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Filming ideologies

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As a young man growing up in Shandong province in the 1980s and 1990s, Chao Ren witnessed great changes in China as it transformed from a communist empire to the world's second largest economy. As a filmmaker in China for more than 12 years, five years spent as a lecturer in directing at the Beijing Film Academy, he began to research the decades of his father's generation, the decades from post WW II through to 1966, and the ideological reconstructions that led to these enormous changes.

Through the subtext of ideological struggle within mainstream cinema, Ren is seeking to explicate the nature of competing ideologies by revealing how this struggle impacted on cinema practices, techniques and content. Titled 'The Terminator of China: Between Light and Dark' (2013), interviews with scholars are intercut with sequences from eight carefully selected, highly successful mainstream films to illustrate key moments in the struggle.

Introduction

Chao Ren was born in November 1975, 11 months before the arrest of the Gang of Four (pinyin: *Sirenbang*) which marked the ending of the Cultural Revolution. Ren was born into an ordinary worker's family in a middle-scale city in the northern province of Shandong. Until his departure from China in 2009 for study abroad, he witnessed the changes in China that have led to its economy now being the second largest in the world.

On the occasion of his youngest uncle's wedding in 1998, Ren took this photo of his father and his father's four younger brothers (Figure 1). These five brothers' given names reflect a demonstrable history of ideological construction in the decades of 1940s to early 1960s in China.

Standing far left, Chao Ren's father is the eldest brother among five brothers. He was born in February 1948, the last year of the Republic of China government's reign in mainland China. Just 14 months after his birth, on 2 June 1949, the communist ~~PLA~~ seized the city of Qingdao ('*The city History of Qingdao*', n.d.) where the Ren family lived. On 1 October 1949, the People's Republic of China announced its establishment. The eldest brother's given name 'Jianmin', literally means 'to establish the Republic'. Notably, the 'Republic' here refers to 'the Republic of China' rather than the 'People's Republic of China', because the word 'jianmin' comes from a sentence of the National Anthem of the Republic of China: 'yi jian min guo yi jin da tong' ('*National anthem*', n.d.).

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Figure 1. 1998 Five Brothers 'Photo: Chao Ren'.

To his right, the second brother was born in 1951, which is the third year after the communist party took over the country and established the People's Republic of China. To those ordinary working class people like the Ren family, it is a government-people honeymoon period with a lot of satisfaction, expectation and hard work. His given name 'Jianhua' means 'to rebuild China'.

Next one is the third brother who was born in 1953, when the Chinese army and the North Korean army declared a ceasefire and signed the Korean Armistice Agreement with the UN army and the Army of Republic of Korea (Stokesbury 1990, 242–245). However, the ending of the Korean War was propagated into a marvelous victory. Therefore, the third brother's name 'Jianjun' means 'to strengthen the army'.

The fourth brother was born in 1956, when the Socialist Transformation Movement was completed. During this movement, the Communist government confiscated all industry, business and even all land from their owners and then announced that the whole country would become a socialist country (Lewis and Lieberthal 2011). To celebrate this wonderful achievement, the fourth brother was given the name 'Jianxin', meaning 'to transform to a new society system'.

At the far right, the youngest brother was born in 1958, when there were uncountable backyard steel furnaces all around China as the Great Steelmaking Movement was initiated in this year. The Great Steelmaking Movement was an important part of the Great Leap Forward. To accelerate industrialization, the Great Steelmaking Movement aimed to produce 10,700,000 tons of steel during 1958. Steel production in China in 1957 was half that (Gu, n.d.). Unsurprisingly, the youngest brother's given name 'Jiangang' means 'to produce steel'.

The important aspect of this background is to show that Chao Ren's grandparents, the father and mother of those five brothers, were not communist propaganda officers. Being ordinary workers, like millions of other people, Chao Ren's grandparents spent all their life in the city of Qingdao from the 1920s to their

death in the 1980s and 2010s. The story of how they chose their five sons' names is a pointed illustration of how ordinary Chinese people readily accepted the ideological reconstructions during the period 1945 to 1966.

