THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Cultural Entrepreneurship and Border-Crossing Practices: The Multi-Faceted Career of Ouyang Yuqian

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The University of Edinburgh

2024

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Acknowledgements

In writing this thesis, I have been fortunate to receive invaluable support and guidance from many people, and my sincere appreciation extends to all of them. Foremost among them is my supervisor, Dr. Xuelei Huang. I am deeply grateful of the generous mentorship provided by Dr. Huang throughout these challenging years. Her expertise not only steered me with valuable suggestions during difficult phases of my research but also her patience supported me through the demanding stages of revision. Beyond the formal scope of instruction, Dr. Huang's diligent and highly rigorous approach to her personal research, coupled with her ability to balance work and life commitments, has become a paradigm for me in understanding what it means to be a good researcher. Witnessing her dedication in composing her second academic monograph in these years has added another indelible learning experience for me outside the classroom setting.

I extend my gratitude to my assistant supervisor, Dr. Christopher Rosenmeier, for his constructive comments on my work in progress. His kindness and gentleness consistently provided reassurance during my moments of self-doubt and frustration. Additionally, I am thankful for Mr. Graeme Lee, my editor and friend, whose guidance and patience in refining my imperfect writing, along with sharing insights into his life, work, and travels, has been a continual source of encouragement and relaxation throughout this writing process. I am deeply grateful to my external examiner, Dr. Panpan Yang from the SOAS, and my internal examiner, Prof. Joachim Gentz, for their invaluable contributions to my thesis. Their meticulous reading and insightful feedback have significantly enhanced the quality of my work, offering constructive suggestions for refining the arguments. The intellectually stimulating exchange of ideas during the viva was truly enriching, and I am appreciative of their guidance on potential avenues for further research.

I would like to express my thanks to Prof. Igor Iwo Chabrowski of the University of Warsaw. I met him in 2018 when he served as my teacher of Art History at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He gave me the initial encouragement and help when I was hesitant about pursuing my PhD studies. During my first year in Edinburgh, grappling with the challenges of adapting to a new life, he took the time to write me emails,

sharing his experience when he was obtaining his degrees. He once told me, “Doctoral studies are about research, but also about all else…that’s the best time of your life”. His words have proven to be so right! Special thanks are owed to Dr. Timmy Chin Ting Chen, who played a pivotal role in igniting my passion for Chinese film history. Over the years, Dr. Chen has provided invaluable support, from assisting in the publication of my articles to aiding in my job search. Gratitude for such mentors who have guided me along my journey is difficult to express adequately. Yet, I am convinced that the most fitting tribute to their kindness is to strive to emulate their diligence and warmth as a researcher in the future.

I wish to convey my heartfelt gratitude to my friends, with a special acknowledgment to Rui Qian at the University of Lancaster. The friendship between us has endured since our master’s studies in Hong Kong. Rui, your consistent presence, and wise counsel have provided me with solace throughout the years. Equally, I express my gratitude for the camaraderie shared with my roommates and my classmates in the LLC study room, including Xinyu Zhu, Cynthia Shen, and so on. In those moments, we immersed ourselves in writing, chatting, exercising, cooking, sharing snacks, supporting each other’s progress, and creating unforgettable memories together. I would also like to thank my friends Ada Gao, Jessie Yang, Stephine Heck, and Sarah Gibson, whom I met during my part-time job in Edinburgh. It was a different experience from campus life, but one that gave me unexpected friendships and warmth.

My deepest appreciation is reserved for my father, Jiesan Liu, and my mother, Yaqi Xiao. Their unconditional support and wholehearted love allowed me to pursue my heart’s desires in multiple places miles away from home. The notion of fully repaying them feels like an arduous undertaking, considering their infinite concern for me. My earnest wish is to grow up from being a daughter who often causes them worry to one who can give them enduring care and companionship in the days ahead!

Abstract

This thesis explores the multifaceted life of Ouyang Yuqian, one of the esteemed founding fathers of modern Chinese drama. Focusing on the concept of "cultural entrepreneurship", my study unveils Ouyang's diverse professional endeavours that traversed the terrain of mass-mediated cultural enterprises during the Republican era and beyond. In contrast to the prevailing narrative that highlights his canonical status in the history of modern Chinese drama, I characterize his career as a border-crossing journey, as he skilfully directed his fame, talents, and social assets into various cultural ventures in his roles as an opera actor, fiction writer, editor, filmmaker, government employee, and a choreographer in Socialist China. Based on a wide range of newly discovered primary materials, this thesis throws light on the lesser-known facets of his image and argues that there was a nuanced fusion of "new" and "old", "serious" and "popular," "left" and "right" throughout his vast repertoire of works, defying facile classification. In doing so, this thesis also illuminates the complexity of popular cultural production in modern China, which involved entangled forces of intellectual discourses, political shifts, commercial interests, and personal aspirations.

Lay Summary

Ouyang Yuqian was one of three esteemed dramatists in modern China along with Tian Han and Hong Shen. My thesis explores the multifaceted life of Ouyang Yuqian as he traversed his way through the turbulent times of twentieth century China as a cultural entrepreneur. I chart his journey from traditional opera actor at the end of Qing Dynasty, through to his role as a socialist cultural worker in the People's Republic of China from 1949 until his death in 1962. I trace Ouyang's trajectory, characterizing him as a cultural or even political chameleon whose career unfolds as a border-crossing odyssey. Navigating the late Qing Dynasty, Republic of China, and People's Republic of China, he adeptly utilized his fame, talents, and social asserts to not only secure success but, at the very least, ensure his survival. Based on a wide range of newly discovered primary materials my thesis shows how Ouyang was able to stay at the forefront of cultural developments through his nuanced fusion of "new" and "old", "serious" and "popular," "left" and "right". In doing so, this thesis also demonstrates how Ouyang's strategic approach reflected the dynamic interplay of intellectual discourses, political shifts, commercial interests, and personal aspirations. His case serves as a revealing lens through which to understand the intricate forces significantly shaping popular cultural production during a transformative period in China's history.

Chapter One

Introduction

When reading literature on modern Chinese drama, one cannot help but notice a fascinating phenomenon: playwrights in this era were not confined to a single role but rather embraced multifaceted personas. They effortlessly donned various hats, acting as performers, filmmakers, writers, translators, publishers, editors, musicians, journalists, and educators simultaneously. In essence, these creative minds thrived on diverse occupations, sustaining their livelihood through a rich tapestry of cultural endeavours. Consider the esteemed dramatists of the Republican era, particularly Tian Han 田汉 (1898-1968), Hong Shen 洪深 (1894-1955), and Ouyang Yuqian 欧阳予倩 (1889-1962)—the central focus of this research. Their noteworthy accomplishments transcended the boundaries of playwriting, demonstrating their profound influence across a spectrum of cultural domains. They were equally revered for their prowess in teaching in schools, column-writing, editing, filmmaking, and even serving in governmental roles. Their careers displayed remarkable flexibility and mobility, far beyond the narrow confines of drama. This serves as a compelling reminder of their blurred identities, their ability to produce diverse cultural products, and their penchant for engaging in border-crossing activities. Nonetheless, many of their invaluable endeavours have been marginalized under the banner of "progress" within modern Chinese cultural history, often by post-1949 Communist scholars. Within this context, the term "May Fourth intellectuals" monopolizes academic discussions about them. Initially used to denote political demonstrations that swept across the nation in May 1919 and persisted, according to some accounts, until 1925, "May Fourth" developed into an umbrella term that incorporates various activities often with divergent ideas, such as the new thought tide, the literary revolution, the boycott against Japan, the worker's strikes, and so on.[1] Young and aspiring people like Ouyang Yuqian garnered

[1] Tse-tsung Chow, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 5.

significant recognition due to their constructive contributions to the new intellectual activities and their reform initiatives on a national scale during this movement. This positioned them as influential elites who disseminated enlightening ideals to the wider population—a narrative that has been widely accepted. However, this very perspective has led to their perceived image as one-dimensional and stereotypical figures, while the intricacies of their individuality and their aspirations for both fame and material success have often been overlooked. Furthermore, there exists a notable gap in our understanding of the intricate networks and multifaceted activities undertaken by these versatile individuals.

As libraries and archives inside China have gradually opened, accompanied with innovative research endeavours conducted both within and outside China in recent years, it has been shown that the renown and legacy of these figures were shaped not solely by their political activism and intellectual efforts, but also by profound shifts within the public sphere of the time. These changes encompassed the proliferation of newspapers and other print media, the evolution of urban leisure practices, trends of commercialization, and more during the late Qing and Republican periods. Compared to his contemporaries Tian Han and Hong Shen, Ouyang has garnered comparatively less attention, with scholarly focus on him predominantly centred on the domain of drama.[2] Leveraging new archival evidence sourced from digitized newspapers and magazines of the Republican era, this study embarks on a mission to bridge existing research gaps and analyses Ouyang Yuqian's multifaceted roles within professional, commercial, and socio-political domains. Through this exploration, this thesis aims to present Ouyang Yuqian in a more historically nuanced light, revealing the complexity of his character, public image, artistic inclinations, and legacy. It also seeks to illuminate the evolution of his cultural entrepreneurship, tracing his journey of border-crossing across a diverse spectrum of cultural landscapes. Furthermore, through an exploration of the circumstances that facilitated Ouyang Yuqian's growth and influence, this research will cast light upon his remarkable skill in navigating social networks,

[2] In terms of scholarly studies of Tian Han and Hong Shen, see Liang Luo, *The Avant-Garde and the Popular in Modern China: Tian Han and the Intersection of Performance and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014); and "Special Issue on Hong Shen and the Modern Mediasphere in Republican-Era China" in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 27, no.2 (2015). It includes six insightful essays to examine Hong Shen's creative life from 1919 to the 1940s, which is contributed by Xuelei Huang, Man He, Siyuan Liu, Megan Ammirati, Liang Luo, and Weihong Bao.

engaging with political dynamics, attracting patrons, and, on occasion, acquiescing to political pressures to mould reality to harmonize with his artistic vision. Therefore, I map out Ouyang's encompassing cultural engagements, aiming to provide detailed analyses of his opera, spoken drama, fiction, film, essays, choreography, and his political inclination—each of which played a pivotal role in understanding his multifaceted persona and the complex field of modern Chinese cultural production. As a representative of a new class of individuals blending intellectual ambition with entrepreneurial acumen, Ouyang exemplifies the pattern of modern Chinese cultural production, particularly in popular culture. This pattern is characterized by a dynamic interplay of intellectual discourse, political dynamics, commercial influences, and individual aspirations.

1.1 Conceptual Frameworks

In her book titled *Print and Politics: Shibao and the Culture of Reform in Late Qing China*, Joan Judge describes a cohort of people during the late Qing period as the "new middle realm" who served as editorialists, women's instructors, translators, and fiction writers, all with the shared goal of propagating their innovative vision for China.[3] Their collective efforts played a crucial role in bridging the gap between authority and the general public in late Qing and early Republican society.[4] Rudolf G. Wagner puts forward the term "cultural broker" to characterize individuals who possess transcultural backgrounds and multi-lingual skills, aiding in communication between "Western" and "Chinese" spheres.[5] Christopher Rea further extends the discussion by proposing the concept of "cultural entrepreneurs", referred to in Chinese as "*wenhua qiyejia* 文化企业家" or "*wenhua shangren* 文化商人", to encapsulate these polymath individuals who engage in diverse cultural enterprises.[6] Rea's argument centres on the rise of "cultural personalities" — individuals who excel in multiple professional domains and utilize their artistic abilities to shape and promote their unique brands.[7] Broadly speaking,

[3] Joan Judge, *Print and Politics: 'Shibao' and the Culture of Reform in Late Qing China* (Stanford, Calif.: Standford University Press, 1996), 1-3.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Rudolf G. Wagner, "China's 'Asleep' and 'Awakening': A Study in Conceptualizing Asymmetry and Coping with It," *Transcultural Studies* 1 (2011): 92.
[6] Christopher G. Rea and Nicolai Volland eds., *The Business of Culture: Cultural Entrepreneurs in China and Southeast Asia, 1900-65* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 10.
[7] Ibid., 18.

these cultural entrepreneurs signify a notable shift in the outlook of Chinese intellectuals towards culture in the modern era.[8] Based on Christopher Rea's conceptual framework, I deem Ouyang Yuqian as a "cultural entrepreneur". As Rea explains, cultural entrepreneurs exhibit "mobility in a dual sense: between physical places and between occupations", embodying individuals whose expertise, capabilities, and activities transcend multiple categories.[9]

Ouyang Yuqian, born into a wealthy aristocratic family in Liuyang County, Hunan Province, emerged as a remarkable cultural figure during the first half of the twentieth century, leaving a significant impact on both Chinese traditional opera and modern drama. Together with Tian Han and Hong Shen, he is celebrated as one of the three trailblazers in the realm of Chinese modern spoken drama (*huaju* 话剧). Additionally, he garnered acclaim as a distinguished actor in Peking opera, often hailed as the counterpart to Mei Lanfang 梅兰芳 (1894-1961), adding to his illustrious reputation as "Southern Ouyang, Northern Mei" (*nanou beimei* 南欧北梅). His dramatic journey spanned an impressive half-century and several regions of China, commencing with his earliest performances at the Spring Willow Society (*Chunliu she* 春柳社) in Japan during the early 1900s and culminating in his leadership of the Central Academy of Drama (*Zhongyang xiju xueyuan* 中央戏剧学院) in Beijing during the 1950s. The influence of his dramatic works extended far beyond the borders of China, making its way to Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia.

Yet, a deeper examination of Ouyang's life and creative output complicates any attempt to define or categorize this multifaceted individual. As Rea defines cultural entrepreneurship as "the investment of both talent and capital in new enterprise in the cultural sphere,[10] Ouyang's diverse capital and talent served as a dynamic resource, enabling him to venture into various creative domains and making significant contributions in the realms of drama, literature, film, politics, and dance. His extensive networks illustrate the far-reaching impact of cultural entrepreneurship in shaping his exceptional career. He penetrated the sphere of literary creation, as evidenced by his

[8] Ibid., 4.
[9] Ibid., 9-10.
[10] Ibid.

academic transition from business studies at Meiji University to liberal arts at Waseda University in Japan, his ventures into fiction writing, his translation of literary classics, and his contributions to modern periodicals. His involvement with various film studios, including Minxin 民新, Xinhua 新华, Mingxing 明星, and Lianhua 联华, imparts an additional layer of complexity to his diverse portfolio. Furthermore, he went from being a prominent Peking Opera performer on Shanghai's popular stage to a government employee, actively involved in the construction of theatres in the wartime Southwest region. As the currents of history shifted, Ouyang's trajectory took yet another turn. Embracing a fresh identity, he transitioned into the role of a choreographer and researcher in Beijing under the Communist governance. This multifaceted journey showcases his adaptability and his immersion in various creative and professional spheres across different historical epochs.

Noteworthily, Rea highlights a pivotal aspect of cultural entrepreneurship, emphasizing its dynamic essence characterized by the "mobility" between various cultural professions or productions.[11] This perspective resonates with the analytical framework referred to as "border crossings", which is utilized in this study. Border studies emphasize the crucial role of borders, alongside associated concepts such as "boundaries", "thresholds", and "liminality" in shaping human experiences, perceptions, and societal dynamics.[12] This framework suggests that even seemingly inherent borders are essentially cultural constructs, thus susceptible to construction, modification, and reinterpretation. Furthermore, it views borders as dynamic processes rather than static entities, a perspective echoed in interdisciplinary works like *Minding Borders* edited by Nicola Gardini and collaborators. This collection delves into the creative dimensions of borders, portraying their status as "contact zones, spaces of hybridity, exchange and translation". [13] Ana Manzanas expands on this idea,

[11] Christopher G. Rea and Nicolai Volland eds., *The Business of Culture*, 10.
[12] Barbara Korte and Laura Mª Lojo-Rodríguez eds., *Borders and Border Crossings in the Contemporary British Short Story* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 3.
[13] Nicola Gardini, et al. eds., *Minding Borders: Resilient Divisions in Literature, the Body and the Academy* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2017), 5.

highlighting borders' dual function—to both separate and facilitate passage.[14] Recognizing borders as intricate and multi-layered phenomena unveils their intersectional nature, wherein the political, social, and cultural dimensions of the border are intersectional and inseparable from each other.

For students in mainland China, it is evident that their education concerning the cultural history of the Republic of China tends to reinforce and fortify boundaries. These boundaries are conceptualized or framed as a means of segregating what is officially perceived as threatening or undesirable. For instance, the May Fourth Movement is typically depicted as a pivotal period of enlightenment. Consequently, social reforms that preceded the May Fourth Movement, particularly those initiated towards the end of the nineteenth century in the pursuit of national vigour, are often intentionally or unintentionally excluded from the narrative of mass enlightenment. Put differently, the cultural legacy of the May Fourth Movement is often depicted as a socially aware one, distinguishing itself from cultural productions intended for mere entertainment or mass consumption. Within the cultural landscape of Republican China, distinct boundaries were established and repeated between the realms of the "serious" and "popular", as well as the "new" and "old", "left" and "right", and these demarcations were consistently reinforced. This thesis utilizes Ouyang's case to illustrate, examine, and assess the phenomenon of borders in Republican China, particularly focusing on his frequent interactions with various borders and liminal spaces. Ouyang is portrayed as an individual existing in a perpetual state of transition, navigating the contact zones between different boundaries. The conceptual framework of "border crossing", along with related concepts such as "liminality" and "intersectionality", sheds light on the complex intertwining of personal, national, and cultural identities.

[14] Ana Manzanas ed., *Border Transits: Literature and Culture across the Line* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 9.

From this perspective, as I explored Ouyang's performances in Peking Opera adaptations of the traditional novel *Honglou meng* 红楼梦 (Dream of the Red Chamber) on the popular Laughing Stage 笑舞台, I ask if these ostensibly unrelated artistic expressions held a meaningful connection to the passionate and didactic missions of the New Culture and May Fourth Movements. Did Ouyang's endorsement of Western style spoken drama *huaju* as a modern cultural form of disseminating serious messages imply his abandonment of sentimental melodramas on the popular stage and film screen? Similarly, when examining his contributions to the so-called "lowbrow" tabloid newspapers and commercial magazines such as *Xinsheng banyue kan* 心声半月刊 (Sing Sing Half-Monthly), I pondered whether he faced rejection from the camp of "New Literature" (*xin wenxue* 新文学) that claimed itself above such works. Another intriguing aspect of Ouyang's career path is how his dramatic and literary experiences played a role in shaping his filmmaking. Did his prior expertise and artistic versatility prove advantageous in this new creative realm? Additionally, the conventional political categories of "leftist" and "rightist" seem insufficient to account for Ouyang's political activities. Did these labels truly reflect the nuances of his beliefs and actions? Moreover, I question whether the concept of cultural entrepreneurship continued to thrive in socialist China, where cultural production and individual interests were meticulously orchestrated and regulated by the Communist Party? In general, I have endeavoured to gather narratives concerning Ouyang's encounters with borders across diverse fields and found that his propensity for crossing borders—sometimes even transcending them due to the nuanced nature of certain boundaries—proves to be enlightening in reshaping our understanding of the cultural landscape of modern China.

