add, "winds" were starting to flow many directions at the same time; he wanted clarification and not caprice. Feeling ambivalent about the contradiction between his copy's confiscation and the society's evidential "openness," Li ironically thanked the Taiwanese government in the article: their confiscation helped him "strengthen the binding of his personal *JPM* copy," which he triumphantly retrieved. With the Taiwanese government's (insecure) "liberalization" of *JPM* by the time of his writing the essay, he ironically concluded: "[if not for the government], how could I fully collect a total of ten different versions of *JPM*?"[361] Li's sarcastic "acknowledgment" of the government's censorship/curtaining reveals the ambivalent nature of curtaining. For Li, this is how the □ on pages translate into a dynamic yet ultimately

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[360] Noting that some circulating copies contained illustrations from the copy stored in the National Palace Museum in Taiwan, one legislator in 1982 asked in the legislature: "Is *JPM* a banned book?" "How are the sales?" and "Have the staff members failed their duties in National Palace Museum?" Quoted from "Guben Jin Ping Mei tanghuang shangshhi lingyou dengji zheng zhe hua zen jiang" 古本金瓶梅堂皇上市 領有登記證這話怎講？ [Original copies of *Jin Ping Mei* openly on sale; how come they got permits to publish?] *The China Times* 中國時報*,* April 20, 1982.

[361] The full quote: "But pay attention, I don't really cherish that copy of *JPM*, and I am not asking them to return it (because they can never return it.) I just hope this "the Treasure Island of Taiwan" of freedom can tell us the limits of our freedom. On the other hand, they do not need to worry: the copy they have helped me re-bounded is now in my hands. I bought it with 20000 Taiwan dollars. Thus far it is still in good condition. But of course, after that they took me and my wife to the interrogation room for 48 hours, but they don't need to think too much now, because we are proven finally not to be Communist spies. Now that I think of it, I want to say "thank you" to them. I thank them for helping me give my Kangxi Yihai copy a new binding. I thank them for allowing the publisher Lianjing to reprint *JPM Cihua*, otherwise how could I have obtained 10 different versions of *JPM* now?" (*translation mine*) 不過， 千祈注意， 我並不珍惜那本「金瓶梅」，也並要求他們交還（因爲根本無法還）只是要求把自由寶島上的自由的限度告訴大家一下；一方面也請他們放心，他們替我重新裝裱的「金瓶梅」，已被我用兩萬新台幣買了回家，至今保存的完完美美，儘管他們沒多久，請我們夫婦到警備總部去間了四十八小時話，也請他們不必耿耿於懷，因爲他們終於證實了我不是什麼「匪諜」，把我們夫婦格外開恩的釋放了。所以至今想起這件事還要格外的謝謝他們，謝謝他們替我並新裝裱那本康熙乙亥本的「金瓶梅」！ 謝謝他們又允許聯經出版事業公司，重印「金瓶梅詞話」，否則我怎麼湊足十套不同版本的「金瓶梅」？Li, *Jin Ping Mei*, 16.

opaque confiscation of *JPM* in life, but this is also what made him treasure and crave a "full version" of *JPM*.

Curtains hide and at the same time elicit desire, filtering but also inciting an affective experience triggered by uncovering, and in turn, covering. To be sure, sex is one of the covered-up sources of sensation in the novel, but definitely the affect of wind-curtain dynamics is not irreducibly *sexual*, but more generally and generatively, both *sensorial* while being *censorial*. This chapter, as a result, seeks to focus on *JPM*'s ecological forces of air and wind, as well as the materiality of the curtain which are shared by the two protagonists as well as the people around them. It is by emphasizing both the material and ecological forces at play with curtaining, that I echo but also depart from a sole focus on feminist critique (Ding Naifei and Yau Ching) or feminine excess (Dingru Huang).[362] Nor do I center my analysis through the lens of eroticism and sexuality (see Robert Hans van Gulik and Keith McMahon's foundational oeuvre; Chen Jianqing).[363] In tune with the general turn towards new materialism, affect studies, ecocriticism, and object-oriented ontology in literary and media studies, I propose to understand Li's exemplary aesthetic-political experience of "winds" and "curtains" as *JPM*'s very own eco-system of seduction.

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[362] Ding Naifei, *Obscene Things: Sexual Politics in Jin Ping Mei*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Yau Ching, "Porn Power: Power: Sexual and Gender Politics in Li Han-hsiang's *Fengyue* Films," in *As Normal as Possible: Negotiating Sexuality and Gender in Mainland China and Hong Kong*, edited by Yau Ching. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 113-131; Dingru Huang, "The Sensual Surplus of History: Cao Hanmei's Pictorial Adaptations of *Jin Ping Mei* in Wartime China," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, 35 no. 1 (2023): 58-93.

[363] Robert Hans van Gulik, "Chapter 10: Ming Dynasty," in S*exual Life in Ancient China: A Preliminary Survey of Chinese Sex and Society from Ca. 1500 B.c. till 1644 A.d.* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Keith McMahon, *Misers, Shrews, and Polygamists: Sexuality and Male-female Relations in Eighteenth-century Chinese Fiction.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Jianqing Chen, "Adapting *Jin Ping Mei*, Serializing Sex: Hong Kong's Pornographic Serial Melodrama," in *Erotic Literature in Adaptation and Translation*, edited by Johannes D. Kaminski (Cambridge: Legenda, Modern Humanities Research Association, 2018), 186-200.

As argued below, it is this eco-system that sustains the novel's narrative from beginning to end and from the semantic content of the words on the page to the material form they take in each remediation. The figure of the woman as well as the act of sex are pivotal for such an affect of wind-fluttering-curtains, but, as the materiality of the object and the atmosphere of the wind suggest, such affects also go beyond the woman figure and sex. Our experience of *JPM* as a fluttering or frustrating curtain is always determined and fluctuating depending on the wind circulation. Yet, even if a certain atmosphere suggests "openness", it should be emphasized that *JPM*'s curtain is never fully taken down: it is never taken down because the curtain and wind are precisely how *JPM* unfolds as its narrative flows. As both a "victim" and "victor" in his battle with curtains and winds with *JPM*, Li and Li's cinema, in opening up and uncurtaining *JPM*, would not only paradoxically preserve, but even propel this dynamic further into folds and folds of transmedial curations.[364]

Wind-curtain fluttering in *Jin Ping Mei* and cinema



Fig. 3.3 The inauguration of wind-curtain fluttering.

[364] On the philosophical and aesthetic of "folds," see Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conely (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

Li's first full length adaptation of *JPM*, *Golden Lotus* (1974), opens with Pan Jinlian's (played by Hu Chin 胡錦 b. 1947 -, born in Jiangxi now living in San Francisco) encounter with Ximen Qing (played by Peter Yang Kwan 楊群 b. 1934-2022, born in Harbin and died in Los Angeles): a scene inaugurating the affect of what we call "wind-curtain fluttering." Before we turn to a thorough discussion of the film itself, however, we will first discuss the novel, in particular the scene the film here references Chapter 2 of the text. It is in this scene of the novel that Pan loses control of a stick as she opens the curtain (*lian* 簾),[365] setting in motion the lengthy flirtation of Pan Jinlian and Ximen Qing (as well as the reader).

Joining recent scholars who investigate the aerial form in visual culture and art history, I show that this dance of seduction in *JPM* is not simply the result of internal emotions or individual desires, but rather to the environmental forces we might typify as the rush of wild winds, in Chinese, *feng* 風 (**Fig. 3.3**).[366] Indeed, what we call the wind-curtain dynamic begins in Chapter 1, where Pan seduces another important (though sidelined until the end) male character in the novel – Wu Song, the younger brother of Pan's legal husband Wu Da (aka Wu the Elder, as rendered in David Roy's translation). Not unlike the author of *JPM*, who turned Pan (by no means a major character in *Shuihuzhuan*) into a full-blown character occupying a novel on/of her own, Li Han-hsiang's *Golden Lotus* likewise chose to sideline Pan's failed seduction of Wu Song in Chapter 1 (more on Pan and Wu Song later) and chose to begin with Pan and Ximen's romantic encounter in Chapter 2. Clearly, Pan and Ximen are the main protagonists of *JPM*. Unlike the self-censoring and censorious Wu Song, Pan and Ximen are both sensorially

[365] Depending on materials (silks, cloths, beads, woods…), the Chinese word *lian* could refer to partitioning devices ranging from curtain, blind, screen, drapery, to veil. In this essay, I change all the translations of *lian* into "curtain" rather than "blind" to maintain consistency.

[366] Here I am borrowing from the American singer Roberta Fleck's "And So It Goes," the lyric of which has this poignant line on the affective force of wind carrying both love, scent, and sound of whistles: "Love is a rush of wild wind/The scent of a summer rose/A whistle blowing on a distant track and when it goes, it goes."

amenable and susceptible to what we call "wind-curtain fluttering," the main engine of *JPM*'s affect.

To schematize this ecological form and its affective world-making, let us first turn to Chapter 2, where Pan and Ximen meet through the mediation of winds:

> The woman was in the very act of reaching up to **take down the curtain** with a forked stick **when a gust of wind** dislodged it from her grip so that it fell. Neither correctly nor precisely, but right onto the hat of the passerby. As she hastened to put on an ingratiating smile she looked at him and saw that he was […] quite a dashing figure … A man after my own heart, as **romantic [*feng-feng-liu-liu*, wind-flowing]** as can be; **beneath the curtain,** he tips a wink at me.
>
> 婦人正手裡拿着叉竿放簾子，忽被一陣風將叉竿刮倒，婦人手擎不牢，不端不正，却打在那人頭巾上。婦人便慌忙陪笑，把眼看那人，也有二十五六年紀，生得十分浮浪 … 可意的人兒，風風流流從子簾子下丟與奴個眼色兒可意的人兒。(*PIGV* 2:1:48-50; *JPMCH,* 2:1:29, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

The emphatic use of the term *feng-liu* is absent in *Shuihuzhuan*, which *JPM* is derived from.[367] As *JPM* makes clear, the fledgling romance between Pan and Ximen is set in motion through both environmental (i.e., wind) and material (i.e., curtain) co-operations. On the environmental side, the novel repetitively uses the word "wind" (*feng*) to describe Pan and Ximen's romantic beginning: blowing from the actual wind as a force that makes the woman lose control of her grip, to a metaphorical reference in the term *feng-liu*, i.e., "romance" (literally twirling winds), which best characterize both the flirtatious Pan and Ximen. In turn, almost as in a slapstick comedy, these atmospheric forces of wind have a clear material effect, in that sticks get blown out of hands and curtains are set fluttering.

[367] *JPM* used "*feng-liu*" to describe Pan Jinlian while *Shuihu* does not: see the comparison made in Sung Te-hsi 宋德喜, "Cantou feng-liu er zi chan – feng-liu ciyi zai zhongguo shehui wenhua shishang de dibian" 參透風流二字禪—「風流」詞義在中國社會文化史上的遞變 [Deciphering the zen of *feng-liu* – the gradual changes of *feng-liu*'s meaning in Chinese social and cultural history] *Tamkang Journal of Chinese Literature* 淡江中文學報, inaugural issue (1992): 68.

As the novel takes pain to ecologize their desires, it is this environmental and material combination – what I call "wind-curtain fluttering" that sets in motion feelings and desire, guided, through the gaze of the woman as it falls (like the stick on a head) on the figure of the man. As already noted above, the word *feng-liu* in Chinese (lit. "wind-flowing") is used to describe romantic, unorthodox and promiscuous persons, behaviors, or styles of living that impart a sense of (often sexual) freedom from social mores, often meaning both irresponsible aberration from the norm that is *also* meant to be "charming."[368] *Feng-liu*'s sense of sensual "excess," for example, is implied in Pan's mishandling of the sticks (i.e., phallic instruments of power, pleasure and punishment), indexing her fluttering (and flirtatious) body and her behavioral "looseness," as the novel emphasizes.[369]

[368] Philosopher Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 argues that *feng-liu*/wind-flowing (Feng translated *feng-liu* as "wind-streaming") in Chinese philosophical discourses could be understood as equivalent to "romance" and "romanticism" in the Western tradition. According to Feng, *feng-liu* is kindred to Daoism rather than Confucianism, tracing it to neo-Daoist particularly the Qing-tan 清談 movement in Jin dynasty (266-420), when "living according to oneself" was valued. The term's elusiveness, as Feng concedes, precisely imparts a sense of "freedom and ease" that the literal meaning ("wind-flowing") invokes. See Chapter 20 in his *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: The Free Press, 1948), 231-240; and "Lun Feng-liu" 論風流 [On *feng-liu*] n *Feng Youlan xuanji* 馮友蘭選集 [Feng Youlan's selected essays], edited by Tu Youguang 涂又光 (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1994), 323-332. Additionally, Ogawa Tamaki 小川環樹, scholar of Chinese literature, noted the upsurge of the use of *feng-liu* also in Jin dynasty. The term gained the connotations of "decadence", "sensuality" and "sexuality" in later dynasties, epitomized in the term "*feng-liu caizi*" ("romantic talented scholar") from the Tang Dynasty onwards until today. See: Ogawa Tamaki, "Feng-liu ciyi de yanbian" 風流詞義的演變 [The Semantic Changes of *feng-liu*] in *Lun Zhongguo Shi* 論中國詩 [On Chinese Poetry], translated and edited by Yue-him Tam 譚汝謙, et al. (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1986), 33-48.

[369] Then narrator emphasizes that the stick falls "neither correctly [not *duan*] nor precisely [not *zhen]*" (*buduan buzheng* 不端不正). As the Chinese words *duan-zheng* 端正 means "decent" and "appropriate," her handling of the stick is then implied to be "indecent."



Fig. 3.4 & 3.5: Relaying of male-and-female gazes captured by camera of *feng-liu*.

As in the novel, the cinematic adaptation evokes such wind circulation through camerawork. Translating this scene from words into sounds and images, Li's camera movements can be understood as itself a force not only visualizing and representing, but also mimicking, augmenting, embodying and ventilating such wind circulation. Cinematically, Li Han-hsiang's camera captures such flowing of the wind through camera movements. First, it zooms from a wide shot of the town then panning into the outside of Pan's window and curtains. Then, when the two characters begin to interact, the camera movements dynamically capture, like wind circulating between them, how their relations flow into formation with the two's body movements and point-of-view shots (**Fig. 3.4 & 3.5**). The camera first follows Pan coming down to the door apologizing to Ximen. Then as Pan retreats into the house step by step, a tracking shot embodying her retreat inside shows Ximen's intently looking at her (and the camera's) retreat (**Fig. 3.5).** The fast and alternating movements of the camera(s) in and out of the house, as well as in between the male and female, enacts the exchangeability of subject-object positions between Pan to Ximen (also man and woman) and vice versa. It also, of course, allows a whirlwind of different cinematic gazes and positions, the cinematic apparatus seducing the viewer as much as Ximen's and Pan's appearance seduce the other.

In a way, Li's cinematic wind movement is pre-formulated already in the novel, mirroring the to-and-fro gazing between the two in the novel. As this wind-driven scene moves

forward, descriptions of Pan, supposedly from the perspective of Ximen, continue to flow like a camera searching and moving on her body in a careful sequence of what some may call fetishistic cuts:

> Behold, she has: Glossy, black, raven's feather tresses; dark, curved, new moon eyebrows. Clear, cold, almond eyes; redolently fragrant cherry lips; a straight, full, alabaster nose. Thickly powdered red cheeks; a handsome, silver salver face; a light, lissome, flowerlike figure; slender, jade-white, scallion-shoot fingers; a cuddlesome, willow waist; a tender, pouting, dough-white tummy; tiny, turned-up, pointed feet; buxom breasts, and fresh, white legs. And there is something else as well: tight and squeezy, red and wrinkly, pale and fresh, black and cushioned; who can tell what it might be? **The beauties of this woman were such that he could not look his fill.**
>
> 但見他：黑鬒鬒賽鴉翎的鬢兒，翠彎彎的新月的眉兒，清清冷冷杏子眼兒、香噴噴櫻桃口兒，直隆隆瓊瑤鼻兒，粉濃濃紅艷腮兒，嬌滴滴銀盆臉兒，輕裊裊花朵身兒，玉纖纖蔥枝手兒，一捻捻楊柳腰兒，軟濃濃粉白肚兒，窄星星尖翹腳兒，肉奶奶胸兒，白生生腿兒，更有一件緊揪揪、白鮮鮮、黑裀裀，正不知是甚麼東西。觀不盡這婦人容貌。(*PIGV* 2:1:50; *JPMCH* 2:1:29, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

The description of Pan is, for sure, erotic. But more crucially it is also cursory and diffusive, breezing past only *the surface* of her body, akin to the flow of wind. Admittedly, Pan's appearance is scrutinized in searching fashion from head to toe, involving up-and-down ocular movements like a camera panning–- a classic case of what Laura Mulvey calls the "male gaze," as Ding Naifei astutely noted.[370]

In Ding's feminist reading, the description in this scene is penetrative and voyeuristic, objectifying woman in nothing short of a "striptease." Ding writes:

> It is as if [Pan] exuded a particular and **permissive being-looked-at-ness** that compels the looking eye to **aggressive penetration** and decomposition**.** For if the male body [of

[370] See Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 14-28; Naifei Ding, *Obscene Things: Sexual Politics in Jin Ping Mei*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 161.

> Ximen] was … unseen and whole, the female body is now seen in a virtual lyric **dismembering.** (*emphasis mine*)[371]

Ding rightfully notes that the description of Ximen looking at Pan is more extensive than her looking at him, but one may also ask, at his moment of the text: has Pan's body really been "penetrated," "decomposed," and "dismembered"? What Pan exudes is not passive to-be-looked-at-ness per se, but flowing and atmospheric charm of "wind" (*feng-liu*) circulating through and surrounding her body, corresponding to but not resisting "gaze."[372] As the narrator marvels, Pan's beauty, in the eyes of Ximen, is visually unmasterable, forever delaying rather than finally conquerable. After all, the ultimate object of the questing gaze (the folds of the vagina) are described as "an object I know not what it is" just as the gaze cannot be fully satisfied ("The beauties of this woman were such that he could not look his fill," *guan-bu-jin* 觀不盡). In addition, the gaze of the narrator is floating but fixating as well; the series of reduplications of words in Chinese starting with 黑鬒鬒 (*hei zhenzhen*, "[g]lossy, black, raven's feather tresses") were triggered first of all by the "windy" and romantic (*feng-feng-liu-liu*, 風風流流, lit. "wind-wind-flowing-flowing") way Ximen looks, which flurries as a continuum of "the gust of wind" that impacts Pan's hold of the stick, the curtain's prohibitive/enabling presence, and then the two's bodies.

Not exactly invasive (for Pan, even attractive and lucrative) and definitely not conclusive, the *feng-liu* and wind-flowing pleasure (not at all or not yet arriving at sexual intercourse) generated in this scene for both Ximen and Pan is of atmospheric, cursory, impressionistic, and,

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[371] Ding, *Obscene Things*, 161.

[372] For example, Ximen's wife Wu Yue-niang describes Pan's charm in terms of *feng-liu* – the way the latter's charms flow across her body as "winds:" "As Wu Yue-niang scanned [Pan Jinlian] from head to foot, her glamour [*feng-liu*] ran downward apace; as Wy surveyed her from foot to head, her glamour [*feng-liu*] flowed up with her gaze. If one were to describe Pan's glamour [*feng-liu*]; it is like a shining pearl rolling on a crystal plate." 吳月娘從頭看[潘金蓮]到脚，風流往下跑；從脚看到頭，風流往上流。論風流，如水晶盤內走明珠。(*PIGV* 9:1:174; *JPMCH* 9:1:116, *translation modified and emphasis mine*).

crucially, *non-penetrative* quality.[373] Not only is Pan unharmed, the man in case, Ximen is arguably paralyzed by the winds that stirs from and through Pan's wind-flowing power, which disempowers the male protagonist more than it does the woman. After all, even for the veteran womanizer Ximen, whose "mischievous eyes [were] …adept at assessing [women's] romantic possibilities (*feng-qing*, lit. wind-sentiment 風情)," lingering with the sight (as well as tarrying with the descriptions of) Pan is a *suspensive* experience. According to the narrator, Ximen's body is literally immobilized by the wind: his "starch begins to melt" (*zisao liao banbian*, 自酥了半邊) and his presumed aggression was "sent to Java."[374] Pan's susceptibility to, and indeed superiority in *feng-liu*, simply *overpowers but not empowers* Ximen.[375]

Wind-carrying in her demeanor, Pan is not to be underestimated as (merely) an object; rather, as Naifei Ding memorably called her, she is a "part subject and part object."[376] As a subject (i.e., woman) conflated with object (i.e., curtain) as well as exuding flows of charm (*feng-liu*), Pan indeed stands tall and stands by her "female" gaze. Evaluating Ximen's worth (just as Ximen evaluates her), she is more than ready to play "winds" with him:

> The woman, for her part, had had a good look at the man and thought to herself, "He's **dashing and romantic [*feng-liu*]** as well as soft-spoken, and he seems to be rather taken with me; but I don't even know his name, or where he lives. If he didn't care for me he wouldn't have **glanced back at me seven or eight times** before going his way. Who knows? This may turn out to be the very love-match I've been waiting for." **She fixed her gaze upon the man** until he was out of sight before taking down **the curtain**, closing the front door, and going back inside.

[373] Some similarly sensual but not necessarily sexual adjectives for women in Chinese include, for example, 風韻 *feng-yun*,(lit. wind-rhythm) and 風情 *feng-qing* (lit. wind-sentiment).
[374] On Java in late Ming China, see Yuanfei Wang, "Java in Discord: Unofficial History, Vernacular Fiction, and the Discourse of Imperial Identity in Late Ming China (1574–1620)." *positions: asia critique* 27, no. 4 (2019): 623-652.
[375] "The mere sight of her makes one's ethereal and material souls take flight; Shown off to such advantage, she is a beautiful, if heartless, lover. No sooner did the man catch sight of her than His starch began to melt and his anger flew to Java, as the irate look on his face changed into a broad smile." 那人一見，先自酥了半邊，那怒氣早已鑽入爪窪國去了(*PIGV* 2:1: 51-52; *JPMCH,* 2:1:30).
[376] Ding described Pan as "part subject, part object;" *Obscene Things*, 155.

> 當時婦人見了那人生的風流浮浪，語言甜淨，更加幾分留戀：「倒不知此人姓甚名誰，何處居住。他若沒我情意時，臨去也不回頭七八遍了。不想這段姻緣，却在他身上！」卻在簾子下眼巴巴的看不見那人，方纔收了簾子，關上大門，歸房去了。(*PIGV* 2:1:52-53; *JPMCH,* 2:1:30, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

Pan half-heartedly closes the curtain, momentarily ending the wind-flowing romance between the two. Though the scene is only the first of many in which Pan and Ximen will reciprocate *feng-liu*, it is crucial that here Pan brings the scene to an end (just as she, much later, will bring an end to Ximen's very life) through the medium of curtain/ing. Therefore, assuming that the male character is the sole owner of the capacity to gaze is to fail to appreciate the power of *feng-liu* as being inevitably a mediation between man *and* woman and across all genders.

More crucially, for Pan, woman *is* and can also be *a man*. For instance, after failing to stir "the flame" of Wu Song's desires, she was talked down by the two Wu brothers to stay put inside the house and stop being flirtatious. In response, however, Pan did not simply fall back on womanhood and claim victimhood, she even progressively asserts that she is "a (long-haired) man" vis-à-vis the two Wu(s). As she curses the latter against expected feminine norms: "I may not wear a turban but *I am* such a man, not to mention I am also a dingdong dame*!* I can lift a man on my fist, carry a horse on my arm, and trample on anyone else's face. 我是個不帶頭巾的男子漢，叮叮噹噹響的婆娘！拳頭上也立得人，胳膊上走得馬…！" (*PIGV* 2:1:45-46; *JPMCH* 2:1:27, *translation modified and emphasis mine*).[377]

Confining Pan to the category of woman is, therefore, reductive if not a misgendering mistake. It follows that *feng-liu* must be understood as neither male nor female-exclusive, but rather as a shareably environmental and potentiating in the atmospheric background. As testified

[377] Pan clearly says: "I *am* (*shi* 是) …a man (*nan-zi-han*)." David Roy's translation toned down her transgressive assertion of masculinity or perhaps even transgendering claim on manhood, rendering the phrase as "I may not wear a turban, but I am a match for any man." (*PIGV* 2:1:46),

by the poem describing Ximen's delight in the counter, the curtain flutters with wind and weather:

> In **the cool breeze and genial weather,** he has sauntered out for a stroll;
> By chance, **beneath the curtain** he encounters a seductive beauty.
> Merely because, "on the point of departure, she gives him a meaningful glance"
> His desires are so aroused that he cannot call it quits.
>
> 風日晴和漫出遊，偶從簾下識嬌羞。只因臨去秋波轉，惹起春心不自由。
> (*PIGV* 2:1:52; *JPMCH,* 2:1:30, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

Throughout *JPM*, the book and characters often invoke the elements of winds. This poem begins with the congenial weather facilitating flirtation between Pan and Ximen under the curtain. As Ling Hon Lam theorized in *The Spatiality of Emotion in Early Modern China* (2018), emotion in Chinese literature – better understood as "emotion-realm" (*qing-jing* 情境) – is not an interiorized and psychologized state of mind; instead it designates an affective atmosphere that is fundamentally spatialized and embedded often in the topos of winds since ancient China.[378] As Shigehisa Kuriyama and Elizabeth Hsu have also noted, in the Chinese conception of body and health, as well as self and emotion, wind/*feng* figures as a prominent element (often negative) in mediating the body's inside and outside from ancient to China to even contemporary Asia.[379] Since wind, like air (*qi*), circulates from the outside to the inside of the body, and vice versa, the

[378] Ling Hon Lam, *The Spatiality of Emotions in Early Modern China: From Dreamscapes to Theatricality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 20-23.