The documentary's argument is that there were several important steps in the foundation of Maoist China, and these include the ideological struggles from the Anti-Rightist Movement to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The Great Cultural Revolution is the climax of a series of political movements, and the documentary seeks to reveal these ideological struggles as they manifested in mainland mainstream cinema, producing significant influence on a mainstream audience.

Through the interpretive reality of film, through its plots and characters, filmmakers directly affect the shared cultural understandings of the audience, and attempt to shape that understanding. This agency within a cinematic screening is what defines some of the parameters of ideological construction. Since the early days of cinema, the ability to affect perceptions of ideologies within audiences has made cinema a most powerful tool for constructing cultural hegemony. Correspondingly, a most effective approach to analyzing ideological construction and ideological struggle of an era could be found by undertaking a critical analysis, provided by experts in the field, of excerpts from significant cinema of the time.

Due to its widespread communication ability to reach the widest audience and to influence them deeply, the film industry during this period was controlled in every single aspect and stage by the authorities in China. From 1945 to 1949, the administrating and censoring agency was the Central Propaganda Department of Kuomintang (Nationalist Party of China). Along with a few private studios, state-owned production units were established or rebuilt after World War II and included the Central Film Studio First and the Second Factory in Shanghai, the Third Factory in Beiping (Beijing's name during 1928 to 1949), the Changchun Film Studio, the China Film Studio in Nanjing and Shanghai, the Shanghai Experimental Film Factory in Shanghai, the China Education Film Studio and the China Agricultural Education Film Studio in Nanjing. An agency named the Central Film Service monopolized distribution and screenings all around China (Cheng, Li, and Xing 1963, vol. 2, 146–151). During 1949 to 1966, similar to Kuomintang's system, ~~the~~ ~~CPC~~'s film industry was composed of three parts: the highest leading agency is the Film Administration Bureau under the CPC Propaganda Department from February 1949 and then Ministry of Culture of PRC from December 1949. The production units included the Dongbei Film Studio (later the Changchun Film Studio), the Beijing Film Studio and the Shanghai Film Studio, which annexed all private film studios in Shanghai. And an agency named the China Film Management Company monopolized distributing and screening all around China (Shen 2005, 134–154).

By those agencies, the government monopolized investment, equipment, distribution, and even cinema venues and movie theater chains all over China. The most important aspect of this control however was in the area of censorship. In this system, every film that could be produced and released had a definite ideological construction appeal. Films were tolerated by these agencies, provided they were not dangerously questioning of ideology propagated by the Party.

In Western academia, the mainstream viewpoint on Chinese film history has been that there was no ideological struggle in Chinese films during this period because nobody mentioned this struggle. For example, in his work, Jubin Hu however has

highlighted that, just as the struggle between Communist Party and Kuomintang is acknowledged to be at its peak during 1945 to 1949, there too was a difference between the Communist Party's revolutionary populist film and Kuomintang's anti-revolutionary nationalist film (Hu 2003). Clark, too, in his research on Chinese cinema after 1949, concludes that, in the films before the Cultural Revolution in 1966, the most important differences could be dismissed as mere creative divergence, between different orientations of the political and the artistic (Clark 1988). It is clear that Hu's and Clark's viewpoint agrees with the official Communist Chinese film history, as evidenced in the works of Cheng, Li, and Xing (1963), Zhong and Shu (1995), Lu and Shu (1998), and Yin and Ling (2002).

The authorized argument was that there was a struggle only between two intentions in the field of film: to become an educational tool controlled by ideological authorities, or to be the personal creative vehicle of the artists themselves. This kind of officially sanctioned viewpoint reflects why there has not previously been an approach to understand the period 1945 to 1966 as a period of 'ideological struggle' within the cinema.