Amongst Ouyang's various occupations, I cannot deny that his most significant and impactful career was related to drama. When I examined his accomplishments in other fields, I found that they all bore essential connections to the reputation he initially forged in the field of drama. Particularly noteworthy was his contribution to preserving Peking opera's heritage and introducing spoken drama and its predecessor, the civilized drama (*wenming xi* 文明戏). Modern spoken drama emerged at the turn of the 20th century as an "imported" dramatic genre, and it was considered exotic due to its stark contrast with traditional Chinese opera (*xiqu* 戏曲), which primarily conveyed

narratives through song and dance. The traditional opera held a dominant position in both urban and rural areas during the early 20th century, with audiences cherishing its familiarity and showing reluctance to embrace something novel. In contrast, spoken drama relied on spoken language and often contained serious social messages, which was not very popular outside a small circle and faced formidable challenges in its early dissemination. However, Ouyang's career journey reveals the pivotal role of *huaju* (and the civilized drama) as a form of "new knowledge" in shaping his public image, which became a crucial aspect of his cultural entrepreneurship. Additionally, his engagement in Peking opera provided a valuable networking resource, enriching his opportunities across various future careers. Considering Ouyang's case, reducing the assessment of twentieth-century Chinese drama to a binary lens of serious/popular and traditional/ modern is overly simplistic. This study places an emphasis on his drama-related activities, recognizing that they not only influenced Ouyang's diverse cultural creations and cross-boundary endeavours but also formed the cornerstone of his "capital".

Pierre Bourdieu introduced the concept of "capital" as a framework for comprehending the diverse resources or assets individuals possess in society. Among the various forms of capital in his framework, "cultural capital" denotes an individual's education, knowledge, and familiarity with cultural practices and norms. [15] In the case of Ouyang, his "cultural capital" was initially shaped by his educational foundation in Western learning (*xixue* 西学) at the onset of the twentieth century, coupled with his proficiency in performing new forms of spoken drama and Peking Opera. In Chapter Two, the opening analytical segment of this thesis, I emphasize that Ouyang's involvement in drama served as a pivotal foundation for his cultural enterprises. This aspect of his career not only bestowed upon him invaluable practical experience, which he later utilized across various cultural domains, but also fostered his interpersonal relationships and forged a complex reputation—a blend of acclaim and critique—akin to accumulating "social capital" and "symbolic capital". These assets acted as portals to a multitude of opportunities and encounters, laying a sturdy groundwork for his diverse journey. As shown in Chapter Three, Ouyang's essay titled "*Yuzhi xiju gailiang guan* 予之戏剧改良观" (My Views on Drama Reform, 1918), which offers his unique

[15] Pierre Bourdieu, Randal Johnson ed., *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge : Polity Press, 1993), 6-30.

insights into both new and traditional drama, captured the attention of May Fourth literary intellectuals, and thus drew him into their collective literary activities. His dramatic and literary careers became intricately intertwined, as his fiction found publication in magazines and journals while his presence graced the drama review columns of newspapers, and his stage photographs adorned the pages of literary magazines.

Ouyang's "capital" accumulated through drama significantly contributed to his ability to establish connections with a diverse array of influential individuals, spanning filmmakers, industrialists, and politicians. Chapter Four underscores this dynamic, revealing how Ouyang's fascination with Peking opera facilitated his associations with early filmmakers like Bu Wancang 卜万苍 (1900-1973), providing him with a gateway into the burgeoning film industry. Ouyang's first-hand experience as a performer on the stage of civilized drama, exemplified by his portrayal of characters like Xiao Taohong 小桃红 in the renowned play *A Tale of Family Affairs* (*Jiating enyuan ji* 家庭恩怨记, 1912), furnished direct inspirations for his sentimental filmmaking. As detailed in Chapter Five, Ouyang's reputation within the realm of dramatic arts, combined with his overseas education, gained him recognition from prominent political figures, including the esteemed industrialist Zhang Jian 张謇 (1853-1926), the Nationalist Party (Guomindang or KMT) general Chen Mingshu 陈铭枢 (1889-1965), and the Guangxi warlords, among others. This extensive reservoir of "symbolic capital" exhibited enduring resilience, even in the landscape of socialist China, following the Communist Party's overthrow of the Guomindang regime in 1949. Ouyang's firmly established standing as an influential "cultural personality" and his intricate web of connections, which extended to dance practitioners like Wu Xiaobang 吴晓邦 (1906-1995) and Dai Ailian 戴爱莲 (1916-2006), facilitated his entry into the domain of dance—an uncharted realm for him until that point (Chapter Six).

While Ouyang's multifaceted cultural pursuits serve as the central narrative thread of this study, it is not my intention for this work to reproduce a conventional biography of Ouyang Yuqian. Instead, this research employs the concepts of "cultural entrepreneurship," "border-crossing," and "capital" as analytical frameworks to delve

into Ouyang's cultural career and the social formations and discourses that shaped it. I believe that these conceptual constructions can elucidate how cultural figures, such as Ouyang, in the Republican period navigated the seemingly stubborn boundaries that separate the "serious" from the "popular", intellectual from entrepreneurial efforts, and the margin from the centre.

1.2 Research Questions and Structure

This research adopts a framework centred on Ouyang Yuqian's five professional domains, focusing on two overarching themes crucial to his multifaceted career: cultural entrepreneurship and border crossing. One of the primary goals is to redefine Ouyang Yuqian beyond the constraints of the official narrative of modern Chinese drama and uncover aspects of his artistic inclination that have been overlooked or marginalized in this narrative. Firstly, through the lens of cultural entrepreneurship, this study will delve into how Ouyang cultivated his cultural stature, maintained public visibility, and utilized his talents and interpersonal skills to shape his influence, thus paving the way for new professional ventures. The research also explores whether the relationship between intellectuals advocating "Westernism" and culturally oriented commercial figures necessarily needs to be adversarial. Secondly, this study seeks to explore the interspace traversed by Ouyang and to analyse the significance of border experiences and crossings in shaping his individual life and identity formation. The study will examine what motivated Ouyang to consistently transcend medial, geographic, and political boundaries. I contend that Ouyang's career is not just about crossing borders (both physical and metaphorical), but more importantly, it involves negotiating an interspace where he confronts the tensions arising from conflicting sets of ideals, values, and practices. This process requires his active engagement and ultimately allows him to discover a secure anchorage for the self and cultivate a sense of belonging.

Chapter Two investigates the genesis of Ouyang's symbolic capital through his early career as an opera actor. This foundational experience proved instrumental in bolstering his subsequent ventures across various cultural domains and establishing invaluable social networks. Notably, in the early twentieth century, certain reformist

elites held a disparaging view of traditional opera culture, considering it as culturally regressive. However, Ouyang's trajectory illustrates that his mastery of Peking opera performance and composition not only paved the way for his future endeavours but also signified a strong connection to urban modernity. Amidst the shifting sociocultural landscape, Ouyang's sense of displacement and detachment becomes strikingly apparent. Positioned at a crossroads, he not only champions the cause of enlightened vernacular spoken drama but also embraces roles as an actor, captivating the masses with love stories conveyed in the distinctive nasal tones of Peking opera. This dual engagement underscores Ouyang's adaptability and underscores the intricate interplay between tradition and modernity in his artistic journey.

Chapter Three delves into Ouyang's involvement in the literary realm, specifically focusing on his pursuits in fiction writing and journal editing. This section illuminates his astute comprehension of the leisure industry and his remarkable eagerness to connect with urban readers. Ouyang's practices underscore his versatility in both popular and serious writing, as well as his adeptness at navigating the dichotomy between the so-called "new" and "old" literary factions. It appears that he approached the contentious "new" versus "old" debates of the era with a desire to occupy a middle ground or a liminal space, allowing for the exploration of possibilities of border transgression. In Chapter Four, I delve into the complex interplay between Ouyang's endeavours in drama, literature, and film. It showcases how he leveraged his esteemed reputation and vast network of relationships to venture into the realm of filmmaking. This exploration raises pertinent inquiries regarding the influence of educated elites in driving cultural transformations through the burgeoning medium of mass media. Such a transition reflects a form of cultural entrepreneurship, wherein Ouyang broadened and amalgamated additional domains once he had firmly established his reputation. Moreover, it underscores the permeability of medial borders within the cultural landscape of the Republican period.

Chapters Five and Six delve into the intricacies of Ouyang Yuqian's political engagements and how they played a pivotal role in his pursuit of increased power, visibility, tangible or intangible rewards, and, perhaps most importantly, his survival. These chapters shed light on how Ouyang effectively transformed his cultural endeavours into political capital during specific periods of his life. They also scrutinize

whether his alleged "political speculation" necessitated a compromise of his dedication to the nation-building community and his artistic ideals. Within these chapters, I re-evaluate Ouyang's relationships with patrons from diverse political backgrounds, including industrialists, Kuomintang officers, left-wingers, regional warlords, and post-1949 Communist Party officials. The goal is to restore Ouyang's nuanced positions, complex experiences, and multifaceted persona that have often been overshadowed by conventional historical narratives. For Ouyang, navigating the intricate web of interactions with diverse political forces and even crossing borders serves not only economic purposes and garnering support from various political factions but also as a means of survival in turbulent times. By strategically aligning himself with political correctness and skilfully exploiting the prevailing political climate, Ouyang succeeded in carving out a new professional niche for himself—the realm of dance in early Maoist China. Here, amid the stifling censorship and intervention of the Party, profit-oriented cultural entrepreneurship and individual creativity encountered formidable challenges.

1.3 Literature Review

Ouyang initially came to prominence at the turn of the twentieth century in an era coinciding with the rapid growth of urban China's publishing and entertainment sectors. Western colonial expansion, international trade, and rapid industrialization collectively propelled the city's cultural output to new heights. As introduced earlier, a multitude of individuals found themselves deeply immersed in an array of cultural mediums, spanning from literary compositions, visual imagery, recorded audio, to cinematic creations. During this transformative period, a crucial question emerged: what roles should the modern and the traditional undertake (and how should these roles be demarcated) in shaping a new Chinese cultural identity? This ongoing dialogue reverberated across scholarship impacting literature, drama, film, performing arts, and various other arenas of imaginative articulation. Scholars and cultural critics working in modern Chinese studies in the Euro-American context has been striving to dismantle the conventional division between elite culture and mass culture.[16] They invite us to

[16] For example, David Der-Wei Wang, *Fin-De-Siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1997); Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard

reassess the frameworks that have long governed our understanding of the relationship between "serious" and popular facets of cultural production during the Republican era. The question of whether "serious" art and literature can overshadow popular culture, along with research endeavours aimed at decentring the May Fourth Movement, holds significant relevance to my own research. This is because one of the primary objectives of my study is to rescue Ouyang Yuqian's narrative from the constraints of a reductionist Communist historiography that tends to overemphasize the legacy of the May Fourth paradigm and ideological forces.

However, the richness and intricate nature of cultural production in modern China make it impractical to offer a comprehensive review of secondary literature across all cultural forms within the constraints of this limited space. Acknowledging that Ouyang began his career in the realm of drama and subsequently, after establishing his reputation, delved into other fields such as literature, cinema, and dance, I intend to provide a schematic overview of the evolution of Chinese drama during the first half of the twentieth century. This overview aims to establish the backdrop against which Ouyang's activities can be examined. Furthermore, considering that drama is the primary arena in which Ouyang is deeply engaged and familiar, the scholarship surrounding drama becomes the focal point that my research can most effectively engage with. As illustrated in the forthcoming research, Ouyang's transitions between various cultural domains are seldom sudden; instead, the sensibilities, professional instincts, and artistic tendencies developed in one venture often play a role in guiding and influencing his subsequent pursuits. Therefore, the significance of drama events as the linchpin of Ouyang's initial appeal to both the common audience and scholarly perspectives cannot be overstated.

1.3.1 The Development of Chinese Drama during the First Half of the Twentieth Century

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University Press, 1999); Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: the Politics of Reading between West and East* (United States: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), and so on. Despite their varied critical agendas, they all argue that urban popular culture serves as a realm of resistance against the elitist and all-encompassing narratives of nationhood prevalent in the literary discourse of May Fourth era intellectuals.

As Jonathan Stock categorizes, existing scholarship on Chinese drama can be organized into thematic areas encompassing "social, historical, textual, musical, biographical, general, and reference" works.[17] It is worth noting that many studies intersect across multiple categories, while certain general works aim to encompass a wide spectrum of several categories. Generally, Chinese scholars' comprehensive studies tend to adopt an inward-focused approach, delving into various facets of Chinese drama, such as playwrights, scripts, actors, makeup, costumes, theatres, and more.[18] In contrast, English-language scholarship on modern Chinese drama has a tendency to adopt a more outward-focused perspective, emphasizing the intricate interplay between drama and its historical context, which includes socioeconomic realities, intellectual currents, and political circumstances.[19] Although scholars in this field have conducted research across a broad array of topics like "nationalism", "hybridism", and "Chinese modernity", there has been limited concerted effort to investigate the relationship between modern drama and cultural business. To better comprehend modern drama and Ouyang Yuqian, we need to appreciate what issues have arisen in the study of drama culture during the 20th century, how it was understood by cultural historians, and what use we can make of the concepts they have developed. In reviewing this subject, I concentrate on specific periods: the late Qing and early Republican era, the 1930s left-wing movement, the Sino-Japanese war, and the Mao era.

1.3.1.1 The Drama Culture in Late Qing and Early Republican China

As the initial genre of Chinese spoken drama and the predecessor of *huaju* , the civilized play (*wenming xi* 文明戏, also called the New Play, *xinju* 新剧), which had adopted western dramatic conventions and used spoken language, was popular from the 1900s

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[17] Jonathan P. J. Stock, *Huju: Traditional Opera in Modern Shanghai* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003), 10.

[18] For example, Ye Changhai 叶长海, *Zhongguo xijuxue shigao* 中国戏剧学史稿 (History of Chinese Drama) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2005); Chen Baichen 陈白尘 and Dong Jian 董健 eds., *Zhongguo xiandai xiju shigao* 中国现代戏剧史稿 (History of Chinese Modern Drama) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1989); Sun Qingsheng 孙庆升, *Zhongguo xiandai xiju sichaoshi* 中国现代戏剧思潮史 (History of Chinese Modern Drama Trend of Thought) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1994).

[19] See Colin Mackerras, *The Chinese Theatre in Modern Times: From 1840 to the Present Day* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975); William Dolby, *A History of Chinese Drama* (New York: Barnes & Nobel, 1976). The more recent works include Qitao Guo, *Ritual Opera and Mercantile Lineage: The Confucian Transformation of Popular Culture in Late Imperial Huizhou* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2005); Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), and so on.

to the 1920s. Academic studies of the civilized play tend to focus on its genesis and evolution, its affinity with Western and Japan culture, its acculturation and domestication, its cosmopolitan nature, and its political orientation. In her critical introduction on a general anthology of modern Chinese drama, Xiaomei Chen explicates how the civilized drama played a pivotal role in supporting the political revolution that led to the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the construction of a new Chinese identity.[20] Edward Gunn also contends that the civilized play represented the iconoclastic and innovative genre, purposefully designed to disseminate ideas of reform and revolution.[21] Li Jin further posits that the "excessive" emotional sentiment within civilized drama served as a driving force, kindling the urgency for revolution.[22] In the Chinese-language scholarship, works by authors like Seto Hiroshi (translated into Chinese by Chen Linghong), Yuan Guoxing, Huang Aihua, and Wang Fengxia significantly enrich this field by comprehensively examining various aspects, including the historical context, political repression, participants, scripts, and troupes.[23]

The most important concepts to research of new drama are "Occidentalism" and "hybridism" put forward by Chen and Liu respectively.[24] Chen proffers the concept of "Occidentalism" to conduct a thorough examination of Western cultural appropriations within the discourse of modern China. She highlights that the May Fourth Occidentalist discourse for some dramatists was paradoxical and they started to dialectically reflect on the questionable Western thrust and the value of the Confucian canon to convince

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[20] Xiaomei Chen ed., *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Drama* (New York : Columbia University Press, 2010), 1-56.
[21] Edward M. Gunn, *Twentieth-Century Chinese Drama : An Anthology* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1983), vii-xxii.
[22] Jin Li, "Theater of Pathos: Sentimental Melodramas in the New Drama Legacy," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 24, no. 2 (2012): 97.
[23] See Seto Hiroshi 濑戶宏, *Zhongguo huaju chenglshii yanjiu* 中国话剧成立史研究 (Study on the Establishment of Chinese Spoken Drama), trans. Chen Linghong 陈凌虹 (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 2015); Yuan Guoxing 袁国兴, *Qingmo mincu xinchao yanju yanjiu* 清末民初新潮演剧研究 (Study on New Drama in the Late Qing and Early Repulican China) (Guangzhou: Guangdong Renmin chubanshe, 2011); Huang Aihua 黄爱华, *Zhongguo zaoqi huaju yu Riben* 中国早期话剧与日本 (Early Chinese Spoken Drama and Japan) (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2001); Wang Fengxia 王凤霞, *Wenmingxi kaolun* 文明戏考论 (On the Civilized Play) (Guangzhou: Guangdong gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 2011).
[24] Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (New York ; Oxford, England : Oxford University Press, 1995); Siyuan Liu, *Performing Hybridity in Colonial-Modern China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Chinese people.[25] In works such as Chen Dabei's 陈大悲 (1887-1944) *Youlan nüshi* 幽兰女士 (Madam Youlan, 1921) and Ouyang *Huijia yihou* 回家以后 (After Going Home, 1922), the Occidentalism is rooted in a repulsion toward Western elements, as it appeared that the West, despite its perceived freedom, fundamentally contradicted Chinese values.[26] Siyuan Liu applies the concept of "hybridism" to trace the civilized play's biological and cultural hybridity that combined Chinese classical drama with Western spoken drama and Japanese *Shinpa* (also a hybrid genre of Western spoken drama and Japanese traditional kabuki).[27] In contrast to Chen, who emphasizes Western influence, Liu drew more attention to the "Eastern foreign country" – Japan. He stresses the parental influence of Japan on Chinese civilized play's literary, translational, and performing style, and analyses the practices of the first civilized drama troupe of Chinese people – Spring Willow Society and its members. Much like Liu, Chinese scholar Huang Aihua also focuses on the civilized drama's affinity with Japanese new drama. Her monograph with a textual and historical approach examines five typical plays,[28] which depict a panorama of the development of civilized drama in Japan and China.[29] Other influential scholars who also research the civilized drama are Joscha Chuang and Chen Linghong who pay more attention to theatre studies and the performances of young students (*xuesheng yanju* 学生演剧).[30]

During this era, the civilized play thrived alongside local Chinese drama, with Peking Opera emerging as the most welcomed form of entertainment for a diverse audience. In stark contrast to the educated student base that primarily patronized

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[25] Chen, *Occidentalism*, 137-138.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Siyuan Liu, *Performing Hybridity in Colonial-Modern China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1.
[28] They are *Chahua nü* 茶花女 (*La dame aux camelias*, 1905), *Heinu yutian lu* 黑奴吁天录 (A Black Slave's Cry to Heaven, 1905), *Shengxiang lian* 生相怜 (1907), *Ming buping* 鸣不平 (Grumble, 1909), *Relei* 热泪 (Hot Tears, 1909).
[29] Huang , *Zhongguo zaoqi huaju yu riben,* 1.
[30] For example, Joscha Chuang 钟欣志, "Wanqing xinzhishi kongjian li de xuesheng yanju yu Zhongguo xiandai juchang de yuanqi 晚清新知识空间里的学生演剧与中国现代剧场的缘起" (The Origin of Student Plays in the Late Fresh Knowledge Space and Modern Chinese Theater), *Xiju yanjiu* 戏剧研究 (Journal of Theatre Studies), no. 8 (2011):21-58; Chen Linghong 陈凌虹, "Qingmo minchu Shanghai wenmingxi juchang xinkao 清末民初上海文明戏剧场新考" (A New Research on the Theatre of Shanghai Civilized Drama in Late Qing and Early Repubican China), *Xiju* 戏剧 (Drama), no. 1 (2015): 40-53.

civilized and modern spoken drama, Peking Opera drew a much wider spectrum of spectators, including the gentry, merchants, intellectuals, and common folk. Peking Opera is often regarded as a quintessential representation of Chinese culture. In 1972, Colin Mackerras published *The Rise of Peking Opera, 1770-1870*, marking a significant milestone as the first substantial English study delving into the history of Peking Opera.[31] Additionally, the three-volume *Zhongguo jingju shi* 中国京剧史 (A History of Chinese Peking Opera), compiled by Chinese scholars in 1999, stands as another comprehensive and authoritative work that traces the genre's evolution from the mid-Qing period through to the 1990s.[32] Andrea S. Goldman and Joshua Goldstein have directed their scholarly focus towards late imperial and modern China. They meticulously trace how various historical forces and evolving social and discursive contexts shaped the transformation of Peking opera from its regional origins to become a dominant genre with broader influence.[33] While much of the scholarship on Peking opera is cantered around Beijing, Hisao-t'i Li and Bingbing Wei's work bridges a noticeable gap by delving into the genre's immense popularity in semicolonial Shanghai.[34] They explore how Peking Opera, as a local form of public entertainment, intersected with Shanghai, which served as a hub for the introduction of new Western-inspired leisure activities. Jin Jiang and Jonathan Stock shift their attention to other popular regional opera genres, such as Yue opera (*Yueju* 越剧) and Hu opera (*Huju* 沪剧).[35] These regional forms played a vital role in shaping Chinese local dramatic landscape but went into decline until the emergence of the indigenous film industry in the late 1930s.