[379] As historian Shigehisa Kuriyama notes, health was considered dependent on the circulation of wind inside and outside the body in Chinese culture. Elizabeth Hsu, building on Kuriyama, made a fine distinction and overlap between "*feng*" (wind) and "*qi*" (air), noting that the former often carries negative implications. On winds in literature, Ling Hon Lam traced how in early modern China emotion was conceived as an affective realm theatricalized by the *topos* of winds. See: Shigehisa Kuriyama, "Wind and Self," *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 233-270; Elizabeth Hsu, "The Experience of Wind in Early and Medieval Chinese Medicine." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13, no. s1 (2007): 117-134.

surrounding environment therefore "sculpted the shape and possibilities of the body, molded desires and dispositions, infused a person's entire being."[380]

Crucially, winds move with the curtain. As Ximen vividly remembers Pan *and the curtain* after the first encounter: "…I don't know why it is, but ever since I caught sight of her when she was taking down the curtain the other day, it's been just as though she had stolen away my three ethereal and my seven material souls. 不瞞乾娘說，不知怎的，吃他那日叉簾子時見了一面，恰似收了我三魂六魄的一般" (*PIGV* 2:1:60; *JPMCH* 2:1:36, *emphasis mine*). Clearly, Ximen is hooked on Pan not just as any woman, but as a specifically *curtained/curtaining* woman. Once triggered, the wind-flowing process of *feng-liu* continues to drift through curtains after curtains throughout the novel among other characters. For example, what happens in Chapter 2 is indeed a continuation of the wind-curtain fluttering in Chapter 1 – where another kind of "wind" is invoked to curtail Pan's romantic and erotic advancement. (Li Han-hsiang would spotlight this Pan vs. Wu Song episode in another film adaptation *Tiger Killer* [1982]; more on this film below.)

To see how winds play a role in Pan's seduction of Wu Song, let's turn to Chapter 1. Right before Pan seduces Wu Song, the weather suggest that it is a snowy day, and strong winds prevails:

> Before anyone knew it more than a month had gone by. It was now the eleventh month and **a strong north wind began to blow**, day after day. In every quarter what should appear but:
>
> Dense masses of dark clouds and all of a sudden:
> **Fluttering and swirling,** a skyful of auspicious snow came flying down.
>
> Behold: For ten thousand *li* dark clouds are densely massed
> In midair the **auspicious omen ripples the curtains**

[380] Kuriyama, "Wind and self," 235.

不覺過了一月有餘，看看十一月天氣，連日朔風緊起，只見四下彤雲密佈，又早紛紛揚揚飛下一天瑞雪來。好大雪！怎見得？但見：萬里彤雪密佈，空中瑞祥飄簾…
(*PIGV* 2:1:52; *JPMCH,* 2:1:30, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

The "rippling curtain" in the sky is a mood that sets the tone for Pan's fluttering that follows. Right after this passage we are told about how Pan, always standing near the curtain in her house, flutters in concert with the curtains in the sky:

Wu Da was hustled out of the house by Pan Jinlian to ply his trade. Now she asked Dame Wang, next door to buy her some meat and wine, and then went into Wu Sung's room and lit a brazier of charcoal. "**Today I'll give his cinders a real stirring,"** she thought to herself. "Never fear, he's bound to be hooked." Cold as it was, the woman stood **inside the hanging curtain** at the door, all by herself, until she caught sight of Wu Sung… as he made his way homeward through the snow. **The woman raised the curtain** to let him in and said with a smile, "Brother in-law, you must be cold."

武大被婦人早趕出去做買賣，央及間壁王婆買了些酒肉，去武松房裡簇了一盆炭火。心裡自想道：「我今日著實撩[illegible]他一[illegible]，不怕他不動情。」那婦人獨自冷冷清清立在簾兒下，望見武松正在雪裡，踏著那亂瓊碎玉歸來。婦人推起簾子，迎著笑道：「叔叔寒冷？」
(*PIGV* 1:1:36-37; *JPMCH* 1:1:17, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

What follows is Pan's seduction of Wu inside the room. The fluttering of curtains and Pan are therefore, as the novel emphasizes, in concert with the stirring winds. While Pan appears to be the seducer, she is as well just another bearer of winds. Of course Pan herself a seductive subject/object of flirting (*liao*, 撩) and fanning (*bo,* 撥),[381] wanting to move Wu Song's heart and bodies (*bupa ta budong qing* 不怕他不動情). Yet note that Pan's almost choreographic breezes and winds are counteracted by Wu Song putting on airs of being self-righteous.

Unsettled by her "wind," Wu Song's language of rejection reveals another kind of contending wind at work, that of "local custom/social mores/public morals," in Chinese *feng-su* 風俗, literally "wind-folk/custom":

[381] Original: "那婦人時常把些言語來撥他，武松是個硬心的直漢。"

> Opening his eyes wide, Wu Sung said, "I'm the sort of man who stands erect between Heaven and Earth, with teeth in his mouth and hair on his head. I'm not the sort of pig or dog who poses a threat to **social mores (*feng-su*)** or violates the standards of human decency. Sister-in-law, this kind of shameless behavior must cease! From now on: **if something happens around here (*feng-cui cao-dong*),** my eyes may recognize you as my sister-in-law, but my fists won't recognize you. Let's have no more of this."
>
> 武松睜起眼來說道：「武二是個頂天立地噙齒戴髮的男子漢，不是那等敗壞風俗傷人倫的豬狗！嫂嫂休要這般不識羞恥，為此等的勾當，倘有風吹草動，我武二眼裡認的是嫂嫂，拳頭卻不認的是嫂嫂！」[382]
> (*PIGV* 1:1:40, *JPMCH,* 1:1:19, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

In face of Pan's frivolous and flirtatious *feng-liu*, Wu struggles to maintain his corporeal and moral composure while gripped by a velocity of conflicting winds between *feng-liu* and *feng-su* (i.e., social mores).[383] Japanese sinologist Mio Kishimoto genealogically investigates the use of the word *feng-su* (local custom) during the Ming-Qing period. She notes that *feng-su* is neither a static concept of boundary- and distinction-making (as in "culture" and "custom") nor is it implying linear progress (as in "civilization"). Amorphous and ever-changing like wind, *feng-su* is also not the law itself, nor is it simply locatable in either individuals or social structure. Rather, in the eyes of Ming-Qing statesmen such as Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 and Wang Fuxhi 王夫之, *feng-su* designates an affective diagnostic of whether a society is declining or improving without resorting to explanatory rubric such as the law, institutions and the state, but through sensing the spirit, hearts and minds (*ren-xin* 人心) of people as demonstrated in their social interactions. Put simply, *feng-su* designates "local custom" that is by nature dynamically inter-subjective and

[382] In David Roy's translation this statement of Wu Song is treated as a poem. Here I presented it as a paragraph.
[383] The term *feng-su* (social mores) appears less than 10 times in *JPMCH*: Ch.1, Ch. 22, Ch. 30, Ch.34, Ch. 48, Ch. 76, Ch. 77. In contrast, *feng-liu* (frivolous romance) appears at least more than 40 times throughout the book.

environmental, and therefore susceptible to changes and cultivations (as implied in the phrase *yi-feng yi-su* 移風易俗).[384]

Winds/*feng* in *JPM*, therefore, gathers multiple possibilities of conjugation (*feng-liu*, *feng-su*, *feng-cui-cao-dong*….). While Pan threatens to curtain and un-curtain herself through *feng-liu*, Wu Song cites *feng-su* and threatens to freeze the former's fluttering movements. Wu Song's own speech, foregrounding winds/*feng* two times, encapsulates how winds as "background" forces compel characters to move and think. He is caught in between the woman/the curtain's fluttering and rectitude. Pan facilitates the fluttering erotic of *feng-liu*, we are told in this passage that Wu Song "was an adamantly straightforward man and did not rise to the bait." (直性的漢子). "Erecting between heaven and earth," he cites straight/strict social customs and public decency, threatening to extinguish the soft fluttering of Pan's (in)voluntary seduction under the atmospheric pressure of the "weather."

Taking our cue from Wu Song's entanglement with competing winds, the novel JPM as a whole can be summed up as the fluttering between (at least) two modalities of wind conjugations: one that is mainly mediated through Pan in this passage (*feng-liu*) and one invoked by the self-righteous Wu Song (*feng-su*). This volatility and indeterminacy in differentiating between overlapping yet colliding types of winds is epitomized in Wu Song's phrasing describing his quagmire, that is *feng-cui cao-dong* 風吹草動, (lit. "wind-blowing and grass-moving"). The generic expression often refers to "occasions arising in the surrounding," contingent upon which further and follow-up actions should be pursued. While the blowing wind (*feng-cui*) Wu Song refers to at first appears to be merely the flirtatious physical movements of

[384] See: Mio Kishimoto 岸本美緒, "Fengsu yu lishiguan"「風俗」與歷史觀 [*Feng-su* and historiography] 13, no. 3 *New History* 新史學 (2002); 1-19.

Pan, at this point Wu is arguably already provoked and bodily affected by her seduction. Put differently, Wu is suppressing that licentiousness of hers (and his own body reacting) through summoning the seemingly solid, but always dissolvable feng-su/social mores. In this sense, Wu's mentioning of *feng-cui cao-dong* refers not only to Pan's sexual advance, but an atmospheric attunement to a hypervigilant, constantly oscillating environment where(by) whirls of different kinds of winds gather and contend. The circulatory tension in between *feng-liu* and *feng-su* threatens to erupt in either sex (Wu succumbing to seduction) or murder (Wu suppressing seduction or killing Pan, which happens only near the end of the novel.

Conclusion

This chapter uses the historical case of Li Han-hsiang's book-and-cinema entanglement to theorize the nuances surrounding *JPM*'s circulation in contemporary world. More than any other classic Chinese novel, cinematic and transmedial adaptations of *JPM* are entangled through a "wind-curtain" dynamics that overlaps with but is not reducible to any institutional covering and statist acts of censorship. Rather than taking a binaristic view on "openness" and "repression" in viewing the book's circulation, Li's case suggests to us that the slippage between covering, and exposing is always more unpredictable than assumed. Indeed, as his film texts demonstrate, curtaining proliferates as an aesthetic device on screen. I argue that this is due to the affordances of the original novel itself, which is anchored in an ecological form of winds and the infrastructural networks of curtains. As it stands, frivolous romance (i.e. *feng-liu*) in *JPM*, in whichever remake, is inevitably accompanied by the fluttering of curtains; the degree of such affective world-marking intensity depends on the "winds" of local customs (*feng-su*) and the

world's climactic happenings (*feng-cui-cao-dong*). As Li traveled from Republican China to colonial Hong Kong, post-war Japan, and (post)martial-law Taiwan, we witness how his itinerant geographical movement ("winds") gave form to different modes of fluttering of curtains through *JPM*.

In the next chapter, I will show further how Li Han-hsiang's cinema demonstrates that curtaining does not disappear even in the absence of censorship. We will move from Li's *JPM* journey (as provided to us above through his autobiography) to more close readings of his adaptations from the 1970s to early 1990s. The next chapter will demonstrate how the literary texture of wind-curtain fluttering in the novel is interrelated to what Zhang Zhupo calls "splitting of seam," which in turn becomes re-mediated in the fabric of Li's cinematic staging. As Li Han-hsiang moved his film-making base from Hong Kong and Taiwan to mainland China in the 1990s, *JPM*'s wind-curtain fluttering took a new direction as Deng Xiaoping opened up mainland China, inaugurating a volatile transition from socialism to post-socialism**.** In the context of China reintegrating into global capitalism, the last section of the next chapter will then look at *JPM*'s sensuous entanglement of films, books, and infrastructure. It will show how wind-curtain dynamic surfaces as aesthetic-political (im)possibility as the so called "Iron Curtain" (between the communist world and the post-socialist world) appears to vanish. Finally, the conclusion will move beyond China and the Sinophone world and discuss *JPM*'s cinematic circulation across East Asia and Euro-America.

Chapter Four:

***Jin Ping Mei's po-zhan*/split-seam, and the global fabric of wind-scape**

After theorizing the contention of winds (*feng-liu* versus/and *feng-su* amidst *feng-cui-cao-dong*) in the previous chapter, this chapter continues to trace the leaky circulation of wind-curtain fluttering in *JPM* through staging a conversation between Ming-Qing literary aesthetics on the novel's curtain and curtaining with the mise-en-scène of *JPM*'s contemporary film adaptations. Before continuing to discuss Li Han-hsiang's film adaptations, here we theorize in further details what have been called "curtaining" as distinctively different from while also working in tandem with censorship. More particularly, this section discusses how winds circulate through the aesthetics of curtaining in film in relation to what the 17th century critic Zhang Zhupo 張竹坡 (b. 1670-1698) calls *po-zhan* (split-seam) 破綻, meaning "loopholes," but more precisely suggesting the "splitting of seam."

Traditional Chinese fiction critics (such as Jin Sheng-tan, Mao Zong-gang and Li Yu), as Andrew Plaks noted, were more invested in assessing craftsmanship of fiction in terms of texture rather than structures, analogizing good writing to sophisticated stitching and tailoring.[385] Zhang Zhupo is not an exception. In his "How to read *JPM*" (*dufa*) essay, Zhang likewise cast *JPM* as a sophisticated "volume of a thousand stitches and ten thousand threads" (*yi bu qianzhen wanxian* 一部千針萬線) – a product of what Gu Ming Dong (à la Zhang) has called *JPM*'s "poetics of weaving."[386] Viewed in this light, *po-zhan* can be translated literally as "split-seam," (as Plaks

[385] See Andrew Plaks' magistral summary in "Traditional Chinese Fiction Criticism: d) Terminology and Central Concepts," in *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, edited by David L. Rolston (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); 92.
[386] Cited in Ming Dong Gu, "Brocade of Human Desires: The Poetics of Weaving in the *Jin Ping Mei* and Traditional Commentaries." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 63, no. 2 (2004): 333-356.

hinted at),[387] an expression sensitively restoring the senses of materiality of the Chinese character *zhan* 綻, which is constructed with the silk radical (i.e. 糸). The word *zhan* and its various semantic cousins signify not only "loopholes" (*po-zhan* 破綻) or "the fraying of fabric" (*zhan-po* 綻破), but also other forms of affective opening such as "blossoming," (*zhan-fang* 綻放) and physical splitting, i.e. the "blistering (of flesh)" (*pi-kai-rou-zhan* 皮開肉綻).[388] As Zhang sees it, the novel *JPM* is driven by how different loopholes (*zhan*) unravel" (*po*) and and "un-curtain. As Zhang writes:

> There are many episodes in *JPM* where the clandestine activities of some of the characters are disclosed to others through **loopholes (*po-zhan*)**. For example, Ximen's sexual intercourse with Pan during the funeral service for her husband is overheard **by the monks outside the windows**; Pan Jinlian's affair with Qintong is discovered by Sun Xue'e**,** and the even more incriminating perfume sachet that Pan Jinlian has given him is also found on Qingtung's person; Pan Jinlian discovers Ximen Qing's secret assignations with Li Ping-er **over the garden wall** and stumbles upon Song Huilian's affair with Ximen Qing; Li Ping-er's remarks in the *Feicuixuan* are overheard by Pan Jinlian, bur her own antics in the grape arbor are witnessed by Tiegun…(*translation modified and emphasis mine*)
>
> 《金瓶》有節節露破綻處。如窗內淫聲，和尚偏聽見；私琴童，雪娥偏知道。而裙帶葫蘆，更屬險事。牆頭密約，金蓮偏看見；惠蓮偷期，金蓮偏撞著。翡翠軒，自謂打聽瓶兒；葡萄架，早已照入鐵棍才受贓即動大巡之怒；才乞恩，便有平安之攙。調婿後，西門偏就摸署；燒陰户，胡秀偏就看見… [389]

Echoing with what we have been theorizing as (un)curtaining, Zhang theorizes *po-zhan* as accidental and incidental (*pian* 偏) moments where hidden activities are exposed through omnipresent voyeurism and atmospheric surveillance, particularly along windows and walls, and

[387] "Split-seam" is one of Andrew Plaks' translation of the word *po-zhan*. In modern usage, *po-zhan* often negatively refers to errors and flaws in one's plot, design or reasoning. The term has been alternatively translated as "crack" and "rifts" by David Roy; see Plaks, "Traditional Chinese Fiction Criticism," 92.
[388] See the entry of "*zhan* 綻" in *Revised Mandarin Chinese Dictionary* 重編國語辭典修訂本, National Academy for Educational Research 國家教育研究院, https://dict.revised.moe.edu.tw/dictView.jsp?ID=7824&q=1&word=%E7%B6%BB
[389] The English translation is cited from David Roy's in *How to Read the Chinese Novel* edited by David Rolston (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990): 207; Chinese original cited in Zhang Zhupo, "Jin Ping Mei dufa 金瓶梅讀法," in *Jin Ping Mei Ziliao Huibian* 金瓶梅資料滙編, edited by Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄 (Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 1985), 211.

of course: curtains. That the novel is full of descriptions of curtain is well-noted by Zhang and contemporary critics. Martin Huang, for example, has pointed out that *JPM* is "dominated by images of screens, windows, and bedroom curtains;" spying on others or overhearing them almost becomes a ritual.[390] Extending the notion of the *po-zhan* from within to the outside of the novel, Katherine Carlitz contends that readers of *JPM* perform voyeurism just as characters do.[391] In this light, it is understandable that contemporary critics interprets Zhang's marveling at *po-zhan* in terms of surveillance.[392]

Besides concerns about power, what is more surprising is perhaps the fact that Zhang finds the aesthetic of *po-zhan* revelatory of something profound: "the predicament to which human emotions lead." (*renqing zhi kewei* 人情之可畏). For Zhang, as we have argued, *JPM* is a novel punctuated by *po-zhan* one after another, uncurtaining and curtained by turns. As he goes on to extol the author of *JPM*:

> Examples of *po-zhan* are too many to enumerate. In general, the author uses risky technique [*hsien-pi* 險筆] in order to show the predicaments to which human emotions can lead. But even more remarkable is the way in which he enables the characters whose clandestine activities are **disclosed to cover their cracks with plausible alibis** so that he does not have to waste his energy on tedious explanations. This is why his technique is so miraculous [*hua-bi* 化筆)]

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[390] Martin Huang, "The Materiality of Desire and the Beyond in *Jin Ping Mei*," in *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001); 86-87.

[391] As Carlitz writes, "The author of *JPM*… communicates the illicit nature of *JPM*'s sexual encounters by making us voyeurs: in clandestine company with Pan Jinlian, Ying Bojue, or various little boys, we watch these encounters *through keyholes*, we listen *through walls*. These other characters catch us in the act of watching Ximen Qing and his various partners, thus exposing our own frailties, demonstrating that the reader has as great a need for self-cultivation as do any of the characters in the novel. *(emphasis mine*)." Katherine Cartliz, *The Rhetoric of Chin P'ing Mei.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 51-52

[392] See, for example, Chen Jianhua 陳建華, "Yu de ningshi, Jin Ping Mei Cihua de xushu fangfa shijue yu xingbie" 欲的凝視：《金瓶梅詞話》的敘述方法、視覺與性別 [On the gaze of desire, *Jin Ping Mei*'s narrative, visuality and gender], in *Jingdian Zhuanhua yu Ming Qing Xushi Wenxue* 經典轉化與明清敘事文學 [Transforming classics and the Ming-Qing literary narrative] edited by Ayling Wang 王瓊玲 and Hu Siao-chen 胡曉真 (Taipei: Linking, 2009): 97-128; Shi Xiaojun 史小軍, "Jin Ping Mei zhongdi toukui yu qianting" 論《金瓶梅》中的偷窺與潛聽 [On *Jin Ping Mei*'s voyeurism and eavesdropping] in *2012 Taiwan Jin Ping Mei Guoji Xueshu Yan Taohui Lunwenji* 2012 台灣金瓶梅國際學術研討會論文集, edited by Chen Yiyuan (Taipei: Liren Shuju, 2013): 149-166.

> 諸如此類，又不可勝數。總之，用險筆寫人情之可畏，而尤妙在既已露破，乃一語即解，統不費力累贅。此所以爲化筆也。[393]
> (*translation modified and emphasis mine*)

Po-zhan, as a form of curtaining and uncurtaining in *JPM*, is pleasurable and fascinating. What impressed Zhang was that *po-zhan*, once uncurtained, were smoothed over and curtained immediately through techniques and craftmanship of writing and weaving. Curtaining and uncurtaining by turns dynamically propel the narrative forward. As Zhang asserts, such *po-zhan* demonstrates finesses of writing that are both "risky" (*xian bi* 險筆) and eventually "miraculous." (*hua-bi* 化筆.) The revealing through *po-zhan*, in Zhang's view, thus not only relates to questions of power and ethics (e.g., intrusion of privacy, transgression of social mores and gender norms) that are entrenched in dichotomy (e.g., male/female, private/public), but more generatively and infrastructurally about affording *the very possibility of sustainable wind-curtain dynamic*, without which the story of *JPM* would stop, or stop from being read, or watched (in the case of film adaptations) due to a full ban from circulation.

With a contextualized understanding of the aesthetics of *po-zhan*/split-seam as a form of (un)curtain/ing, we can now trace how winds conjugate (e.g., *feng-liu*, *feng-su*, *feng-cui-cao-dong*…) and circulate through more and more "loopholes" and *po-zhan*, punctuating and articulating the plot and the narration of the story. As discussed in the previous chapter, wind-curtain fluttering begins in between Pan Jinlian and Wu Song (Chapter 1 of *HLM*). As shown in Wu Song's wrestling with winds, *feng-liu* (flirtatious romance) and *feng-su* (social mores) collide and converge as the wind-curtain dynamics in the novel. Initially, Wu Song tries to arrest the wind-curtain dynamic. To prevent Pan and the house's curtain from extra-marital romance, Wu Song urges his brother Wu Da to observe and enforce local customs (*feng-su*): go home

[393] Zhang, "How to Read," 207; "Jin Ping Mei dufa," 211.

early, lock the doors and close the curtain on time (*zixi menhu* 仔細門戶), preventing Pan from "shameless" exposure.[394]

Not coincidentally, the Chinese word for curtains, *lian* 簾, significantly rhymes with "shame," (*lian-chi* 廉恥),[395] serving as an aesthetic device demarcating spatial, architectural and by extension social and gender hierarchies. Following this spatial and formal logic, Wu Song urged his brother Wu Da – the legal husband of Pan – to lock Pan up, disallowing her to dress up and aesthetically curtain herself at the border of home and the outside world. The arrival of Ximen Qing, himself a wind-bearing figure of *feng-liu*, however, stirs up Pan's curtain. The curtain is emphasized three times within one paragraph of this pivotal scene:

> One day in the third month, when spring was at its most beautiful, Pan Jinlian dressed herself up alluringly and could hardly wait for Wu Da's departure before taking up her position behind **the curtain** that hung over the front door. She had become accustomed to standing there until her husband was expected home and then taking down **the curtain** and going inside to wait for him. But this particular day was one of those occasions on which something was destined to happen. Just as she was about to take down **the curtain** a certain person happened to walk by…
>
> 一日，三月春光明媚時分，金蓮打扮光鮮，單等武大出門，就在門前簾下站立。約莫將及他歸來時分，便下了簾子，自去房內坐的。一日也是合當有事，卻有一個人從簾子下走過來… (*PIGV* 2:1:48, *JPMCH,* 2:1:28-29, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

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[394] "武松又吩咐道：「哥哥，我的言語休要忘了，在家仔細門戶。" (*JPMCH* 2:1:28)

[395] This observation is echoed throughout many studies (interestingly, all by female scholars) which argue that the aesthetics of curtain in *JPM* demarcates social, moral and gender boundaries, but none of them emphatically connects it to the novel's figuration of wind and weather, as well as *JPM*'s censorship and cinema. See: Dai Na 戴娜, "Shilun Jin Ping Mei zhong de lianzi yixiang," 試論《金瓶梅》中的「簾子」意象 [On the imagery of curtain in *Jin Ping Mei*], *Wenjiao Ziliao* 文教資料, no.34 (2007): 40-43; Xue Lei 薛蕾, "*Jin Ping Mei* Zhong de 'lianzi' yiziang de shenmei" 《金瓶梅》中「簾子」意象的審美作用 [The aesthetic role of the curtain imagery in *Jin Ping Mei*], *Journal of Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University* 廣東技術師範學院學報, no.2 (2010): 6-8; Huang Hui-ling 黃惠鈴, "Lun Jin Ping Mei Cihua zhong daode yu qingyu zhi liudong – yi 'lian' zhi wuxiang wei kaocha zhongxin"論《金瓶梅詞話》中道德與情慾之流動——以「簾」之物象為考察中心" [The flow of morality, Sentiments and sensuality in *Jin Ping Mei* based on the portrayal of curtains], *Studies in Chinese Literature* 中國文學研究 no. 50 (2020): 135-172; Shao Liguang 邵麗光, "Shilun Jin Ping Mei lianzi yixiang de xushi gongneng" 試論《金瓶梅》「簾子」意象的敘事功能 [On the functions of the curtain imagery in *Jin Ping Mei*], *Journal of Henan Polytechnic University (Social Sciences)* 河南理工大學學報(社會科學版) 22, no.4 (2021): 80-84.