Filmmakers at the time took great societal responsibility. The Chinese commoner intellectuals formed the main body of the classic China bureaucracy ruling group for almost 1,300 years from the eighth century (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 84–85), and they despised the creative and scholarly activities in the 'tower of ivory', as a place where filmmakers could indulge themselves in an escape from reality. On the contrary, these intellectuals had a powerful will and motive for not only interpreting but also shaping the audience's reality. The truth is that neither under the government of the Kuomintang nor the Communist Party did Chinese intellectuals abandon their sense of societal responsibility to become 'hermit filmmakers'.

The Terminator of China (2013) seeks to challenge the mainstream view that there was no ideological struggle in Chinese cinema in this period arguing that that view is an ideological construction in and of itself. The documentary uncovers what scholars of Chinese film and culture have overlooked in the process of 'baking the cultural bricks' of China today. Within the overall structure of representative films from each significant period, and intercut with expert Chinese cinema scholars, the audience reception of these films at the time of their initial screenings is critical to the documentary's argument. The storyline, characters and settings will all be referenced in a style appropriate to the time period.

The eight films each have distinctive styles, lighting and framing and the book-ending sequences of each of the interviews will reflect, in an imagined montage, the core of each of the eight periods. For the viewing comfort of an English speaking audience, there will be an English voiceover for the interviews conducted in Chinese, with English subtitles for the feature film sequences.

Eight units of the documentary

The documentary begins with a brief introduction of the history of film as a vehicle of ideological construction from the earliest development of the film industry in China from 1905 in which year the first Chinese short film was produced, to 1946, the starting point of the research project.

The film *Spy Number One* (1946) was directed by Tu Guangqi and produced by the Central Film Studio Third Factory, a Kuomintang government's studio, in

Beiping, the former name for Beijing. The film is typical of the Hollywood-style film dominant at the time with an extremely complicated story combined with spying, love, loyalty, betrayal and family ethics.

As the film is very much in the style of the American film *Casablanca* (1942) the opening sequence for this unit of the documentary will be images of smoke-filled scenes with glimpses of shadows disappearing into the mist. AQ5

During World War II, Chinese quisling Liu Mocun works for the Japanese Occupation Authorities in Beijing as a high-ranking official. By accident, Liu Mocun and his subordinate Jia Xinmin find information that a very important spy – secret coded Number One – has arrived in Beijing. The spy is organizing attacks, including assassinations of Chinese quislings. Jia then attempts to arrest some disclosed spies but fails because someone has already warned them. Liu's daughter Xiaoyan loves her cousin, Liu's nephew, Ying Weimin, who is the ex-fiancé of Liu's new young attractive wife, Qin Wanxia. Ying, it is revealed, is a spy from Chongqing, coded 'Number Ninety-nine'. Qin arrives and gives Ying a passport to help his escape with Xiaoyan, and we discover that Qin herself is the legendary 'Number One'. AQ6

As Dr. Zhang Yiwei pointed out, the film was a great commercial success, and initiated a wave of imitation productions (Zhang 2011). By presenting the efforts and sacrifices of the Republican government during the war against Japanese as a Hollywood-style genre film, Tu significantly strengthened the influence of this film on its audience. Comparing with its peer films, such as *Song of Police Spirit* (*Jinghun Ge*) (Tang 1945) propagating the value of the police system, *Family of Loyalty* (*Zhongyi Zhi Jia*) (Wu 1946) propagating the sacrifice of the army family, *Night to Dawn* (*Heiye Dao Tianming*) (Tu 1947) propagating post-war rural constructing and *Chasing Dream* (*Xun Meng Ji*) (Tang 1949) propagating anti-war, *Spy Number One* 'originates from the implicit or explicit passion of the dominant ideology's desire of AQ7 AQ8 AQ9 AQ10

Figure 2. *Spy Number One* still 'Screenshot: Chao Ren'.

propagating' (Ding 2005, 93) and 'becomes a text to support the justifiability of Kuomintang political system' (~~Zhang 2011~~). Consequently, the film received harsh criticism, sometimes even abuse, from communist film critics and film historians (Cheng, Li, and Xing 1963, vol. 2, 175–176). Even now, Prof. Chen Shan still considers *Spy Number One* as 'nothing but a commercial film' (Interview with Prof. Chen Shan 2013).