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[31] Colin Mackerras, *The Rise of the Peking Opera, 1770-1870: Social Aspects of the Theatre in Manchu China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).
[32] Mao Shaobo 马少波 et al., eds. *Zhongguo jingju shi* 中国京剧史 (A History of Chinese Peking Opera) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1999).
[33] Andrea S. Goldman, *Opera and the City:The Politics of Culture in Beijing, 1770-1900* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012); Joshua L. Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-Creation of Peking Opera, 1870-1937* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2007).
[34] Hsiao-t'i Li, *Opera, Society, and Politics in Modern China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: the Harvard University Asia Center, 2019); Bingbing Wei, "The Bifurcated Theater: Urban Space, Operatic Entertainment, and Cultural Politics in Shanghai, 1900s–1930s" (Ph. D. diss. Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2013).
[35] Jin Jiang, *Women Playing Men: Yue Opera and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011); Jonathan P. J. Stock, *Huju: Traditional Opera in Modern Shanghai* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003).

As evident from the aforementioned literature, scholarly discourse on late Qing and early Republican Chinese drama predominantly revolves around three main categories: the local drama represented by Peking Opera, the imported yet less refined civilized drama, and the modern spoken drama, influenced by Western styles but not widely embraced by the general Chinese audience. It is noteworthy that Ouyang made significant contributions to all three genres, each playing a role in shaping his reputation and providing invaluable experience and resources for his other cultural occupations. In assessing Ouyang's activities in the field of drama, it is important to discuss how he navigated the interstice between diverse dramatic genres.

1.3.1.2 The Staging of Left-Wing Drama Around the 1930s

To the best of my knowledge, there exist only a handful of comprehensive book-length studies focusing exclusively on left-wing drama (*zuoyi xiju* 左翼戏剧). However, a wealth of research is available regarding leftist literature and film during the 1930s. Notably, Tsi-an Hsia's seminal work, *The Gate of Darkness*, stands out as one of the earliest scholarly endeavours to delve into the left-wing literary movement in China.[36] This work serves as a counterbalance to stereotypical perspectives on renowned figures such as Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881-1936), Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899-1935), Jiang Guangci 蒋光慈 (1901-1931), and others. Employing a predominantly unexplored array of Chinese source materials of the time, Hsia meticulously explored the perplexing idealism harboured by these young writers and the dilemmas they encountered at the crossroads of politics and art. Wang-chi Wong's *Politics and Literature in Shanghai* stands out as another significant contribution to the study of left-wing literature.[37] In this work, Wong critically re-evaluates the intricate dynamics between the left-wing writers and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), debunking the notion that the ideology of the party unequivocally directed the leftist leagues in their functioning and undertakings.[38] Ho-yee Kwong also displays her passion for left-wing literature, particularly focusing on the influence of European leftist literary ideologies on Chinese

[36] Tsi-an Hsia, *The Gate of Darkness: Studies on the Leftist Literary Movement in China* New edition. ed. (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2015).
[37] Wang-chi Wong, *Politics and Literature in Shanghai: The Chinese League of Left-Wing Writers, 1930-1936* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991).
[38] Ibid.

Modernists.[39] On a different note, Kang Ling, in more recent years, delves into the examination of Chinese left-wing poetry from the 1930s.[40] Through perceptive analyses, Kang unveils the nuanced interplay between political dynamics and the mobilization of the body and senses within the realm of these poetic works.

Regarding left-wing filmmaking, Laikwan Pang's research stands out.[41] Pang's work not only illustrates the diffusion and solidification of progressive left-wing ideologies during the 1930s but also tracks the evolution of approaches to left-wing filmmaking. This encompasses facets like production, reception, and theoretical frameworks, providing a comprehensive comparison to other cinematic productions of the time. In addition, Xuelei Huang's *Shanghai Filmmaking* also occupies a significant position.[42] However, her approach diverges from Pang's study as she challenges the conventional demarcation between "right-wingers" and "left-wingers". Her focus is directed toward the transnational and transmedia forces that wielded influence over filmmaking in the 1920s and 1930s. This perspective reshapes the narrative by emphasizing the broader factors that shaped the filmmaking landscape during this era.

Liang Luo's exploration of the "left turn" narrative surrounding Tian Han, a pioneering figure in Chinese modern spoken drama, emerges as the most pertinent English scholarship in relation to Chinese leftist drama.[43] Luo's analysis goes beyond the common scholarly fixation on Tian Han's conversion rhetoric, such as the transition from art to politics. Instead, Luo adeptly showcases the ongoing interplay between performance and politics, as well as the dynamic between avant-garde and popular elements within the intellectual landscape of that era. This approach highlights the nuanced and intricate connections that shaped this period. Within Chinese academic circles, a wealth of studies explore the dramatic activities of the 1930s. A notable work

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[39] Kwong Ho-yee 邝可怡, *Heian de mingdeng: Zhongguo xiandaipai yu Ouzhou zuoyi wenyi* 黑暗的明灯: 中国现代派与欧洲左翼文艺 (Fanal obscur : Chinese modernists and European lefist literature) (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan youxian gongsi, 2017).
[40] Kang Ling, *Yousheng de zuoyi: shi langsong yu geming wenyi de shenti jishu* 有声的左翼:诗朗诵与革命文艺的身体技术 (The Audible Left: Poetry Recitation and the Physical Technologies of Revolutionary Literature) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2020).
[41] Laikwan Pang, *Building a New China in Cinema: The Chinese Left-Wing Cinema Movement, 1932-1937* (Lanham, Md.; Oxford : Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).
[42] Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking*, 103-126.
[43] Liang Luo, *The Avant-Garde and the Popular in Modern China: Tian Han and the Intersection of Performance and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014).

is Ge Fei's book, where he employs the term "Bohemian" to encapsulate the lived experiences of intellectuals and their transformative "left turn" during the 1930s.[44] By analysing their marginalized social standing and challenging economic circumstances, Ge argues that while these intellectuals might have felt marginalized, they also held a sense of exhilaration as they actively sought to upend societal and cultural norms. This work provides a thought-provoking perspective on the complex motivations and outcomes of their endeavours. The author extensively examines the historical staging of events, concentrating on the amalgamation and divergence of left-wing theatre troupes. Notable within the influential studies mapping the history of these troupes and their ideological foundations are the works authored by Cao Shujun and Liu Ziling.[45]

The aforementioned scholarship sheds light on the limitations of conventional binaries between leftist and rightist camp during Republican China and underscores the complexity of intellectual thought during that period. When exploring historical figures from that era, it becomes evident that their relationships cannot be confined to any single faction. As scholars have noted, many of them navigated a nuanced grey area and experienced multifaceted life trajectories.[46] Furthermore, a notable absence of Ouyang in discussions surrounding leftist literary, cinematic, and dramatic activities prompts the question: Was Ouyang distanced from the prevalent left-wing movement of 1930s China? My study seeks to fill this gap by investigating Ouyang's involvement in left-wing cultural activities during this period and examining his connections with prominent left-wing figures.

1.3.1.3 Wartime Drama During the 1940s

The period of wartime, spanning from 1937 to 1949, encompassing both the War of Resistance against Japan and the Chinese Civil War, has long captured the attention of

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[44] Gei Fei 葛飞, *Xiju, geming yu dushi xuanwo: 1930 niandai zuoyi juyun, juren zai Shanghai* 戏剧、革命与都市漩涡:1930 年代左翼剧运、剧人在上海 (Drama, Revolution, and Urban Vortex: Leftwing Dramatic Movement and Actors in Shanghai in the 1930s) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008).

[45] Cao Shujun 曹树钧, *Julian yu zuoyi xiju yundong* 剧联与左翼戏剧运动 (Drama Societies Association and Left-Wing Drama Movement) (Shanghai : Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2014); Liu Ziling 刘子凌, *Huaju xingdong yu huayu shijian: ershi shiji sanshi niandai Zhongguo huajushi pianlun* 话剧行动与话语实验:二十世纪三十年代中国话剧史片论 (Dramatic Action and Discourse Experiment: On the History of Chinese Drama in the 1930s) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2016).

[46] Xuelei Huang, "Hong Shen in the Popular Press, 1924–1949," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 27, no. 2 (2015): 13.

scholars due to its significance in the realm of modern drama and broader cultural productions. As Chang-tai Huang has noted, this era marked a crucial juncture where popular culture, originating in urban centres, particularly cities like Shanghai, began to permeate the vast rural hinterlands.[47] The war brought about a profound transformation, shifting modern Chinese drama from its previous elitist urban orientation to a new emphasis on rural themes, a shift that playwrights actively engineered. Edward Gunn's work, *Unwelcome Muse*, stands as a pioneering and influential book-length study on this subject.[48] Gunn underscores the resurgence of tradition and the infusion of traditional elements into modern drama during this period. Carolyn Fitzgerald supports this perspective, contending that Ouyang Yuqian's notable achievement during the war era was the reformulation of regional drama as a potent tool for anti-Japanese propaganda, further highlighting the dynamic changes in the dramatic landscape of that era.[49] Broader examinations of wartime drama, for the most part, revolved around their propagandistic nature and their primary objective of educating and influencing the masses. Several significant works delve into how the war's impact was manifested in the types of drama staged for both elite and rural audiences, as well as the distinctions between urban and rural performances. In Chang-tai Huang's book, he illuminates the common characteristics shared by wartime dramas.[50] These included an informal setting, straightforward dialogues, inventive narrative forms, and a commitment to portraying realistic content, all aimed at establishing a direct and resonant connection with the general populace.[51] Hung also emphasizes that the optimal execution of the most popular and influential forms, including street plays, historical plays, newspaper plays, traditional operas, and so on, which aligned with the promotion of patriotism and the prevailing propaganda themes of the era through straightforward content.[52]

Moreover, research on Chinese wartime drama can be categorized based on geographical divisions that were significantly influenced by distinct political dynamics

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[47] Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 3-8.
[48] Edward M. Gunn, *Unwelcome Muse: Chinese Literature in Shanghai and Peking, 1937-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).
[49] Carolyn FitzGerald, *Fragmenting Modernisms: Chinese Wartime Literature, Art, and Film, 1937-49* (Leiden : Brill, 2013), 15.
[50] Hung, *War and Popular Culture*, 55-56.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 85.

and ideological differences. These divisions encompassed the "Japanese-Occupied region" (*lunxian qu* 沦陷区), the "Great Hinterland" (*da houfang* 大后方), and the "Liberated region" (*jiefang qu* 解放区). Notably, one of the most influential works that centres on drama within the Japanese-occupied region is Poshek Fu's research.[53] In this comprehensive work, Fu utilizes the case study of playwright Li Jianwu 李健吾 (1906-1982) in occupied Shanghai to examine the intricate interplay between intellectuals' artistic ideals, their political choices, and the formidable pressures of survival amid the backdrop of war. Shao Yingjian's 2012 monograph offers a detailed survey of the evolution of spoken drama in occupied Shanghai, which he divides into two distinct periods: the "isolated island" period (spanning the summer of 1938 to 1939) and the period of full occupation (1941-1945).[54] This meticulous examination provides valuable insights into the transformation of drama during these challenging times. Fu Xuemin explores drama in Chongqing, which was considered the central hub within Chiang Kai-shek's government-controlled hinterland, shedding light on this significant area of cultural production.[55] Additionally, Weihong Bao contributes to the understanding of wartime dramaturgy in the hinterland by focusing on the work of Hong Shen, with a particular emphasis on behavioural psychology, providing valuable insights into this facet of drama during the war era.[56]

In addition, historian Brian DeMare offers insights into the operation of drama troupes within the liberated region under the governance of the Communist Party.[57] While his book's scope extends beyond the war period, it sheds light on the dynamics of drama during this time. There are notable studies on individual playwrights, exemplified by Pu Wang's work titled *The Translatability of Revolution*. This comprehensive study delves into Guo Moruo's 郭沫若 (1892-1978) historical plays, a

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[53] Poshek Fu, *Passivity, Resistance, and Collaboration: Intellectual Choices in Occupied Shanghai, 1937-1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 68-109.
[54] Shao Yingjian 邵迎健, *Shanghai kangzha shiqi de huaju* 上海抗战时期的话剧 (Dramas in Wartime Shanghai) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2012).
[55] Fu Xuemin 傅学敏, *1937-1945 Guojia yishi xingtai yu guotongqu xiju yundong* 1937-1945 国家意识形态与国统区戏剧运动 (1937-1945 National Ideology and Drama Movement in KMT's Area) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2010).
[56] Weihong Bao, "The Art of Control: Hong Shen, Behavioral Psychology, and the Technics of Social Effects," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 27, no. 2 (2015).
[57] Brian James DeMare, *Mao's Cultural Army: Drama Troupes in China's Rural Revolution* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2015).

genre characterized by the reimagining and translation of Chinese legends into dramatic forms.[58] Other prominent playwrights have also garnered the attention of scholars, including Xiong Foxi 熊佛西 (1900-1965) and Xu Xu 徐訏 (1908-1980). For instance, Xiaobing Tang and Yu Zhang explore Xiong Foxi's contributions to the "new peasant drama" and drama pedagogy,[59] while Christopher Rosenmeier and Frederik Green offer insights into Xu Xu's "existentialist tragedies".[60]

These studies collectively enrich our understanding of the diverse creative forces at play within wartime drama and provide a geographically expansive framework for comprehending wartime China. During this tumultuous period, Ouyang's trajectory led him to relocate from the increasingly threatened Shanghai, under occupation, to the hinterland of Guangxi province, primarily controlled by the Nationalists. The reasons prompting this move are noteworthy and merit further exploration. While scholars have noted the connection between his cultural creations during this period and military mobilization, scant attention has been given to the way he navigated life as an ordinary individual amidst the challenges of war and chaos.

1.3.1.4 Drama Reform in the Early Years of the PRC

When we contrast the dramatic landscape in the first half of the 20th century, marked by a trajectory toward westernization and modernization, with the dramatic milieu under the People's Republic of China (PRC), we observe a deliberate reimagining of traditional dramatic forms with an inward focus. Indeed, notable playwrights from the last five decades, including figures like Tian Han and Ouyang Yuqian, ardently (or sometimes under compulsion) dedicated themselves to the task of reconciling socialism with traditional opera in the wake of the PRC's establishment in 1949. As Yomi Braester suggests in his work, *Witness against History*, the most prominent feature of

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[58] Pu Wang, *The Translatability of Revolution: Guo Moruo and Twentieth-century Chinese Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Published by the Harvard University Asia Center, 2018), 196-232.
[59] See Tang Xiaobing, "Street Theater and Subject Formation in Wartime China: Toward a New Form of Public Art," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, no. 18 (2016); Yu Zhang, "Visual and Theatrical Constructs of a Modern Life in the Countryside: James Yen, Xiong Foxi, and the Rural Reconstruction Movement in Ding County (1920s-1930s)," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 25, no. 1 (2013).
[60] Christopher Rosenmeier, *On the Margins of Modernism: Xu Xu, Wumingshi and Popular Chinese literature in the 1940s* (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2018); Frederik H. Green, "Rescuing Love from the Nation: Love, Nation, and Self in Xu Xu's Alternative Wartime Fiction and Drama," *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 8, no. 1 (2014).

Maoist literature was its rigorous control over artistic production and its imposition of censorship on public discourse.[61] During this period, drama was expected to conform to revolutionary sensibilities and serve as a propaganda tool through political intervention. However, the extent and nature of the reforms in drama, both traditional and modern, during the pre-Cultural Revolution era remain a subject of inquiry. In contrast to the substantial research dedicated to traditional opera reform, there is a relative scarcity of works focusing on the cultural policies surrounding modern drama, particularly in the 1950s. This disparity underscores the need for further exploration in this critical area of Chinese cultural history.

The early years of the PRC (1949-1966) was marked by official celebrations of Communist achievements, but it was also a period of immense suffering for many. As dissent among intellectuals grew, it sparked a surge of creativity among writers who grappled with the challenge of expressing both their hopes for the revolution's success and their discontent with the Party's leadership and policies. However, the political climate in China during this era was volatile, and the state exercised strict control over literature, making it difficult for writers to directly confront the pressing issues of the time. Consequently, they turned to a range of sophisticated and time-tested forms, including historical drama, to voice their grievances. In his research, Rudolf Wagner delves into the intricacies of three such plays composed and performed between 1958 and 1963, decoding the concealed political and cultural messages embedded within them. [62] He offers a survey of the political dynamics within Chinese historical drama, shedding light on the complex interplay between two major factions: one staunchly supporting the ultimate leader and the other critical of this authority. Echoing this perspective, Maggie Greene's research offers a compelling alternative to the prevailing narrative of socialist cultural production as monolithic and uninspired.[63] Greene re-evaluates this perspective by highlighting the remarkable creativity and

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[61] Yomi Braester, *Witness against History:Literature, Film, and Public Discourse in Twentieth-Century China* (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 2003), 106-108.
[62] Rudolf G. Wagner, *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama: Four Studies* (Berkeley ; Oxford : University of California Press, 1990). The three historical plays are Tian Han's *Guan Hanqing* (关汉卿, 1958), *Xie Yaohuan* (谢瑶环, 1961) and, *Monkey King Subdues the White-Bone Demon* (孙悟空三打白骨精, 1961).
[63] Maggie Greene, *Resisting Spirits: Drama Reform and Cultural Transformation in the People's Republic of China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019).

experimentation undertaken by writers and artists during the early 1950s and 1960s. In doing so, she underscores how these creative individuals navigated the intricate waters of both culture and bureaucracy.