Marking the inside from the outside, the curtain later falls due to some geophysical wind; Pan himself blames it on the wind. Drawing Ximen in, the wind also gathers repeatably and infrastructurally more and more participants as the story progresses. For example, the lady pimp named Dame Wang 王婆 (henceforth Wang). Catching wind of Pan's curtain/ing, Wang's opportunistic participation in *feng-liu* suggests that wind-circulation is never a private but public affair; wind-flowing is a social, sexual, and crucially, commercial, and capitalist event of profit-making. It is therefore not for nothing that, as an expert in matchmaking and pimping, Wang calls her earnings *feng-liu-qian* 風流錢 (lit. wind-flowing money), meaning "agency fees" in pimping outside of social mores.

Noting Wang's zest for match-making of *feng-liu*, Ximen calls Wang "a *feng*/mad woman" *feng-po-zi* 風婆子 but unusually with the Chinese character *feng*/wind 風 in replace of the homophonous word *feng*/crazy 瘋, whose graphic also carries a wind element in its character.[396] For Ximen, then, Wang is a "crazy" (*feng* 瘋) matchmaker and deal-maker of "wind" (*feng*, 風). Given that the conventional Chinese character for *feng*/crazy 瘋 has been used in other chapters,[397] the consistent rendering of Wang's "craziness" in *JPM*'s Chapter 2 as *feng*/wind 風 is therefore a stylistic choice on the part of the author or editor, spotlighting her as a profit-driven, transactional or even transgressive medium of wind, gravitating towards the

[396] The editor of *JPMCH* in a footnote suggests that in this instance *feng*/wind/風 is synonymous with *feng*/madness/瘋 feng without explaining why. The element of wind in the Chinese character *feng* is totally lost in translation after rendered in English. For example, Ximen says to Wang: "What a crazy old crone you are [*feng-po-zi*, literally meaning "wind-old-woman"]…you just keep joking and making a crazy face [*feng-lian*, "wind-face"] 你看這風婆子，只是扯著風臉取笑." [*PIGV* 2:1 56; *JPMCH* 2:1:33, *translation modified*] Later, Ximen again calls Wang a woman of wind: "Why you crazy old crone [*feng-po-zi*], you are just crazy [*feng*, literally 'you are just wind.'] 你看這風婆子，只是風!" [*PIGV* 2:1 59; *JPMCH* 2:1:45].

[397] For example in Chapter 28: "西門慶道：「既不是瘋病，如何這軟癱熱化」"

alright-ness of *feng-liu* regardless of the airtightness of *feng-su*. Note how Wang captures and capitalizes on the wind-induced "hook up scene" between Pan and Ximen:

> This scene happened to be witnessed by Dame Wang, whose teahouse was situated next door. Breaking into a laugh, the old lady said, "And whatever induced you to walk under these particular eaves, sir? It serves you right."
>
> 卻被這間壁住的賣茶王婆子看見。那婆子笑道：「兀的誰家大官人打這屋檐下過？打的正好！」 (*PIGV* 2:1:52; *JPMCH,* 2:1:30, *translation modified*)



Fig. 4.1: Wind and air circulation between the inside and outside.



Fig. 4.2: Dame Wang's catching wind of *feng-liu* in the Ming woodblock illustration
Source: *PIGV*: 2:1:49.



Fig. 4.3: Catching winds from Dame Wang's teashop.

Wang does all kinds of business including coupling man and woman; she has been described as an enabler of another compound word *feng-yue* 風月 (lit. wind-moonlight), which is another slippery term like *feng-liu.* The term *feng-yue*, literally meaning "light breeze and bright moon," in Chinese ambivalently refers to "romantic and sexual feelings outside of norms," or "sexual/sensual promiscuity." Most poetically, *feng-yue* refers to "the beautiful scenery to be savored at the moment (while dismissing serious and political affairs)," and most vulgarly, as an adjective for "brothel," as in the modern Chinese phrase *feng-yue chang-suo* 風月場所.[398] Ventilating all these nuance and ambivalence of the term *feng-yue*, Li Han-hsiang has been known as the initiator of a film genre called *feng-yue* movie 風月片, often referring to his profit-driven Chinese-costumed soft porn movies.[399]

[398] *JPM*'s Chapter 2 describes Wang thus: "It so happens that this Dame Wang, the proprietress of the teahouse, was not the sort to abide by her lot. In fact, for years she had played the procuress, made a living as a matchmaker, peddled human flesh been a broker, meddled in midwifery, acted as accoucheur, and revealed a knack for every sort of knavery ... she is also [a]dept at manipulating **the breeze [*feng*] and the moonlight [*yue*]** to her own advantage." 原來這開茶坊的王婆，也不是守本分的，便是積年通殷勤，做媒婆，做賣婆，做牙婆，又會收小的，也會抱腰，又善放刁…這婆子，端的慣調風月巧安排 (*PIGV* 2:1:57-68; *JPMCH* 2:1:34). My explanation of the word *feng-yue* is drawn from Revised Mandarin Chinese Dictionary重編國語辭典修訂本, s.v. "feng-yue 風月" edited by National Academy for Educational Research 國家教育研究院, accessed February 23, 2023, https://dict.revised.moe.edu.tw/dictView.jsp?ID=37327&q=1&word=%E9%A2%A8%E6%9C%88

[399] Rejoining the Shaw Brother studio in 1972, Li is known to have produced a series of ancient-costumed films in the genre of what was called *feng-yue* movies. Li himself differentiates his more "Chinese aesthetic" inflected *feng-yue* movies from what have been called Category III movies that he made in the 1990s, though he admitted both are

Fittingly, *Golden Lotus* is one such example. In Li's reconstruction of Pan, Ximen and Wang's wind-induced and -produced erotic/economic collaboration, winds similarly easily circulate around Pan's household installed with gigantic windows, ventilating air and Pan's desire for self-exhibition through covering of curtain (**Fig. 4.1**). Next to it is Wang's teashop. Compared to the Ming illustration of the scene (**Fig. 4.2)**, where readers are positioned as a virtual passerby (**Fig. 4.3**), the film more viscerally treat the audiences with a point-of-view shot from the "inside" of Wang's shop. Carefully curated to focalize while also decenter Pan and Ximen, the teapots and bowls, while blocking and framing the incident, index not only the very environmental entrapment of Wang/the audience/the camera. More precisely, the so-called blocking of objects help focalize and aestheticize the center of attention (here in this shot, Ximen) through what I call curtaining throughout the chapter*: an aesthetic-political practice which takes place through* the rendering visible *within* and *through* the invisible.



Fig. 4.4: *Golden Lotus*'s multiple layers of curtain(ing): fabric(ation) displayed to the privileged audience while also hidden at the background from other diegetic characters,

for profit-making. The less literary sounding and less Chinese-culture-derived latter category "Category III film" emerged only after Hong Kong set up a film classicization system in 1988. See: Edwin C. Chen 陳煒智, "Daguan shijie fengyue qingnong, qiantan Li Hanxiang doyan de fengyue dianying [yi]" 大觀世界・風月情濃——淺談李翰祥導演的「風月電影」（一） [A cosmos of sentimental feng-yue: On Li Han-hsiang's *feng-yue* movies], *Funscreen* 放映週報 of Taiwan Film and Audiovisual Institute 國家電影及視聽文化中心, 31 July 2020, https://funscreen.tfai.org.tw/article/7974.

Without Wang's catching wind of Pan and Ximen's *feng-liu* encounter, the novel, as it is, simply will not proceed further – in the fashion of curtain(ing) and uncurtaining as well as *po-zhan*, the covering and uncovering of loopholes. While we noted that Pan hides herself behind the curtain to attract male gazes, the novel echoes curtaining not only in terms of her exhibitionism, but in terms of plot progression as well. Foregrounding the texture of hiding, the novel takes pain to describe to us that the *feng-liu* trio (Pan, Ximen and now also Wang) altogether employs the traditionally feminine and domestic task of embroidery to "curtain" an illicit affair with "curtaining" the (dead) body as the pretext. To help Ximen further develop his and Pan's *feng-liu*, Wang sets up a meeting between Pan and Ximen on the pretext of nothing but making the old lady's burial clothes.[400] Wang is highly selective in terms of the texture, style and value of the fabric, ordering from Ximen (himself, notably, a wealthy merchant trading in fabric) "a bolt of blue pongee and another of white, along with a bolt of white damask [and also] ten taels' worth of good quality silk wadding. 一疋藍紬，一疋白紬， 一疋白絹，再用十兩好綿," displayed in great colors in the film *Golden Lotus* (**Fig. 4.4**) (*PIGV* 3:1:65; *JPMCH,* 3:1:40, *translation modified*). As Wang highlights, Pan's father was a tailor, and her embroidery training is noted as excellent. Wang therefore uses the high-end fabric to convince Pan to make burial

[400] Wang and Pan flatly transgress tradition and chose "an ominous day" (*po-ri*, 破日, lit. a day of "split") in traditional Chinese calendar [to make the burial garments: "[Pan Jinlian] took the calendar in her hand and examined it for a while. 'Tomorrow is an unlucky day,' she said, 'and the day after tomorrow is bad too. The next good day for tailoring is not until the day after the day after tomorrow.' Dame Wang snatched the calendar away from her and hung it back on the wall, saying, 'The fact that you're willing to do it for me, young lady, makes you my lucky star. What need is there to be particular about the date. I already asked someone to check for me and he reported that tomorrow is an unlucky day. **But I for one, see no reason to pay any attention to the taboo** against doing tailoring on ominous days.' Pan said, 'burial garments made on an ominous day, that's a good idea." 婦人接在手內，看了一回，道：「明日是破日，後日也不好，直到外後日方是裁衣期。」王婆一把手取過歷頭來掛在牆上，便道：「若得娘子肯與老身做時，就是一點福星，何用選日！老身也曾央人看來，說明日是個破日。老身只道裁衣日不用破日，不忌他！」那婦人道：「歸壽衣服，正用破日便好。」" (*PIGV* 3:1:70; *JPMCH,* 3:1:44, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

clothes for herself. With tailoring and "curtaining" as a pretext, Wang, as *feng-liu* facilitator, next arranges for Ximen to appear during the tailoring. Wang then threatens to tell Wu Da about the affair, unless (the by then all-too-willing) Pan agrees to engage in an affair with Ximen from then on.





Fig. 4.5: Curtaining by the curtain and wooden bars from Dame Wang's perspective.
Fig. 4.6: Curtaining by the door from Dame Wang's perspective.





Fig. 4.7: Dame Wang looking at Ximen and Pang through curtains.
Fig. 4.8: Looking from an aesthetically carved hole in the wall.

In the film's re-*curation* of this secret meeting, the motif of *po-zhan*/split-seam, and by extension, tailoring, translates into an embodied cinematic texture of wind and curtaining. In *Golden Lotus*, Wang first peers into her room through the veiled windows, filtered with the camera's wooden bars and the curtain's fabric. (**Fig. 4.5**) As Ximen and Pan move to the bed for sex, Wang moves towards the door for a better look. Her sight fluctuates and body vibrates as she struggles to see more through the swinging door's gap, indexed by the heady, jerky

movement of the camera, proffering a simultaneously titillating and/or frustrating cinematic experience (**Fig. 4.6 & 4.7**).

Wang is, however, just one "camera" among many hidden eyes. Like the invisible air, the film (and of course, also the novel's) narration are themselves the very all-encompassing atmospheric apparatus of sensory surveillance itself, tailoring to us a montage that suggests suffusion through several diegetically impossible angles. Most outlandishly in *Golden Lotus*, such *po-zhan* is offered through a smoothly carved and curved hole behind the "wall" of Dame Wang's room, which extends, arguably as a hole in the film set, the film screen and the theater. What is busily displayed on screen here is *the curtaining itself*, affectively curated through layers of "veils" such as the wooden frame of the wall, bed curtain, bedsheet, the door curtain, the window curtain, as well as the "curtain" (i.e. layers of clothing) on Ximen and Pan's bodies. (**Fig. 4.8**).

Throughout his career, Li was renowned for his meticulous attention to art direction and props.[401] As the film progresses, Li Han-hsiang's curation of curtains – and by extension, the cinematic screen – would only mirror the very texture of the novel more effectively. Film and media theorist Giuliana Bruno (who in turn draws from Giles Deleuze) in her book *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media* (2014) argues that "affect is actually 'worn' on the surface as it is threaded through time in the form of residual stains, traces, and texture."[402] Going

[401] Li said the following about another *JPM* adaptation *The Golden Lotus "Love and Desire*" 金瓶風月(1991): "Our attention to costumes makes our *feng-yue* and Category Three films stand out. Take the furniture in the Ming-dynasty for example; they are simpler in design and patterns, but the Qing counterparts are more complex. We were meticulous about all this […] not a single bed would look the same in the past … there were also various kinds of curtains and we paid attention all styles, colors, and tonality … in this way we make films richer in texture so that the audience has something more to look at." Quoted from Chen Qingwei, Li Qin, 陳清偉、李琴, "Li Hanxiang tan chuang lunxi Jinping Fengyue zhizuo qianhou" 李翰祥談床論戲《金瓶風月》製作前後 [Li Han-hsiang on the production of "*The Golden Lotus "Love and Desire*"], *City Entertainment Magazine* 電影雙週刊, No. 315 (May 1991): 47-48

[402] Giuliana Bruno, *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 5.

beyond the platitudes of (subject-centered) voyeurism and (power-driven) surveillance, we can now understand *Golden Lotus* as Li Han-Hsiang's very own affective reconstruction and reactivation of "wind-curtain" fluttering drawing from the novel itself, demonstrating to us, in Bruno's words, "the tailoring of film," which in itself echoes the aesthetic of *po-zhan* (derived from Zhang Zhu-po's earlier theorization) of *JPM*.

Understood as *po-zhan* and "split-seam," the curtains as well as the curtaining curated by Li Han-hsiang on screen can be serially understood as virtual and material "blossoming" or eventful unravelling (*zhan*) of loopholes in the novel. These textural curations demand us to reclaim analytical rubrics afforded by the novel's form of affects such as wind-curtain fluttering and *po-zhan*, before an otherwise useful application of psychoanalytic term such as voyeurism, derived either from Sigmund Freud or the panopticon by Michel Foucault. The goal here is therefore to foreground how objects such as curtains intervene in fashioning a textured *JPM* experience, both textual and cinematic, of wind's flowing in *feng-liu*.

Viewing film itself as sartorial worldmaking, as Bruno suggests, Li's *JPM* films not only block, expose and filter, but more fashionably *decorate* and *dress* the shots and mise-en-scène, re-curating what Jonathan Hay has called "sensuous surfaces" which permeated the Ming and Qing dynasties' material cultures.[403] One may recall that in the novel curtains sensuously, or sometimes simply infrastructurally flutter in two-thirds of the chapters.[404] Depending on materials, curtains (or other materials or surfaces performing curtaining) vary in design and transparency. The novel itself shows a keen awareness of the textural and material

[403] Jonathan Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010.)
[404] Oftentimes, characters are said to lift the curtain just to enter the room. According to Huang Hui-ling's statistics, the character for "curtain" appears 207 times in the novel, spread across 80 chapters, totaling around two-thirds of the books. See: Huang, "Lun Jin Ping Mei," 141-142.

differentiations among different curtains as coverings, ranging from "embroidered hangings (*xiu-lian* 綉簾), "crimson bed curtain" (*sha-lian* 紗簾), "hanging blinds of speckled bamboo," (*xiang-lian* 湘簾), "beaded portieres" (*zhu-lian* 珠簾), "the emerald blind" (*cui-lian* 翠簾), "the curtain of crystal beads" (*shuijing-lian* 水晶簾)", as well as "the gauze mosquito netting" (*sha-zhang* 紗帳) and "fragrant silk" (*xiang-lu* 香羅), to name a few.[405]



Fig. 4.9 & Fig. 4.10 : Curtaining (**Left**) and uncurtaining (**Right)**
through an upward tilt shot passing through the flower-patterned screen.



Fig. 4.11 & Fig. 4.12: Stylistic display of multiple curtains of diverse textures and shapes.

[405] I am indebted to Huang's listing here see: "Lun Jin Ping Mei," 144.



Fig. 4.13: Layers and folds of un/curtaining on and off bodies, on and off screen.

Echoing such textural diversity, across Li's adaptations (and indeed most other *JPM* films; **see below**) the affect of curtaining and uncurtaining assumes multifarious forms of curation of screens (as objects and props in the film set) as well as the cinematic screen itself.[406] In *Golden Lotus*, explicit shots of female nudity, while certainly available, are by turns or at the same time covered and curtained: through a hole in the wall and floral pattern curtain (as mentioned above **Fig. 4.9 & 4.10**), a close-up of glass beads curtain (**Fig. 4.11 & 4.12**), or an explicit juxtaposition or conflation of curtains with curtaining/clothing on female bodies (**Fig. 4.13).** Such curtaining at times, as Bruno argued in a different context, move affectively along with the tracking wind of camera movement. Consider, for instance, another sequence where Pan spies on Ximen and another of his wives, Li Ping-er, through the door gap. The camera (a surrogate of Pan's vision) first hides behind a semi-transparent floral screen before tilting upward to unravel the latter two's erotic *zhan*: "seam-splitting" (*po-zhan* 破綻) and, as per the flowers on screen, flowering (*zhan-fang*, 綻放) in all its texture **(Fig. 4.13).**

[406] Wu Hung discusses the "ambiguous identities" of screen as an object, a painting medium, and a pictorial representation in Chinese art history in *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

As the film and the novel come to an end, wind-curtain fluttering begins to subside. Circulation of *feng-liu* persists throughout the novel as in *Golden Lotus*, from the moment of Ximen, Pan and Wang's murder of Wu Da (Chapter 5), followed by the exile and sentencing of Wu Song (Chapter 10). Near the end of the novel, however, the curtain subsides but does not disappear; indeed, the curtain will infrastructurally remain, only to be turned into a fabric of blood: a curtain that can no longer conceal. Tian Xiaofei has incisively pointed out that the story of *JPM* appears to be bookended by two events of curtaining, both involving Pan seductively hiding herself with(in) the curtain.[407] The first instance occurs in the case of Pan curtaining herself while encounters Wu Song in Chapter 2 on a cold winter night. The second occurs, fatally, in Chapter 87, where she repeats her seduction in her "reunion" with Wu Song.[408] In the second time, Wu would (successfully) kill her, as foretold in the opening couplet in Chapter 2, which says "…That [Pan and Dame Wang's] blood will spatter the standing curtain and make the whole floor red 血濺屏幃滿地紅."

As *JPM* begins to end, the climatic concern of *feng-su* (local custom), itself a dynamic interaction of human and environment, begins to override the currents of *feng-liu*. Wu Song, who abhors Pan's "corrupting" of *feng-su* with *feng-liu/feng-yue*, all of a sudden stages a whirlwind

[407] Tian Xiaofei writes: "In Chapter 87, when Pan leaves Ximen's family and waiting to be married off, she has already become a very different person than before. But as Wu Song returns, it is as if time has suspended: she once again **stands under the curtain: what a familiar curtain!** We would almost forget that the sheer masterpiece of *JPM* extends **across two curtains** 第八十七回中，金蓮已離開西門府，在王婆家裡待嫁。這時的金蓮，已經與昔日的金蓮，判若兩人，然而，就好像一切都沒有發生過似的，她再次站在「簾下」，遠遠地看到武松走來。這情景是如此熟悉，幾乎要使得我們也忘記了一部大書橫亙於兩幅簾子之間" (*translation and italics mine*) See Xiaofei Tian 田曉菲, *Qiushuitang Lun Jin Ping Mei* 秋水堂論金瓶梅 [Qiushuitang on *Jin Ping Mei*] (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2019), 39.

[408] In Chapter 87, Pan deliberately hides herself behinds the curtains this way: "The next day, he put on his turban, donned his clothes, went straight out the door, and headed to Dame Wang's place. [**Pan] Jinlian was standing behind the curtain** that hung over the front door at the time, and when she saw Wu Sung coming, she promptly disappeared into the inner room**. Wu Song lifted aside the curtai***n* and asked, "Is Dame Wang at home?" 次日，裹幘穿衣，逕出門來到王婆門首。金蓮正在簾下站著，見武松來，連忙閃入裡間去。武松掀開簾子便問：「王媽媽在家？」(*PIGV* 87:5:121; *JPMCH,* 87:3:1494, *translation modified and emphasis mine*).

comeback after a hiatus of more than around 70 episodes. As he returns with a vengeance, the narrator himself is caught off guard by the environmental changes taking place within the imperial court and imperial politics:

> Who could have anticipated that, while [Wu Song was] on his way [to seek patronage from military exile], he heard that an heir apparent had been designated to reside in the Eastern Palace, and that at the Suburban Sacrifice to Heaven on the day of the winter solstice, a **general amnesty** had been issued to celebrate the occasion … **Wu Song … resume[s] his post as police captain.** On returning to his brother's home … he was told, "Ximen Qing is already dead, and your sister-in-law has been expelled from his household and is currently residing at Dame Wang's place where **she is waiting to be married off. When Wu Sung heard this: His old resentment awoke in his heart …**
>
> 不想立東宮，放郊天大赦，武松就遇赦回家，到清河縣下了文書，依舊在縣當差，還做都頭 … 來路上聽見太子到家中 … 打聽西門慶已死，「你嫂子又出來了，如今還在王婆家，早晚嫁人！」這漢子聽了，舊仇在心…
> (*PIGV* 87:5:120; *JPMCH* 87:3:1494, *translation modified and emphasis mine*)

Winds have changed; as we can recall, Wu Song claims to defend *feng-su* (social mores) vis-à-vis Pan's *feng-liu*, and his return signals a resurgence of the former which has subsided in most of the novel. As Wu Song swiftly transforms from an outlaw to the enforcement of law and back to extrajudicial avenger (i.e., from a murderer of guards who escort him to exile, to a police inspector), he is determined to expose the final loophole/*po-zhan* in the novel, which is the secret murder committed, covered, and curtained up by the *feng-liu* trio Pan, Ximen and Wang. Foretelling the ending of Pan, Chapter 87 announces in its opening couplet, "…Good and evil acts inevitably bring their appropriate results/ Though you fly high or travel far *you cannot run for cover* 善惡到頭終有報，高飛遠走也難藏" (*PIGV*, 87:5:113; *JPMCH*, 87:3:1489, *translation modified and emphasis mine*). Coached still in the language of covering and curtaining, the poem refers to Pan, Ximen and Wang's covered up murder of Wu Da in Chapter 5. The *feng-liu* trio decides to kill Wu Da after the latter got wind of their tailoring of an affair, but even their murder

involves fabric(ation). Consider the invocation of covering and fabric in Wang's instruction for Pan's murder:

> When the poison starts to take effect his stomach and intestines will burst and he may cry out. You must muffle his cries **with a quilt** so no one will hear, holding **the quilt** in place as tightly as you can**.** You must also heat a pan of hot water beforehand and **put a rag** to soak in it. When the poison takes effect there may be hemorrhaging from all his seven apertures as well as telltale marks where he has bitten his lips. After he stops breathing you must remove the quilt, **take the rag** that you have soaked in hot water and wipe away any signs of blood.
>
> 他若毒氣發時，必然腸胃迸斷，大叫一聲。你卻把被一蓋，都不要人聽見，緊緊的按住被角。預先燒下一鍋湯，煮着一條抹布。他若毒發之時，七竅內流血，口唇上有牙齒咬的痕跡。他若氣斷了，你便揭起被來，卻將煮的抹布只一揩，都揩沒了血跡。(*PIGV* 87:5:120, *translation modified*; *JPMCH,* 87:3:1494)



Fig. 4.14: The looming curtain in the Ming illustration; **Source:** *PIGV*, 5:1:108.




Fig: 4.15 & Fig. 4.16: Murderous curtains in *Golden Lotus* (1974)




Fig: 4.17 & Fig. 4.18: Murderous curtains in *Tiger Killer* (1982)

Buoyed up by the winds of *feng-liu*, all steps of the murder are done through the very materiality of fabric used in covering and curtaining. First, Wu Da dies of arsenic (first "wrapped in cloth") and additionally smothered (by quilt), just as his corpse later is dressed up as "natural" and in turn covered up by bribery.[409] Such textural attention to fabric(ation) persists or even magnifies in the Ming illustrations, where the bed curtain (not underscored at all in the novel's crime scene) cloud over the murder, in sync with the illustrator's depiction of vapor/clouds (and metonymically, breath/air) at the picture's upper half (**Fig. 4.14**).