Then, produced in 1948, four of the characters in the film *Spring in a Small Town* (Fei 1948), along with a dispensable aged servant, are caught up in complicated love scenes mostly filmed in the Dai family's house, with only few scenes on the city wall looking out to a beautiful view. Generally, it is a story without a societal background. It is an individualistic work in the 'tower of ivory' style – a complete escape from the reality.

Zhang Zhichen, a friend of the husband Dai Liyan but also former boyfriend of the wife Zhou Yuwen, comes to the once prosperous but now ruined and loveless Dai family in a small town in southern China immediately after World War II. His visit ignites the wife's conflicting feelings between love for him and loyalty to her semi-paralyzed husband. This makes relations more complex as the sister of husband Dai Xiu loves Zhang as well. Soon after, the husband cannot endure these ambiguous relationships any more so he takes poison in a suicide attempt.

His action provokes a sense of morality in the wife and her new lover. In the last scene, the couple stand on the city wall, hand in hand, watching Zhang as he leaves the small town.

Figure 3. *Spring in a Small Town* still 'Screenshot: Chao Ren'.

Spring in a Small Town is almost unique in its escapist nature. It is recognized as a poetic film, a pioneer in modern cinema. As Li Shaobai suggested, the importance of *Spring in a Small Town* in the history of Chinese cinema is equivalent to *citizen Kane* in the history of United States cinema (Li 1996). This film was voted the best Chinese-language film of all time by the Hong Kong Film Critics Society in 2002.

Spring in a Small Town is almost too strange. Until the year 1948, China is in the middle of the Civil War. After three years of war, the economy is on the brink of collapse, and people do not know what the future holds (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 331–341). In such a difficult year, Fei Mu produces this strange film. On the surface, this is a love story performed in melancholy ancient Chinese ink painting scenes, but this film is not so simple or superficial, more of a fable than a love story. As Prof. Zhong Dafeng says in the interview: 'The intellectual is very desperate during this period. Fei Mu just expresses the emotion' (Interview with Prof. Zhong Dafeng 2013). The film carefully constructs Chinese traditional family ethics rather than Western individual liberty.

Since the early 1920s, when liberal intellectuals entered the film industry, their ideological construction achieved great success (Cheng, Li, and Xing 1963, vol. 1, 71–121) because their ideological implementation is the most in accordance with ordinary audience expectations. The success of Fei Mu and his collaborators made them an enemy and threat to the Kuomintang and the Communist Party. Fundamentally, as Prof. Yang Yuanying pointed out, 'Kuomintang and Communist Party both are revolutionary political parties. They are both determined to overthrow Chinese traditional culture' (Interview with Prof. Yang Yuanying 2013). They are distinguished only by degree. Liberal intellectuals who inherited the traditional culture of three thousand years are the real cultural conservatives of China.

Being an important film of this kind, *Secret History at Qing Court* (Zhu 1948) was produced by the liberalist studio in British Hong Kong in 1948. It is a literal interpretation of Chinese history from the First Sino-Japanese War during 1894 and 1895, through the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898, until the Boxer Rebellion from 1899 to 1901. The film begins with a scene of Emperor Guangxu expressing his dislike for the wife appointed by his nominal mother Empress Dowager Cixi. Consort Zhen, his favorite concubine, is the only one he can share his secret desire to take control of the Empire. Cixi plots a coup to kidnap Guangxu and puts him under house arrest. When the Boxer Rebellion breaks out, rioters kill many foreigners and Cixi takes this as an opportunity, using the mob to drive foreigners out of the Qing Empire. AQ14

This film was severely criticized by Communist Party historians (Cheng, Li, and Xing 1963, vol. 2, 315) as its most significant characteristic is loyalty to the wise monarch, or 'good leader of the state'. Liberal intellectuals consider the wise monarch as the guarantee for stability in society, and had to be a model of moral and ethical stature. By comparing Guangxu and Cixi, as examples of a good monarch and a bad one, this film represented a strong yearning for the domination of a wise emperor. The bad emperor Cixi becomes the intrinsic reason to destroy order. The major criticism from the Communist Party was that this film challenged radical revolution so openly.