Regarding operatic reform in the PRC, Zhao Cong's 1968 monograph serves as a historical survey, tracing the trajectory of state intervention and mediation in Peking opera and various regional operas.[64] Wilt Idema's project delves into the history of a local opera titled "Married to a Heavenly Immortal" (*Tianxian pei* 天仙配) as an illustrative case of the transformation of operatic works.[65] This case demonstrates how a relatively obscure traditional play underwent revisions to become a blockbuster, showcasing the emerging political culture of the People's Republic of China. In alignment with Wilt's insights, Zhang Lianhong employs textual analysis and a cultural studies perspective to trace the evolution of several popular operas in the realm of drama adaptation.[66] Beyond this, contributions from Hsiao-mei Hsieh and Anne Rebull in their journal articles, representing new English-language research, have further enriched this field. They have helped transition the research from broad explorations to more focused and specific inquiries.[67]

Ouyang Yuqian's activities in the field of drama, as well as his engagements in other cultural fields, during the 1950s have not garnered adequate attention or research both domestically and internationally. This can be attributed in part to the limited accessibility of Chinese archival materials and the censorship challenges encountered by scholars in China. Additionally, Ouyang's transition towards conservatism during this period, coupled with a shift in focus from drama to dance, has contributed to the

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[64] Zhao Cong 赵聪, *Zhongguo dalu de xiqu gaige, 1942-1967* 中国大陆的戏曲改革: 1942-1967 (Opera Reform in Mainland China: 1942-1967) (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1968).

[65] Wilt L Idema, *The Metamorphosis of Tianxian pei: Local Opera under the Revolution (1949–1956)* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2014).

[66] Zhang Lianhong 张炼红, *Lilian jinghun: Xin Zhongguo xiqu gaizao kaolun* 历炼精魂: 新中国戏曲改造考论 (Experiencing the Essence of Spirit: A Study of the Transformation of Traditional Chinese Opera) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2013). These include renowned works like "*Silang tanmu* 四郎探母", "*Xie yaohuan* 谢瑶环", "*Li huiniang* 李慧娘", "*Baishe zhuan* 白蛇传", and so on.

[67] Hsiao-Mei Hsieh, "Where Have All the Different Butterfly Lovers Gone? The Homogenization of Local Theater as a Result of the Theater Reform in China as Seen in Gezai Zi/Xiangju," *CHINOPERL* 30, no. 1 (2011); Anne Rebull, "Locating Theatricality on Stage and Screen: Rescuing Performance Practice and the Phenomenon of Fifteen Strings of Cash (Shiwu guan; 1956)," *CHINOPERL* 36, no. 1 (2017).

relative neglect of this aspect of his career. The factors underlying this phenomenon and Ouyang's specific activities during this time will be explored in Chapter Six of this study.

1.3.2 Individual Studies on Ouyang Yuqian

Although a significant contributor to both modern Chinese drama and traditional opera, Ouyang has been somewhat overlooked in comparison to his peers Tian Han, Hong Shen, and Mei Lanfang. Despite this void, around fifty peer-reviewed articles—both direct (approximately five articles) and indirect studies—have explored Ouyang and his contributions. These articles are published in esteemed journals such as *Asian Theatre Journal*, *The Drama Review*, *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, *Nan Nü*, *Modern China*, and *CHINOPERL*, among others. The discussion on him predominantly centres on his pivotal role in the evolution of modern Chinese drama, particularly his engagement with the "social problem play" (*shehui wentiju* 社会问题剧) in early Republican China and his propaganda efforts during wartime. For example, Yomi Braester, in his analysis of Ouyang's renowned play *Pan Jinlian* (1926), underscores Ouyang's fervent stance on women's emancipation and the concept of free love.[68] In another scholarly exploration, Yang Shu delves into Ouyang's response to the May Fourth "Nora plays" (*nala ju* 娜拉剧) and his own creations like *Pofu* 泼妇 (Shrew, 1922) and *Huijia yihou* 回家以后 (After Going Home, 1922), emphasizing Ouyang's dedication to women's issues. She investigates how Ouyang transformed the portrayal of vixenish women in traditional Chinese novels into courageous and insightful characters in the new social context.[69] Furthermore, articles by Chang-tai Huang and Carolyn Fitzgerald shed light on Ouyang's depiction of female warriors during the war period, exploring his efforts to bring to life the heroic deeds of legendary Chinese figures like Liang Hongyu 梁红玉 and Hua Mulan 花木兰.[70] In her focused study on Ouyang's *Heinu hen* 黑奴恨 (Regret of a Black Slave, 1959), Megan Ammirati centres

[68] Braester, *Witness against History*, 58-60.
[69] Shu Yang, "I Am Nora, Hear Me Roar: The Rehabilitation of the Shrew in Modern Chinese Theater," *Nan Nü* 18, no. 2 (2016): 303.
[70] Chang-Tai Hung, "Female Symbols of Resistance in Chinese Wartime Spoken Drama," *Modern China* 15, no. 2 (1989): 149-177.

on how he adapted Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and explores the intricate challenges posed by radical impersonation within this context.[71]

Chinese scholars have made significant contributions to the understanding of Ouyang Yuqian through the compilation of biographical and historical materials. Jing Libin, in particular, has played a pivotal role with two notable books: *Ouyang Yuqian nianpu* 欧阳予倩年谱 (The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian) and *Ouyang Yuqian yiwen jijiao yu yanjiu* 欧阳予倩佚文辑校与研究 (Ouyang Yuqian's Unknown Writings and Studies).[72] These texts offer primary materials, recovering Ouyang's previously lost and lesser-known works, including fiction, correspondence with friends, speeches, and so on, shedding light on Ouyang's multifaceted activities and private life beyond the realm of drama. Su Guanxin has edited *Ouyang Yuqian yanjiu ziliao* 欧阳予倩研究资料 (Research Materials on Ouyang Yuqian), providing indexing services for Ouyang's influential essays and drama commentaries.[73] Chen Jianjun's monograph categorizes Ouyang's career based on geographical locations, including Nantong, Shanghai, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Guilin, and Beijing.[74] This approach offers a comprehensive overview of Ouyang's dramatic legacy, encompassing various genres such as Peking opera, modern spoken drama, comedy, historical drama, among others. Li Wei's research, on the other hand, focuses on assessing Ouyang Yuqian's contributions to drama reform during the early PRC period.[75] Cumulatively, these works enhance our comprehension of Ouyang Yuqian's substantial influence on Chinese drama.

However, a notable gap in both English and Chinese scholarship lies in the limited attention granted to Ouyang's creative endeavours beyond the realm of drama, despite his significant impact in literary and cinematic domains. Furthermore, akin to

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[71] Megan Ammirati, "Uncle Tom's Cabin in China: Ouyang Yuqian's Regret of a Black Slave and the Tactics of Impersonating Race, Gender, and Class," *Asian Theatre Journal* 36, no. 1 (2019): 165-188.
[72] Jing Libin 景李斌, *Ouyang Yuqian nianpu* 欧阳予倩年谱 (The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2019); *Ouyang Yuqian yiwen jijiao yu yanjiu* 欧阳予倩佚文辑校与研究 (Ouyang Yuqian's Unknown Writings and Studies) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2019).
[73] Su Guanxin 苏关鑫 ed., *Ouyang Yuqian yanjiu ziliao* 欧阳予倩研究资料 (Research Materials on Ouyang Yuqian) (Beijing: Zhishi chanquan chubanshe, 2009).
[74] Chen Jianjun 陈建军, *Ouyang Yuqian yu xiandai xiju* 欧阳予倩与现代戏剧 (Ouyang Yuqian and Modern Drama) (Beijing: Remin chubanshe, 2016).
[75] Li Wei 李伟, *20 shiji xiqu gaige de sanda fanshi* 20 世纪戏曲改革的三大范式 (Three Paradigms of Opera Reform in the 20th Century) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014).

many of his contemporaries, Ouyang's life unfolded within a "grey zone", navigating the complexities of an ever-shifting socio-political landscape. The ways in which he sustained his vitality and renown amidst challenging circumstances and conducted his cultural pursuits have not received adequate consideration. Hence, this study endeavours to rectify this oversight by re-evaluating Ouyang's legacy, shedding light on the intricacies of his character, and exploring his position within the rich tapestry of cultural production during a transformative period marked by cultural and political shifts.

1.4 Notes on Methodology, Sources and Conventions

This research methodologically employs a dual approach integrating both primary material surveys and textual analysis. The primary material survey encompasses a comprehensive examination of original documents and other primary sources pertinent to the research topic. This entails meticulously scrutinizing historical records, archival materials, manuscripts, letters, memoirs, and any other relevant primary sources that offer first-hand accounts or evidence related to the subject under investigation. Additionally, textual analysis forms a crucial component of the methodology, wherein scholarly texts, literary works, historical documents, and other relevant written materials are subjected to systematic examination and interpretation. This analytical process involves dissecting the content, language, structure, and underlying themes of textual sources to extract meaningful insights. By integrating these methodological approaches, this research aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject matter, drawing upon both the empirical evidence gleaned from primary materials and critical insights derived from textual analysis.

My selection of primary sources was guided by their societal impact and accessibility. Foremost among these sources are Chinese digital databases, including the Shanghai Library's organized Late Qing Journal Full-text Database (1833-1911), the Chinese Periodical Full-text Database (1911-1949), and the Database for the History of Contemporary Chinese Political Movements, 1949-, curated by the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Spanning the period from the late nineteenth century to Maoist China, these databases offer comprehensive coverage of the era aligning with

Ouyang's active years. They grant me access to contemporaneous newspaper articles, official documents, speeches, and press editorials featuring Ouyang, providing valuable insights into his activities and contributions. Additionally, these sources shed light on the periodicals with which he was affiliated, enriching our understanding of his cultural and intellectual milieu. I also explored digital databases curated by Western academic institutions, which have accumulated valuable information that occasionally eludes the attention of Chinese scholars, such as the Pioneers of Chinese Dance Digital Archive and Early Chinese Periodicals Online.[76] Within these repositories, I discovered rare photographs of Ouyang and biographical narratives that, being relatively free from censorship constraints, offered more candid insights into his experiences and contributions.

While digital sources constituted a substantial portion of the primary literature I engaged with, I acknowledged the indispensability of traditional paper sources in my research. Specifically, I turned to two prominent newspapers—*Shenbao* (申报, 1872-1949) and *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日报, 1946-2012)—due to their extensive publication history, meticulous preservation, expansive content, and broad readership. However, it is essential to note that both newspapers had inherent limitations for my research. For instance, *Shenbao* predominantly focused on the Shanghai region, whereas *People's Daily* was notorious as an official mouthpiece for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Furthermore, I utilized an anthology of Ouyang's works titled *Ouyang Yuqian quanji* 欧阳予倩全集 (The Complete Works of Ouyang Yuqian) as another significant paper-based source. Published by the Shanghai Literary Publishing House in 1990, this anthology, while not exhaustive, stands as the most comprehensive compilation of Ouyang Yuqian's works available to date. Nevertheless, it is imperative to approach these materials with a critical awareness of potential censorship impacts.

In terms of terminology, as many scholars note, words such as "theatre", "drama" or "opera" are used depending on the author's approach to the subject or their common

[76] See Pioneers of Chinese Dance Digital Archive curated by the University of Michigan Asia Library in 2014: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/d/dance1ic; Early Chinese Periodicals Online (ECPO) supported by the University of Heidelberg: https://ecpo.cats.uni-heidelberg.de/ecpo/.

parlance. To avoid possible confusion, it is necessary to give a brief explanation about the way they are used in my dissertation (except in quotations). It is well known that "theatre" in English has two basic meanings: one refers to dramatic performance as an artistic branch, and the other is a building or venue where dramatic performances are staged. In my work, I use "theatre" in the sense of conveying the building or venue. I apply the term "drama" in a general way in my dissertation, such as "Chinese drama" or "modern spoken drama". Following most common translation in English scholarship, I generally use the word "opera" in the context of specific traditional and regional genres such as "Peking opera" or "Cantonese opera".

Chapter Two

Stepping into the Theatre Spotlight: Ouyang Yuqian in the Drama Territory

On January 7, 1928, the influential dramatist Tian Han published "Tan Ouyang Yuqian 谈欧阳予倩" recounting about the bifurcated life of his life-long friend and colleague Ouyang Yuqian. Tian stated that when he saw Ouyang on the Peking Opera stage with his gorgeous hairstyle and ornate costuming, he would not compliment him as he thought Ouyang was only doing it to please the audience.[1] However, he found himself captivated by Ouyang's spoken drama *Pan Jinlian* 潘金莲, particularly when he heard the female character conventionally perceived as lascivious and immoral openly confessing to her lover and expressing her desires with candour: "I have a warm and pure heart in my snow-white chest".[2] Tian Han asserted that Ouyang's spoken drama, which celebrated liberated sexualities and individualism, exhibited a higher level of sophistication and social significance compared to the operas centred around love stories that Ouyang frequently staged. Consequently, he concluded that "a person's life is sometimes 'sterile' (*pinfa* 贫乏) and sometimes 'substantial' (*chongshi* 充实)".[3] Tian Han's comment highlighted an interesting point in the early Republican era: new forms of drama, in particular the Western-style spoken drama, were often recognized as powerful sites capable of effecting social and political transformation, though the proclaimed "newness" has been proved by academia as never quite thorough.[4] In contrast, local forms of musical drama, such as Peking opera, appeared complicated

[1] Tian Han 田汉, "Tan Ouyang Yuqian 谈欧阳予倩" (Talking about Ouyang Yuqian), *Shenbao* 7 January 1928: 18.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] For example, Edward Gunn, "Introduction", in Edward Gunn ed., *Twentieth-Century Chinese Drama: An Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), vii.

and controversial due to the condemnation of literary traditions.[5] Ouyang's dramatic career was so equivocal in the historical context that he straddled two seemingly opposing fields: the field professing May Fourth "progressive" agenda depicted by the new forms of drama and the mass-mediated commercial popular culture portrayed by Peking opera.

Numerous voices at that time, like Tian Han's, critically expressed displeasure with Ouyang's involvement in commercial entertainment, which they regarded as lacking revolutionary fervour and was a crass concession to business.[6] Tian Han's article emphasized his anxiety over Ouyang's status as an opera singer, representing a prevalent stance among May Fourth reformist intellectuals of breaking decisively with tradition and declaring that there can be no possible link between old and modern culture. They believed that the contents of "traditional" opera, such as fanciful tales of the emperor, beauties, and ghosts, were detrimental to the mission of spreading literacy and building the modern nation, whereas new drama fought against imperialism and foreign invasion while also bringing revolution to China; in short, opera represented the dark past, and spoken drama portrayed the bright future.[7] However, scholarship has long argued that the May Fourth radicals were not nearly as radical as depicted and that a violent rejection of mass and popular culture manifested hegemonic fantasies.[8] Even so, Ouyang's career as an operatic actor was still considered questionable and criticized by the period's "progressive" thinkers and was largely ignored by history. We, therefore, wonder what caused a hegemonic split between opera and spoken drama in the views of Tian Han and his generation of Chinese intellectuals and why they thought local opera culture could not offer the promise of social development.

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[5] Joshua L. Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-Creation of Peking Opera, 1870-1937* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2007), 3.
[6] When talking about his opera-singing experience, Ouyang once expressed, his decision to become a Peking opera actor was rejected by his family, relatives, and friends. See Ouyang Yuqian, "Wo zenyang xuehui le yan jingxi 我怎么学会了演京戏" (How I Learned to Perform Peking Opera), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji* 欧阳予倩全集 (The Complete Works of Ouyang Yuqian) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1990), vol.6, 239-240.
[7] Igor Iwo Chabrowski, *Ruling the Stage: Social and Cultural History of Opera in Sichuan from the Qing to the People's Republic of China* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 217.
[8] Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 55.

This chapter investigates Ouyang's bifurcated role as an opera actor and a teacher of modern dramaturgy under the influence of popular intellectual faith in early Republican China—"the developmental thinking", which was, as Andrew Jones defines, "a means of knowing, explaining, and striving to regulate the process of significant historical transformations".[9] This thinking, as Jones points out, "created an excruciating dilemma for native intellectuals in the context of a colonial or semi-colonial situation", and its application to socio-cultural questions resulted in intense and productive anxiety about their historical agency as intellectuals entrusted with the task of building a modern nation".[10] This notion is also critical in comprehending the historical period of genre division and power realignment in Chinese drama. Under "developmental thinking", Chinese thinkers saw Western realism as the pinnacle of drama history's evolutionary teleology. Spoken drama and its so-called forerunner, civilized drama, a genre inextricably linked to western realism, were thought to represent revolutionary or progressive intention, whereas traditional/indigenous Chinese opera was thought to be the nemesis of such intent and the unabashed commercialization of frivolity.[11] Under this thinking, some radical thinkers who saw the Chinese cultural legacy as inadequate for survival in a new global system of competition put traditional opera (as well as its performers) on the precipice of atavism.

It is impossible not to infer that Ouyang Yuqian was caught in certain ideological traps, where he was supposed to be accountable for developing Chinese drama due to his Western education and knowledge. However, it turns out that he, the assumed subject of the developmental task, inevitably betrayed this logic. He constantly crossed the occupational boundary between operatic entertainer and modern teacher, and he displayed ambivalence and anxiety to the "developmental faith" in his works. According to the conventional narrative of modern Chinese drama, Ouyang Yuqian is a towering figure who pioneered a new Westernized dramatic form of civilized drama beginning in the 1900s.[12] His engagement in Chinese modern spoken drama in the mid-

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[9] Andrew F. Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 3.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Joshua L. Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-Creation of Peking Opera, 1870-1937* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2007), 146.
[12] For example, Ye Changhai 叶长海, *Zhongguo xijuxue shigao* 中国戏剧学史稿 (History of Chinese Drama) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2005); Chen Baichen 陈白尘 and Dong Jian 董健 eds.,

1920s extended his influence even further. However, the historical tale conveniently misses his strong association with Peking opera. His career as an opera performer from 1912 is largely overlooked, and his success on the opera stage was undermined and trapped by the shadow of "developmental thinking" popular among reformist intellectuals of the time. Against this backdrop, this chapter aims to fill this biographical gap.

In tracing Ouyang's early career trajectory, this chapter poses a critical question: Did Chinese drama evolve along a linear path, progressing from the "backward" to the "civilized" to the "modern", or did it embark on a less straightforward journey? Ouyang's narrative emerges as a potential example, as his transition from traditional opera singer to modern drama teacher was not a linear progression, but rather a complex bifurcation where he continuously navigated between the two worlds. This chapter aims to examine how Ouyang crossed the boundary between different occupational roles—an opera actor and spoken drama educator. While Ouyang appeared to move between these roles with relative ease, there are indications that he experienced some degree of stress and anxiety. Consequently, this chapter delves into the ideological challenges encountered by intellectuals like Ouyang, who found themselves burdened with the responsibility of driving societal progress. Additionally, it examines how the seemingly marginalized genre of traditional opera actively embraced modern themes and causes, revealing its previously overlooked significance.