[409] Fabric appears, first, with the arsenic: "…Ximen had not been gone for long when he returned with a wrapped packet of arsenic 且說西門慶去不多時，包了一包砒霜。(*PIGV* 5:1:105; *JPMCH*, 5:1:69, *translation modified*); second, with the act of smothering: "… [Pan] jumped onto the bed…and pressed down on the edge of the quilt with all her might…跳上床來，騎在武大身上，把手緊緊地按住被角，那裡肯放些鬆寬? (*PIGV* 5:1:107; *JPMCH*, 5:1:71); third, with Wu Da's corpse: "Pan and Dame Wang] combed his hair, placed a turban on his head…stretched a strip of white damask over his face and covered the corpse with a clean quilt.…與他梳了頭，載上巾幘，穿了衣裳，取雙鞋襪與他穿了，將片白絹蓋了臉，揀床乾淨被蓋在死屍身上。" (*PIGV* 5:1:109: *JPMCH*, 5:1:69)

Likewise in Li's contemporary cinematic reconstruction, the mise-en-scène of this crime scene is busily stuffed with curtains or objects performing as curtains. In *Golden Lotus*, for example, Pan's weaponizing of the quilt is backed up not only by bed curtains (**Fig. 4.15**), but also accompanied by table clothes and laundry (**Fig. 4.16**) displayed in a medium shot where Wang enters to join the murder. In *Tiger Killer* (1983), the sequel of *Golden Lotus* which spotlights Pan and Wu Song, curtains and bedsheets envelop Wu Da layer upon layer (**Fig. 4.17)**, of a piece with a mysterious object (plausibly a mirror) whose covering is juxtaposed with Pan's face as she prepares poison (**Fig. 4.18**). The mirror, as it turns out, serves no narrative function, affectively signaling but not necessarily signifying as part and parcel of the overall atmosphere of curtain. This seemingly minor detail of the mis-en-scene only reinforces the point this chapter has argued all along, that what is curtained remains elusively less important than the act of curtain/ing itself.

As a conclusion of this section, we will proceed to read how winds and curtains settle into stasis and dormancy in *JPM* and Li's adaptations *Golden Lotus* as well as *Tiger Killer.* The film, as in the novel, signals ideological closure sensorially through acoustic, material and atmospheric evocations of wind and curtain. First, we may read how Pan's *feng-liu* ends in the novel. After his return from exile, Wu Song deceptively proposes to marry Pan while offering a sum of money to Wang. It proves to be Wu Song's conceit whereby *feng-su* is masqueraded as, or mobilized in cracking down on *feng-liu* (romance), ultimately locking up Pan and Wang in a room. Murdering the two wind-bearing women in the name of protecting *feng-su*, Wu unleashes his phallic weighty weapon ("A two-foot long, fine-edged, thick-bladed dagger…一把二尺長刃薄背厚扎刀") with "a swishing sound" ("只聞颼的一聲響.").

Consistent with the novel's ecological consciousness of wind's multiple possibilities of conjugation, the unleashing of Wu's lethal sword produces a particular sound, indexed by the onomatopoetic word "*sou*" 颼, which graphically presents a radical of wind/*feng* 風 with an added atmospheric "reality effect" of what Paize Keulemans calls "acoustic imagination."[410] If in Chapter 2, Pan's loose handling of the falling stick stirs up *feng-liu* of romance and sex, then in Chapter 87 we witness an instance of a patriarchal and "(f)right(ful)" handling of the phallic stick in debriefing/"de-breathing" the culprits of *feng-liu*. Intent on destroying wind-curtain fluttering, Wu Song is adamant in "un-covering" both the body of Pan, as well as her mind. First, he demands Pan to unveil her mind (forcing her to confess) and observe patriarchal norms (*feng-su*) in kowtowing in front of Wu Da's shrine. Then Wu Song undresses/uncurtains her body ("stripping her stark naked" 旋剝凈了 *xuan bao jing le*), eventually pulling out her heart –and in the most graphic way "uncurtain" her body surface so that there is nothing interior to hide and no wind/air/breath to circulate through her anymore.




Fig: 4.19 & Fig. 4.20. In *Tiger Killer*, Wu Song assembles a public trial in executing Pan Jinlian **(Left)** after which he arrives at the teahouse to kill Ximen Qing (**Right)**

[410] See Paize Keulemans's study of onomatopoeia in martial arts novels *Sound Rising From the Paper: Nineteenth-Century Martial Arts Fiction and the Chinese Acoustic Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014).


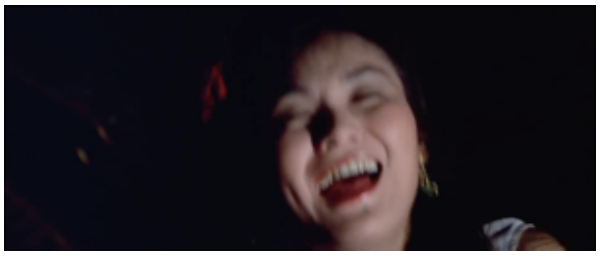

Fig: 4.21 & Fig. 4.22: A frantic relay of subject-object position between Pan and Ximen in *Golden Lotus.*




Fig: 4.23 & Fig. 4.24 The shaking of wind-chimes vis-à-vis the "rectitude" of the plaque in *Golden Lotus.*

In *Tiger Killer*, Wu Song's murder hews closer to *Shuihuzhuan* than *JPM* particularly in its assembling of public onlookers. The film begins with Pan's seduction of Ximen, followed by Pan and Wang's murder of Wu Da, and in turn immediately followed by Wu Song's return and execution of Pan during Wu Da's funeral. Most noteworthy is that, unlike the execution scene which takes place in a locked up private room in the novel *JPM* (where no onlookers are present), Wu's executions of both Pan, Wang and Ximen in *Tiger Killer* (as in *Shuihuzhuan*) involve participations of a large number of public onlookers, all assembled at the funeral to bear witness how Wu's tumultuous assembling of "social mores" (*feng-su*) in extinguishing Pan, Wang and Ximen's stirrings (*feng-liu*) of the social and moral fabric of Chinese society. After executing Pan and Wang, Wu, accompanied by sound and visual effects of sand rising and flags fluttering, kills Ximen Qing in a teahouse (**Fig. 4.19 & 4.20)** – an ending that echoes with *Shuihuzhuan* rather than *JPM*. In the end, Wu Song putatively joins the rebellion, escaping the rule of law and Qinghe with a gust of wind blowing up a sandstorm and trailing after him. More

publicly foregrounded, winds in *Tiger Killer* ecologically invokes the publicness of *feng-su* in the masculine realms of "rivers and lake" (*jiang-hu*).[411]

In contrast to *Tiger Killer* and *Shuihuzhuan*'s foregrounding of publicness (i.e., public trial), *Golden Lotus*'s ending hews closer to *JPM* in that the murder takes place in a private room. As in *JPM*, *Golden Lotus* ends with Ximen's sexual excess and death, only the film presents his death with shots of wind-bells making eerie sounds. The shaking of wind bells (**Fig. 4.23**) begins with Li Ping'er and her son Guan Ge's deaths, persisting until Ximen's deadly copulation with Pan and imaginarily, his other concubine Li Ping'er. The sex sequence alternates with a series of fast cuts between mainly two point-of-view shots. One from the angle of Ximen (zooming in and out of Pan and Li Pinger's faces and bodies) (**Fig. 4.21)**, and the other one from the angle of the Pan and Li Ping'er, facing and "riding" the body of Ximen (**Fig. 4.22)**. Saturated with juxtaposed sounds of moaning and bell-chiming, the quickening shifts of angles excessively enacts the frenetic exchangeability of subject-object positions between Pan/Ximen and female/male in the act of *feng-liu*, as *Golden Lotus* presented in the opening scene of their encounter (**see Chapter Three)**

Wind-bells and *feng-liu* die down as Ximen himself dies of sexual exhaustion. As opposed to the fluttering curtain whose aesthetics punctuate so much *JPM* as well as the film, *Golden Lotus*'s last shot rests with seemingly hard-and-fast and opaque materials: a Chinese calligraphic plaque hanging on the wall, preaching Buddhisst/Confucianist maxims (*ji-de xing-ren* 積德行仁), meaning "to cultivate and realize moral virtues" (**Fig. 4.24)**. Not unlike the novel, the film appears to end by punishing the protagonists who transgress social norms, ending *feng-liu/*romance in the name of *feng-su/*social mores. But as Emily Yeh and Darrell Davies have

[411] See Song Geng. "Masculinizing Jianghu Spaces in the Past and Present: Homosociality, Nationalism and Chineseness." *Nan Nü: Men, Women And Gender in China*. 21, no. 1 (2019): 107–129.

argued, like other Hong Kong Category III movies (i.e., movies limited for people who are over 18 years old), *Golden Lotus*'s "association with China's historical past enables t[hem] to endorse Confucian values and, in turn, justifies it transgression of the boundaries of sexual depiction."[412] Like the original novel's occasional but pivotal indulgence in sexual descriptions,[413] the moralistic and didactic ending could just be another playful "curtaining" enacted by the shrewd director Li in the fashion of the author of *JPM*, using the veneer of *feng-su* to *cover up* (i.e., censoring) while also *covering for* (i.e., to provide an excuse for) the sensual process of *feng-liu*.

And it is by going back to the wind-curtain fluttering in *JPM* itself that we can navigate contemporary adaptations of the novel affectively, and not only ideologically. Ideologically committed and critique-hungry readers might ask: does the *JPM*, then, endorse *feng-liu* and/or *feng-su*? Does *JPM* describe or prescribe men (but who exactly? Ximen or Wu Song or Wu Da?…etc) "oppressing" woman (but who? Pan, Dame Wang, or Li Ping-er…etc.)? Whereas these questions are urgently needed and relevant, the ecological form and affective world-making of *JPM*'s infrastructural network complicates any easy and dichotomic answer while repeatably generating different possible answers depending on the vicissitudes of the global media climate.

In *JPM*, passages of wind implicate the whole community beyond the gender binary: co-participatory pleasure-seeking (consider not only male, but female characters' solicitation of and pleasure in sex), the capitalist ethos deviating from the Confucian norms (consider Ximen and Wang's *feng-liu* business, but also Pan's and Wang's calculations moving across households), and most "levelling" of all among male and female characters: collateral death (consider the

[412] Darrell W. Davis and Yueh-yu Yeh. "Warning! Category III: The Other Hong Kong Cinema." *Film Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (2001): 14.
[413] See Keith McMahon, *Saying All That Can Be Said the Art of Describing Sex in Jin Ping Mei.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2023).

ending where most major characters, men and women, die or perish in abjection). Put simply, characters are, though hierarchized, making kin with each other, sustained by their unanimous immersion in and subjection to the perils and pleasures of wind and curtain. Binaries do not sufficiently allow us to understand the book's form of affect. Our focus on environment (wind/*feng*) and objects (curtain/*lian*) allow us to go beyond individualities and identities, affectively grasp their entangled relationality in the midst of environmental changes as well as ecological provocations.

Whereas the story of *JPM* seemingly polarizes the questions of gender (e.g. Pan Jinlian, Li Pinger, Pang Chunmei vs. Ximen Qing and other men) and class (e.g. Wu Da and Wu Song vs. Ximen Qing, Ying Bojue, Chen Jingji…), this chapter ventures that what the novel *JPM* offers, overall, is more precisely about the indeterminate affect of winds curtaining and uncurtaining all kinds of *feng-liu* induced *feng-bo* 風波 (i.e., wind-waves), in Chinese referring to the dramatic occurrence of a "scene" (or a trouble, situation, accident, or incident), often followed by a ripple of repercussions (hence *bo*; wave). In Chapter 2, for example, Wu Song tries to moralistically talk Pan Jinlian out of adultery and *feng-liu* after her failed seduction. Displeased, Pan is said to further provoke *feng-bo* in *JPM*. One poem testifies: "Good advice proves bitter to the taste; as do words of admonition; Jinlian resents him for this, creating one situation after another (*feng-bo*); So mortified herself, that she can scarcely remain at table; She arouses the anger of the hero, young Wu the Second 苦口良言諫勸多，金蓮懷恨起風波。自家惶愧穀存坐，氣殺英雄小二哥！"[414]

[414] The expression *feng-bo* appeared in *JPMCH* at least four time in Ch. 2, Ch.12, Ch.25, Ch.28. Roy translated *feng-bo* as Pan "throwing a tantrum," but what the repercussion of Pan's action is certainly more than a tantrum, in the long run hers enacts a butterfly effect. (*PIGV* 2:1:46; *JPMCH* 2:1:27, *translation modified and emphasis mine*).

In sum, what winds and its promiscuous conjugations in *JPM* afford us is the opportunities to switch, slip, and shuttle in between male/female characters, cultivating our susceptibility to a concatenation of winds(*feng*)/craze(*feng*)*: feng-liu* (romance; adultery; abandon; freedom from norms), *feng-su* (local norms and social mores), *feng-yue* (sensuality), and more generally all kinds of *feng-bo* (dramatic episodes) potentiating in the *feng-cui-cao-dong* (the always imminent eventfulness of the world's surroundings) of China and/in the world. Obviously, both *feng-liu* and/or *feng-su* take place in the novel and the book's affective charm lies with the interplay – the "wind-waves"/*feng-bo* between both in relation to curtains fluttering, by turns up and down, turning stagnant or frenetic. Yet if we closely follow wind and curtain instead of fixing ourselves with preexistent social or gender identity as well as fictional character, we will know that in the novel subject-object positions can dynamically (and never permanently) switch and even dissolve on the strength of all kinds of wind/*feng* circulating among and beyond male and female characters, as well as readers and audiences. What *JPM* and its adaptation dramatize is, therefore, such wind-induced and wind-producing happenings. The key is to observe the wind's direction and potential current. Conjugating irregularly with either romance or norms (or both), winds in the world of *JPM* more generally signal the potential imminence of all happenings, events or non-events, action or stasis, as well as surprise or suspense, or even its history making potentials.[415]

In this sense, Li's *JPM* cinema has demonstrated the novel's wind-curtain fluttering of the most sensuous kinds, and his curation of *feng-liu* remains a series of singular wind-carrying

[415] Wang Fan-sen 王汎森 discusses the concept of winds as indicators of "historical changes" in the historian Liu Xianxin's 劉咸炘 (1896-1932) writings; Liu argues that history writing is not just about recording, but about observing currents of all kinds and should be event-centered based observation of "winds." See the chapter "Feng – Yixhong bei hulue de shixue guannian," 風 - 一種被忽略的史學觀念 (Wind – a neglected historiographical concept) in *Zhiniu de Diyin : Yixie Lishi Sikao Fangshi de Fansi* 執拗的低音 : 一些歷史思考方式的反思 [Obstinate Bass: Some Reflections on Historical Methods] (Beijing: Sanlian, 2014), 169-209.

events curtaining and uncurtaining between China and the world. In this sense, wind *is* the possibility of cinema itself – in the fashion of *JPM*, arousing emotion and bodily affections.[416] Through the major case study of Li Han-hsiang, we have approached the wind-mediated possibility and impossibility of adaptation of *JPM*'s wind-curtain fluttering "inside" or "outside" mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan as well as East Asia. From 1973 to 1994, Li produced four *JPM* film adaptations through colonial Hong Kong. Within Li's 70-year life trajectory from 1926 to 1996, his film production and circulation take place across national and geopolitical borders, or more precisely, "curtains," knotting and unknotting the entanglement of multiple time-periods and geo-climate zones: from Republican China to transborder filmmaking in colonial Hong Kong, martial-law Taiwan, Japan, Korea, as well as post-socialist China under Deng Xiaoping.[417]

Enacting and evoking "wind-flowing"/*feng-liu* in between China and East Asia throughout his career, Li managed to evade but also in some ways sensorially respond to the censors in martial-law-era Taiwan from 1949 to the early 1990s **(see Chapter Three)** and post-1949 mainland China.[418] Thus far, most *JPM* film adaptations have been made in or through colonial and postcolonial Hong Kong – a colony, a port city, a business center with relatively porous "curtain/ing" and wind circulation (*feng-liu*) compared to mainland China and Taiwan from 1949. Arguably, Hong Kong is the center of *JPM*'s film adaptation from 1949 (through the

[416] One such ambitious, but short statement can be seen in French historian Alain Corbin's chapter "The Wind, the Theater, and the cinema," in *A History of the Wind*, trans. William A. Peniston. (Cambridge: Polity, 2023), 118-123.
[417] Li's filmmaking has been divided into roughly four periods: the first Hong Kong period (1948-1963), Taiwan period (1963-1970), the second Hong Kong period (1971-1982), the mainland China period (1982-1996). See Huang Ren 黃仁 ed. *Yongyuan de Li Hanxiang: Jimian zhuanji* 永遠的李翰祥 : 紀念專輯 [The everlasting legacy of Li Han-hsiang: A commemorative volume] (Taipei: Jinxiu chu ban, 1997), 3.
[418] According to Hong Kong Film Archive's database, *The Golden lotus "Love and Desire*" (1991) is produced by Cannon Profit Film (International) Ltd 金高潤電影. And *The Amorous Lotus Pan* (1991) is produced by a certain "Lianhe" film production 聯合製作有限公司, yet I note that *The Amorous*'s film's DVD has been distributed by the Shaw Brothers.

Shaw Brothers)[419] to the early 2000s, such as *The Forbidden Legend Sex & Chopstick* 金瓶梅 1 and 2 (2008, 2009, dir. Cash Chin 錢文錡) which, reportedly, drew mainland Chinese tourists to cross the border to watch the films in Hong Kong's theaters.

Though Li's films and other *JPM* adaptations in Hong Kong from 1949 to the late 1970s were not made and *publicly* screened in socialist and post-socialist China (from 1949 until now) as well as the martial-law era Taiwan (from 1949-1987), it is inconceivable that these adaptations are not in some ways produced, consciously or unconsciously, responding or reacting to *JPM*'s troubled publication and book circulation across the Taiwan straits. The fact that Li found it so difficult to collect copies of *JPM* (except in Hong Kong and Japan during this period) has everything to do with the censorship of the book form of *JPM* in, respectively but also relatedly: 1) Republican China, 2) martial-law-era Taiwan and 3) socialist and post-socialist China. In the case of Taiwan, for example, only illegal or private screenings were possible in the late 1970s; one newspaper source in *Lianhebao* 聯合報 suggested that Li's *Golden Lotus* film-reel was smuggled in 8mm format from Japan and home-screened in Taiwan.[420] As newspaper records suggest, it was not until the early 1990s where *JPM* films were publicly screened in

[419] Before Li Han-hsiang's foray into *JPM*, the ever-commercially driven Shaw Brothers made two adaptations of *JPM*; one in 1955 directed by Wang Yin 王引,starring the legendary Japanese/Chinese actress Li Xiang-lan 李香蘭; the other one in 1964 directed by Chow Sze-loke 周詩祿 and scripted by Chang Cheh/Zhang Che 張徹,

[420] One Hong Kong newspaper source put it thus: "Taiwan government claimed that they strictly prohibited violent and pornographic movie from public screening, but these movies were popular and circulating well in Taiwan. Recently in Hong Kong, a visitor from Taiwan told [the actress] Hu Jin that "Those European, American and Hong Kong movies with nudity were abundantly available in the form of 8mm copies. The visitor said that he had watched Li Han-hsiang's *Golden Lotus* (starring Hu Jin as Pan Jinlian) with his friends at home! Evidently these B-movies became "household items"! According to some sources, Li's *Golden Lotus* was transferred into 8mm format in Japan, and each copy was sold at $50 Hong Kong Dollar. 台灣雖然聲稱嚴格限制暴力與色情影片的上映，但，有色電影一樣在台灣流行。最近，一名台灣來客對胡錦說：香港以及歐美拍的暴露影片，台灣有八米厘拷貝，並且大量推出。胡錦主演的《金瓶雙艷》他在台灣看過了，是在家裏約了一些朋友看的。可見，這些「小電影」還進入家庭哩！這部《金瓶雙艷》據說，是在日本翻了八米厘影片運往台灣出售，每部折合五十港元。" Quoted in "Taiwan suishuo yao yanjin baolupian jinru jiating" 台灣雖說要嚴禁　暴露片進入家庭 [Despite Taiwan's nominal banning, pornographic films enter households], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, May 18, 1978.

Taiwan, such as Hong Kong director Clara Law's *The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus* 潘金蓮之前世今生 (1989) (**see the next section**),[421] as well as Li's previously banned *Golden Lotus* in 1991,[422] before the emergence of a Hong Kong-Taiwan coproduction titled *New Jin Ping Mei* 新金瓶梅 (1995). In the case of mainland China, what can be called "liberalization" with regard to the book's publication accelerated only in the late 1980s (**see Table. 1 at the end of this chapter)** and it was in a way coeval with Taiwan's liberalization (with the lifting of the martial law in 1987).

***JPM*'s infrastructural network: from post-socialist to global China**

After focusing on Li Han-Hsiang's Hong Kong adaptations of *JPM*, this last section provides an admittedly partial glimpse of *JPM*'s wind-curtain fluttering starting from mainland China, extending to East Asia and Euro America. Focusing on film texts, particularly extra-filmic, para-textual materials of film and books, this section will discuss how *JPM*'s film adaptation is transmedially entangled with, first of all, infrastructure, and equally importantly, the book form and publication history of *JPM* particularly in mainland China. Through the affective and ecological form of "wind-curtain fluttering," the previous sections complicate the binary of "man" versus "women." As a follow up, this section would continue to draw from the form of affect of *JPM* itself to refuse reading adaptations of *JPM* according to the Cold War

[421] Clara Law's film *Reincarnation*, however, faced censorship issues due to its portrayal of Cultural Revolution, in particular with its use of Mainland China's revolutionary anthem *The East is Red* 東方紅. See: "Qianshi jinsheng jian chujiao dongfanghong ge yinqi zhengyi"前世今生檢觸礁東方紅歌引起爭議 [*The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus* stirs controversy], *Lianhebao* 聯合報, July 30, 1989.
[422] The film was finally screened in Taiwan in 1991 after being shelved for a decade, "Bendang waipian fuji wei zhuli" 本檔外片輔級為主力 ["Parental guidance" films were dominant among local and foreign films]. *Lianhebao* 聯合報, December 7, 1991.

framework of socialism/capitalism, liberalism/authoritarianism, as well as complicating the East/West binary as *JPM* travels around Asia and the West. This section will show that *JPM*'s wind-curtain fluttering has put all these binaries into relations rather than oppositions and isolations. It will show that what we theorize as wind-curtain fluttering – the major form of affect fluctuating inside the novel – relatedly takes place outside of the novel live and alive in history: in the literary text, embodied in the book, carried through theater, film and other infrastructure across China and the World.

Let's begin, and return, to wind, as events of changes and happenings. Winds change and conjugate promiscuously in *JPM* (*feng-liu*, *feng-su*, *feng-yue*, *feng-bo*, *feng-cui-cao-dong*...) – such is the lesson from our theorization of *JPM*'s wind-curtain fluttering. This is testified in, for example, Li's real-life encounter with the book of *JPM* (**see Chapter Three**), which was allowed to circulate all of a sudden after being banned. Similarly in the novel, the sudden return of Wu Song near the end of *JPM* (due to something also political - an amnesty), puts an end to Pan's erotic and economic circulation beyond Wu and Ximen's household. Also similarly, in post-socialist China, what has been called "the Iron Curtain" separating the communist and the capitalist blocs, appeared to vanish, coupling "China" and "the world" through economic integration and capitalist globalization – what we can call wind-circulation (*feng-liu*). Since then, mainland China is increasingly integrated into the world economy, resulting in the coupling of, most significantly, mainland China and the U.S – a post-socialist "status-quo" which keeps fluttering from post-1989 Sino-US economic entanglement to the so-called "New Cold War" between mainland China and the U.S. in the late 2010s and early 2020s.