The connecting sequence for this unit will be a slow walk through a look-alike of the Summer Palace (the Fo Guang Shen Buddhist Temple in Auckland) linked with the sound of heavy footsteps in the hollow hallways.

Figure 4. *Secret History at Qing Court* still 'Screenshot: Chao Ren'.

Crows and Sparrows (Xu and Zheng 1950), produced by the Communist Party-controlled studio during the Civil War, is a pro-communist political and social metaphor of China society. In this story, set in Shanghai in 1948, there are five families living in an ordinary house. On the second floor, lives the house owner Hou Yibo, nicknamed Monkey, who is a high-ranking official of Kuomintang Ministry of Defence. His concubine Yu Xiaoying lives with him. In the mezzanine live a middle-school teacher Hua Jiezhi and his beautiful wife. On the first floor live a street hawker Xiao Boss and his wife. In the storeroom lives an aged newspaper editor Kong Youwen, nicknamed Confucius, who was the owner of this house before Monkey took the house from him by reason of his son being an officer in the Communist Party's Army. Monkey is getting ready to flee and plans to sell the house for gold. In order to sell it for a higher price, he tries every means to get rid of the tenants. It appears that he is almost in reach, when the tenants unite to fight him. At the time he is calling police to arrest the tenants, he is informed that the Kuomintang regime has collapsed, and he flees immediately. In the end, the victorious tenants sit together to eat their New Year's dinner and look forward to the new society.

AQ15

Dr. von Kowallis argues that the house in *Crows and Sparrows* is a metaphor for China itself (Interview with Dr. Jon Eugene von Kowallis 2012). Although this point of view does not receive agreement from several Chinese scholars, such as Prof. Chen Shan (Interview with Prof. Chen Shan 2013), Prof. Yin Hong (Interview with Prof. Yin Hong 2013) and Prof. Li Daoxin (Interview with Li Daoxin 2013), it does hint at a reality. If not a metaphor for China, the house is at least a metaphor for urban society. In that sense, at that time in Shanghai, the filmmakers and audiences' 'field

Figure 5. *Crows and Sparrows* still 'Screenshot: Chao Ren'.

of vision' of China perhaps, is just as big as Shanghai itself, which is the belief of Prof. Chen Xiaoyun (Interview with Prof. Chen Xiaoyun 2013).

To support this argument, there is a social counterpart of each character. Monkey corresponds to the officials of Kuomintang, who are corrupted. Tenants can be seen as the small business owners and intellectuals, struggling but sometimes cowardly and selfish. Kong Youwen, with his nickname Confucius, corresponds to traditional culture, and is connected with virtue, justice and generosity. His son is like the Communist Party, fighting for the people's happiness, to be victorious very soon.

This film wistfully described the Communist Party of China as the successor of traditional culture and therefore the new hope for a new China. In the last scene, middle-school teacher Hua Jiezhi whose name literally means 'to purify China', is emotional as he says: 'New Year is coming, and the new society is coming too. We should all try to learn how to be a new person in the new society.' Indeed, a new society is coming soon, although it is not what they are imagining.

For this sequence, a still image of a house in Shanghai in the 1940s will be treated with the effect made famous in *The Kid Stays in the Picture* (Burstein and Morgen 2002), an effect of isolating details within the still image and bringing them to the fore as the interviewee's voice discusses the metaphor of the house as a reference to the layers of Chinese society at the time.

After 1949, the CPC took over the entire film industry. They adopted more strict control than the former Kuomintang government. For example, the New China's censorship by the Communist Party after 1949 was much more severe than the

Republic's. Under this censorship, executed by the Film Guiding Committee of the Ministry of Culture of Central Government, from 1950 to 1952, no new scenario passed the censors (Yin and Ling 2002, 5–6).