2.1 Developmental Discourse and Twentieth-century Chinese Drama

According to Jones, the modelling of modern Chinese letters was predicated on evolutionary thinking, which was committed to the idea that literature is intrinsically entwined with the demands of national development.[13] In the realm of Chinese drama, during the 1910s, radical and conservative critics alike were creating an evolutionary

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Zhongguo xiandai xiju shigao 中国现代戏剧史稿 (History of Chinese Modern Drama) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1989); and Sun Qingsheng 孙庆升, *Zhongguo xiandai xiju sichaoshi* 中国现代戏剧思潮史 (History of Chinese Modern Drama Trend of Thought) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1994).

[13] Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales*, 10.

history that assumed a decidedly progressive and linear timeframe.[14] Some leave us with a vague image that "*huaju*-realism" (spoken drama or the drama of natural speech) was the pinnacle in the evolutionary teleology of drama history, ridding itself of classic language and conventional cultural baggage. In this way, the roles of *huaju*-playwright and teacher were regarded as vocations introducing Western ideology and were therefore considered superior to the role of an opera actor in a commercial theatre. However, this assumed "developmental thought" as purposive activity of Chinese intellectuals did not sit well. There was an "excruciating gap between development in its transitive and intransitive sense—between agency and abjection, will and contingency, developer and those in need of development".[15] Indeed, this gap did not lead to Chinese drama transitioning from the "old" to the "new", as the advocates had assumed would happen. On the contrary, these anachronistic assumptions veiled the nonlinearity of development, the diverse reasons for attitudes and ideas, and the sophistication of the "old" and the "new" culture.

The October 1918 issue of *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian* 新青年) magazine was dubbed the "Special Issue of Drama Reform", and it launched a scathing attack on Chinese traditional drama, or *jiuju* 旧剧 (old drama). Hu Shi 胡适 (1891-1962) considered expressive forms of Chinese traditional drama, such as singing, dancing, costuming, face painting, and acrobatics, as "vestiges or rudiments" (*yixing wu* 遗形物) of the past, and advocated that educated people who understand evolutionary teleology should help free Chinese drama from its formal constraints.[16] He believed that Chinese drama would fulfil its internal evolutionary imperatives by becoming indistinguishable from Western realist and narrative-oriented drama. Fu Sinian's 傅斯年 (1896-1950) attitude appeared even more fervent than that of Hu Shi, believing that Chinese drama had never evolved into drama in the first place, and that modern-costume Peking opera (*shizhuangxi* 时装戏) and civilized drama should be termed "transitional drama" (or "hybrid drama", *guodu ju* 过渡剧) and should be abandoned

[14] Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, 145.
[15] Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales*, 5.
[16] Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, 146.

until the real modern drama had fully matured.[17] Clearly, Fu's allusion to "transitional drama" was also based on the evolutionary assumption that old drama will morph into new drama. As highlighted by Joshua Goldstein, by the mid-1920s, the May Fourth intellectuals had constructed an evolutionary teleology of drama history with Western realism at its apex.[18] In contrast to the *New Youth* radicals, the conservative Qi Rushan 齐如山 (1875-1962) coined the term "*guoju* 国剧" (national drama) to refer to Peking opera, which he considered the most sophisticated form of all local forms of old drama. Although Qi's genuine stance was to defend the old dramas, his theory of aestheticism also supported an evolutionary narrative of Chinese drama that was eventually a progressive process of refining the elegance of movements and gestures. By distinguishing it from Western spoken drama and any other "hybrid" versions that he characterized as unsophisticated cultural integration, Qi argued that *guoju* was "realism's 'Other'—its absolute opposite" since it was "aesthetic" and "representational".[19] He managed to propose a historical evolutionary narrative in which the Peking opera of the Qing dynasty reached the pinnacle of being the best type of Chinese drama by assimilating and negotiating traits of various regional operas of the past.[20]

The concept of evolution also influenced the functioning of Chinese *xiyuan* 戏院 (theatres). In parallel with theoretical debate, Chinese theatre went from a sense of "pandemonium" to "civilization" through a series of significant architectural and institutional reforms.[21] As related by Wei, the British-designed Lyceum Theatre in Shanghai's foreign settlement impressed Chinese spectators with its elaborate decor and orderly customer experience after its opening in the late nineteenth century.[22] Under this influence, traditional theatres—teahouses (*chayuan* 茶园) were gradually replaced by more Western-style "stages" (*wutai* 舞台) in major Chinese cities with

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[17] See Fu Sinian 傅斯年 ,"Xiju gailiang gemian guan 戏剧改良各面观" (Many Aspects about Drama Reform), *Xin qingnian* 新青年 (New Youth) 5, no.4 (1919): 18-37.
[18] Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, 145.
[19] Qi Rushan 齐如山, "Guoju gailun 国剧概论" (On National Drama), *Qi Rushan quanji* 齐如山全集 (The Complete Works of Qi Rushan) (Taipei: Lianjing chuban, 2016), vol.3, 1301-1418.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Bingbing Wei, "The Bifurcated Theater: Urban Space, Operatic Entertainment, and Cultural Politics in Shanghai, 1900s–1930s" (Ph. D. diss. Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2013), 102.
[22] Ibid.

increasingly larger capacities, advanced structures, and well-equipped facilities. The pervasive public critical discourse against traditional theatres, such as the calling for "*gailiang* 改良" (reform), could easily lead to the misconception that the reformist intelligentsia was deeply involved in the reform of traditional theatres. Although theatre managers at the time valued the voices calling for reform, traditional teahouses were not totally phased out and replaced by Western-style stages, as they catered better to the theatre-going customs of the Chinese audience.[23]

From the mid-Qing onward, teahouse-theatres remained the dominant venue for commercial operatic performances in Chinese cities.[24] Despite defects in hygiene and fire prevention, teahouse-theatres featuring traditional operatic performances, such as Full-Court Fragrance (*Mantingfang* 满庭芳) and Red Cassia Teahouse (*Dangui chayuan* 丹桂茶园) were prevalent in the late-Qing Shanghai. The year 1908 witnessed the building of the first new-style Chinese theatre, the New Stage Theatre (*Xin wutai* 新舞台) in Shanghai's Southern Market (*nanshi* 南市, a Chinese area outside the foreign settlements), which was facilitated by new construction techniques and stimulated by nationalist incentives.[25] Local theatres underwent operational and architectural makeovers during the following decade, primarily due to the expanding Western cultural influence and the demand for a new social order among the urban middle class.[26] Many theatregoers exposed to Western theatrical culture began to view the theatre as an avenue for pure artistic appreciation and became irritated by the disturbance of table tenders (*anmu* 案目) and snack peddlers in traditional teahouses.[27] The burgeoning middle class, who could afford operatic entertainment on a regular basis, also yearned for an impartial and better service unencumbered by aristocratic advantages. Because of these demands, some theatre owners abolished the concession for upper-class theatregoers by installing rows of fixed seats to replace private boxes

[23] Bingbing Wei, "The Bifurcated Theater: Urban Space, Operatic Entertainment, and Cultural Politics in Shanghai, 1900s–1930s", 103.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Hsiao-t'i Li, *Opera, Society, and Politics in Modern China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: the Harvard University Asia Center, 2019), 99-102.
[26] Wei, "The Bifurcated Theater: Urban Space, Operatic Entertainment, and Cultural Politics in Shanghai, 1900s–1930s", 107.
[27] Ibid.

(*baoxiang* 包厢), cancelling the advanced invitation and snack service, weeding out peddlers, and making other operational reforms.[28]

Nevertheless, across the whole theatre sector from the 1910s, there was no smooth transition from "chaotic" to "orderly" and from "Chinese traditional" to "Western modern". It was more difficult to "modernize" the long-standing habits many Chinese spectators were accustomed to than it was to update the institutions, and the modifications made to create an "orderly" public space proved to be too radical. This is mainly because influential elites in the imperial era only attended operatic performances by advanced invitation and in reserved seats.[29] Purchasing tickets on the open market would degrade their social and economic standing and risk them losing face.[30] According to Wei, the habits of the elites during the early Republican era did not alter significantly, and it was still uncommon for affluent patrons to arrive on time and feel content in the theatres' policy of "*duihao ruzuo* 对号入座" (designated seating).[31] Even ordinary spectators, accustomed to cleaning their cheeks with hot towels and indulging in certain pastries or fruits while watching the performance, were unhappy with the modern reforms. The abolishment of these traditional services and the ensuing negative impact on business led some theatre entrepreneurs to restore expensive seating sections and reemploy tea servers in the late 1930s.[32] The fact that there was no distinct divide or linear evolution between traditional and Western-style theatres could also be indicated by the prevalence of theatres in Shanghai's "contact zone". According to Huang, the Isis Theatre (*Shanghai da xiyuan* 上海大戏院), which was built close to the boundary between Shanghai's foreign concessions and Chinese areas in 1907, was emblematic of transcultural exchange and mediated the relations between the Chinese and Western theatregoers.[33]

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[28] Ibid., 108.
[29] Wei, "The Bifurcated Theater: Urban Space, Operatic Entertainment, and Cultural Politics in Shanghai, 1900s–1930s", 106.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 108.
[33] Xuelei Huang, "Through the Looking Glass of Spatiality: Spatial Practice, Contact Relation and the Isis Theater in Shanghai, 1917-1937," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 23, no. 2 (2011): 4-7.

From the preceding discussion, it becomes apparent that the notion of "development" has been extensively conceptualized and debated within intellectual discourse, yet its realization in practice has encountered obstacles. The trajectory of Chinese drama has deviated from the expected transition from the "old" to the "new", influenced by factors such as commercial interests or entrenched audience preferences. Considering this, how does Ouyang Yuqian's drama career intersect with this concept of development? The subsequent sections will address this question by examining some of his activities during the 1910s and 1920s, wherein he navigated between roles as both a spoken drama educator and a performer of popular operas.

2.2 The Bifurcation of Ouyang's Drama Career

As indicated in the preceding section, the contributions to the evolutionary narrative of Chinese drama by the May Fourth radicals and conservatives like Qi Rushan were instrumental in the split between spoken drama and traditional opera. Their viewpoints left a tendency to think that spoken drama represented an agenda of humanistic enlightenment and national mobilization, while popular opera signified little more than commercial consumption. Ouyang's early career embraced the same confluence of concerns, confronting head-on the troubling question of the relationship between the two genres. It was in the presence of this evolutionary ladder and colonial modernity that reformist critics could criticize Ouyang's profession as an opera singer for its "degeneracy". Between 1912 and 1926, Ouyang was active on the Peking opera stages, bringing him condemnation from supporters of the "developmental belief". However, by examining Ouyang's career during this period, I will demonstrate that his operatic fame was a result of the interplay between commercial and intellectual elements. What makes his story notable is that his role as an opera singer went hand in hand with his role as a teacher of Western knowledge in the new-style Shanghai colleges. In this chapter, I set out to show that Ouyang's early career followed bifurcated paths that had as many similarities as contradictions and each of the supposed "opposing" paths fuelled Ouyang's development in the other path. Indeed, his story is a vivid demonstration of how the nation-building agenda and popular culture were mutually promoted in the 1910s and 1920s.

Ouyang Yuqian was born into a wealthy elite family in Liuyang County, Hunan Province, in 1889. His grandfather, Ouyang Zhonghu 欧阳中鹄 (1849-1911), was a provincial magistrate of the Qing government in Guangxi Province, and he was also the mentor of Tan Sitong 谭嗣同 (1865-1898) and Tang Caichang 唐才常 (1867-1900), the political activists of the Hundred Days' Reform. His father, Ouyang Ziyun 欧阳自耘 (unknown), did not enter officialdom like his grandfather, but had great achievements in Confucianism, music, and medicine. Before Ouyang Yuqian went to Japan in 1904 to study business and literature at Meiji and Waseda University, he had obtained an excellent education in Chinese Classics from Tang Caichang and learned English from the translator Zeng Zonggong 曾宗巩 (1866-1938) in Changsha Jingzheng 经正 College.[34] It was in Japan where he started his drama career and entered the public eye in 1907 when he joined the Spring Willow Society (*Chunliu she* 春柳社), a progressive student troupe of "new drama" (*xinju* 新剧, also the civilized drama), as opposed to "old drama" of the operatic tradition.[35] With the objective to enlighten and educate the masses, they adapted many Western novels in a form of spoken dialogues and realistic acting styles. For example, they staged Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (also known as *A Black Slave's Cry to Heaven* in the Chinese version) in Hongō Tokyo. There, Ouyang met his life-long friend and collaborator Lu Jingruo 陆镜若 (1885-1915).[36] After their graduation, Ouyang, under the invitation of Lu, returned to Shanghai and in 1912 participated in organizing a commercial drama troupe, the Society of New Drama Comrades (*Xinju tongzhihui* 新剧同志会), where he later became the senior principal.[37] They rented the Western-style Moutrie Theatre (*Moudeli xiguan* 谋得利戏馆) in Nanjing Road and renamed it the Spring Willow Theatre (*Chunliu juchang* 春柳剧场) to perform civilized drama.[38]

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[34] Jing Libin 景李斌, *Ouyang Yuqian nianpu* 欧阳予倩年谱 (The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2019), 4.
[35] Xiaomei Chen, *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 3.
[36] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian*, 5.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 6.

As an "imported" genre, the appeal of civilized drama was initially quite limited. For commercial purposes, the Spring Willow Theatre simultaneously staged Peking Opera, which was more familiar to the Chinese audience, to promote the visibility of the theatre to the theatre going public. This led Ouyang to formally and systemically research Peking Opera and, as he recalled, he first studied performing as *qingyi* 青衣, the young female impersonator, from Chen Xiangyun 陈祥云 in 1912.[39] By virtue of his tremendous talent and hard work, he quickly became an iconic figure and received many invitations from commercial opera theatres, earning a reputation as "Southern Ouyang, Northern Mei"— the counterpart of Mei Lanfang 梅兰芳 (1894-1961) in southern China.[40] From that year onwards, he was employed by various commercial theatres in Shanghai, including the First Stage of Red Cassia, the New Stage, and several others.[41]

Ouyang's early success in his operatic career cannot solely be attributed to his talent but rather to his identity as a young scholar who threw himself into the entertainment industry. Unlike traditional opera singers who underwent rigorous training from childhood, Ouyang only commenced his study of opera as an adult. Although compared with Mei, Ouyang lacked the profound technical expertise required to compete with him. What likely propelled Ouyang to prominence in the eyes of local theatre managers was his (partial) Western education and the potential influence of his intellectual prowess. According to Wei, since the early twentieth century, local theatre entrepreneurs commonly employed reformist rhetoric and nationalist concepts to present their repertoire as highbrow, even if, in many instances, it seemed unrealistic and exaggerated.[42] This same tactic might have been utilized to craft the public persona of their new actor, Ouyang. In 1917, the Laughter Stage (*Xiao wutai* 笑舞台) announced Ouyang's participation through the *Shenbao* newspaper, employing a tried-and-tested discourse of nation-building. Ouyang was promoted as possessing the "talent of managing society" (*bao jingji cai* 抱经济才) and the "ambition of saving the country"

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[39] Ouyang Yuqian, "How I Learned to Perform Peking Opera", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 266.
[40] Chen Jianjun 陈建军, *Ouyang Yuqian yu zhongguo xiandai xiju* 欧阳予倩与中国现代戏剧 (Ouayang Yuqian and Modern Chinese Drama) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2016), 10.
[41] Ouyang Yuqian, "How I Learned to Perform Peking Opera", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 267.
[42] Wei, "The Bifurcated Theater: Urban Space, Operatic Entertainment, and Cultural Politics in Shanghai, 1900s–1930s", 193.

(*you jiushi zhi* 有救世志), suggesting his superior breadth of view, erudition, and foresight in addressing pressing social problems compared to the majority of opera singers.[43] The advertisement suggested that in addition to highly skilled actors, they boasted singers with "high-minded intention" capable of satisfying viewers' preferences for plays with current affairs or "progressive" content. As Wei observes, the opera culture in Republican Shanghai was diverse, encompassing a range of themes from mythical subjects and advanced technologies to conventional values and new discourses.[44] Despite Ouyang acknowledging in his memoir that his primary motivation for working in opera was financial,[45] the advertisements that fused "developmental thought" with cultural consumption garnered him recognition and a reputation that local opera singers struggled to achieve.

However, singing opera was not his sole career focus during that period as he simultaneously took on the teaching roles in Western-modelled educational institutions. In 1917, he reportedly gave a charitable opera performance on the First Stage to raise funds for several Shanghai new-style schools, such as Yangxing College (*Yangxing xuexiao* 养性学校) and Qinye Women's Normal School (*Qinye nüshifan* 勤业女师范).[46] Many news reports from the time illustrate how Ouyang crossed the occupational boundary between opera entertainer and modern educator. For instance, *Shenbao* hailed his superb performance of "Baochan Delivers the Wine" (*Baochan songjiu* 宝蟾送酒) at the opera house Yi Stage (*Yi wutai* 亦舞台) in March 1923.[47] A few days later, there was a report noting that he had been employed as a professor of "*xiju xue* 戏剧学" (dramaturgy) at the Western-style college, Southern University (*Nanfang daxue* 南方大学).[48] In the same year, we learn about his upcoming performance of the opera "Peach-blossom Face" (*Renmian taohua* 人面桃花) at the famed New Stage (*Xin wutai*

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[43] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian*, 56. Also, see *Shenbao* 24 October 1917.
[44] Wei, "The Bifurcated Theater: Urban Space, Operatic Entertainment, and Cultural Politics in Shanghai, 1900s–1930s", 167.
[45] Ouyang Yuqian, "Since I have been Performing Opera", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 48.
[46] "Yangxing xuexiao yanju choufei 养性学校演剧筹费" (Raising Funds through Plays in Yangxing College), *Shenbao* 21 May 1917: 11.
[47] "Zuori yi wutai guanju ji 昨日亦舞台观剧记" (Notes on Watching Opera in Yi Stage Yesterday), *Shenbao* 22 January 1923: 18.
[48] "Xijuxue zhi xin jiangshou 戏剧学之新讲授" (A New Lecture of Dramaturgy), *Shenbao* 19 March 1923: 18.

新舞台) theatre,[49] and his appointment as a professor at the Two Rivers Women's Normal College (*Liangjiang nüzi shifan* 两江女子师范), which read as:

> Dramaturgy is a subject in many of our school's courses. We have recently enlisted Ouyang Yuqian to lead the instruction for this course, scheduled every Friday. The students are eagerly anticipating the sessions.[50]

Like many elite intellectuals of his time, Ouyang was involved in advocating women's education and dedicated to promoting Western dramaturgy as a means of advancing new cultural perspectives. According to available reports, we are aware that, in addition to delivering lessons such as "An Overview of Japanese and Western Drama", one of Ouyang's primary activities was teaching subjects that endorsed modern knowledge and values. For instance, in April 1923, he presented the lecture "The Origin of Clothes and its Popularity" at the Fine Arts College of Shanghai University, aiming to instil aesthetic education in students.[51] Concurrently, he engaged in discussions on "The Relationship between Women and Literature" with his students at Liangjiang Normal School, emphasizing women's personal growth.[52] Ouyang encouraged his female students to actively participate in literary activities, asserting in his notes that women possessed a superior awareness of literature and art due to their "innate inclinations" (*tianxing* 天性).[53] Going beyond the advocacy for "natural feet" (*tianzu* 天足, in contrast to the traditional backward custom of foot-binding for women), Ouyang connected his acknowledgment of women's biological superiority with their potential role in making a unique contribution to the modern nation. By recognizing

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[49] "Ouyang Yuqian jinwan yan renmian taohua 欧阳予倩今晚演人面桃花" (Ouyang Yuqian Performs *Peach-blossom Face* Tonight), *Shenbao* 15 October 1923: 18.
[50] "Yanjiu xijuxue zhi youyixiao 研究戏剧学之又一校" (Another School for the Research of Dramaturgy), *Shenbao* 30 March 1923:18.
[51] "Meizhuan zhi jiangyan ji xiaoyou huiyi 美专之讲演及校友会议" (Lectures in Fine Arts College and Alumni Meeting), *Shenbao* 19 April 1923:18.
[52] During teaching in the Liangjiang Normal School, Ouyang delivered a speech titled "Wenyi yu nüzhi zhi guanxi 文艺与女子之关系" (the relationship between women and literature and art), in which he claimed, "I think there is an especially relevant relationship between women and literature and art due to their innate inclinations". [The original Chinese text is 鄙意,女子之与文艺, 尤有关係, 盖性之所近,有以致之]. See "Another School for the Study of Dramaturgy", *Shenbao* 30 March 1923:18.
[53] Ibid.

women as physically and cognitively capable of leading active and public lives, this idea engaged with theoretical efforts to redefine womanhood, as pursued by reformist intellectuals like Hu Shi addressing the "woman question" (*funü wenti* 妇女问题) amid internal political degradation and external crises.[54] Ouyang's teaching bore the significant influence of the humanistic ideals of May Fourth era educators, yet he diverged from the notion that singing opera was inherently at odds with the modern educational agenda.