Preceding all that, however, was the fact that China in the Ming dynasty was already entangled with the global economy in the form of silver circulations – an economic fact

erotically reflected in *JPM*, as Ning Ma has demonstrated.[423] No surprise, then, that post-socialist China's renewed embracing of global capital flows simultaneously entails not only an economic, but also an aesthetic and erotic curtaining and uncurtaining re-forming of itself - modelling after its very own proto- and incipiently "capitalist" *JPM* (i.e., the overwhelming obsession with money, buying and selling of commodities, or in Chinese "things 物").[424] Luring Chinese diasporic and foreign investments, post-socialist mainland China appeared to host and facilitate *feng-liu* through exactly the aesthetic-political-infrastructural arrangement of wind-curtain fluttering as afforded by and through *JPM.*

One such attempt at this aesthetic, economic, and erotic re-formation in mainland China involved no one but the filmmaker Li Han-hsiang. In 1992, the PRC newspaper *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報 reported that Li had signed a contract with the Linqing city government to build a film set in the city to shoot a 40-episode *JPM* TV drama:

> Linqing was the ideal site for the film set because the prosperous city life along the Grand Canal in Linqing was the novel's real geo-cultural setting. Many physical references in the novel remain visible in today's Linqing. After on-site investigation, Li Han-hsiang decided to build a *Qingming Shanghe* Entertainment Complex along the Canal. Another big infrastructural project would be "*JPM* Cultural District" which would include shopping centers, restaurant streets, wax museums of *JPM* characters, housing complexes of characters such as Ximen Qing, Li Ping'er, Dame Wang, as well as a closed-door casinos and red-light districts – all are used as film sets for media production.
>
> 李翰祥擇山東臨清為外景地，是因為《金瓶梅》的作者是以當年大運河畔繁華的臨清為地理背景和文化背景的《金》書中描寫的許多景觀在今日臨清仍有蹟可尋。李翰祥經實地考察後決定，在臨清市沿古運河堤岸兩側，以「清明上河圖」為藍本興建一座狹長的「清明上河圖文化娛樂城」。另一項大工程是修建「《金瓶梅》文化城」，內有購物街、美食街、大型藝術表演廳、《金瓶梅》故事蠟像館、西門慶宅

[423] Ning Ma, *The Age of Silver: The Rise of the Novel East and West.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
[424] See Sophie Volpp, "The Gift of a Python Robe: The Circulation of Objects in 'Jin Ping Mei.'" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 65, no. 1 (2005): 133–58.; Li Wai-yee, *The Promise and Peril of Things: Literature and Material Culture In Late Imperial China*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

院、李瓶兒宅院、王婆宅院以及封閉式的賭城、花柳巷等用於拍攝電影電視的外景場所。(*translation mine)*[425]

Li reportedly came up with such an idea of real-location shooting and at the suggestion of scholars in a *JPM* conference in mainland China.[426] As Cheng-hua Wang has pointed out, the long tradition of *Qingming Shanghe Tu* ("Up the River during Qingming Days") paintings, particularly its Qing iteration, spectacularizes and theatricalizes streetscape and business activities for the pleasure and political legitimacy of viewers – mainly the emperors.[427] As socialism appears to recede in the reform-era, what Li tried to restage for the mass consumers and foreign visitors is exactly such urban, "feudalistic" and "capitalist" activities along the river in the aesthetic-political form of *JPM* from 2D painting and pages to 3D infrastructure.

In the end, however, both the TV adaptation and the "cultural park" only surfaced and then subsided as a fluctuating possibility, despite the promise of market opening (*gaige kaifang*, 改革開放). Li only managed to make his last two *JPM* film *The Golden Lotus "Love and Desire"* (1991), and lastly *The Amorous Lotus Pan* (1994) in Korea. All his *JPM* films were, as a result, made outside of the PRC as he himself and his films circulated in the rest of Sinophone pacific and East Asia. Indeed, Li was not alone in wanting to activate *JPM*. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, several mainland Chinese directors reportedly flirted with *JPM*'s wind and curtain: from

[425] "Jin Ping Mei beijing youji kexun, Li Han-xiang Linqing jian waijinde," 金瓶梅背景有跡可尋　李翰祥臨清建外景地 [The real setting of Jin Ping Mei is traceable; Li Han-hsiang builds film set in Linqing], *Wen Wei Pao*, November 10, 1992.

[426] As one participant of the conference, He Xiangjiu, wrote, Li "brought the film *Golden Lotus* (1974)" to the conference in 1992. Probably, then, Li also showed the film to experts and officials as well. See He Xiangjiu 何香久 *"Jin Ping Mei" Chuanbo Shihua : Yibu Qishu Zaiquan Shijie De Qiyu* 金瓶梅傳播史話 : 一部奇書在全世界的奇遇 [On Jin Ping Mei's global circulation: Curious encounters] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chuban gongsi, 1998), 305-309.

[427] Wang Cheng-hua. "One Painting, Two Emperors, and their Cultural Agendas: Reinterpreting the Qingming Shanghe Painting of 1737." *Archives of Asian Art* 70, no. 1 (2020): 85-117.

the so-called first-generation director Ling Zifeng 凌子風,[428] to famed director of historical TV drama Chen Jialin 陳家林,[429] to fifth generation auteur Chen Kaige 陳凱歌.[430] Reportedly, major mainland Chinese actresses such as Liu Xiaoqing 劉曉慶 and Gong Li 鞏俐 were going to play Pan Jinlian in the 1990s.[431] None of these erotic/economic projects, however, fully materialized; they flicker and flutter as flight of fancy. News of the banning of a TV adaptation in 1993, for example, was reported after it emerged as an opportunity.[432] Unlike cinema, *JPM*'s Sichuan opera did witness a brief boom in the early 1980s, but not in other media.[433]

The controversies of *JPM*'s wind-curtain fluttering persist until 2010s, as city and provincial governments in mainland China flighted with the opportunity to develop *JPM* into touristic infrastructure, whose efforts were portrayed by the media as "profit-driven" and

[428] Ling Zifeng claimed he obtained funding from "West Germany" to shoot *JPM* in Korea or Japan. Ling opined that previous adaptation of *JPM* in Hong Kong and Taiwan "were not up to standard," though he had no chance to prove he could do better." The Chinese original: "凌子風雖然是第一代導演，他自認在思想上絕對不保守，拍完《狂》之後，還會「狂」下去，他已獲得西德資金的支持，準備稍後拍《金瓶梅》，外景地點可能會在日本或韓國，金瓶梅是中國鉅著，他以前看過一些香港及台灣拍攝有關題材的電影，覺得水平不夠，希望可以用一個比較學術性的角度來包裝。"; Yu Wei 余蔚, "Diwu dai daoyan congming huoyue Ling Zifeng ye yao kuang shenwei di yidai daoyan zicheng sixiang kaifang gen bengang dianying gongsi pai wan 'Kuang' jiang kaipai *JPM*" 第五代導演聰明活躍　凌子風也要「狂」身為第一代導演 自稱思想開放 跟本港電影公司拍完《狂》將開拍《金瓶梅》[The fifth generation directors are making waves; as a first-generation director, the open-minded Ling Zifeng will direct *Jin Ping Mei*], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, June 26, 1991.

[429] A source from Xinhua News Agency claimed that Chen Jialin's TV adaptation will have 40 episodes. See "*Jin Ping Mei* shang dianshi jinnia shiyue kaiji mingnian di paijun"《金瓶梅》上電視　今年十月開機明年底拍竣 [*Jin Ping Mei* to appear on TV; shooting starts in October and will finish at the end of next year], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, April 20, 1988.

[430] The project was cancelled not because of any overt censorship, but because the investor of Fuyi, Cai Ziming 蔡子明, was murdered; see "Fuyi yao Chen Kaige zhidao Jin Ping Mei Gong Li zhuyan shiyue neidi kaipai" 富藝邀陳凱歌　執導《金瓶梅》鞏俐主演　十月內地開拍 [Chen Kaige invited to direct *Jin Ping Mei* with Gong Li as the lead], *Wen Wei Pao*, Feb 9, 1992.

[431] Liu Xiaoqing said Pan Jinlian is a challenging character to play; she also said shooting was approved in mainland China in 1995; see "Liu Xiaoqing xiang yan bian zhongguo ming nuren," 劉曉慶想演遍中國名女人 [Liu Xiaoqing said she wants to play all famous Chinese female figures] *Global Times* 環球時報 July 9, 1995.

[432] "Sheji luoti huo xingmiaoxie Dalu qunian jinpian wubu" 涉及裸體或性描寫　大陸去年禁片五部 [Five movies were banned last year in mainland China due to nudity and sex], *Wen Wei Pao*, March 16, 1994.

[433] For example, Wei Minglun's 魏明倫 Si-chuan opera adaptation (*chuan-ju*) created a stir in mainland China in 1987. See: Wei Minglun, *Pan Jinlian : Juben He Juping* 潘金蓮 : 劇本和劇評 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1988)

"shameless."[434] In this sense, *JPM*'s dependence on the curtaining of uncurtaining by "winds," stands out among its canonic peers. Compared to other well-circulated classic Chinese novels and Chinese literary canons such as *Xiyouji, Sanguo*, and *Shuihuzhuan,* the conspicuous absence of *JPM*'s film adaptations in mainland China is not surprising as the source novel itself was systemically censored and affectively "curtained" in public consciousness since the book's publication from the Ming to mainland China in 1949 until the present day. As an instance of simultaneous curtaining and uncurtaining, in the 1950s, Mao Zedong reportedly commanded that *JPM* can be circulated "internally" (*neibu faxing* 內部發行) as a reference book among party officials, praising the book's critique of "feudalism" while noting its misogynist undertone (i.e., using *feng-su* to cover up while to a certain extent covering for *feng-liu*).[435] The authenticity of Mao's comments and quotations is tenuous, as Yvon Wang pointed out.[436] But, clearly "elites" were allowed to read the novel; the masses were prevented (and curtained) from seeing it.

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[434] One article in 2010 brought this phenomenon to frenzied attention; see Pei Yu 裴鈺, "Ximen Qing guli liang sheng san de zhi sheng" 西門慶故里兩省三地之爭 [Three cities in two provinces flighting to claim as Ximen Qing's hometown], *China Economic Weekly* 中國經濟週刊, May 4 2010, reposted on *Sohu* https://business.sohu.com/20100504/n271900458.shtml. Indeed in 2006, it was already reported that in Yanggu County and the city Linqing competed to develop tourist sites themed around *JPM*. The park(s) even to some degree materialized in its bid to attract investment and capital, though eventually halted by moral(istic) criticism, lambasted by some as morally suspect, socially irresponsible and gimmicky. See: He Yong, 何勇 "Shangdong liang de zhengxiang jie Jinpingmei kaifa wenhua luyou yinfa Zhengyi, ruci kaifa Jingpingmei heshi ma?" 山東兩地爭相借「金瓶梅」開發文化旅遊引發爭議——如此開發「金瓶梅」合適嗎？" [Two city governments in Shangdong compete for developing *Jin Ping Mei* cultural tourism – but is that appropriate?], *The People's Daily* 人民日報, July 19, 2006.

[435] Mao was often quoted as having said, for example, that "*JPM* was great at exposing the contradiction between the oppressors and the oppressed in a feudal society, but it doesn't respect woman, and exposes only the dark side with obscene details, so it didn't circulate well 他認為《金瓶梅》在揭露封建社會經濟生活和統治者與被壓迫者的矛盾方面寫得很細膩，但不尊重女性，只暴露黑暗，講淫穢，就很難傳開." See Yan Zhen 嚴真, "Xiaoyi Jin Ping Mei chuban zhi kanke," 小議〈金瓶梅〉出版之坎坷 [The tortuous publication history of *Jin Ping Mei*], *The Library Journal of Henan* 河南圖書館學刊, no. 2 (1993): 58-59.

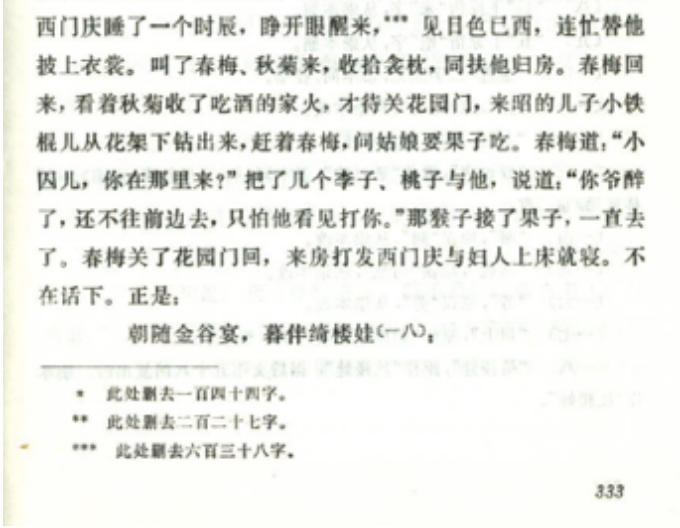
[436] For a series of Mao's comment on the book, see: Yvon Wang, *Reinventing Licentiousness: Pornography and Modern China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021), 196-199; also see Wang's discussion on *JPM* as a "brand," "Nation, Brand, Afterlives: *The Plum in the Golden Vase* in Early-Twentieth-Century China," in *Approaches to Teaching The Plum In the Golden Vase (the Golden Lotus)*, edited by Andrew Schonebaum (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2022); 172-185. Wang's accounts on this particular point draws from Cai Qiong, 蔡瓊 "Mao Zedong lun Jin Ping Mei ji dui qi yanjiu de yiyi" 毛澤東論《金瓶梅》及對其研究的意義 (Mao

Echoing the novel itself, in the case of Mao and mainland China, *feng-liu* is reserved "privately" and "internally" (as enjoyed by the mercantile "Ximen Qing") whereas simultaneously, *feng-su* (i.e., first Confucian norms in premodern China, then Mao's "progressive" commitment to "gender equality" in socialist China) applies to the wider Chinese society (as censored/curtained by the revolutionary bandit "Wu Song"). Arguably embodying both "Ximen" mode and "Wu Song" modes, Mao in 1957 mandated that 2,000 copies of an uncensored *JPM* edition could be published. Readers, however, were limited to high-level party members, distinguished professors and cultural luminaries, married and above 45 years old. Each copy and buyer was assigned a number in purchase, and transaction were one-to-one between the publisher and individual buyers (*duikou faxing*, 對口發行), curtained from the public. In 1961, Premier Zhou Enlai put a stop to Ouyang Yuqian's 歐陽予倩 theatrical performance of his play "*Pan Jinlian*" (1926), whose feminist revision of Pan was previously understood as "anti-feudalist" but now understood as "walking the wrong path."[437] Such animosity towards *JPM* further escalated during the Cultural Revolution (1967-1977) the circulation of the work took a more violent turn: the Ming masterwork was attacked as a "poisonous weed." The publishers of *JPM*, previously mandated to manage circulation, were persecuted as a result.[438]

Zedong's comments on *JPM* and its significance for research). *Mao Zedong Sixiang Luntan* 毛澤東思想論壇 [Forum on Mao Zedong thought] 2 (1994): 63–65.

[437] Liang Bingkun 梁秉堃, a CCP party member and a playwright, provided a first person and almost word-to-word "transcript" of Zhou Enlai's conversations with Ouyang Yuqiang and other participants of the play in his memoir. His account has been re-circulated by several official media with variating wordings and contents; Liang Bingkun 梁秉堃, "Tingyan Pan Jinlian 停演潘金蓮," in *Shijia Hutong 56 hao: Woqin li de renyi wangshi* 史家胡同 56 號 : 我親歷的人藝往事 [Memoir of my days in Beijing People's Art Theatre] (Beijing: Jincheng chubanshe, 2010), 4-11.

[438] Just recall how Wu Song summoned an assembly of onlookers to witness his execution of Pan, Wang and Ximen. As if echoing that mobilization of the mass, during the Cultural Revolution, the publisher Renwen She 人民社 was persecuted by the Red Guards, see Huang Yi 黃伊, "Jin Ping Mei Chuban yiwen 《金瓶梅詞話》出版軼聞 [Anecdotes on the publication of Jin Ping Mei Cihua], *Guangming Ribao* 光明日報, February 24, 2000. https://www.gmw.cn/01gmrb/2000-02/24/GB/02%5E18340%5E0%5EGMC3-221.htm



西门庆睡了一个时辰，睁开眼醒来，*** 见日色已西，连忙替他披上衣裳。叫了春梅、秋菊来，收拾衾枕，同扶他归房。春梅回来，看着秋菊收了吃酒的家火，才待关花园门，来昭的儿子小铁棍儿从花架下钻出来，赶着春梅，问姑娘要果子吃。春梅道："小囚儿，你在那里来？"把了几个李子、桃子与他，说道："你爷醉了，还不往前边去，只怕他看见打你。"那猴子接了果子，一直去了。春梅关了花园门回，来房打发西门庆与妇人上床就寝。不在话下。正是：

朝随金谷宴，暮伴绮楼娃〔一八〕。

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* 此处删去一百四十四字。
** 此处删去二百二十七字。
*** 此处删去六百三十八字。

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Fig. 4.25: Curtaining with asterisks in Xiaoxiaosheng 笑笑生, *Xin jiaodianben Jin Ping Mei Ci Hua* 新校點本金瓶梅詞話, edited by Hongsen Dai 戴鴻森 (Hong Kong; Hong Kong Joint Publishing, 1986), 333

In the fictional *JPM* as in the real world, winds keep changing. After Mao died, and mainland China is ready to uncurtain and open up further for capital flows, as well as less inhibited buying and selling – allowing *feng-liu* coupling. It was not until the so-called reform era in 1985 that a "tidied up" version (*zhenli ben*), based on the 1957 version, was re-released officially for research purposes, setting a milestone in *JPM*'s re-uncurtaining in mainland China.[439] Passages containing sex and deemed obscene were edited out, but like Li Han-hsiang's Republican-era copy, the deleted word count in most editions were meticulously recorded, justified in prefaces; the extent of censorship is therefore "transparently" displayed and aesthetically curtained in and as footnotes and annotations (**Fig. 4.25**). What should also be emphasized was that, over time, expurgation of words were recalibrated with care by different editors, compiling from different versions of *JPM*. Reminding of Li's encounter of □ in

[439] For a history of this landmark 1985 publication, see Dong Xingjie 董興傑, "1985 nianban Jin Ping Mei Cihua chuban faxing kaocha," 1985 年版《金瓶梅詞話》出版發行考察" (Study on the Publication and Distribution of the 1985 Version of Jinpingmei Cihua), *Zhongguo Chubanshi Yanjiu* 中國出版史研究, no.4 (2016):144-149.

Republican China, in socialist China words deleted and the styles of replacement also varied and fluctuated, from "squares" ("☐"), footnote numbers ("① ,②, ③"), ellipsis ("……."), asterisks ("****"). Serially linked to each other, each expurgation was in itself a singular curation/curtaining with different rationales, fluctuating and not exactly simply conforming, but aesthetically negotiating with state policies and approvals.[440] Expurgations and limited circulations have been consistent in the context of mainland China under Mao and later Deng, but by no means were monolithic; they are like different materials and qualities of covering (veils, blinds, screens, windows or walls, etc.) curtaining the curtained in changing winds and weather both within the novel and on screens.





Fig. 4.26:(Left). *Jin Ping Mei Cihua.* (Renmin Wenxue Press, 1985; expurgated)
Fig. 4.27 (Right): *Zhang Zhupo Piping Diyi Qishu Jin Ping Mei*
(Shandong Qilu Press, 1987; expurgated)

[440] For the latest visual and bibliographic archive, see Shi Xiaojun 史小軍, and Zhihuan Luo 羅志歡, eds. *Jin Ping Mei Banben Zhijian Lu* 《金瓶梅》版本知見錄 [A Companion to *JPM*'s Editions] (Beijing: Guojia Tushuguan Chubanshe, 2016); Huadong Qiu 邱華棟, and Qingsong Zhang 張青松, editors. *Jin Ping Mei Banben Tujian* 金瓶梅版本圖鑒 [An Illustrated Guide to Various Editions of *Jin Ping Mei*] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2019).



Fig. 4.28 (Left): *Xinke Xiuxiang Piping Jin Ping Mei.* (Shandong Qilu Chubanxue, 1989; unexpurgated)
Fig. 4.39 (Center): *Jin Ping Mei Cihua*. (Renmin Wenxue Chubanxue, 1992; 2nd printing; expurgated)
Fig. 4.30 (Right): *Gaohetang Piping Diyi Qishu Jin Ping Mei*. (Jilin University Press, 1994; expurgated)



Fig. 4.31 (Left): *Jin Ping Mei Cihua*, expurgated (Renmin Wenxue Press, 2000)
Fig. 4.32 (Right): *Jin Ping Mei Cihua*, expurgated (Renmin Wenxue Press, 2008)

As curtains "opened up" and mainland China rejoined the capitalist world in embracing marketization, the re-activation of *JPM*'s affective world-making and infrastructural network

gained momentum by fits and starts (**Fig. 4.26 - 4.32, see Table 2 in Appendix)**. In response to publishers' high demands for publishing, abridging, or adapting *JPM*, the CCP's National Press and Publication Administration (NPPA, 國家新聞出版署) in 1988 published a *JPM*-targeting guideline justifying its expurgation of *JPM* on social grounds, citing the book would influence young people negatively.[441] In 1989, an unexpurgated version was approved for publication (**Fig. 4.28**), corresponding to an all-too-revealing book cover that is unprecedentedly awash with blooming colors, exquisite detailing, and, of course, curtains and the ever-presenting affect of "split-seam."

However, a linear development or envelopment it is not; the ecological form of wind-curtain dynamic progresses and regresses, waking and weakening. Consider the cover of the 1994 version, release at the height of reform spirit then reigning in mainland China. Three female characters (presumably Pan Jinlian, Li Ping-er, Pang Chunmei) are depicted outside of, and "liberated" from a home setting/Ximen's compound (**Fig. 4.30**). Achieving "autonomy" and seemingly "free" to circulate, however, the female figures look circumspect and confused. Their outfit, far from seductive, exudes a fearful anxiety of overexposure, and their bodies fastidiously folded with fabric from neck to toe: are they in the *hot* or *cold* (à la Zhang Zhupo) sections of *JPM*'s world?[442] Sumptuous visual details seen in the background of previous covers were also

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[441] The guideline, phrased as a "Notice" (*tongzhi* 通知) to all parties concerned, emphasizes that "there is no need for *JPM*'s circulation among the general public." See "Guanyu zhengli Jin Ping Mei ji qi yanjiu ziliao de tongzhi" 關於整理《金瓶梅》及其研究資料的通知 [Notice on sorting out Jin Ping Mei and its research materials]. In *Xinwen chuban gongzuo wenjian xuanbian* (1988-1989) *Neibu Wenjian* 新聞出版工作文件選編 內部文件 [Selected documents on news and publishing work (internal Ccrculation)], edited by Office of the National Press and Publication Administration 中華人民共和國新聞出版總署辦公室 (Beijing: Zhongguo Zhongxin, 1990): 212-214. Song Muwen 宋木文, by then the Director of NPPA, suggested that this document had set the direction of *JPM*'s publication in the next two decades from 1988; see *Song Muwen chuban wenji* 宋木文出版文集[Collected essays of Song Muwen] (Beijing: Zhongguo shuji chubanshe, 1996): 238-242.

[442] Zhang Zhupo famously uses thermal rubrics such as heat and cold to describe the book's fluctuating dynamics. See: "How to Read the *Chin P'ing Mei*," trans. David Roy, in *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, edited by David Rolston (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); 202-244.

unprecedentedly preempted by verbal explications of the book's literary merit and copyright materials. Indeed, fluctuating from this version onward, *JPM*'s covers sport much less vivacious design (**Fig. 4.31 & 4.32**), while on the other hand, expurgation has been reduced over time, from 19,161 words in 1985 to 4,500 words in 2008.[443] Whereas the state plays the dominant role in shaping *JPM*'s fluttering, many individuals and creative agents (i.e., editors, illustrators, publishers) co-curate in each *JPM*'s publications. Instead of seeing censorship as top-down operation, it could be more productive to note its fluctuating and "environmental" nature, and ask: "How's the wind blowing?" or ponder: Is it Ximen Qing or Wu Song, or is it Pan Jinlian or Dame Wang who is in charge here?[444]





Fig. 4.33 & Fig. 4.34: "Curtaining" between pages and on screen in the opening credits of *Golden Lotus* (1974)

[443] Though each mainland China's version is compiled from different historical copies of *JPM*, the argument still holds that the number of words deleted decreased over time.
[444] My discussion on wind is largely based on close reading of *JPM* itself; for other works discussing the winds of contemporary politics in mainland China, see Michael J. Hathaway. *Environmental Winds: Making the Global in Southwest China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Jerry Zee, *Continent in Dust: Experiments in a Chinese Weather System* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021).