Written and directed by Sun Yu (1950), *Life of Wu Xun* was shot from 1947 to 1950, and premiered in 1951, screening non-stop for months in all the major theaters in Shanghai. In May 1951, it was forbidden by Mao Zedong ever to be screened in China again, accusing the movie of trying 'to reform the minds of intellectuals' (Mao 1951). Mao Zedong championed the class struggle ideology and this film was viewed as not having a struggle ideology. The movie industry was the most severely prosecuted sector of society during the Cultural Revolution.

In 2012, *Life of Wu Xun* was released on DVD and clearly marked 'For Research Purposes Only'. The film tells the story of Wu Xun who lost his father at the age of seven and became a beggar with his mother, a poor peasant living in Shandong province in the late Qing dynasty. He cannot afford schooling to learn to read and write. When his mother dies, Wu Xun goes to the gentry seeking money for the funeral. Instead he is badly beaten. Wu Xun continues to live in poverty and is bullied by officers and rich people because he is uneducated. The 'salary incident', in which an evil landlord cheats Wu Xun out of his salary of three years and beats him almost to death, becomes the narrative turning point for Wu Xun's goal to build charity schools for poor children. During his 58 years, Wu Xun builds three charity schools; and at the end of the film, he is granted the highest award that a common person can receive from Empress Dowager Cixi. He becomes a moral model and cultural leader in his community.

In *Life of Wu Xun*, the intellectual proposes a dangerous ideology by upholding Wu Xun as a moral model as well as a cultural saint in the Qing dynasty. The core of this is the construction that education is the only hope for everyone, especially for the poor people. From one dynasty to another, it is a powerful opinion in China for more than two and half millennia. It is around this opinion that is formed a very important part of the ideology of traditional China, even in the lowest level of society. AQ16

Boy Wu Xun: Mum, why are they going to school? It must be great to go to school, is it?

Mother: Yes, it's great. You can learn many kinds of knowledge at school, so nobody can bully you anymore. You won't live a happy life unless you get to go to school.

For this sequence, the transitional montage will consist of the pages of books written in Chinese as they are slowly turned by a child's hand and this intercut with that small hand writing Chinese letters in ink.

Here, class conflict takes the form of the struggle for the right to an education. Wu Xun never struggles against the social system. Suspicion and criticism of revolution is presented almost everywhere in the film. When Wu Xun meets an old friend Zhou Da, an officer in the peasant army, he asks Zhou: 'All that you do to work against them is to kill people? Is that an acceptable way?' By challenging violent revolution, the film suggests that the intellectual should be the leader of the new China instead of the violent Communist Party.

Figure 6. *Life of Wuxun* still 'Screenshot: Chao Ren'.

Mao Zedong declared this film to be 'propaganda of feudal culture and slander of peasant revolution' (Mao 1951). Mao's severe criticism made it clear that the Communist Party was prepared to initiate discipline against intellectuals. Six years later, in 1957, the Anti-Rightist Movement is launched. According to Prof. Fairbank, 'Mao's Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 was only a continuation of what began in 1957' (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 366).

Maoists attempted to construct ideology and the films belonging to this period from 1949 to 1966 are also called 'Red Films of New China' (Yin and Ling 2002, 6–10). Among them, the epic film *Song Jingshi* (Zheng and Sun 1955) is a significant example. This film tells the story of a peasant who lives in Shandong province, Song Jingshi, an uprising leader in the late Qing. The Qing government has increased taxes on poor peasants as military expenditure has increased. A peasant, Song Jingshi, leads a villagers' uprising. The Qing General Shengbao comes to suppress the uprising, and in order to save soldiers' lives, Song pretends to surrender to Shengbao. After Shengbao's death, Song's troops revolt again, and in a decisive battle with the Qing army, Song wins a complete victory. Song then kills a famous Qing General, Prince Sengge Rinchen, in revenge for the deaths of Song's mother and wife. AQ17

Song Jingshi was a real peasant uprising leader who lived in the same area and same period of Wu Xun. The purpose of the production of this film was to strike back at the ideology proposed by the film *Life of Wuxun*. The ideological construction of the film *Song Jingshi* was to celebrate the peasant uprising with dramatic action sequences of war drums, fierce battles on horseback and thousands of foot soldiers falling to their deaths on the uneven battlefield of swords versus guns.