Additionally, during his teaching tenure, he actively participated in organizing entertainment fairs, also known as *Youyi hui* (游艺会 in Chinese). As Ge Fei contends, *Youyi hui*, a form of amusement rally that originated in the Late Qing under the influence of Western-style education, aimed at instructing students in singing, dancing, and various performing arts for purposes of celebration, political propaganda, and charitable activities.[55] The progressive goals and Western influence of *Youyi hui* are undeniable. In these fairs, Ouyang instructed his students in opera singing, with "Peach-blossom Face" being the piece they favoured and performed most frequently (see figure 2.1).[56] Based on a 9th-century legend, this opera portrays the romance between Cui Hu 崔护, a Tang Dynasty scholar, and Du Yichun 杜宜春, a captivating woman whom Cui encounters during his travels. The narrative unfolds as Du becomes enamoured with the scholar, especially when she despairs of ever seeing him again. Despite introducing opera performance into the school setting, some believed that it would enhance students' musical literacy and contribute to fundraising.[57] However, it faced significant criticism. In 1927, a critic named Yu Cu 羽卒 contended that Peking opera performances, particularly those featuring sentimental stories, on college campuses were perceived as a form of low-grade entertainment, and he argued that they were corrupting the minds

[54] For example, Hu Shi delivered a speech called "Meiguo de furen 美国的妇人" (Women in the United States) at Beijing Women's Normal School in 1918 to celebrate the concept of "new style women". Also see *Hu Shi wencun* 胡适文存 (Existing Works of Hu Shi)), 4 vol. (Beijing: Waiwen chubanshe, 2013), vol.4, 39-62.
[55] Gei Fei 葛飞, *Xiju, geming yu dushi xuanwo: 1930 niandai zuoyi juyun, juren zai Shanghai* 戏剧、革命与都市漩涡: 1930 年代左翼剧运、剧人在上海 (Drama, Revolution, and Urban Vortex: Leftwing Operas and Actors in Shanghai in the 1930s) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008),108.
[56] "Ge xuexiao xiaoxi huiji 各学校消息汇记" (News from the Schools), *Shenbao* 2 July 1922: 14.
[57] Ibid.

of young students.[58] This once again indicates that Ouyang's operatic career existed within a discursive environment where "development" could be perceived as a pedagogical process, wherein the enlightened were tasked with elevating the yet-to-be-developed.[59] Traditional opera, in this context, was considered discordant in the broader cultural development project. Confronted with Chinese intellectuals viewing their circumstances through cultural Darwinian terms, how did Ouyang respond? Did the historical mission concerning the growth and progress of the nation and its citizens leave its mark on Ouyang's operatic works?

Figure 2. 1 Ouyang in the Peking opera *Peach-blossom Face*, *Youyi huabao* 游艺画报 (Amusement Pictorials), no.34 (1926): 1.

[58] Yu Cu 羽卒, "Yishujie yinggai fangzhi fuhua 艺术界应该防止腐化" (The Art World Should Prevent Corruption), *Shenbao* 13 November 1927: 3.
[59] Jones, *Developmental Fairy*, 6.

2.3 Adaptation as Creation: *Honglou* Operas and Historical Progress

As shown in the first section, some radical reformist critics shared an antagonistic view of traditional Chinese opera, which eventually relegated it to the bottom of the evolutionary ladder with Westernized forms prevalent on the upper rungs. According to Jones, this hostility stemmed in part from their ideological and symbolic investment in Westernism and cultural Darwinism that characterized the May Fourth intellectuals.[60] This evolutionary assumption, which held indigenous traditions partly responsible for China's weakness in the face of foreign powers, negatively influenced people's views of traditional opera. Ouyang was affected by this evolutionary thinking, just as he managed to radically reinvent and reinterpret traditional content when he worked for various Peking opera houses. He arrived at a synthesis of these opposing viewpoints without abandoning the power of tradition, providing the same agenda as the May Fourth program of developing and modernizing China. However, an examination of his operatic adaptations reveals Ouyang's anxiety about how far "development" could go as a purposive means of rescuing society. He left an impression that any individual growth brought about by enlightenment could nevertheless be plunged into tragedy by a mismatch with a slowly developing external environment, which may also represent his reflection on "developmental necessitarianism". As Jones points out, the "developmental thinking" of early twentieth-century Chinese intellectuals had its characteristic complexities.[61]

At the dawn of the twentieth century, Chinese reformist intellectuals proposed reforming the relations of the sexes in China. They introduced the term "modern women" or "new women" in reformist discourse to modify the traditional notion of "good wife and wise mother" (*xianqi liangmu* 贤妻良母).[62] Impressed by Henrik Ibsen's (1828-1906) "Nora" as a model for independent and emancipated personhood, they provided several Chinese versions of *A Doll's House* in the form of spoken drama, such as Hu Shi's *Zhongshen dashi* 终身大事 (The Greatest Event in Life, 1917). One

[60] Ibid., 64
[61] Ibid.
[62] Shu Yang, "I Am Nora, Hear Me Roar: The Rehabilitation of the Shrew in Modern Chinese Theater," *Nan Nü: Men, Women, and Gender in Early and Imperial China*, no. 2 (2016): 292.

cannot find a more powerful May Fourth symbol than the imagery of a daughter who fled her patriarchal family in search of unrestricted love and economic independence. It is worth noting that Ouyang took on the same radical dimension in his operatic productions adapted from the traditional novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou Meng* 红楼梦, *Honglou* hereafter) written by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 during the mid-1910s. He incorporated progressive and reformist ideas into his adapted *Honglou* operas, promoting free marriage, the nuclear family, gender equality, new women, and so on. His operatic career must therefore be understood within the context of a larger agenda about social development. Through staging the disobedient female characters like Zhineng 智能, Ouyang aimed to depict a vision of womanhood characterized by strength and sexual allure. However, as the narrative unfolds, it becomes apparent that even the characters portrayed as "modern" remain vulnerable and unable to alter their tragic destinies. As suggested by Jones, on developmental narratives, individuals, as much as nations, are assumed to move along a continuum from the "savage" to the "civilized".[63] The failed process of "civilization" or "modernization" of characters in Ouyang's operas may represent his challenging views of historical progress and anxiety on the extent of development as a necessary activity of rescuing society.

According to Yeh, from the 1860s to the 20th century, the most admired Chinese traditional tale, *Honglou*, was deeply involved in the "new Shanghai scenario", becoming a cultural legacy and symbol shared by the aristocracy, merchants, and new urban classes.[64] As is well known, each young woman in the novel has her unique personality and character with which readers can easily identify. Since the novel's publication in the late 18th century, the stories of each specific character have been a major source of popular operatic adaptations. It was also popular among Shanghai courtesans to don the name of a particular character from the novel to indicate a persona they would like to emulate.[65] For example, some courtesans adopted "Daiyu 黛玉", the name of the most beautiful and fragile woman in the novel, to signal a poetic link between their enchantments. Ouyang's operatic adaptation of *Honglou* was produced

[63] Jones, *Developmental Fairy*, 29.
[64] Catherine Vance Yeh, *Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture, 1850-1910* (Seattle University of Washington Press, 2006), 139-140.
[65] Ibid.

in response to urban leisure and consumption, and it was also driven by an intellectual pursuit to contribute to the construction of a modern nation. From the mid-1910s onward, Ouyang delved into the adaptation and performance of operas based on *Honglou*. He displayed a particular fascination with various female characters such as Wang Xifeng 王熙凤, You Sanjie 尤三姐, Qingwen 晴雯, and Yuanyang 鸳鸯. These characters shared the common trait of refusing to conform to traditional norms of silence and subservience, standing out for possessing qualities that defy Confucian ideals of femininity. Wang Xifeng, for instance, is renowned for her ambition, assertiveness, and even cruelty. In 1915, Ouyang brought to the stage an episode depicting her clash with in-laws over her husband's affair at the Spring Willow Theatre, known as "*Danao ninguo fu* 大闹宁国府" (Havoc in the Ning family).[66]

Ouyang's attention to the incarnation of a "new woman" fleeing from home for personal liberation and free love was more evident in his adapted opera *Mantou an* 馒头庵 (Wheat-cake Priory) in 1916. This story was based on chapters 15-16 of the original novel, in which the Buddhist nun Zhineng falls in love with the noble Qin Zhong 秦钟. They are separated by Qin's aristocratic family due to Zhineng's religious background and lower social class. Ouyang adapted it into a five-act opera and played the role of Zhineng (see figure 2.2). Different from the novel, Ouyang restored the complete life of Zhineng with an introduction to her family background. In Ouyang's version, she partially attributes her misfortune to her weak and irresponsible parents, alleging that their abandonment drove her into a nunnery, thus losing the chance for her to love and marry freely. Her sense of exploitation also comes from the nunnery where she is imprisoned, which is absent in the novel. In addition to refuting the nunnery as a "*qingliang shijie* 清凉世界" (a Buddhist phrase to describe the peaceful place), she refers to it as "a pit of fire" that perpetually constrains her.[67] She makes the implication that had she grown up in a happy family, she would not have sought solace from Qin Zhong and ultimately committed adultery with him.[68] By inventing her backstory and her hatred of it, Ouyang constructed an emblem of patriarchal oppression and conflict

[66] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian*, 18. Also, see *Shenbao* 17 January 1915.
[67] Ouyang Yuqian, "Mantou an 馒头庵" (Wheat-cake Priory), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.3, 16.
[68] Ibid.

that leaves Zhineng with no other option than to take the path to the nunnery and onwards to her dalliance with Qin Zhong.

Figure 2. 2 Ouyang Yuqian (right) played the role of Zhineng in the Peking Opera *Mantou an* 馒头庵 (Wheat-cake Priory), *Shenbao* 5 July 1915.

In the original tale, Zhineng is portrayed as a hapless victim who is wrongly accused of seducing the young gentry, Qin Zhong, who is powerless and unable to protect her from his father Qin Bangye's 秦邦业 banishment. In Ouyang's adaptation, Zhineng denounced Qin's impotence and his father's despotism as a representation of her enlightenment and strength. By differentiating the concepts of lust and love, she justifies herself when Qin Bangye presses her to confess her crime and sings: "We had pledged to the heaven that we would spend our older years together, and it was in no

way an adultery".[69] She proposes a modern logic, of which Qin Bangye is ignorant, that lust and love are mutually inclusive. They speak on incompatible parallel tracks, with her viewing sexuality as proof of her profound love, while Qin Bangye regards it as the cause of his son's degeneration and illness. On realizing Qin Zhong's feebleness, she decides to take the blame for their love affair and accepts the punishment, singing: "I will return the debt of romance with confession and leave behind the mortal world by dying".[70] With such a statement, she redefines the gendered power dynamics between Qin and herself, claiming the upper hand in their relationship. This is in vivid contrast to the original story where the affluent gentry subjugates her, whereas the female dominates the male in Ouyang's adaptation. Furthermore, Ouyang endeavoured to reshape Zhineng from an "aphasia" facing adultery and false accusations to a modern woman who is unashamed to openly discuss sexual desire in a patriarchal society. By declaring, "the Buddhist meditation is pointless, but the carnal desire is precious",[71] she justifies her affinity to free love and sexuality to the audience. In fact, all the female characters Ouyang brought to the opera stage were noted for their unrestrained behaviours in the original novel. In his adaptation of their stories, Ouyang emboldened the female characters by justifying their unfettered sexuality, which refutes their "lubricious" accusation in earlier texts and conjures up the image of the modern woman who enjoys amorous relationships.

Through his adaptations, Ouyang was dispelling the myth that Chinese opera should be considered antiquated and denounced the binary structure of the radical "Western-style drama" and the obsolescent "traditional opera". Through his operatic adaptations of *Honglou*, Ouyang showed that it was possible to actively play with elements of a historical tale to both modernise and re-imagine it, despite the restrictions of operatic rhyme and prejudice imposed within traditional opera. However, grafting modernist ideology onto opera led to what Yomi Braester called the "shadow of literary history"—the narrative dynamics of the original plot and the limits of textual rewriting.[72] In his adapted version, Ouyang did not change the fundamental storyline

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[69] Ibid., 30. [The original Chinese text: 我二人誓天日相期白首, 并非是卖风流逾墙钻隙, 苟且相投].
[70] Ibid., 35. [The original Chinese text: 还清这风流债魂兮忏悔，从此后弃红尘大限同归].
[71] Ibid. [The original Chinese text: 梵行清修都是假，那春宵一刻珍无价].
[72] Yomi Braester, *Witness against History: Literature, Film, and Public Discourse in Twentieth-Century China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008), 63.

or the final destiny of Zhineng; instead, he reinvented her character with a modern interpretation of her motivation and sensibilities. He even created an allegory in the first act to highlight the poignancy of his plot and inevitable tragedy. At the request of her two suitors, Qin Zhong and Jia Baoyu, Zhineng tells a tale of two children trying to catch a pretty butterfly. One of the boys fails in his quest, while the other succeeds but harms the butterfly leaving it to limp away.[73] Zhineng's narration of the tale acts as a metaphor to symbolise the failure of Jia's courtship, Qin's success, and her eventual banishment by Qin's father.

In terms of retaining the same tragic finale in his opera with that of the novel, Ouyang explained: "Zhineng's love is pure, but in that social setting, their end is doomed to be tragic".[74] He applied the same rationale when adapting other *Honglou* female characters, using the same reasoning of "social environment determined". When rethinking the fate of You Sanjie (a woman who commits suicide to prove her innocence to her lover), Ouyang stated, "She is an opinionated and resolute woman; however, she must perish in vain in a setting like the household of Jia".[75] As pointed out by Jones, evolutionary thinking in the context of the semi-colonial situation created intense anxiety for local intellectuals about their historical agency.[76] It is clear from the words that Ouyang regards historical development as so contingent and slow that any sort of human endeavour is wasted. In addition to the original narrative dynamics that invoked doomed pathos and tragedy, I think the dynamics of Ouyang's adaptation came from his scepticism regarding the developmental narratives, in which individuals and nations are assumed to move along a continuum from the "backward" to the "modern". Here Ouyang grapples with the mismatch between the developed subject and the undeveloped society (or those understood to be unenlightened masses, like Qin Bangye). In his scripts, these women, despite their modern sensibility, are unable to change their fate by pushing the course of history, and their awakening to new ideas was merely a

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[73] Ouyang Yuqian, "Mantou an", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.3, 20.
[74] In terms of adapting the destiny of Zhineng, Ouyang noted, "The love of Zhineng is pure, but in that social environment, their end is bound to be tragic". See "Wo zipai ziyan de jingxi 我自排自演的京戏" (Peking Operas I Rehearsed and Performed), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol. 6, 271.
[75] Ibid., 273. [The Chinese text:可见她是有主意的, 斩钉截铁的, 人穷志不穷, 可是在贾家那样的环境里，她也只有枉死].
[76] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (Boston: Mariner Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019), 79.

heightened consciousness of powerlessness. It brings to mind Walter Benjamin's canonical use of "the angel of history", a character with its head facing the past and its body propelled toward the future.[77] Ouyang shared the evocation of tragicomic figures struggling against history, which suggested his apprehension concerning connections and tensions between tradition and modernity on the commercial opera stage and his challenge to what has been a governing faith of modern Chinese intellectuals: the discourse of development. However, the introduction of "developmentalism" was an elite undertaking.[78] Common people did not share the same enthusiasm toward "developmental belief" as the cadre of reformist intellectuals. Consequently, how did Ouyang perceive his role as an opera actor in his engagements with ordinary audiences? Did he shed the "developmental burden" and embrace the allure of being an opera star in the modern metropolis, akin to some of his peers? In the forthcoming section, I will examine Ouyang's introspections regarding his journey as an opera actor, drawing insights from his own autobiographical accounts and self-referential sources.

2.4 Opera Actor, Courtesans, and Urban Experience

During the early Republican era, leading Peking opera actors were bestowed with wealth and adoration from the ardent audiences enchanted by their brilliant performances.[79] In 1927, after completing his rendition of "*Yu tangchun* 玉堂春" (The Story of Su San), opera star Xun Huisheng 荀慧生 (1900-1968) experienced this first-hand, receiving over two hundred gifts, including trophies and flower baskets.[80] He exited the theatre in high spirits, accompanied by the music of a military band.[81] In contrast, Ouyang's operatic journey did not mirror the fulfilment enjoyed by Xun Huisheng. Ouyang grappled with ambivalence from the onset of his career, especially when the value of traditional opera became a disputable topic among intellectuals and cultural critics. One objective of this section is to delve into Ouyang's intricate

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[77] Liang Luo, *The Avant-Garde and the Popular in Modern China: Tian Han and the Intersection of Performance and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 7.
[78] Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales*, 8.
[79] Wei, "The Bifurcated Theatre: Urban Space, Operatic Entertainment, and Cultural Politics in Shanghai, 1900s–1930s", 211.
[80] "Linbie Liuxiang Xun Huisheng 临别留香荀慧生" (Xun Huisheng Leaves Fragrance before His Departure), *Shenbao* 22 December 1927: 17.
[81] Ibid.

emotions while working as an opera actor. I discern Ouyang's emotional landscape by closely scrutinizing his interactions with devoted followers and courtesans within the vibrant cultural milieu of Shanghai. These encounters serve as rich fodder for his introspective narrative, allowing for an exploration of his inner world and the complex dynamics of his relationships. I posit that the influence of "developmental thinking" contributed to his sense of disorientation and anxiety as a young scholar entering the opera industry. While troubled by his association with this ostensibly "backward" profession and driven to set himself apart from ordinary opera singers, he experienced the remarkable dimensions of the modern metropolis throughout his operatic journey. Perhaps, perceiving modernity through the lens of this seemingly "obsolete" cultural form provided him with a perspective that few intellectuals of his time could grasp or appreciate.