Fig. 4.35 & Fig. 4.36: Film title shown with the cover of *Jin Ping Mei Cihua* (**Left**) and A curated display of *JPM* related books in *The Golden Lotus "Love and Desjre"* **(Right)**





Fig. 4.37 & Fig. 4.38: *JPM* books presented as both "cheap" (recklessly arranged) **(Left**) and "expensive" (carefully stored) (right) in *Golden Lotus "Love and Desire"* (Right)





Fig. 4.39 & Fig. 4.40:
Sex in both the Ming illustration and painting in *Golden Lotus "Love and Desire"*

To return to Li Han-hsiang's peculiar cinematization of *JPM*. Given the fraught circulation history of *JPM* and its prohibited adaptation in mainland China, it is no surprise that the book's Hong Kong film adaptations spectacularize, however briefly, the book form of *JPM*

as objects worthy of attention on their own.[445] Echoing the long-established practice of using book motif in opening sequences, Li Han-hsiang's *Golden Lotus* (1974), for example, opens with Cao Hanmei's 曹涵美 *Jin Ping Mei Quantu* 金瓶梅全圖, first published in the 1930s.[446] Seamlessly fitted or cropped to the edges of the screen, the inky print of Cao's illustrations bleeds across the folds of pages and screens (**Fig. 4.33 & 4.34)**. As what Georg Stanitzek calls "an eminent spaces of cinematic intermediality," this opening sequences invoke the possibility that audience might as well be watching "the (tabooed) book" as well as reading "the (tabooed) film."[447] Doubling down on this intermedial un/curtaining of *JPM* itself, Li in *The Golden Lotus "Love and Desire"* (1991) opens with more varieties of print materials: from studies of *JPM*, illustrations, paintings, to the box set of *JPM* that Li alluded to in his *JPM* essay (**see Chapter Three**). The camera zooms into titles and covers one by one, flipping its pages to the audiences, while the narrator keeps elaborating on the publication history, as well as the traditional and contemporary significance of the book (**Fig. 4.37-4.40**).[448] Supposedly already "adapted" into the film themselves, the surface of *JPM* books and printed materials, not diegetically serving any function, are meant to just flicker in quick succession as curiosities; they are to *be skimmed*

[445]. On how "books" appear in films, Ling Hon Lam discusses such intermediality in the case of *HLM*: see Ling Hon Lam, "Bao-yu's Multimedia Classroom: Reading, Performance, and the Vicissitudes of the Voice from The Story of the Stone to Its Film Adaptations," *in Approach to Teaching The Story of the Stone* edited by Andrew Schonebaum and Tina Lu (New York: The Modem Language Association of America, 2012), 454-476.
[446] See Dingru Huang, "The Sensuous Surplus."
[447] Reading, as the title sequence conventionally suggests, has always part and parcel of the experience of film-watching; on the intermediality of "books" and "films," see Georg Stanitzek, "Reading the Title Sequence (Vorspann, Générique)," *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 4 (2009): 44-58.
[448] The narrator's introduction goes like this: "*JPM* is a traditional classic. It has been called one of the "Six Talent's books" (*liu caiji shu*, 六才子書 [sic]). There have been translations of *JPM* all over the world. Across the sides of the strait (i.e., *haixia liang-an* 海峽兩岸 i.e. mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan), around 300 studies of *JPM* have been published. Like "Red-ology" dedicated to *Hongloumeng*, "Jin-ology" is a scholarly field devoted to *JPM*. The female protagonists of *JPM* includes Li Pinger, Pan Jinlian, Pang Chunmei, and the male protagonist is Ximen Qing. He is the decadent scion of a family of considerable wealth who never study. Yet he knows to how wield swords and sticks, colluding with the government. He is an official of the Qinghe county, equivalent to today's vice-chief of the Police Office. He befriended hooligans and was the playboy and godfather of Shandong province in early modern China, equivalent to today's kingpin of crime syndicate." (*translation mine*)

through in all their visuality, tactility, materiality before "the film" per se begins as they also per se begin "the film."

But such seemingly superficial, and "surface reading"[449] was likewise traceable to the premodern world. In extant Ming and Qing-era copies, as Robert Hegel shows, pages with illustrations evince wear and tear while the main text appeared untouched.[450] Relatedly, Shang Wei has pointed out that the novel could be read more like an encyclopedia and a magazine of information retrieval.[451] Indeed, reading for the sexual scenes, as opposed to the inner workings of the texts refined aesthetics, was frowned upon by serious scholars such as Zhang Zhupo. Surface reading, it seemed, presented itself as the opposite of the curtain, a deliberate decision to focus on and touch the most pornographic bits of the text. At the same time, of course, fulminating against such forms of "surface" reading became a curtain the intellectual elite could employ to keep the riffraff out. (see Ding Naifei).



Fig. 4.41: The burning of an imaginary edition of *JPM* published by a Hong Kong literary press Su Yeh in the heat of the Cultural Revolution in *Reincarnation*

[449] I borrow the term from the well-cited article by Sharon Marcus, Stephen Best, "Surface Reading: An Introduction," *Representations* 108, no. 1 (2009): 1-21.
[450] Robert Hegel: "…the fascicle containing the illustrations in many late Ming novels may be well worn whereas the text seems scarcely to have been opened, much less given extensive use." *Reading Illustrated Fiction in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 200.
[451] Shang Wei, "*Jin Ping Mei'* and Late Ming Print Culture," in *Writing and Materiality In China: Essays In Honor of Patrick Hanan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 187-238; "The Making of the Everyday World: *Jin Ping Mei Cihua* and Encyclopedias for Daily Use," in *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation: From the Late Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005); 63-92

Our theorization of *JPM*'s affect form of wind-curtain fluttering, as has been shown throughout the chapter, will therefore allow us to trace the book's affective circulation across media and areas. As we trace further *JPM*'s cinematization, we will see the continued invocation of "the book" impressing and leaving imprints in films and film-related paratextual materials such as posters, advertisements, DVD covers…etc.

One prominent example of "book" in "film" is Macau-born Hong Kong (and by now also Australian)[452] female Chinese director Clara Law's 羅卓瑤 adaptation *The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus* (1989), itself based on Hong Kong female writer Lillian Lee 李碧華 (Lee Bik-wa)'s namesake novel. Unlike Li Han-hsiang's cursory showcasing of "the books" as objects, Clara Law's *Reincarnation* (1989) incorporates the book history of *JPM* into the fictional narrative itself. The film first appears to reinforce the Cold-war binary as it easily depicts socialist China as "oppressive." The protagonist Shan Yulin 單玉蓮 (the modern reincarnation of Pan Jinlin, played by Joey Wang), for example, is raped and persecuted as a "licentious" woman (*yin-fu*) in Shanghai during the Cultural Revolution, in which the Red Guards, seeing *JPM* as embodiment of "feudalistic oppression", burn copies of this classic (**Fig. 4.41**). The copy burned on screen is indicated to be printed by a Hong Kong literary press, referring to perhaps the history of smuggling books from Hong Kong to mainland China.)[453] Shan, however, survives the Cultural Revolution. Catching the winds and waves of Deng's market reform, she (like Pan

[452] Law and her husband migrated to Australia in 1995; their later films explore issues of Chinese diaspora; of course, as this chapter shows, such "diasporic" experience is already thematized in the "escape" of Pan Jinlian from her putative household in *JPM* as well as in *Reincarnation.*

[453] Interestingly, the copy burned in the film, certainly just a prop, indicates that it is printed by the famous literary press of modern Hong Kong literature called Su Yeh press 素葉出版社. The press, however, never published *JPM*. The press mostly published literary works by local Hong Kong writers, and it was founded in 1978 by a group of writers including most famously the writer Sai Sai (Xi Xi, 西西).

Jinalian) manages to marry Wu Yuda (the modern Wu Da), migrating to Hong Kong where she later meets Simon (the modern Ximen Qing), and Wu Long (the modern Wu Song), her ex-lover in Shanghai, now reduced to a chauffeur driving for Wu Yuda.




Fig. 4.42 & Fig. 4.43 Shan Yulin/Pan Jinlian discovering and reading a copy of *JPM*.

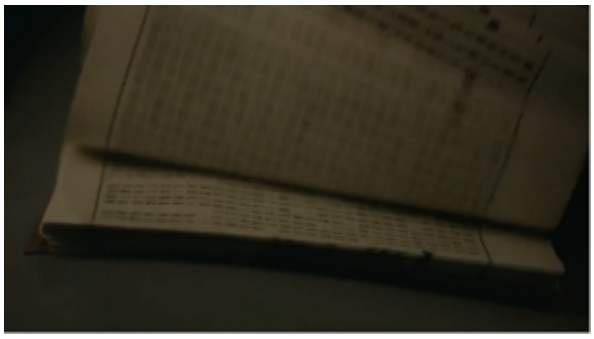


Fig. 4.44 & Fig. 4.45: The book of *JPM* unravelling near the end of Shan's life.

Most crucial for us is the film's depiction of *JPM* as a book, as well as its rendering of wind-curtain fluttering. Throughout the film Shan is not aware that she "is" Pan Jinlian, though she is increasingly haunted by flashbacks of her "ancient" lives as Pan. Through reincarnation, Pan Jinlian, now becoming Shan Yulian, is not only a character in the fictional world, but also becomes a contemporary reader (Shan) who is first unable (in socialist China) and then able (in colonial Hong Kong) to read about "herself" in the book of *JPM*.

Carrying winds from her "past life" as Pan, Shan can not help seducing men. Shan's becoming of Pan culminates in the ending of the film; at the invitation of Simon (the modern Ximen Qing), Shan/Pan was asked to perform as "Pan Jinlian" for a photo-shoot (themed around "traditional Chinese beauty") in her husband's ancestral village-compound in the New Territories.[454] There she serendipitously finds a dust-covered, likely always unread copy of *JPM*.[455] Alternating from shots of key words and sentences from the book to superimpositions of the pages on the face of Shan/Pan, herself doing the reading, *Reincarnation* performs what has been theorized as "wind-curtain fluttering" cinematically; it renders the problems of curtaining (i.e., making visible through the invisible) diegetically in the film, as well as undigetically to the audience reading about Pan/Shan's reading. (**Fig**. **4.42 & 4.43**) Just as Shan connects with Pan, the contemporary audience connects with *JPM* also through reading – partially – the book "on" the film screen.

Not unlike Li Han-hsiang who "uncurtained" the book moving from mainland China to Hong Kong, Shan/Pan (as well as contemporary audiences) realizes "her fate" in the past which has haunted her all along as flashbacks. In the end, Shan/Pan tries to run away with Wu Long/Wu Song, ultimately dying with this true lover of hers in a car crash. Here, the film crosscuts to show the pages of a *JPM* copy unravelling with *a gush of wind* (**Fig**. **4.44 & 4.45**), echoing the ecology of wind-curtain fluttering in several Li's *JPM* adaptations (**see the above**) and the novel. Like in *JPM* and in Li's *Golden Lotus*, this gush of wind (*feng-liu*) results in deaths of both Pan and this time – not Ximen – but Wu Song. Just as the book unravels on screen (**Fig**. **4.45)**, Shan/Pan and Wu Long/Wu Song (not having read or not needing to read *JPM*),

[454] The New Territories is part of Hong Kong where "indigenous Chinese inhabitants" living in Hong Kong since the Ming and the Qing Dynasty retain their (male-exclusive) rights during and also after the British colonial era.
[455] Perhaps, Law is suggesting that in Hong Kong, people do not (need to) read *JPM*– they simply *be* and *perform* the book's *feng-liu* (frivolous romance) in the erotic/economic coupling between "China" and "the world."

simply re-enact *JPM* in their real-lives – dying altogether under the whims of wind's multiple conjugations (*feng-liu*, *feng-su, feng-bo*…). "Liberated" from socialist economy and the national censor, the two protagonists ultimately still perish in market economy. Isn't this "tragic" ending of *Reincarnation* also the "original" ending of *JPM*?



Fig. 4.46: Wind and curtain across book, film, and woman: fluttering across past and presence on the same surface. **Source:** Captured from https://mcoun.com/voddetail/46336.html

Flowing across East and West at the intersection of post-socialist China and colonial and capitalist Hong Kong, Shan/Pan's border-crossing in her "real life" as in the original novel, results similarly in her annihilation at the hands of *feng-liu*, which simultaneously convey (as well as constrain) her power as she "sells" herself through and to other men**.** As Shan/Pan embodies the transition from mainland China's socialism to Hong Kong through participating in global capitalism, what awaits her/Pan Jinlian – a transferable "commodity" troublingly yet

sympathetically re-enacted in the film - is not complete autonomy, but another round of quandary and impasse shrouded in the form of the materiality of curtain. Through, again, the depiction of forces of winds, in the ending of *Reincarnation* the "book" of *JPM* unravels its pages and dissolves into "reality" in Shan/Pan's car crash (**Fig. 4.45**), as the "past (of *JPM*)" finally catches up with "the present" in post-socialist China merging with capitalist Hong Kong. And the book (flipping on its own as wind blows it) is no longer needed, since now *JPM* has merged into contemporary reality in the diegetic world of Shan/Pan. The film appears to suggest that what is needed is not just adapting *JPM* into film, instead, it is also about recognizing and seeing our "reincarnated" selves through returning to the book of *JPM*.

While the female authors Law and Lee are sympathetic to emphasizing the individuated agency of "Pan Jinlian' (i.e. Shan/Pan chooses to run away with her "own" lover, who, is no one but Wu Long/Wu Song, as in *JPM*), they nonetheless observe that, true to the affective texture of the novel, Pan remains trapped, disoriented and lost, as well as "curtained" in a "free" economy and the larger scheme of "winds."[456] If, in *JPM*, Wu Song is the state-released terminator of *feng-liu*, the rush of wind derailing the car and killing Pan/Shan and Wu Long/Wu Song in *Reincarnation* is a more mysterious asocial force of wind blowing from the book of *JPM* – as well as the contemporary market economy in Hong Kong itself: is that *feng-liu*, or *feng-su*? The film offers no answer, but it is the suggestiveness and wind's/*feng*'s conjugative promiscuity that matters. Such suggestion is rendered in the poster of *Reincarnation* **(Fig. 4.46)**, which, still, foregrounds this ecological motif of wind and curtain. With past/present as well as

[456] As Steve Fore points out Law and Lee "do not explore the differences among the patriarchal ideologies encountered by [Pan Jinlian] in the film's feudal, socialist, and capitalist settings; they emphasize the common thread of women's oppression across historical and sociopolitical moments"; Steve Fore, "Tales of Recombinant Femininity: The *Reincarnation of Golden Lotus*, the *Chin P'Ing Mei*, and the Politics of Melodrama in Hong Kong." *Journal of Film and Video* 45, no. 4 (1993): 57-70; see also Yomi Braester, "Modern Identity and Karmic Retribution in Clara Law's *Reincarnations of Golden Lotus*" *Asian Cinema*, 10 no. 1 (1998): 58-61

book/novel/film stitched altogether as a visual continuum (literally, "put on the same page"), the poster shows an entranced and meditative Pan Jinlian/Shan Yulin/Joey Wang wrapped and wrestling with half visible curtains, neither looking delighted nor deflated. Winds blow her hair. Let's take a look at this transtemporal and transmedial entanglement – the poster seems to, simply affectively, suggest. Wind and curtain flutters: is contemporary Pan Jinlian free?

Sensing wind-curtain fluttering from global China to East Asia and Euro America

Taking a cue from Pan Jinlian's transtemporal and transmedial border-crossing in *Reincarnation*, this essay finally ends on a brief survey of *JPM*'s transnational and transcultural cinematic afterlife beyond mainland China and the Sinophone world. This section chooses to go through a selected curation of paratextual materials instead of the film texts themself for several reasons. First, they are not (widely) available; even if available in the form of DVD, the film text (such as *Notorious Concubine*, more below) itself appears to be a heavily edited version from the original. Second, as theorized above, the goal of this chapter is to theorize the affective circulation of *JPM* – which, even within the novel itself, is always curtained and "partial," depending on the potentiality of wind circulations as well as taking places through surfaces rather than "depths." While it is impossible for me at this stage to "recover" these adaptations in full, it appears to be an opportunity missed if we do not use existing and available materials of transnational *JPM* to gesture towards what this chapter has emphasized throughout: the relationality between the original novel and its even-extending networks of film and other adaptations across China and the world.

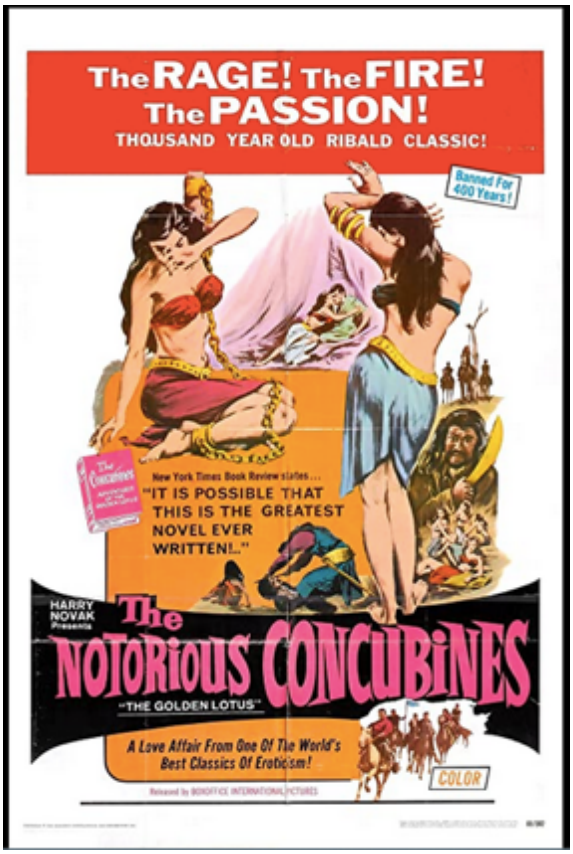



Fig. 4.47: Film poster of *The Notorious Concubine*
Source: IMDB.com, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0145027/mediaviewer/rm2714450432/
Fig. 4.48: Film poster of *The Notorious Concubine*
Source: *Detroit Free Press*, Feb 10, 1970, Newspapers.com, https://www.newspapers.com/article/detroit-free-press-the-notorious-concub/31246667/

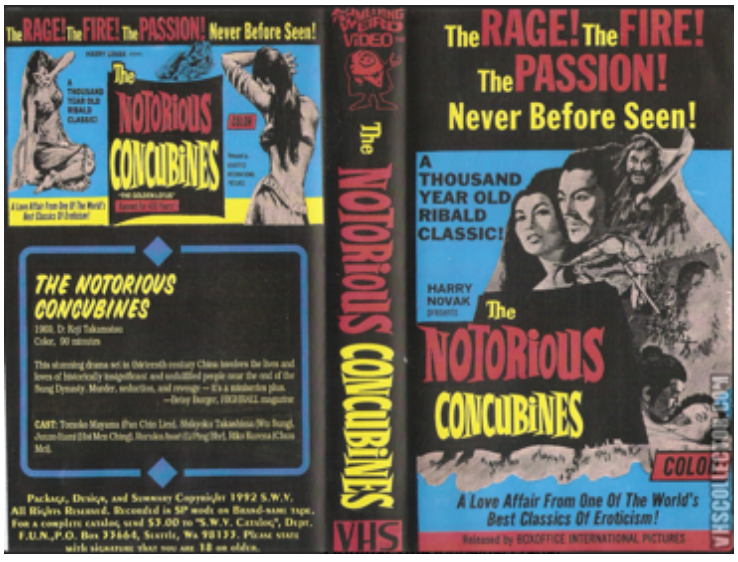

Fig. 4.49: The VHS cover of *The Notorious Concubine*, released in 1992.
Source: VHS Collector, https://vhscollector.com/movie/notorious-concubines

As in mainland China and the Sinophone community, *JPM*'s film circulation in the West continues to demonstrate wind-curtain fluttering as an ecological, erotic, and economic entanglement among otherwise disparate *JPM* adaptations. As shown below, such curtaining and uncurtaining similarly characterize the affective texture of *JPM*'s global adaptations. Consider, first of all, some American promotional materials of *The Notorious Concubine* (henceforth *Notorious*; original title, *Kin Pei Bai*, dir. Kōji Wakamatsu 若松孝二, 1968). Gleaning from the rhetorical strategies and forms of these posters intended for American audiences in 1970 **(Fig. 4.47 and 4.48**) and 1992 (**Fig. 4.49),** we can sense the curtain/ing at work across the binary of East and West, as well as past and present:

> "The Rage! The Fire! The Passion! Thousand-year-old ribald classic…Banned for 400 years…*New York Times Book Review* states 'it is possible that this is the greatest novel ever written…A love affair from one of the world's best classics of eroticisms."

Under the covering of liberal cosmopolitanism (quoting print materials such as *New York Times Book Review* and "inclusively" deemphasizing the Asiatic origin of the film), the promotional materials still promise an affective experience in unprecedentedly ("never before seen") uncovering to the Western audience love, and perhaps more crucially, sex ("a love affair," "ribald"), that is suppressed by a "pre-modern" world, temporally far-away and ancient ("thousand-year-old…," "banned for 400 years"). Marketed and distributed by Harry Novak (1928-2014),[457] known as the "legendary" sultan of sexploitation" films, *Notorious* was branded and perceived as a "B-movie." While superficially sensational, the promotional passage

[457] For a summary of his otherwise recognizable (if not respectable) career, see Pierre Perrone, "Harry H Novak: 'The Sultan of Sexploitation' behind cult hits like 'Mondo Mod' and 'The Secret Sex Lives of Romeo and Juliet' *The Independent*, June 6, 2014, last accessed February 2024, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/harry-h-novak-the-sultan-of-sexploitation-behind-cult-hits-like-mondo-mod-and-the-secret-sex-lives-of-romeo-and-juliet-9481019.html

nonetheless acknowledges *JPM* respectably as a novel of world-historical statue and canonicity, calling it "one of the world's best classic," "the greatest novel ever written," without explicitly ethnicizing or racializing the book's "oriental" origin (though the word "concubine" might have done the work for some).[458]

While not obviously orientalizing the films, the DVD cover nonetheless fails to mention the name of the Japanese director Kōji Wakamatsu, deemphasizing the novel and the adaptation's origin in China or Japan and Asia. Echoing the whitewashing or embodying the transcultural ideal of cross cultural and cross-racial *feng-liu*, the supposedly "Chinese" or "Japanese" or "Asian" characters/actors, look bi-racial, racially ambiguous, or deracinated. For Western and American (men)'s quick and easy consumption, this assimilative edition also changed the original title *Kin Pei Bai* (the Japanese equivalent to *Jin Ping Mei*) to a more generic title of sexploitation film "The Notorious Concubine."

As we read on the more recent promotional material, as well as watch the film itself in its 2002 version, strangely, the hidden and underlying racial logic of orientalism, likely to be previously "hidden" and "curtain" off in the 1970s and 1990s posters, becomes laid bare. In the film's DVD version released in 2002, two named white individuals appear in the film credits. It is revealed in the film credits that this current version has been "presented" by Harry Novak and dubbed in English by a certain James McLarty. Indeed, both white individuals in this DVD version have excised the Japanese original version from 90 to 72 minutes (**Fig. 4.49)**, cutting the Asian male auteur's film – and by extension the latter's phallic power – shorter, amounting to

[458] Such contradictory rendering of both the "highness" and "lowness" of *JPM* are also visible in the Italian and German poster of this film, see the last session of Andrew Schonebaum, "Dreams and Plums of World Literature: The *Hong Lou meng* and *Jin Ping Mei* in English (1827-1939)," in *History Retold: Premodern Chinese Texts in Western Translation* edited by Chan Tak-hung Leo, and Zong-qi Cai. (Leiden: Brill, 2022.), 259-260.

nothing but a male-to-male racial castration.[459] The reduction of the original film's length can be due to the fact that the DVD producer wants to add extra materials to the film of *JPM* including an excessive two hours of "special features" titled "Asian stripteases" "Geisha playmates" and "Oriental typhoons." All are racist tropes, and this is no surprise given the long history of Hollywood's racial fetishism of Asian people as "yellow peril."[460]

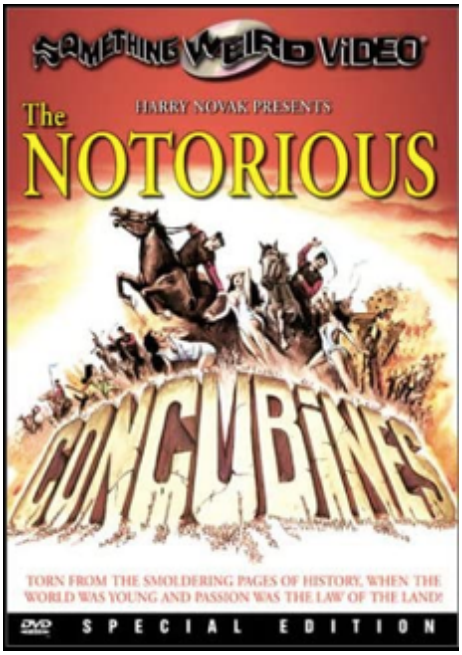



Fig. 4.50 and 4.51 Front and back cover, *The Notorious Concubine* (edited from *Kin Pei Bai*, released in 2002, purchased on Amazon in 2017.) **Source:** Scanning by the author.

[459] On racial castration, see David Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).
[460] On the problematic representation and reception of "Asian women" in Hollywood and Western imaginations, see particularly: Gina Marchetti, *Romance and the Yellow Peril: Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Celine Parreñas Shimizu, *The Hypersexuality of Race: Performing Asian/American Women on Screen and Scene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Rey Chow, "Framing the Original: Toward a New Visibility of the Orient," *PMLA*, 126, no. 3 (2011): 555-563.





Fig. 4.52 & 4.53: Two white men's editing, financial and affective investment
Source: Screen capture by the author.





Fig. 4.54 & 4.55: Curtaining on the DVD menu panel.