Figure 7. *Song jingshi* still 'Screenshot: Chao Ren'.

The transitional montage to introduce this sequence will include a collage of the sounds of battle, the drums, the clash of swords, the gunfire, over images of weapons and artefacts archived in the Queensland Art Gallery.

Dead Trees Revival (Zheng 1961) pioneers a series of Maoist films, whose highest achievements are the Revolutionary Model Operas (pinyin: *Geming Yangban Xi*). The film begins with a song from a Mao Zedong poem. Under Kuomintang's reign, Kumeizi (this name literally means 'miserable girl') is an orphan girl who lives with her fiancé, Dongge, and his parents. They become refugees to escape from a deadly disease, schistosomiasis. On the road, Dongge's father is infected and dies, and Kumeizi is separated from Dongge and his mother. Kumeizi settles in a village named Shuangta and marries. After the liberation in 1949, life gets better, but schistosomiasis is still serious. Kumeizi's husband dies from the infection and Kumeizi becomes infected as well. One day she meets Dongge again and the broken family is reunited. Unfortunately, Kumeizi's illness has reached an advanced stage. Just as they are desperately looking for treatment, Chairman Mao personally inspects the schistosomiasis epidemic area. In a 'deus ex machina' device, doctors suddenly find a cure by combining traditional Chinese medicine and modern medicine, and Kumeizi is well again, giving birth to two fat twins in a very happy ending.

Dead Trees Revival is a hymn to deify Chairman Mao Zedong as the savior of China, especially of Chinese traditional culture. The most important scene is the scene of 'Chairman Mao is here'. Audiences do not witness Chairman Mao himself, but a symbol to represent him – a small building ablaze with lights in the middle of a

dark night. In this scene, the director uses 10 shots to construct an extraordinary jump cut montage, to emphasize Kumiezi's shocking and exciting recovery. AQ18

By using such a Hollywood device, borrowed from *The Great Waltz* (Duvivier 1938), *Dead Trees Revival* is shaping a 'good leader of the state' who can even AQ19
change the laws of nature merely by his presence. This is merely one more miracle among countless miracles by Emperors, Empresses, Kings and Queens from the beginning of China's history. The deification of monarchs when they are still alive is inherently an important part of Chinese tradition.

For this sequence, the documentary takes on a slightly sardonic twist in style and the montage will be drawn from a Cultural Revolution themed restaurant in Auckland called Red Guards where the décor is posters, flags and slogans from the era and the waiters are all dressed in Red Guard uniforms.

From the late 1950s to the middle of 1960s, there emerges an ideological struggle inside the Communist Party between Liu Shaoqi and the Deng Xiaoping Group and the Maoist Group. The Liu Deng Group is comprised of pro-Western liberal intellectuals inside the Communist Party, called the 'Revisionist Group' by the Maoists. The films during this period were cast as Revisionist Films and were intolerable to the Maoist Group. In June 1961, the CPC Propaganda Department and Ministry of Culture convened the All-nation Literature and Art Workers Conference and the All-nation Feature Film Production Conference at Xinqiao Hotel in Beijing, and was referred to thereafter as The Xinqiao Conference. This conference was controlled by the Liu Deng Group and was used as an occasion to propagate democracy and liberty instead of Communist propaganda. As a harvest of this Xinqiao Conference, from 1963 to 1964, a climax of Revisionist Film emerged

Figure 8. *Dead Trees Revival* still 1 'Screenshot: Chao Ren'.

Figure 9. *Dead Trees Revival* still 2 'Screenshot: Chao Ren'.

Figure 10. *Dead Trees Revival* still 3 'Screenshot: Chao Ren'.

Figure 11. *Dead Trees Revival* still 4 'Screenshot: Chao Ren'.

Figure 12. *February* still 'Screenshot: Chao Ren'.