Ouyang, who had come of age in the early twentieth century, was well familiar with Peking opera and other local operas since frequently encountering them at his family parties. However, when he decided to pursue a professional career as a Peking opera singer, vehement opposition arose from his family and friends. They feared it would tarnish the family's reputation and social standing as a scholar-official household. This resistance stemmed, in part, from the fact that performing operas in China was still perceived as a trivial pursuit, lacking the equal valuation accorded to other professions.[82] As he detailed in his 1953 memoir, "How I Learned to Act Peking Opera" (*Wo zenme xuehui le yan jingxi* 我怎么学会了演京戏), Ouyang recounted the reactions he faced when deciding to pursue acting. He noted, "When I decided to act, it is needless to say that members of my family rejected it unanimously; some of my friends and relatives despised me; some even moaned in sorrow and declared that the family of Ouyang is ruined from now on".[83] Beyond these adverse external opinions, Ouyang's own perspective on this phase of his career was complex. Involvement in opera brought him nuanced interactions with the audience. While he often received admiration from women of the gentry for his exceptional performances, as well as adoration from renowned courtesans, these experiences were not necessarily perceived as pleasant by Ouyang himself.

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[82] Li, *Opera, Society, and Politics in Modern China*, 56.
[83] Ouyang Yuqian, "How I Learned to Act Peking Opera", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 239-240.

As outlined by Catherine Yeh, in the late Qing era, literati earned their livelihood through the art of words, akin to how courtesans traded in smiles, forging a connection rooted in a longstanding tradition of mutual sympathy and affinity.[84] The practice of young scholars dedicating a significant portion of their leisure time and resources to the city's brothels, where they became key patrons of courtesans during their Imperial Examinations, solidified and nearly institutionalized this association in imperial China.[85] However, the dynamics of their relationship underwent a transformation in the Shanghai Foreign Settlements post-1840. Urban intellectuals, formerly part of the traditional literati class, assumed a more business-like role, actively contributing to shaping the public image of courtesans within the burgeoning entertainment industry of the city.[86] The relationship between opera singers and courtesans appears to be even more complex. On the one hand, they were entwined in business-like arrangements within the theatres. Since the late Qing period, theatres held significance as workplaces for courtesans to socialize and accompany the affluent, even though certain exclusive services, such as the "runner-service" responsible for their invitations, had been discontinued since the early twentieth century.[87] Consequently, maintaining amicable relations with local theatre operators ensured that courtesans encountered minimal disruption when seeking potential clients in these venues. Additionally, some courtesans sought to enhance their skills by learning singing techniques from opera singers, aiming to captivate their affluent clientele. On the other hand, romantic entanglements between opera singers and courtesans were commonplace, with their anecdotes becoming particularly sought after by entertainment newspapers and the voyeuristic public during the Republican period.[88]

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[84] Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 179-181.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid., 183.
[87] Wei, "The Bifurcated Theatre: Urban Space, Operatic Entertainment, and Cultural Politics in Shanghai, 1900s–1930s", 102.
[88] See Yeh, Catherine Vance. "A Public Love Affair or a Nasty Game? The Chinese Tabloid Newspaper and the Rise of the Opera Singer as Star." *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2003): 13-51.

Ouyang acknowledged that engaging with courtesans was a necessary aspect of promoting his operatic career.[89] He candidly admitted to being frequently courted by courtesans, with Chen Yu 陈寓, a renowned prostitute residing on Tibet Road in Shanghai, being a notable presence at his performances. Chen Yu would attend, bearing gifts for Ouyang and his colleagues, and extend invitations for banquets at her residence. However, Ouyang expressed unease regarding his close association with Chen Yu. He frequently employed derogatory Chinese slang, referring to the unhealthy relationship between Chen Yu and his colleagues as "*diao bangzi, zha pintou* 吊膀子, 轧姘头" (literally translated as dallying with prostitutes). [90] In doing so, he cautioned them about the dangers of being ensnared by the allure of luxurious lifestyles associated with courtesans. According to Ouyang, such intimacy jeopardized his social standing and projected an image of frivolity, even though it was commonplace at the time for courtesans of higher economic status to select handsome opera singers as their private lovers. Moreover, he once found himself the recipient of a love letter from a courtesan named Daoxiang 稻香. Within her letter, she expressed her admiration for Ouyang, referencing a traditional Chinese poem, "people are both at the same misfortune and sympathize with each other" (*Tongshi tianya lunluo ren* 同是天涯沦落人), which illustrates a shared sense of alienation. [91] However, in his reply, Ouyang chose not to identify with the term "misfortune" (*lunluo* 沦落) in describing himself. [92] He steadfastly declined to acknowledge any resemblance in their societal positions, firmly believing in the weight of his social responsibilities. Although we should remain sceptical of self-referential material, it becomes evident that Ouyang's perception of opera performers approximates to what Chen Duxiu dubbed "great teachers of the masses". In his 1904 essay "On Opera" (*Lun xiqu* 论戏曲), Chen advocated for Chinese intellectuals to create high-spirited operas, emphasizing their role in cultivating moral

[89] Ouyang Yuqian, "Since I have been Performing Opera", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 68. In the article, he said, "I once worked for the theatre the Stage of Laughter, and it didn't take long for many women to express their goodwill to me, but I didn't care to mess with them".
[90] Ibid, 47-48.
[91] Ibid, 48. In the article, Ouyang said, "Although I was poor at that time, I was by no means 'degenerate'. No matter how bad my encounter was, I never pretended to be degenerate to show the beauty of decadence". [The original Chinese text: 我那时虽然穷一点, 绝不是天涯沦落, 我无论遭遇怎么不好, 从不肯自命沦落已显其颓废的美].
[92] Ibid.

character and serving political objectives.[93] According to Chen, opera surpassed fiction and newspapers in its effectiveness in enlightening the masses and fostering social development.[94] Regardless of whether Ouyang fully subscribed to the belief in "developmentalism" during that period, it is conceivable that he positioned his career as an opera singer in a sense that is relevant to serious undertaking, contrasting it with frivolous urban entertainment.

Despite facing contrasting opinions regarding his career as an opera singer, Ouyang's engagement in this profession led him to discover the splendid facets of the modern metropolis, an experience few intellectuals of his era shared. When confronted with the notion of change and the emergence of a novel urban lifestyle, the new class of Chinese urban intellectuals during the late Qing period seemed alienated and somewhat disoriented. Their ambivalence reflected their unease towards Western social values and material culture, which posed a threat to the traditional hierarchy and their elevated positions within it.[95] From this perspective, the opera singer's adaptation to the new urban culture and their engagement with Western material culture positions them not only as "developed" individuals but also as pioneers, leading the way through interactions with courtesans. Despite Ouyang's professed "vigilance", his involvement with courtesans took a distinctive form. For instance, he borrowed clothes and jewels from celebrated and affluent courtesans, who set the fashion trends, to use as his stage costumes. This approach not only saved him a substantial amount of money but also satisfied the insatiable appetite of the Shanghai audience for novelty and extravagance, providing him with a competitive edge over other performers.[96] While Ouyang did not explicitly acknowledge it, a mutual sense of fashion was shared between opera singers and courtesans, with each influencing the other. As highlighted by Yeh, opera singers frequently exchanged ideas on makeup techniques and dressing styles.[97] In certain respects, opera performers and courtesans were engaged in parallel pursuits, both ensnared by the allure of fashion and glamour.

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[93] Chen Duxiu 陈独秀, "Lun xiqu 论戏曲" (On Opera), *Xin xiaoshuo* 新小说 (New Fiction) 2, no.2 (1905): 4-8.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 94.
[96] Ouyang Yuqian, "Since I have been Performing Opera", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 70.
[97] Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, 62.

Furthermore, Ouyang discovered that interacting with courtesans afforded him the opportunity to immerse himself in the avant-garde urban lifestyle prevalent in Shanghai, the epitome of a Western-style metropolis in Republican China. Beyond merely shaping the city's fashion trends, these courtesans wielded significant influence in the public sphere, projecting their impact through distinctive demeanour and exotic presence.[98] Symbolizing Shanghai settlements culture, they embodied a dynamic fusion of Eastern and Western elements, tradition, and modernity. Through their regular interactions, courtesans introduced opera singers to novelties from the West, subsequently becoming integral to their identity and lifestyle as entertainers in Shanghai. For instance, as a gesture of affection toward opera singers, courtesans would often send small gifts onstage, and in return, the singers would reciprocate with Western sweets, coffee, or chocolates. Ouyang recounted an example where his colleague, Zha Tianying 查天影, fell in love with a high-class courtesan with a sweet tooth. In order to maintain their connection and uphold his position at the pinnacle of glamour and fashion, Zha Tianying invested a substantial amount of money and time in shops specializing in "foreign sugar" (*yangtang* 洋糖).[99] He also purchased Western desserts, wines, and other exotic gifts for her.[100] While on one level, Zha's financial investment symbolized the role of a traditional patron-protector, even though patrons had lost historical privileges by that time, it more significantly reflected Shanghai's attributes of modernity. Their friendships with courtesans were often fuelled by novelty, amusement, and even elements that they themselves may not have been able to afford. In this way, both opera singers and courtesans emerge as central figures in the bustling city, acting as intermediaries that bridge traditional culture with the provocative elements of Western material culture. Instead of bearing perceived "obsolete" marks, they stand as pioneers actively embracing the new and the modern.

2.5 Ouyang and Opera on the Transregional Journey

While it was difficult for Ouyang to remain unaffected by his contemporaries who subscribed to "developmental thinking" and relegated Chinese opera to the bottom rung

[98] Ibid., 21.
[99] Ouyang Yuiqn, "Since I have been Performing Opera", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 68-70.
[100] Ibid.

of the evolutionary ladder, the turmoil of the war years acted as the catalyst for traditional Chinese opera to gain intellectual re-evaluation of its socio-political significance. The War of Resistance (1937-45) was a chaotic and brutal chapter in modern Chinese history, during which intellectuals' cultural productions reached a "formal looseness" or what Shu-mei Shih has called an "aesthetic of dissolution" that blurred the lines between the so-called "backward" and "developed", Chinese and Western.[101] The large body of aesthetic theory produced at this time, especially Lao She's 老舍 (1899-1966) "new wine into old bottles",[102] also contradicted the linear evolution of Chinese drama since traditional opera was elevated as a potential and efficient vehicle to spread nationalism and war mobilisation. Commenting on the resurgence of tradition in the context of wartime conditions, Edward Gunn concludes that it "might have seemed that the Qing dynasty (1649-1911) has never ended, and no May Fourth Movement (1915-1921) had ever taken place".[103] During the outbreak of war in August 1937, Ouyang took action in response to the Battle of Shanghai by founding the patriotic troupe *Zhonghua jutuan* 中华剧团 (Zhonghua Opera Company, abbreviated as ZOC hereafter), specializing in traditional opera performances.[104] Through a reinterpretation of traditional legends highlighting female warriors such as Liang Hongyu 梁红玉 and Hua Mulan 花木兰, Ouyang and ZOC turned their touring performance into a powerful tool for championing national salvation and fuelling resistance against the Japanese occupation. As conditions in Shanghai worsened, Ouyang sought refuge in Hong Kong in April 1938.[105] In this new environment, his standing as a professional actor, coupled with close relationships with famous fellow performers, not only enhanced his reputation but also facilitated the accumulation of new symbolic capital for his career. This segment elucidates how Ouyang forged closer ties with the intellectual collective and explores the intersection of traditional opera with modern causes and Westernized cosmopolitanism during its transregional journey.

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[101] Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 383.
[102] "New wine into old bottles" called for the use of popular traditional forms or loose and hybrid forms to represent wartime realities. See Lao She 老舍, *Laoshe wenji* 老舍文集 (Collected Works of Laoshe), 19 vol. (Beijing: Remin chubanshe, 1988), vol.16: 216.
[103] Edward M. Gunn, *Unwelcome Muse: Chinese Literature in Shanghai and Peking, 1937-1945*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 151-192.
[104] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian*, 198.
[105] Ibid., 199.

Since the 1920s, when mainland intellectuals sought sanctuary in British colonial Hong Kong, they derided the local customs as servile and antiquated, in no way comparable to the May Fourth Enlightenment.[106] As exiled elites, they were desperate to establish cultural dominance in a strange place that was viewed as a "cultural desert" and "exotic" in the popular stereotype and scholarly discourse.[107] Confronting forced migration and the looming threat of foreign invasion on the mainland, a convergence occurred between the modern ideals of May Fourth scholars and the native Confucian traditions they aimed to reform. Traditional opera, within this context, underwent a transformation, shedding its symbolism of "backwardness" and instead emerging as a representation of "Chineseness" and authentic cultural roots. It played a pivotal role in "policing" and "guiding" the cultural landscape of their settlements. For instance, when Ouyang brought his student and ZOC colleague, the opera actress Jin Suqin, to Hong Kong for charitable performances, they received a warm welcome from mainland intellectuals seeking refuge there. Glorifying the performance, the popular magazine in Shanghai, *China Pictorial* (*Zhonghua* 中华), coined the term "old artists with new ideas", [108] despite the show being largely similar to those performed on the mainland. Even Tian Han, who had previously expressed dissatisfaction with Ouyang's operatic practices, underwent a change of heart and composed a poem praising his performances as a "flag of morale and bravery".[109] For critics like Tian Han, the significance of traditional opera performance is nuanced and diverse, with a performance in a wartime setting deemed more important compared to its staging in a teahouse-theatre for paying audiences.

With a growing reputation, Ouyang and ZOC were becoming ever more popular as they embarked on performances to the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia, promoting patriotism and national salvation. Throughout this journey, they found themselves as performers of traditional opera deeply entangled with the forces of "modernity". In the summer of 1940, a troupe of approximately eighty opera singers

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[106] Poshek Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2003), 51
[107] Ibid.
[108] "Liangge you xinsixiang de nüyiren 两个有新思想的女艺人" (Two Female Entertainers with New Ideas), *Zhonghua* 中华 (China Pictorial), no.75 (1939): 36.
[109] Tian Han, "Zeng Jin Suqin 赠金素琴" (Presented to Jin Suqin), *Yingju* 影剧 (Film and Drama), no.10 (1943): 20.

from Shanghai embarked on a tour to Vietnam via Hong Kong. The acceptance of ZOC performances in a transnational arena was facilitated, in part, by the prior development of the urban modern cultural industry. Before ZOC ventured into Vietnam, the Southeast Asian diasporic communities were already acquainted with Chinese popular opera, thanks to the efforts of gramophone companies, printers, publishers, and Shanghai-based film producers, whose productions had achieved widespread circulation.[110] Intermedia experiments, like the fusion of opera with film or radio drama, facilitated the local audience's enhanced understanding of ZOC's performances. As recounted by Lü Junqiao 吕君樵 (1915-1996), a key member of ZOC, it was surprising to find that ordinary Chinese immigrants in Vietnam were already acquainted with the storylines of operas regularly performed in Shanghai, thanks to exposure through cinema or popular magazines.[111] This awareness highlighted a non-traditional method of circulating Chinese traditional culture. On the other hand, ZOC's tour also benefited from the developments in modern commerce. According to Lü's recollections, they faced a predicament in Hai Phong city due to Japanese military interference, and it was only "after several negotiations" that they managed to return safely to Shanghai via a French liner.[112] Although the details of the negotiations and assistance acquisition are not specified, it was a common practice for Chinese traveling troupes to seek aid from diasporic merchants. Beiyu Zhang underscores the crucial role played by patriotic transnational Chinese businessmen at that time in mediating conflicts and resolving disputes through their resources and connections with local dignitaries.[113] This facilitation ensured the smooth execution of various performing tours during periods of national crisis, emphasizing the reliance of ZOC's transnational tour on a modern network of stakeholders to execute its itinerary.

Furthermore, ZOC's performances incorporated modern production techniques, skilfully crafted to resonate with the overseas Chinese community, particularly the elite diaspora. Responding to a request from the Hong Kong Federation of Women in 1938,

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[110] Zhang, *Chinese Theatre Troupes in Southeast Asia Touring Diaspora 1900s-1970s*, 69.
[111] Lü Junqiao 吕君樵, "Shanghai Gudao Shiqi De Gailiang Pingju Yundong 上海"孤岛"时期的改良平剧运动" (Movement of Reforming Ping Opera in Shanghai During the "Isolated Island" Period), *Shanghai xiju* 上海戏剧 (Shanghai Theatre), no. 2 (1980): 49-52.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Zhang, *Chinese Theatre Troupes in Southeast Asia Touring Diaspora 1900s-1970s*, 69-70.

Ouyang directed an English version of an opera based on the twelfth-century legend *Xixiang ji* 西厢记 (Romance of the Western Chamber, reports of which can be seen in figures 2.3 & 2.4). It is asserted that numerous Hong Kong celebrities and wealthy individuals were intrigued by the opportunity to participate in what they perceived as a "novel" play.[114] Ouyang characterized this production as a harmonious fusion, seamlessly integrating traditional Chinese costumes, spoken-style dialogue, and gestures that harked back to Peking opera.[115] This artistic amalgamation delivered a distinctive cultural experience to the discerning Hong Kong audience.[116] In conceptualizing the stage for his adapted opera "Xixiang ji", Ouyang breathed new life into elements rooted in Chinese tradition, revitalizing their impact on the local audience. He proudly recounted the meticulous design process, wherein he infused the stage setting with traditional Chinese aesthetics, earning widespread appreciation:

> All the flowers and trees, reminiscent of traditional Chinese painting, are arranged in a sparse pattern[...] A solemn and ancient temple features a dark yellow curtain from which some lotus streamers are suspended; an old monk with his white beard and red robes completes the scene, setting the stage for an erotic romance to unfold in this setting.[117]

Clearly, even as spoken drama in English was adopted to suit diverse diasporic scenarios, the authentic Chinese setting retained a classical essence. Simultaneously, it offered an escapist entertainment for those tormented by foreign invasion. This revisit of a traditional legend served as a poignant reminder to many spectators of China's cultural richness and past glory. As Rosenmeier underscored, this emphasis on the past and traditional art forms aligned with a broader historical reassessment. Many intellectuals no longer viewed historical tradition and popular art forms as the primary impediments to China's development and progress towards modernity.[118] As a result of

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[114] Ibid.
[115] Ouyang Yuqian, "Houtai renyu 后台人语" (Reviews from the Backstage), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji* , vol.6, 347.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid. [The original Chinese text is 所有的花树都是照中国画的图案, 用三夹板剪裁, 加上原色的描绘…寺院的殿, 挂的是深黄的布幕, 从上面吊下来一些莲花幡幢, 配上一个白胡须穿红色袈裟的老和尚, 的确是庄严古朴, 而艳丽无匹的罗曼司就在这种地方进行].
[118] Christopher Rosenmeier, *On the Margins of Modernism: Xu Xu, Wumingshi and Popular Chinese Literature in the 1940s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 49.

this re-evaluation, traditional opera was "liberated" to undergo novel reinterpretations, serving to stir collective sentiments and national pride. To enhance their impact on the Hong Kong audience, Ouyang, and other actors of ZOC underwent training by phonemicists and learned French Cancan and Ballet from a dance specialist referred to as Miss O'Keefe.[119] The elaborate play, infused with modern choreography and details of Chinese tradition, enjoyed unparalleled success. Not only did it generate 15,000 yuan in three days, but it also garnered praise from French spectators who joined in the celebration. They indulged in champagne and danced all night, prompting Ouyang to exclaim, "This is Hong Kong's splendid nightlife".[120] This hybrid opera form served as a bridge, fostering dialogue with an audience of diverse identities in Hong Kong's modern urban setting. In essence, the accomplishment of ZOC's transregional tour could be perceived as an allegory of "development". It transcended being merely a traditional opera troupe by incorporating modern methods of production and dissemination.