However, as a product of East-West romance of *feng-liu*, the orientalist, masculinist, and racist paratextual materials of *Notorious* are, formally and affectively speaking, not unlike its Chinese counterparts in the case of Li's cinema as well as *JPM*'s circulation in mainland China. After all, true to the wind-curtain fluttering in the original novel, *Notorious*'s promotional wordings still unmistakably promise an experience of uncovering and uncurtaining some "thing" erotic – and that "thing" is most representatively Pan Jinlian – the "Asian" and "oriental" woman being under the male gaze of her by now no longer Chinese but Western and presumably white editors/buyers/viewers.

Instead of stopping at calling out the objecthood of Pan and "Asian woman," however, comparative race theorist Anne Anlin Cheng has theorized Asiatic femininity in Western imagination not only as "oriental" (cf. Edward Said) but also "ornamental" being, referring to the yellow woman (as counterparts of black, brown, and white woman) surviving, enduring and

being *as* aesthetic – while also compromised and violated – object in the long history of unending orientalism.[461] Indeed long before "the objectification by the West" of Pan Jinlian in America, Pan in the original novel is always already half-objectified and self-conflated with things such as curtains (**see Chapter Three**). What happens in the American case of *Notorious* is only a new version of the old. For example, *Notorious*'s paratextual materials echo the novel's obsession with fabric in calling Pan Jinlian as "a monster in woman's clothing!" (**Fig. 4.51**), while at the same time figures of curtain continue to cover and uncover in the DVD's playing menu, **Fig. 4.54 & 4.55**). As in Pan's seduction at the doorsteps in the original novel, such conflation between Pan/women with curtain paradoxically releases her seductive power of *feng-liu*, thereby releasing her from one man to another man (i.e., between Wu Da and Ximen Qing), and one "home" to another "home" (i.e., between mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and East Asia as well as the West). In the case of *Notorious*, therefore, Pan Jinlian's ecological form and affective world-making of *feng-liu* is no longer reducible to Chineseness,[462] as she transfers from Chinese households to a new Western household while negotiating with patriarchy in the Chinese novel as well as masculinist, sexist and racist fantasies in the West.

Such is the staying persistence of *JPM*'s ecological form and affective world-making – wind and curtain fluttering across contexts infrastructurally switching on and off, coupling and decoupling "Asia" and "the West." In the cases of *JPM* soft-power, the East-West boundary

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[461] Cheng provocatively asks: "What about bodies *not undone by objectness* but *enduring as objects*?" (*emphasis mine*) in her masterful theorization: Anne Anlin Cheng, *Ornamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 22.

[462] For one such use of "Chineseness" in framing transpacific circulation sex workers and female representations see in particular Lily Wong, "Erotic Liaisons: Sinophonic Queering of The Shaw Brothers' Chinese Dream," in *Transpacific Attachments: Sex Work, Media Networks, and Affective Histories of Chineseness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 79-102. In the case of Pan Jinlian's representation in global media, I do not find it necessary to limit her world-making as necessarily "Chinese"; she could be and has been played and performed by actresses of other nationalities such as Japanese or Korean actresses, and her *feng-liu* goes beyond the geo-body of China.

dissolves in the case of Pan Jinlian's transcultural survival as oriental/ornamental figures. While we may simply criticize the masculinist and racist visual and affective logic in the American "editing" of Kōji Wakamatsu, it remains remarkable that, such American, white, and male affective "investment" in *Notorious* and by extension *JPM* remains "low(ly)" but highly persistent all through the years. The film was screened in 1970s and remains distributable four decades later. By all counts only a "minor" Japanese film of a major Chinese novel, *Notorious* has sustainably circulated in America for four decades. First released in American theaters in the early 1970s, it was re-released in VHS in 1992, and lastly in DVD in 2002. This is all the more remarkable given that no Chinese, Japanese and Asian distribution companies ever bothered to distribute this minor film of the legendary "pink film" master Kōji Wakamatsu in any audio-visual forms.





Fig. 4.56: Advertisement poster for Kōji Wakamatsu's *Kin Pei Bai* (1968)
Source: *Yomiuri Shimbun* 読売新聞, June 21, 1968, from Yomidasu rekishikan (Yomiuri newspaper database)
Fig. 4.57: Advertisement for Li Han-hsiang's *Golden Lotus* (1974) in Japan
Source: *Yomiuri Shimbun* 読売新聞, January 16, 1976, from Yomidasu rekishikan (Yomiuri newspaper database)

Through our new critical vocabulary of *JPM*'s wind-curtain fluttering, we can now critically re-describe the sometimes moralistic, disciplining charge of the critique of "orientalism" in Asian woman's representation and presence in the West. We now understand that the long-continued (but low-key) circulation of *Notorious* can be more affectively (and less rigidly) apprehended as a creative common of wind-flowing and curtain-blowing, coupling men and women through circulating across the East and the West, with all its promise, perils, problems, and politics. For instance, one Japanese advertisement for Li's *Golden Lotus* (**Fig. 4.56**), champions *JPM* and Ximen Qing's display of *tōyō* ("oriental"/East Asian) secret sexual techniques (*tōyō no higi*, 東洋の秘技), claiming that such *tōyō* ecological form triumphs over its Western and South Asian "counterparts" in its otherwise "super international eroticism 超国際エロチズム." (**Fig. 4.57**)[463] As historian Stefan Tanaka has noted, the term *tōyō*, literally meaning "East Seas," refers to "a geocultural territoriality" including both China and Japan, and other countries in Asia, as distinguished from *seiyō* ("the occidental") and the West.[464] Like the circulation of *JPM* across East Asia, *feng-liu* (pronounced in Japanese as *fū-ryū* and Korean as *pung-lyu*) have been a persisting portable "style" shared while also shifting across traditional and

[463] The full quote: "A visionary erotic classic finally adapted into a film at its home front. A *JPM* debut that jeers at Western pornography. Arabian Night and Kama Sutra, whatever they are, are only some baby steps in comparison to *JPM*, a crystallization of two thousand years of time-tested East Asian secret sex techniques, all revealed by Ximen Qing, the ultimate King of Sex and Crime … A super international eroticism has now completed! 幻の好色古典、本場で映画化！欧米のポルノをせせら笑って初登場! アラビアンナイトも何のそのカーマ・スートラは子供用！2000 年練りに練った東洋の秘技のすべてを好色一代 悪一代ご存知、西門慶が披露します…超国際エロチズムを完成。"

[464] As Stefan Tanaka pointed out, the earliest form of the sinographic word *tōyō* /*dongyang* (eastern seas) was used by Chinese merchants to refer to waters around Java as distinguished from *seiyō*/*shiyang* (western seas). After Meiji Restoration, the use of term in Japan started to mean "the oriental" as defined against Europe's modernity. See: *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 4.

modern Japan, from the 8th century *waka* collection *Man'yōshū* to *kabuki* and Natsume Sōseki's writings and East Asia in general.[465]

Importantly, the ecological and world-making formula of *feng-liu* (in connection other aerial form such as *feng-su*, *feng-bo*….etc.) in the specific case of *JPM* are by no means static and essentialist, but highly infrastructural in its ecological volatility and affective unpredictability, assembling and reassembling across literary and cultural contexts. To do justice to the complexity of Pan Jinlian's being, Pan's story is not only a reaction to male violence (can the coupling of "Ximen Qing" and "Pan Jinlian" only be characterized as "violent"?), but also a reconfirmation of Pan Jinlian's wind-bearing capacity of *feng-liu* without this Wakamatsu's adaptation *Kin Pei Bai* (**to be discussed below**) would not even be made or seen (for example, by me as a researcher), either permanently "curtained" out of either statist, masculinist censorship (particularly in mainland China) or commercial disinterest (outside of mainland China). While confirming the long-established pattern of orientalism, *Notorious*'s hardly respectable global circulation is not solely attributable to Western man's objectification of Asian women, but equally attributed to women figures such as Pan, whose superiority in winds-making compel her and *JPM* to circulate here and there.

As we return from America's edition of *Notorious* to two related adaptations of *JPM* in Japan and Korea, the East-West boundary continues to fluctuate and flutter under the erotic/economic pressure of *feng-liu*. To date, two film adaptations of *JPM* outside China and the

[465] For one comprehensive survey of how the sinographic word *feng-liu*/*fū-ryū* exerts itself in Japanese literary history from, see Okazaki Yoshie 岡崎義惠 *Nihon Geijutsu Shichō: Dai 2 Kan no Ge: Fūryū no shisō* 日本藝術思潮 第 2 巻の下 風流の思想 [Trends in Japanese literary thought Vol. 2: The Ideas of *Fūryū*] (Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1948); see also the Sino-Japanese comparison of the word in Suzuki Shūji 鈴木修次, "Fūryū kō."「風流」考 [The genealogy of *fū-ryū*], in *Chūgoku Bungaku to Nihon Bungaku* 中国文学と日本文学 [Chinese literature and Japanese literature] (Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki, 1987), 121-203.

Sinophone world exist: Kōji Wakamatsu's *Kin Pei Bai* 金瓶梅 (1968) and Kim Ki-young's 김기영/金綺泳 *Ban Geum-ryun* 반금련/潘金蓮/*Pan Jinlian* (1978/1981). To begin tracing the wind and curtain network back in post-war East Asia, we can start from Kōji Wakamatsu (b.1936-2012). Now recognized as an art house auteur, Wakamatsu has been associated with "pink films," an industrial genre of pornography reaching its peak in the 1960s, serving almost exclusively urbanized blue-collar male workers and politicized students. But *Kin Pei Bai*, based on a 17th century Chinese erotic novel, appears different from pink films' urban settings and perhaps because of this, it has been therefore ignored by critical analysis on the director's left-wing and avant-gardist politics.[466] Unlike his low-budget pink films, *Kin Pei Pai* was the first film of his that was distributed by a mainstream production house (Shōchiku 松竹),[467] and was considered a commercially expensive and big-budget production (*taisaku* 大作).[468] It was also arguably the first Japanese film financed by foreign capital; as one source suggests, due to the popularity of Japanese-made pornographic film in Europe (in particular West Germany), *Kin Pei Bai* was made with financial investment by a certain German film company named Hansa.[469]

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[466] Wakamatsu's *Jin Ping Mei* adaptation was not mentioned at all major studies of Wakamatsu in the West, for instance: Markus Nornes, ed. *The Pink Book: The Japanese Eroduction and its Contexts* (Kinema Club, 2014), also the first two chapters of Alexander Zahlten, *The End of Japanese Cinema: Industrial Genres, National Times, and Media Ecologies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017); Alberto Toscano and Go Hirasawa, "Walls of Flesh: The Films of Koji Wakamatsu (1965–1972) *Film Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (2013): 41-49; Sarah Hamblin, "Pink Film, Red Politics: Koji Wakamatsu's Revolutionary Pornography." *English Language Notes* 53, no. 1 (2015): 123-139

[467] "Kin Pei Bai de ōte shinshutsu eiga-kagai no gerira taichō wakamatsu kōji kantoku" 「金瓶梅」で大手進出 映画界のゲリラ隊長　若松孝二監督 [The guerrilla leader of cinema: Koji Wakamatsu's breakthrough with the major production of *Kin Pei Bai*]. *Yomiuri Shimbun* 読売新聞, September 10, 1968.

[468] See "Wakamatsu kōji intabyū kikite yomoda inuhiko hirasawa gō" 若松孝二一インタビュー（聞き手 四方田犬彦・平沢剛） [Interview: Wakamatsu Koji by Yomoda Inuhiko, Hirasawa Gō] in *Wakamatsu Kōji Han Kenryoku no Shōzō* 若松孝二反権力の肖像 [An Icon of Rebel: Wakamatsu Kōji], edited by Yomoda Inuhiko 四方田犬彦, Hirasawa Gō 平沢剛 (Tokyo: Sakuhinsha, 2007), 257-258.

[469] In 1965, one newspaper article reported that a West Germany company named "Hansa-film" first proposed to finance Toei 東映 with 100 thousand US dollars in producing a *JPM* film (meant to be comparable to Roger Vadim's *La Ronde* [1964]); the director was reported to be a lesser known director called Watanabe Yuusuke 渡辺佑介, whose pornographic films were financially successful in Germany. See: "Kin Pei bai eiga-ka de shimei sa reta

In this light, then, the financial and affective investment in *JPM* (and Pan Jinlian) was shared by the East as in the West: an erotic/economic process of *feng-liu* trading and coupling. Echoing the plan of luring foreign capital through *JPM* infrastructure in mainland China, the earlier and comparable cases of Japanese pornographic films (including Wakamatsu's Chinese-themed *Kin Pei Bai*) were also said to be "earning foreign currencies" from European, American, Australian, Latin American, and Southeast Asian markets in solving financial issues of the Japanese film industry.[470] In 1969, another Japanese male auteur Nagisa Ōshima 大島渚 somewhat sourly observed that, while his own movies had difficulties in getting screened (i.e., this was way before his global fame with *In the Realm of the Senses* in 1976), Wakamatsu's *Kin Pei Bai* appeared to enjoy certain commercial success in Europe as an "Asian" pornographic film.[471] While censorship per se did not appear to affect *Kin Pei Bai*, the pink films' foreign receptions began to raise concern of "national shame" in post-war Japan, which echoes Wu

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shinjin kantoku Seidoku kara tokubetsu chūmon" 金瓶梅映画化で指名された新人監督　西独から特別注文 [Jin Ping Mei to be directed by a new director; Commission from West Germany] *Shūkan Shinchō* 週刊新潮 10, no. 24 (1965): 17.

[470] One *Lianhebao* article meticulously listed out where these Japanese porn, often ancient-themed or "orientalized," movies were sold to the point that the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs raised concern about such "humiliating" phenomenon for the nation. "Riben huangse yingpian daliang shuchu guowai…Riben waiwusheng jinggao wusun Guoyu," 日本黃色影片 大量輸出國外 獲取外匯挽救影業危機 日外務省警告勿損國譽 [Huge amount of pornographic Japanese films exported overseas to earn foreign currencies…Japanese Foreign Ministry warned that this brings shame to the nation]. *Lianhebao* 聯合報, January 23, 1969.

[471] In 1969, Nagisa Ōshima in one newspaper article lamented that it was difficult for his own films to be shown overseas especially in Europe. In contrast, Wakamatsu's *Kin Pei Bai* was shown in three cinemas in Paris when Ōshima visited there. He noted that Wakamatsu's name didn't appear on the poster and speculated that the film could be taken as "some Hong Kong erotic movie." He further noted that Wakamatsu's film was sold to a "Western Germany" broker, which, according to him, was not a good thing for Japanese cinema in general. Though it is hard to imagine from today's point of view, the Chinese story *JPM* might have served as a "more international" source material than distinctively Japanese materials during that period. See: Ōshima Nagisa 大島渚 "Bari no Nihon eiga minishimiru kaigai jōei no kon'nan." パリの日本映画　身にしみる海外上映の困難さ [The deeply felt difficulty in going overseas: Japanese cinema in Paris," *Yomiuri Shimbun* 読売新聞, 10 September, 1969. In an interview published in 2007, Wakamatsu remarked on Ōshima's lament when asked about the film's overseas distribution. "…これはヨーロッパで大島さんの映画よりも早かったんじゃない？確か、大島さんが悔しがていた。" See: "Wakamatsu kōji intabyū kikite yomoda inuhiko hirasawa gō" 若松孝二一インタビュー（聞き手 四方田犬彦・平沢剛） [Interview: Wakamatsu Kōji by Yomoda Inuhiko and Hirasawa Gō]. In Wakamatsu Kōji han kenryoku no shōzō 若松孝二反権力の肖像 [An Icon of Rebellion: Wakamatsu Kōji], edited by Yomoda Inuhiko 四方田犬彦, and Hirasawa Gō 平沢剛, 234-265 (Tokyo: Sakuhinsha, 2007)

Song's moralistic and violent containment of Pan Jinlian's *feng-liu* through invocations of *feng-su* (i.e. local customs).



Fig. 4.58 & 4.59: Promotional materials for Kim Ki-young's *Ban Geum-ryun* in 1981
Source: https://m.blog.naver.com/cine212722/221696965756

Catching winds of *JPM*'s *feng-liu* in China and other parts of Asia, *JPM* film adaptation was also censored and curtained in Korea under the censorship of Park Chung Hee's military regime. In the case of Korean director Kim Ki-young's (b.1919-1998) the film had to change its title from *Geum Byeong-mae* (*Jin Ping Mei*) to *Ban Geum-ryun* (*Pan Jinlian*) (**Fig. 4.58 & 4.59**). The film was shelved in 1974 due to reasons of "obscenity" and "violence."[472] As contemporaries, Kim Ki-young and Li Han-hsiang both navigated governmental censorship in their respective grappling with East Asian authoritarian regimes (Park Chung-hee in Korea; Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan). In 1981, Kim's iteration was released from storage after 7 years of suspension. Echoing *JPM*'s form of affect, the release of film was advertised and described in an advertisement as an event of passionate and temporal "unsealing" (*gaebong*, 개봉/開封) between

[472] See Molly Kim, "The Intersection of Authorship and Film Regulation During the Period of Military Rule: An Analysis of Kim Ki-young's National Policy Films, *Soil* (1978) and *Water Lady* (1979)," in *The Films of Kim Ki-Young*, edited by Kim Chung-kang (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 129-145.

art (i.e. deep) or obscenity (i.e., superficial)" (예술[藝術]이냐 외설[猥褻]이냐 시비속에 마침내 개봉결정[開封決定]!).[473]

What connects Kim's *JPM* to those by Kōji Wakamatsu and Li Han-hsiang was that, while all these filmmakers are celebrated and legendary male/masculinist auteurs in their respective national film historiography, their *JPM* films are without exception not considered as their major films in their oeuvres. Either suffering from moral or governmental censorship at some point or falling out of f(l)avor critically or commercially, none of their *JPM* films are easily watchable as of 2020s. Kim's *Ban Geum-ryun*, while available for streaming inside Korea, is not released in DVD form like other Kim movies; Wakamatsu's film is only available, paradoxically, in its Americanized, excised, and dubbed form as *Notorious*; Li's *JPM*, while watchable online on several dubious and illegal platforms, are not widely available in DVD form either.

Put differently, *JPM* films, like the book *JPM* itself are both exposed and hidden from view through a variety of sensible "curtains," political censorship or commercial unavailability. Though this chapter as a result cannot fully analyze all the actual "content" of these films due to their limited circulation, I would argue that it is precisely this atmospheric feeling of incompleteness, this affective intensity of partiality and limited exposure that accompanies the original novel's ecological form and aesthetic world-making of wind-curtain fluttering. Regardless of any real or imagined issues of censorship, the infrastructure network of wind-curtain fluttering in the novel and its adaptations serves as a conduit for connecting, conveying,

[473] A translation of some of the key message on the poster: "It's your luck to be able to watch this movie! Passionate stories of passionate lovers. Is she an embodiment of desire or a mysterious devil beauty? …Passionate acting, passionate love, passionate movie. Art or obscenity? All is finally revealed amidst the controversy!" The Korean verb, "*gaebong* 개봉開封" suggests "1. open; unseal, 2. release; be coming soon; to open something wrapped or sealed tightly to protect or conceal it," last accessed 20 March, 2024, https://en.dict.naver.com/#/entry/koen/08dcba8bc7f84b10a8457974dc8c8244.

while also constraining the transnational adaptations of *JPM*, fluttering beyond and between late imperial, modern and contemporary mainland China and the world.

Conclusion

This chapter has made interventions in the study of *JPM*'s global circulation through illuminating the infrastructural entanglement of "wind-curtain fluttering" in between the cases of Li Han-hsiang, Clara Law, Kōji Wakamatsu, and Kim Ki-young film adaptations. By "windsurfing" beyond dichotomies (such as man/women, oppressor/oppressed, Asia/West) and steadfastly holding onto *JPM*'s ecological and economic form of winds, these two chapters see Pan Jinlian, Dame Wang, and Ximen Qing in *JPM* as players in "wind-curtain fluttering" working in tandem with a larger scheme of geopolitical deal-making in between China, Asia and the Western world.

As shown in the cases of *JPM* as infrastructure of luring capital, what we see in *JPM* could well be like what anthropologist Kimberly Hoang calls "the co-constitution of sex and global capital" in contemporary Vietnam and Asia. Like the racialized and minoritized sex workers that Hoang described in *Dealing in Desire: Asian Ascendancy, Western Decline, and the Hidden Currencies of Global Sex Work* (2015), Pan Jinlian shall also not be understood simply as a victim or a sell-out (such is the standard view of the CCP: that Pan Jinlian is either a victim of "feudalist oppression" or that "she took the wrong path of liberation"), but more fascinatingly and/or disturbingly, as role-playing performers and deal-makers calculating gains and losses in doing business with a highly hierarchized assembly of men (between white and Asian, expats

and locals, and in *JPM*, between Ximen Qing, Wu Da, Wu Song…) competing in global capitalism.[474]

While this dissertation's Chapter One and Two have shown how *HLM* has kickstarted or provided a platform in creating queer and trans stardom between China and the world, Chapter Three and Chapter Four theorize *JPM*'s distinctive global media climate distinctively, showcasing its comparative advantage and disadvantage. On the one hand, *JPM*, unlike *HLM*, has been covered up by multiple agents and in multiple aesthetic forms both inside and outside the novel. Strangely, however, while there are no film adaptations of *HLM* made outside of China and Sinophone communities, the wind-flowing appeal of Pan Jinlian has attracted, at least, two adaptations of major auteurs in Korea and Japan; in contrast, no film adaptation of *HLM* took place outside of Chinese-speaking world.

While Pan and *JPM* also "enjoyed" some Western presence, purchase, and investment, *HLM* has largely been an "indoor" emotional affair in terms of cinematicization, though stars who played or have *become* Bao-yu make waves (i.e., mud-water exchange) globally in their less obvious "adaptations" outside of *HLM* platform. In a way, *HLM* creates "major" stars of glittering grief, who actually also exhibit *feng-liu* (such as Dai-yu),[475] But to do justice to the "minor(itized)" stars of Pan Jinlian and other female characters in *JPM*, we should acknowledge

[474] See Hoang's analysis of Vietnamese sex industry in the throes of economic liberalization and participation of world trade in her ethnography: *Dealing in Desire: Asian Ascendancy, Western Decline, and the Hidden Currencies of Global Sex Work.* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015). Hoang's book, in the fashion of *JPM*'s diagnostic description of Pan Jinlian, "looks at women who *choose to* enter into sex work as a strategy to advance their economic and social positions in the local economy." (17). Also problematizing the argument that Asian women are only "objects" but not subjects of desire in romancing with the West, see Karen Kelsky, *Women On the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001)

[475] Compared to *JPM*'s eroticism, *HLM*'s frequent mentioning of the very loose word *feng-liu* is often de-sexualized; in particular, characters such as Dai-yu and Qing-wen have been described as *feng-liu*: see Hong Tao 洪濤, "Feng-liu, bushi feng-yue: Hongloumeng de hexin ci, fanyi xianxiang he pingjia shuyu," 風流，不是風月:《紅樓夢》的核心詞、翻譯現象和評價術語 [*Feng-liu* and not *feng-yue*: Evaluations and translations of keywords in *Hongloumeng*] *Hongloumeng Xuekan* 紅樓夢學刊 3 (2021): 29-66.

that Pan Jinlian and her likes have managed to craft their own niche in the world of winds; she makes deals with the likes of Dame Wang, and Ximen Qing; and she lingers *with* and *as* object across the threshold of the doors and curtains, in between legitimate and illicit arenas as formulated in the novel.

Staying true to the fashion of *JPM* itself, Chapter Three and Chapter Four refuse to exclusively endorse either *feng-liu* or *feng-su*, but more broadly and generatively double down on attuning to (rather than judging, critiquing, and concluding) the Ming novel's, as well as each adaptations' rounds and rounds of resettling and unsettling of winds: that of continual *feng-bo* (incidents), and *feng-cui-cao-dong* (imminent happenings in the unfolding environment as well as surroundings). Through our non-anthropocentric theorizing with the winds – or in environmental anthropologists Jerry Zee and Timothy Choy's formulation, through our "becoming-atmospheric" with *JPM*'s affective world-making across media, cultures and boundaries, this chapter has hopefully shown how winds in *JPM* "shift from states of settlement or condensation to ones of airborne agitation, to settle again in time, or to activate a reaction, somewhere else."[476]

[476] Jerry Zee and Timothy Choy, "Condition – Suspension," *Cultural Anthropology* 30, no. 2 (2015): 210-223.

Conclusion: Further worlding

The limitation of this dissertation is clear: It has only focused on tracing and theorizing from two classic Chinese novels, namely: *Hongloumeng*'s "water" (**Chapter One** and **Two)** and *Jin Ping Mei*'s "wind" (**Chapter Three** and **Four**). This conclusion will briefly highlight future directions which will go towards completing our theorization of all classic Chinese novels' global media climate in 20th and 21st century China and the world. It will provide some clues as to how to procced with, for example, theorizing the affective worldmaking of the ecological form of "cloud" in *Xiyouji*, while I will have to leave "fire" in *Sanguo's* global media climate, and *Shuihuzhuan*'s "rivers and lakes" (*jianghu*) behind for future explorations.