(Shen 2005, 176–179). Adapted from a work by the famous leftist novelist Roushi, *February* (Xie 1964) is one of the most influential and also one of the most criticized.

February is set in 1926. Invited by his friend Tao Mukan, the young intellectual Xiao Jianqiu, discontented and disappointed by the revolution, comes to Furong Town to teach in the elementary school. Xiao Jianqiu sympathizes with a soldier's widow, Wensao, and helps her daughter to go to school. Xiao falls in love with Tao Lan, Tao Mukan's younger sister. This causes jealousy in an evil rich man who makes rumors of adultery between Xiao and Wensao. Xiao decides to marry Wensao, sacrificing the love between him and Tao Lan. But then Wensao commits suicide because of the disgrace and humiliation. Xiao leaves Furong Town, full of anger as Tao Lan chases him away. AQ20

As we transition to the interviews discussing this film, the audience experiences a montage of the key emotion of this era, of hands held to mouths as secrets are shared, hands held to ears as words are whispered.

Uncovering the reasons this film attracted such severe criticism draws our attention to some serious ideological problems. In a lyrical way, this film interprets the reality of China in the 1960s as a sentimental love story. The director Xie Tieli deviates from the Maoist proletarian art creation principle of celebrating workers, peasants and soldiers. He starts walking back, dangerously, to the old path of the enemy bourgeois. This film attacked by innuendo the belief that China is a bigger version of Furong Town and that it was fueled by rumor.

> The way the film criticizes quite strongly the whole culture of tattletales, 'Da Xiao Baogao', making reports on other people and slandering behind their backs. This whole culture of surveillance, in a way, use of rumoring and casual definition, it's one of the things which were criticized by the film. And I think for that reason, Kang Sheng, who was the head of the secret police in that time of Communist China, felt guilty. There is an old saying in Chinese 'Zuozei Xinxu', if you were a thief, then sometimes you get a jury when that might be looked into one way or another. I think that film make Kang Sheng felt quite nervous. (Interview with Dr. Jon Eugene von Kowallis 2012)

The film *February* (Xie 1964) is an expression of the discontent and disappointment emerging in China amongst the liberal intellectuals inside the CPC who were feeling confused and dissatisfied and hoping for a return to a more liberal environment.

In a recent article in the People's Liberation Army Daily *Where Does the Confidence of the Chinese Dream Come From?* (pinyin: *Jiefangjun Bao*), Sun Linping argued that 'the doctrine we believe in actually is the verity of the cosmos' (Sun 2013). This is part of the discourse of propaganda surrounding the new Communist Party of China's General Secretary Xi Jinping's new slogan, 'Chinese Dream'. The words also form part of a quotation from *Death! A Story of a Communist Martyr*, written in May 1935 in Kuomintang's prison by CPC's early leader Fang Zhimin before his death (Liu 2012). The extremely ideological expression 'the Verity of the Cosmos' has raised arguments and a carnival of ideological irony between rightists and leftists on the Chinese Internet communities, especially on Weibo, a Chinese equivalent of Twitter (Wu 2013).

The 1919 May Fourth Movement ignited a revolution of culture to completely destroy an empire, while the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution created another one. This officially so-called 'Mao Zedong Thought' is the cultural reunion of China after 1919, which continued to the present. Waiting for half a century, the China

Empire saw its triumphant return in an innovative imperial ideology system, which reunited the cultural China, continued into the present, and continues to construct the current struggles in contemporary Chinese thinking.

The documentary *The Terminator of China: Between Light and Dark* traces these ideological struggles in China specifically from 1945 to 1966 by selecting and presenting key films from the cinema of the period. By dissecting the narrative and characterizations of these mainstream films, the documentary builds an argument for the history of ideological construction within the film industry. The audience reception of each of the films is condensed into touchstone imaginings of violent struggle, anti-intellectualism, betrayed intimacy and frightened secrecy linking the historical stages of the impact of the ideological struggles in China between 1945 and 1966 as they are traced and woven within the documentary argument put forward by expert testimony.

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