As I am finishing dissertation, Akira Toriyama, the author of the world beloved animation *Dragon Ball*, has passed away. The world-famous series, as Toriyama openly admitted, draws from Jackie Chan's *kung-fu* films and obviously *Xiyouji*. Apparently, the series departs from the original story wildly as it goes on and on, hence many simply ignore the power of the source novel judging by the blatant change of content, plot, as well as social-political contexts. But how come the character of *Dragon Ball*, despite the changed and changing forms, remains to be called in Japanese Son Gokū 孫悟空, which is equivalent to the Chinese written form Sun Wukong 孫悟空 if written in *kanji* 漢字 or sinographs? Against such tracing of Japan's entanglement with classic Chinese novel's global media climates, most will often retort that "*Dragon Ball* is already Japanese and not Chinese," even though such affordance of *Xiyouji* and Chinese culture (especially Jackie Chan's *kung-fu* films) have been openly admitted and acknowledged by Akira Toriyama as formative influences.[477]

[477] My observation is based on personal experiences when I mentioned this argument to friends in Hong Kong. Understandably, very few media coverage of Toriyama's death mentioned the link between *Xiyouji* and *Dragon Ball,* or China for that matter. After all, it has been known as a Japanese franchise, if not only Japanese. However,

Avoiding or trying to dispel the haunting notion of "Chinese influence" or for fear of augmenting "Sinocentricism," these comments I have heard flatly ignored the form and affect of *Xiyouji*. What these responses have missed is that *Dragon Ball*'s display of "change," "changeability," and "to-be-continuedness" (or as media scholars call it, the "seriality" in popular narratives),[478] is not an indication that Sun Wukong is no longer who he is. On the contrary, *the more changes he displays, the more he is the Monkey King*. Paying attention to monkeys' morphological and serial form, Eileen Cheng-yin Chow has provocative suggested that Wukong's tail always betrays his non-human quality while he tries to transform into a human, making Wukong always a mediating figure between the human and the non-human. As Chow writes:

> Given that Monkey's identity straddles the boundary between beast and divinity, it is perhaps not surprising that the conjuring trick he finds most challenging is that of fully transforming himself into human form. His telltale simian tail—the only part of him that resists change and concealment—always gives him away. The Monkey King's tail, therefore, is both part of and persistently outside of all Monkey tales already in circulation: it is the trace of the untameable, unassimilable, vestigial remnant, that which vexes, betrays, and provokes the telling of yet another version of the tale.[479]

Chow traced the self-regenerating and always-forthcoming Wukong as not only *Xiyouji*'s seriality, but even as the life of Chinese cinema itself. We may add to this insight by saying that the Monkey King's very form has been also *Chinese/Japanese/Asian animation* itself.

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the 30th anniversary official history book of *Dragon Ball*, published in 2016, indicates that Akira Toriyama took a field trip to China while creating *Dragon Ball* in the late 1980s during the beginning of China's economic reform. See Akira Toriyama 鳥山明, *30th Anniversary Dragon Ball Super History Book* =30th Anniversary *Doragonbōru Chō Shishū* ドラゴンボール超史集 (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2016), 18.

[478] For one recent example by media scholars, see: Frank Kelleter, "Five Ways of Looking at Popular Seriality," in *Media of Serial Narrative*, edited by Frank Kelleter (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2017), 7–34; Shane Denson, "The New Seriality." *Qui Parle* 32, no. 2 (2023): 301-339.

[479] Eileen Cheng-yin Chow, "Afterword (尾聲): Chinese Cinema as Monkey's Tail." In *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Cinemas*, edited by Carlos Rojas and Eileen Chow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 650.

What if we theorize such "vestigial" beastliness of the monkey (who is also strangely human) not in terms of the tail but in terms another non-human form – that of the (Daoist) cloud? In *Xiyouji*, we know that Wukong's changes and more fundamentally, changeability highly relates to his "cloud somersault" (*jin-dou-yun* 筋斗雲) and "cloud-wandering" (*yun-you* 雲遊) alongside another kind of *qi*, the *yun-qi* – "cloud-vapor" 雲氣. As art historian Martin Powers shows, such an ancient and cosmological pattern of dragon-and-cloud appeared in as early as classical China's artifacts, but it could still be seen in the visual design as well as the plot of early episodes of *Dragon Ball* (**Fig. 5.1**).[480] No matter Chinese and Japanese, the infrastructure of cloud-vapor – the *yun-qi* – remains supportive and connecting whoever that is riding *with* the cloud.

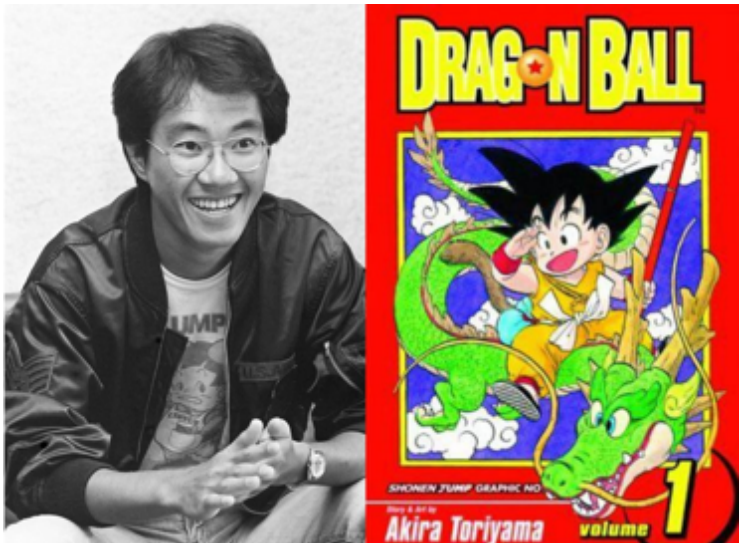

Fig. 5.1: Akira Toriyama and Son Gokū riding cloud-vapor and dragon
Source: Photo AFP, https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/culture/2024/03/08/039dragon-ball039-creator-akira-toriyama-dies-aged-68

[480] See Martin Powers analysis of the cloud pattern in early China in *Pattern and Person: Ornament, Society, and Self in Classical China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006): 184, 229-253.

More interestingly, the continuation of *Xiyouji*'s *qi/*air can be testified in one recent South American commemorative event in paying tribute to Toriyama's death, which illustrates what Lu Xun could be referring to as "air" from classic Chinese novels (**see the introduction**). On the 11th of March in 2024, thousands of fans in Argentina paid tribute to the Japanese animator Toriyama, not only by cosplaying as the Monkey, but also by altogether performing one major trick of Son Gokū, which is called *gen-ki dama* 元気玉(げんきだま) (**Fig. 5.2**), literally meaning "vitality-ball" and translated into English as "the Spirit Bomb." In this introduction Lu Xun mentioned the *qi* of classic Chinese novels, which in Japanese is pronounced as *ki*, which is found circulating in this weapon of *gen-ki dama*. One fan-site of *Dragon Ball* called "Dragon Ball Universe Wiki" describes this "ultimate weapon" of Wukong as a communal and environmental gathering of *ki*:

> What sets the Genki Dama apart from most ***ki*** manipulation techniques in the series is that it is fueled by the energy **gathered from one's living surroundings.** The user, who must be at internal peace, focuses their thoughts on living beings around them — **animals and plants, anything with a life force — and pulls on their energy**. The accumulated energy gathered by the user is gathered at a specific point. In earlier uses, Gokū could only gather enough energy toward his clenched fist, but other times, he would raise both hands upwards and hold his palms out flat so as to focus the accumulated energy into a massive sphere above his head.[481]

What this assembly exactly *means*, as I argued in the introduction, may be beside the point. What this event of affective worldmaking (and infrastructural network) suggest is simply that fans were creating and enjoying one such "allure of elemental envelopment" of air/*ki*/*qi* (**Fig. 5.3**) through *Dragon Ball* and indeed also through *Xiyouji*'s ecological formulation.[482] What Lu Xun

[481] "Genki Dama," *Dragon Ball University Wiki*, last accessed March 15, 2024, https://dragonballuniverse.fandom.com/wiki/Genki_Dama
[482] Derek McCormak, *Atmospheric Things: On the Allure of Elemental Envelopment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

said about classic Chinese novels is invoked and even performed in the Argentina case; such "air" from the novel, through the very affective world-making of Monkey King, survives transculturally with people invoking, performing but not always needing to understand Chinese or Japanese. Such invisibility of "air" constitutes the very definition of classic Chinese novel's infrastructural network, which often goes unnoticed in our "climatic media."[483]



Fig. 5.2: Son Gokū's "*Genki Dama*"
Source: *The Dao of Dragon Ball*,
https://thedaoofdragonball.com/blog/martial-arts/the-genki-dama-explained/



Fig. 5.3: "Dragon Ball fans in Buenos Aires gather to mourn creator Akira Toriyama" The Associated Press, March 11, 2024.
Source: Captured from Associated Press video,
https://apnews.com/video/animation-and-comics-television-movies-pedro-ferrer-74153e19333648df8cbec369b97425a6

[483] Yuriko Furuhata, *Climatic Media: Transpacific Experiments in Atmospheric Control* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022).

Moving back from South America to Asia, *Xiyouji*'s global media climate is emitting a signal on a more diplomatic platform. On the 8th of March in 2024, Mao Ning, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China stated that they mourned the death of Akira Toriyama. It turns out that such statement of mourning is elicited by a Japanese TV reporter, and it is not the Chinese government or media, in this case, trying to claim a connection:

> **TV Tokyo:** The famous Japanese manga artist Akira Toriyama passed away due to illness. His **masterpiece *Dragon Ball* draws on the story of China's *Xiyouji* as its background**. Do you have any comment about his death?
>
> **Mao Ning:** We express deep condolences over the passing of Mr. Akira Toriyama and sincere sympathies to his families. Mr. Toriyama is a renowned manga artist, whose works are popular in China**.** I noted that many Chinese have expressed condolences over his passing online. We hope and believe that **more people with vision in Japan will make active contribution to the cultural exchange and friendship between China and Japan**. (*transcript modified and emphasis mine*) [484]

China's spokesperson has stated what many studies have shown: that *Xiyouji* is a product of and has also been a platform of "cultural exchange." However, it is telling that the Japanese reporter has openly acknowledged the entanglement between *Dragon Ball* and *Xiyouji,* which is described as "background" matters; but the background, as we have discussed, does matter. Like air, it is neither the ground nor figure of representations, it constitutes our surroundings and very being, the very air of things. In this case, China and classic Chinese novels, as the Japanese reporter emphasizes, does have a role to play. But what roles are they?

The background of cloud and its *qi*/air shall receive more scholarly attention. As contemporary China officially associates their Belt and Road Initiate (BRI) to *Xiyouji*,[485] it is not

[484] Quoted from the English transcript in "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on March 8, 2024," Official Website of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, March 8, 2024, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/202403/t20240308_11256513.html
[485] "Live: Monkey King & the Belt and Road Initiative! What's the connection?" *CGTN (China Global Television Network)* 中國環球電視網, October 16, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xe-2MB6Z4GU

inconceivable then, to see the *Dragon Ball* as Japan's very own activation/adaptation of classic Chinese novel's historical and fictional infrastructural network: a world-historical journey along the silk road which signals the long entanglement between South Asia, East Asia and the world at large through the spread of Buddhism (which, as one scholar argues, also generates "an international style" in Buddhist art).[486] Similarly in the case of Japanese anime such as *Dragon Ball*, the series has conquered the world through the novels' very ecological form, affective world-making, and infrastructural network of *Xiyouji* under Japan's specific historical circumstances in, to borrow from historian John Dower, "embracing defeat" (just as Wukong embraces defeat in *Xiyouji*) after losing the Second World War. Consequently, Japan has re-formed and trans-formed its image from an imperialist aggressor in Asia to a "cuter" (*kawaii*) , demilitarized, softer, and more "collaborative" "pop culture nation" under Pax America.[487]

Yet, the world of Pax America has now faced the challenge of Pax Sinica. Back to the present and looking ahead, one can be assured that contemporary China is seeking to repurpose, reclaim, and recentralize classic Chinese novel's ecological form, affective world-making, and infrastructural network. If post-war Japan under Pax America – which some have called "pop-culture Japan" – has activated some of *Xiyouji*'s "aesthetic categories" (such as the Monkey King's "cuteness" and "interesting"-ness) of classic Chinese novels in acquiring soft-power in

[486] See: Dorothy C. Wong, *Buddhist Pilgrim-Monks as Agents of Cultural and Artistic Transmission: The International Buddhist Art Style in East Asia, Ca. 645-770* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2018).
[487] I will explore such Japan's world-making through *Xiyouji* in future publications; for now, Daisy Du's *Animated Encounter* (2019) remains to be the standard reference. On Japan's "changing persona" during and after America's occupation, see the classic John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II.* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999). For a ruthless critique of nationalism in post-war Japan as "complicit" with America's presence in Asia, see Naoki Sakai, *The End of Pax Americana: The Loss of Empire and Hikikomori Nationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022). Several articles have explored such "tenuous" connections between *Xiyouji* and *Dragon Ball*, as well as *Dragon Ball*'s "energy" in generating protests. None, however, successfully links it back to the novel's ecological form itself. See: Bounthavy Suvilay, "Dragon Ball: Body Control and Epic Excess in Manga and Anime." *Loisir Et Société* 41, no. 2 (2018): 250-267; Xavier Mínguez-López. "Folktales and Other References in Toriyama's *Dragon Ball*." *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 9, no. 1 (2014): 27-46; Camilo Diaz Pino, "Weaponizing Collective Energy: *Dragon Ball* Z in the Anti-Neoliberal Chilean Protest Movement." *Popular Communication* 17, no. 3 (2019): 202-218.

winning hearts and minds in the world including the U.S. and mainland China (e.g., the popularity of *Dragon Ball*),[488] contemporary China is now poised to regain classic Chinese novel's affordance with "Chinese characteristics," turning *Xiyouji* into their very own "IP (intellectual properties)" films, their very own "national-style" (*guo-feng* 國風) animations in tandem with the precarious resurgence of *han-fu* 漢服 (i.e. the apparel of the Han or Han-style Chinese clothes).[489]

How will such classic Chinese novels gain new forms as they got re-assembled into China's self-projected international order called *tian-xia* 天下 ("All-under-Heaven")?[490] Will such infrastructural network enable affective world-making? Will the new "Wukong" be able to draw fans and followers around the world (such as the Argentine fans in Gokū's case) paying tribute to as well as contributing their "air/*qi*/*ki*" to Gokū's/Akira Toriyama's world-connecting "force-field," in Chinese, *qi-chang* 氣場? This dissertation has suggested that the answer lies with the classic Chinese novels' ecological form, affective world-making, infrastructural network, a permutation of sensory devices through which China and the world co-constitute our global media climates. Before we rush to conclude, we shall first notice how the *qi* is going in our times: does it smell like the beginning or the end of *Hongloumeng* or will it be a new era of

[488] On Japanese popular culture and affect, the term "popular culture Japan" is from Daniel White, *Administering Affect: Pop-Culture Japan and the Politics of Anxiety* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022); see also the classic in the field of East Asian cultural studies which "recenters" Japan in globalization: Kōichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). On aesthetic categories in late capitalism, see Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

[489] On the notion of "IP" in mainland China's context, see Li Jinying. "The Platformization of Chinese Cinema: The Rise of IP Films in the Age of Internet." *Asian Cinema*. 31, no. 2 (2020): 203–218. For problematiziations of such nation-bounded or ethnocentric brandings, see Eve Ng and Xiaomeng Li. "Brand Nohomonationalism: *Guofeng* ('National Style') Framings of Boys' Love Television Series in China." *Asian Studies Review* 47, no. 3 (2023): 613-630; on the problematic of *hanfu*, see Kevin Carrico, *The Great Han: Race, Nationalism, and Tradition in China Today* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

[490] See Wang Ban, ed. *Chinese Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture, and World Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017); Zhao Tingyang, *All Under Heaven: The Tianxia System for a Possible World Order,* trans. by Joseph E. Harroff (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021).

Sanguo and *Shuihu* up-and-coming? Are the Wukongs/Gokūs/Monkey Kings trying to "rebel" and creating uproar in heaven? Are they being defeated, or more than ready to embark on a team-building journey of self-reflection, self-revision, and multilateral collaboration – between self and other, human and nonhuman, between China and the world? We leave it to our ever-unfolding sense-making, and currently, the undercurrents run deep.

Appendix

Table 2: A brief timeline regarding *JPM*'s circulation within mainland China from 1957-1997 as gathered from available source. The table is not meant to be exhaustive from 1957 to the present. It is to provide a glimpse of what I mean by "wind-curtain fluttering" in terms of the book's publication and circulation in mainland China.

Year	Titles/Versions	Publisher	Book Details	Audience and consequences
1957 Nov (reprinted in 1991)	*Jin Ping Mei Cihua*, (aka Wanli version)	People's Literature Publishing House (Renmin wenxue Chubanshe 人民文文學出版社)/ In the name of Wenxue Guji Kanxin She 文学古籍刊行社	- Unexpurgated (*zu-ben* 足本); also known as "Minister Version" (buzhang ben 部長本)[491] - 2000 copies[492] - 40 RMB[493] - Thread-bounded - Printed by photocopying. - 2 boxes; 21 volumes - The first volume contains illustrations taken from the Chongzhen version; the rest of the 20 volumes are the main text,	- Mao Zedong considered the book worth reading for party leaders. - Approval of Mao Zedong sought by Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸, the vice-minister of the Ministry of Culture; *JPM* was allowed for "internal circulation" (內部發行) [494] - Available only to high-level party members, distinguished professors, and cultural luminaries.[495] - Each copy has a number; buyers had to register their names and were all assigned a number in their purchase. - Buyers had to be married and above 45 years old.[496]
1983	*The Story of Jin Ping Mei* (Jin Ping Mei Gushi)	"*Jian-hun*" 劍魂 a Shaan-xi-	- Han Yingsan 韓英珊, a writer of the Liberation	- *Jian-hun* was shut down as a result

[491] See: Li Xin 李鑫, "Buwei tuli lieqi, zhiwei chuancheng wenhua – 1949 nianhou Jin Ping Mei de jici chuban qingkuan," 不爲圖利獵奇 只爲傳承文化—1949 年後《金瓶梅》的幾次出版情況 [Not for profit but cultural heritage – On *Jin Ping Mei*'s several publications after 1949], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, January 14, 2019, last accessed March 26, 2024, https://www.sohu.com/a/289679840_48835.

[492] Li Xin, Song Chundan and Song Muwen suggested 2000 copies; Yen suggested 1000 copies. See Li Xin, "Buwei"; Yan Zhen 嚴真, "Xiaoyi Jin Ping Mei chuban zhi kanke," 小議〈金瓶梅〉出版之坎坷 [The bumpy road of *Jin Ping Mei*'s publication], *The Library Journal of Henan* 河南圖書館學刊, no. 2 (1993): 58-59; Song Chundan 宋春丹, "'Jinshu' *Jing Ping Mei* de tuomin zhilu," "禁書" 《金瓶梅》的脫敏之旅 [On the un-censoring of the banned book *Jin Ping Mei*] *Dongxinanbei* 東西南北 no. 24 (2016) [reposted on Sohu], last accessed February 23, 2024, https://www.sohu.com/a/229490575_176673

[493] Yang Muzhi, 楊牧之 "Chuban shishang de yiduan gushi – Jin Ping Mei, Chataiai furen de qingren chuban faxing de ganxiang" 出版史上的一段故事 ——《金瓶梅》《查泰萊夫人的情人》出版發行的感想 [On the publications of *Jin Ping Mei* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*], *Zhonghua dushu bao* 中華讀書報, October 30, 2013, last accessed, March 26, 2024, https://epaper.gmw.cn/zhdsb/html/2013-10/30/nw.D110000zhdsb_20131030_1-05.htm. Yang is the chairman of The Books and Periodicals Distribution Association of China (中國書刊發行業協會會長).

[494] Yen, "Xiaoyi," 58.

[495] Yang, "Chuban," n.p.

[496] Li Xin, "Buwei," n.p.

		based literary magazine	Army (*budui zuojia* 部隊作家) abridged the one million word original *Jin Ping Mei Cihua* to a 170-thousand word version	- Han Yingsan lost his status as an army soldier.
1985 (May)	*Jin Ping Mei Cihua*	People's Literature Publishing House	- Expurgated - Edited and annotated by Dai Hongsen 戴鴻森 - Editorial work was already complete in 1980. - Also known as "the clean version" (*jie ben* 潔本) - 10000 copies (20000 copies were initially requested)[497] - 12 RMB - Included 36 "non-sexual" woodblock illustrations[498] - Deleted approximately 19161 words from the 1957 *zu-ben*[499] - Deletions were annotated.	- Initiated by the press's chief editor Wei Junyi 韋君宜 - Include university professors, scholars of classical Chinese literature, members of China Writer's Association - Issued purchase vouchers to qualified buyers - Illegally obtained copies of the book were sold to roadside vendors by the press's back-office staff and drivers.[500] - Reprinted in July 1989.
1987 (Jan)	*Zhang Zhupo Piping Diyi qishu Jin Ping Mei* 張竹坡批評第一奇書〈金瓶梅〉	Qilu Press	- Expurgated - The first ever publication of Zhang's commentary version in mainland China	- Reprinted in 2014

[497] Song Chundan 宋春丹, "'Jinshu' *Jing Ping Mei* de tuomin zhilu," "禁書" 《金瓶梅》的脫敏之旅 [On the un-censoring of the banned book *Jin Ping Mei*] *Dongxinanbei* 東西南北, no. 24 (2016), accessed through *Sohu*, https://www.sohu.com/a/229490575_176673

[498] Li Xin, "Buwei," n.p.

[499] Wang Rumei 王汝梅 suggested "19161" words; Yen suggested "19061" words; Yang suggested "19174" words; see Wang, *Jin Ping Mei banben shi* 金瓶梅版本史 [The history of *Jin Ping Mei*'s different versions] (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 2015): 186; Yen, "Xiaoyi"; Yang, "Chuban."

[500] Song, "'Jinshu,'" n.p.

			- Deleted 10385 words of "lurid sex" but kept descriptions of sexual customs and rare sex toys[501] - Printed with typesetting - 10000 copies - 25 RMB	
1988 (May)[502]	*The Story of Jin Ping Mei* (Jin Ping Mei Gushi)	The Writer's Publishing House (Zuojia chubashe)	- 300000 copies; all copies were later confiscated. - 166000 words[503] - Sexual descriptions were deleted - Han Yingsan abridged *JPM* into 170 thousand words.	
1988 (Aug)	*Xinke Xiuxiang Piping Jin Ping Mei* (Chongzhen version)	Peking University Press	- Unexpurgated - Photo-facsimiles - Two illustrations per episode - 2000 copies[504]	
1989 (June)	*Xinke Xiuxiang Piping Jin Ping Mei* 新刻繡像批評金瓶梅 (also known as Chongzhen version)	Shandong Qilu Press	- Unexpurgated - 200 illustrations[505] - 5000[506]/8000[507] copies - Traditional Chinese/vertical - 175 RMB[508] - Not granted to reprint one year later - The first typeset unexpurgated version	- Sold out in three months - Professors above the rank of Associate professors could purchase with a letter of reference from their home institution as well as proof of their rank.[509] - Reprinted in Hong Kong in 1992

[501] Li Xin, "Buwei," n.p; Yang suggested 10398 words, "Chuban."
[502] Song, "'Jinshu'," n.p.
[503] Song, "'Jinshu,'" n.p.
[504] Li Xin, "Buwei," n.p.
[505] Yang Muzhi, "Chuban."
[506] "Quanben Jin Ping Mei, Shandong Mingxia yinxing kongzhi faxing fanwei zhiyin wuqianen," 全本《金瓶梅》山東明夏印行　控制發行範圍只印五千本 [Unexpurgated version of Jing Ping Mei printing quota capped at 5000], *Wen Wei Po* 文滙報, December 8, 1989.
[507] Song, "Jin-shu," n.p.
[508] Song, "Jin-shu," n.p.
[509] Song, "Jin-shu," n.p.

1991 (Sep)	*Xinke Xiuxiang Piping Jin Ping Mei* (in the form Li Yu's Collected Works 李漁全集)	Zhejiang Guji Press	- Expurgated - Published as the vol. 12, 13, 14 of Li Yu's "Collected Works"	
1994 (Oct)	*Gaohetang piping Diyi qishu Jin Ping Mei* 皋鶴堂批評第一奇書	Jilin University Press	- Expurgated - 3000 copies. - The exact number of deleted words not indicated[510] -	
1995	*Jin Ping Mei Cihua Annotated* 金瓶梅詞話校注	Yuelu Press 岳麓書社	- Expurgated - 3000 copies - 2500 words deleted[511]	
1997	*Xinke Xiuxiang Piping Jin Ping Mei* (in the form Li Yu's Collected Works 笠翁文集)	Guangming Ribao Press	- Expurgated - Published as the vol. 5-7 of Li Yu's Collected Works - 1000 copies - 13871 words deleted[512]	

[510] Song, "Jin-shu," n.p.
[511] Song, "Jin-shu," n.p.
[512] Shi Xiaojun, Zhihuan Luo, *"Jin Ping Mei" Banben Zhijian,* 60.

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