香港婦女會

排演英語「西廂記」詳情

香港的士女們排演英語對白的「西廂記」一事，已見前期本刊，茲將詳細情形，記出如后。

演出人物　張君瑞，唐璜，崔鶯鶯，翁美瑛小姐，小紅娘：宋文斌夫人。

「西廂記」係在中國文學史裏有特殊價值的一部曲本，「紅娘」這一個名詞，到現在仍然廣汎地被每一個人採用着，便可證明這部名小說的「潛勢力」，後人把它搬上舞台之後，更爲哄動一時，「西廂記」便從文人認爲「好書不厭百回讀」，進而爲一般人的「好戲不厭百回看」了！這次香港婦女會點演這部「名劇」，無疑的可以大賣鋼鈿，使西洋男女，看看我「中國的羅密歐與朱麗葉」，同時也可藉此介紹中國文學的偉大，爲國籌欵之外，還溝通中英文化，眞是一舉兩得。

女角多才多貌

崔鶯鶯係由翁美瑛小姐飾，紅娘這一角色，由宋文斌夫人來担任，兩位萬人注目的角色，很貼切的分由兩位多才多貌的女士扮演，爲肖爲妙，顚倒衆生，自不在話下，這裏略把兩位男的一講：

介紹兩位男角

中央銀行辦事的唐璜君，他那瀟灑的身材，上演弱質書生張君瑞，正如初寫黃庭，恰到好處，唐君今年才二十六歲，畢業於上海滬江大學，念書的時候，對戲劇已發生興趣，後來在工餘之下，更加入萬國劇團，串演王寶釧，以過去的經驗，又能加上勤勤的演習，演來一定不會怎樣壞吧。

公餘玩玩罷了

「公餘之暇，玩玩罷了」，唐謙虛地答記者問，「因爲是英文的對白，所以要與動作調和，最初是有點困難」他講述上演話劇的意見，「白馬將軍」，凌憲揚經理也與他具有同感，他說：「因爲對白差不多是詩詞，演來頗覺吃力，好在「打武戲」的動作，與平戲大致相同，故此也沒感到十分困難，而且得到歐陽予倩先生的指導，成就方面，或者希望能得較好的成果。」

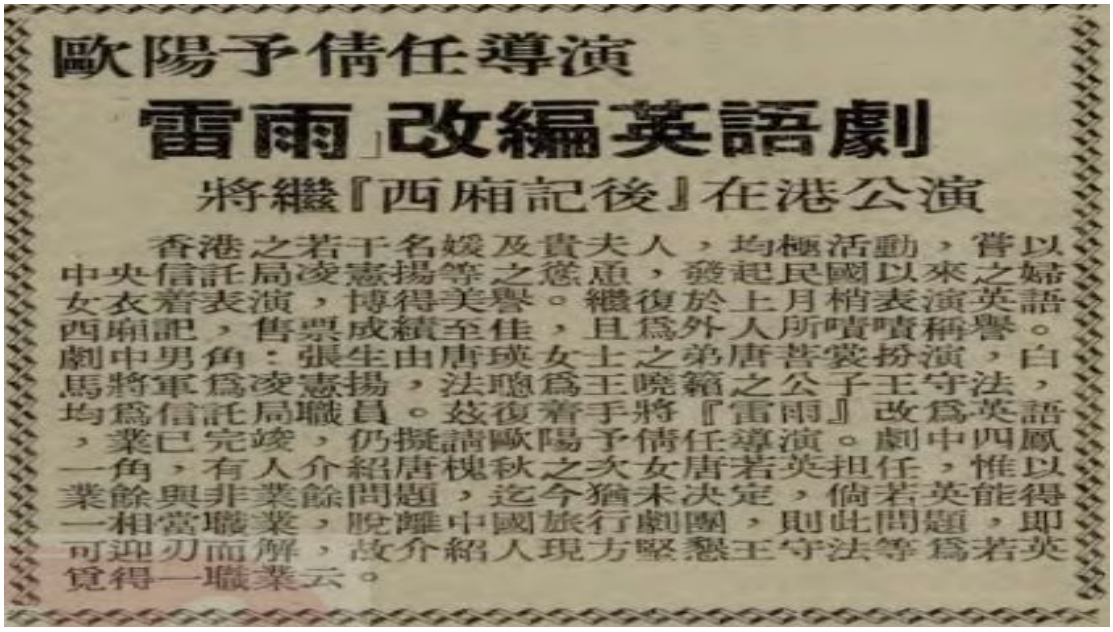
對戲劇有深得

凌君對於戲劇是有深得的人，在上海的時光，他萬國劇社上演王寶釧，他是當薛平貴那一主角，很博得滬濱人士的好評，他是很忙的人，但仍在百忙中登台客串，實在難能，「西廂記」中，只「白馬將軍解圍普救寺」一段，脫去文縐縐的氣氛，所以這一幕是有它的重要性。

此次出演，將假皇后戲院作地盤，因爲中外共睹的關係，道具，佈景。都有很大的準備，當不至如粵劇的演出，劇中人之外還有工人，並採用射燈；使場面更爲動人，這部幕劇，預算以二時三十分的時間演完，全場用粵樂演奏各種歌譜，美麗動人的音響，和動作巧妙的配合，無疑的，開本港舞台劇的新紀元。

Figure 2. 3 The report on the Hong Kong Federation of Women's rehearsal of English-version *Romance of the Western Chamber*, *Dianying* 电影 (Screen Weekly), no.10 (1938): 278.

[119] Ouyang Yuqian, "Reviews from the Backstage", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 348.
[120] Ibid., 350.



歐陽予倩任導演

雷雨」改編英語劇

將繼『西廂記後』在港公演

香港之若干名媛及貴夫人，均極活動，嘗以中央信託局凌憲揚等之慫恿，發起民國以來之婦女衣着表演，博得美譽。繼復於上月梢表演英語西廂記，售票成績至佳，且爲外人所嘖嘖稱譽。劇中男角：張生由唐琰女士之弟唐菩蒙扮演，白馬將軍爲凌憲揚，法聰爲王曉籟之公子王守法，均爲信託局職員。茲復着手將『雷雨』改爲英語，業已完竣，仍擬請歐陽予倩任導演。劇中四鳳一角，有人介紹唐槐秋之次女唐若英担任，惟以業餘與非業餘問題，迄今猶未決定，倘若英能得一相當職業，脫離中國旅行劇團，則此問題，即可迎刃而解，故介紹人現方堅懇王守法等爲若英覓得一職業云。

Figure 2. 4 The continued reports on the English-version *Romance of the Western Chamber* in Hong Kong, *Diansheng* 电声 (Electric Voice) 7, no.43 (1938): 854.

Conclusion

The advent of developmental thinking in the final decade of the nineteenth century gave urban intellectuals a new avenue to participate in social activity, who committed to the idea that new culture and the needs of national development are inexorably linked.[121] In other words, its adherents take on the challenging task of illuminating the country to facilitate its ascent up the evolutionary ladder of "modernity" or "civilization" exemplified by the colonial powers of the West. Around the New Culture Movement in the middle of the 1910s, a small group of reformist intellectuals developed a negative view towards traditional Chinese culture. According to Andrew Jones, the hostility stemmed in part from their symbolistic engagement in teleological theories of cultural "development".[122] The vigorous reform of Chinese drama corresponded with this surge of political, intellectual, and social agitation, during which indigenous Chinese opera, particularly the strongly nasal syllables of Peking opera, was demoted to a secondary role. This logic tainted those working in traditional opera in the Republican period, unjustifiably excluding them from the project of national renewal and development.

[121] Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales*, 10.
[122] Ibid.

However, in this chapter, by examining Ouyang's balancing act as a modern intellectual and a discriminated opera actor, I argue that his operas, adapted from traditional subjects and staged in commercial theatres for audiences in search of entertainment, should be included as important intellectual efforts to seek cultural development. Specifically, I posit that his operatic adaptation of "Wheat-cake Priory" dispels misconceptions surrounding the perceived antiquity of Chinese opera. This adaptation demonstrated how traditional tales could be modernized to reflect historical progress, all while operating within the constraints of operatic rhyme and societal biases against traditional forms. Nonetheless, Ouyang's adaptations may underscore a developmental impasse, revealing a disconnection between individual growth and societal progress. It emphasizes the stark contrast between the vocal revolutionaries advocating reform and the unenlightened objects of their concern. I subsequently examine the dynamic interplay between Chinese operatic culture and modern development. Through an examination of Ouyang's interactions with courtesans in the bustling modern metropolis and his touring experiences in Hong Kong and Vietnam, I analysed how his operatic career intertwined with the portrayal of "Chinese modernity" or progress propelled by historical development. His operatic productions showcased a vibrancy not confined to history or encased in the amber of nostalgia. Instead, they were intricately linked to the material modernity of Shanghai and a broader "East Asian modernity". It becomes ironic for those early 20th-century Chinese intellectuals who adhered to the logic of struggle and survival that Chinese opera, a genre they deemed undeveloped and archaic, was more than capable of demonstrating their modern concepts of development.

Chapter Three

Balancing on the Tightrope: Ouyang Yuqian in the Literary Domain

When reading about the literary-cultural history of the late Qing and the Republican era, one notices an interesting phenomenon: new and pluralistic career paths became available to Chinese *wenren* 文人 (literati), owing to rapid urban development and a burgeoning mass media. In other words, the literati at the time could simultaneously make a living as a column-writer, filmmaker, journalist, editor, scientist or industrialist, and their public persona was associated with diverse professional endeavours across multiple occupational boundaries. Christopher Rea and Nicolai Volland term the early-twentieth-century Chinese who actively participated in various modes of cultural production as "cultural entrepreneurs".[1] The term emphasizes the convergence of the careers of the literati and the merchant-businessmen.[2] They are considered entrepreneurial because they invested their talent or capital across diverse occupations.[3] As Grace Fong supplements, cultural entrepreneurs always took advantage of a talent or skill in one field to advance their other causes and interests.[4] Moreover, Republican-era cultural entrepreneurs were the product of the era of cultural capitalism as something in-between the scholarly orientation of traditional imperial literati and the ideological-bureaucratic model adopted by later Maoist cultural workers.[5] This perspective provides avenues for reviewing Ouyang Yuqian's early dramatic career and his literary activities as a fiction-writer and editor, the latter of which has not yet been fully explored in existing scholarship. It also raises some questions: What is the relationship between those occupations? How did he undertake and adapt cultural entrepreneurship in an era of modern capitalism? How did he employ and rework his skills and resources?

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[1] Christopher G. Rea and Nicolai Volland eds., *The Business of Culture: Cultural Entrepreneurs in China and Southeast Asia, 1900-65* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 10.
[2] Ibid., 27.
[3] Ibid., 10.
[4] Ibid., 37.
[5] Christopher G. Rea, "Comedy and Cultural Entrepreneurship in Xu Zhuodai's 'Huaji Shanghai'," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 20, no. 2 (2008): 52-53.

In the previous chapter, I discussed Ouyang's career on the Peking opera stage. This chapter will begin by examining how Ouyang built his personal reputation through civilized drama, a genre regarded as being situated at the intersection between traditional opera and modern spoken drama,[6] and then invested his fame into his new role of writing fiction and editing modern periodicals. I aim to demonstrate how modern drama, which was born in the multimedia environment of the early Republican period, functioned within the broader literary field and cultural consumption. By reading his works textually and contextually and investigating his role as a writer/editor straddling the divide between different social positions or categories, I put forward one of my hypotheses: Ouyang achieved his success not only because of his writing ability and dramatic talent but also through his prowess in establishing and maintaining his various social networks. To borrow the terminology of Pierre Bourdieu, Ouyang's comprehension of both modern and traditional knowledge constituted his initial cultural capital which struggled to defend and improve his position in a 'field of force'.[7]

However, his approach to solidifying his status and accumulating resources remained in a state of constant flux, particularly as he engaged with individuals from disparate circles such as the "May Fourth" and "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies" simultaneously. His ambivalent stance towards these groups rendered simplistic descriptors like "new" or "old" inadequate for encapsulating the breadth of his interests and activities. Moreover, such labels are also too broad to define him and account for the sophistication required to morph between such opposing groups. Ouyang Yuqian's activities within the Republican literary realm resemble more of a transgressive journey across borders. He occupies a cultural liminal space where the binary distinctions of the "new" and the "old" are challenged, and where diverse power dynamics coalesce, interact, and intertwine. By focusing on Ouyang Yuqian's interactions with various periodicals and supposedly distinct literary communities, this chapter is organized into four parts. Through profiling Ouyang's popular tastes when composing civilized drama and excavating the implicit political agenda behind it, the objective of the first part is to highlight Ouyang's connection with the *Butterfly* school. The following three sections focus on his contributions to the modern periodical press, encompassing his involvement with the May Fourth journals, an influential Shanghai tabloid named *The Crystal*, and the

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[6] Jin Li, "Theater of Pathos: Sentimental Melodramas in the New Drama Legacy," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 24, no. 2 (2012): 96.
[7] Pierre Bourdieu, Randal Johnson ed., *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 30.

commercial magazine *Sing Sing Half Monthly*. The latter two publications have often been dismissed as marginal and commercially driven in conventional historical accounts, in contrast to the purportedly grand reformist aspirations of the May Fourth journals from the late 1910s. This chapter undertakes an examination of Ouyang's three fictional works published in these periodicals. The findings of this analysis reveal that the demarcation between these seemingly disparate aspects is far from distinct.

3.1 The Playwright of Popular Taste and Commercial Ethos

The starting point of Ouyang Yuqian's career in the early Republican era was an important arena for him to establish what Pierre Bourdieu's calls "symbolic capital"—the resources earned by an individual based on honour, prestige, or recognition.[8] In his formative years, Ouyang not only worked as a Peking operatic actor (as shown in the previous chapter) but also as a profit-seeking professional playwright of civilized drama. He established and maintained his cultural prestige by performing and writing popular drama featuring all the stereotypes of sentimental love, muckraking, detectives, comics, and so on that appealed to the tastes of the masses. Such entertainment catering to popular appeal is often referred as the "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School" (*yuanyang hudie pai* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派, hereafter *Butterfly*), a derogatory moniker imposed on all Chinese popular/commercial literary productions and authors who "wrote for money or leisure" and lacked concern with national affairs in the early Republican period.[9] Ouyang's literary energy during the 1910s was distinctively geared towards the leisure aesthetic and *Butterfly* rhetoric, which has often been overlooked in modern Chinese literary history written under the direction of the Chinese Communist Party after 1949. This section aims to bring attention to the less-recognized accomplishments of Ouyang, especially his ability to cater to the public's thirst for sentimental romances. This occurred against the backdrop of unprecedented developments in entertainment and popular culture in the urban centres, where new opportunities presented themselves to the underemployed literate elite to gain fame and fortune. Due to his astute capacity to meet the demands of the market, Ouyang succeeded as a popular playwright when the competition among dramatists was at its height in

[8] Ibid.,31.
[9] E. Perry Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 3. Also see, Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 36.

the wake of the "1914 thriving" (also known as *Jiayin zhongxing* 甲寅中兴), which marked the most prosperous period of development for civilized drama.[10]

In place of its former revolutionary and political appeal, as suggested by Xiaomei Chen, civilized drama became increasingly focused on commercialization and delivering entertainment to satisfy popular taste after the 1911 Revolution.[11] In 1914, Ouyang and his colleague Lu Jingruo in the Spring Willow Theatre co-wrote a play named *Sea of Love and Desire* (*Aiyu hai* 爱欲海) that narrated how a miser forbid the loving relationship between his daughter Xiuzhen 秀珍 and his nephew Shi Chan 石禅 because Shi Chan was not wealthy enough, causing his daughter to go mad and his nephew to become a monk.[12] The play imitated the plot of great pathos or sentimentality of the eighteenth century novel *Honglou meng* in a modern setting, in which the hero of the novel Jia Baoyu 贾宝玉 rebelled against his official career and sought peace from Buddhism after the failed relationship with his beloved cousin, Lin Daiyu 林黛玉. As Catherine Yeh has pointed out, with its call to "true emotion", *Honglou* had been a popular primary source of drama adaptation and sustained popularity among urban dwellers up to the 1920s.[13] Shi Chan, who lived as one of "the sentimental breed" (*qingzhong* 情种) like Jia Baoyu, offered a "satisfactory high-register role model", [14] especially for the men of letters who were frustrated about entering the rank of officials or finding alternative values in a backdrop of political disillusionment. Shi Chan's genuine affection for his cousin appealed to the urban audience who were expected to prioritize patriotic and social obligations over their individual rights and private feelings. When witnessing their story onstage, the audience could find psychological comfort and escapist pleasure, since it promoted the value and redemptive force of emotion in urban lives and tolerated their failure to procure official positions in the government.

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[10] Zhu Shuangyun 朱双云 ed., *Xinju shi* 新剧史 (The History of New Drama) (Shanghai: Wenhui chubanshe, 2015), 95.
[11] Xiaomei Chen, "Introduction", in Xiaomei Chen ed., *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 3.
[12] Jing Libin 景李斌, *Ouyang Yuqian nianpu* 欧阳予倩年谱 (The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2019), 9. Also see, *Shenbao* 31 May 1914.
[13] Catherine Vance Yeh, *Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture, 1850-1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 139.
[14] Ibid., 140.

Ouyang's focus on sentimental love was in response to meet popular market demand. As Haiyan Lee noted, the reading public, whose revolutionary zeal had waned after the establishment of the Republican regime, took delight in the luxury of revelling in "boy meets girl" stories, leading to a surge in popularity of sentimental love tales in the first decade of the twentieth century.[15] Ouyang, recognizing this market orientation, crafted plays characterized by emotional depth and sentiment-based formulas. Although most of the scripts no longer exist, the sub-generic labels that the newspapers assigned, such as *yuanqing* 怨情 (wronged sentiment), *aiqing* 哀情 (tragic sentiment), *yanqing* 艳情 (erotic sentiment), *huanqing* 欢情 (joyous sentiment), and so on, inform today's readers of the general ethos of the plots. According to a *Shenbao* advertisement in 1916, Ouyang was most satisfied about three plays in particular: *Divine Love* (*Shensheng zhi ai* 神圣之爱), *Floating Clouds* (*Fuyun* 浮云) and *Begonia* (*Qiu haitang* 秋海棠), all of which were "sentimental love" stories intended to provide the audience with the "keys to love" (*ai zhi miyao* 爱之密钥) through the exquisite portrayal of male-female relationships.[16] Promoting sentimental melodrama or expressing his understanding of love in his plays would come to symbolize Ouyang's persona as, in Eugenia Lean's terms, "a man of feeling".[17] It can also be considered a "deliberate and self-conscious self-fashioning" strategy by Ouyang, since displaying emotion could be viewed as "a marker of aesthetic sensibility and moral superiority" especially when "sentimental" became a popular idiom and market-demand of the time.[18]

However, seeing sentimental dramas solely as mass entertainment is a one-dimensional perspective. Through highly effective performance these dramas touched upon modern politics and educated and encouraged the audience to action the lessons they had witnessed. In one of his memoirs, Ouyang used "Spring Willow tragedies" (*Chunliu beiju* 春柳悲剧) as an example to describe their explorations in playwriting during the 1910s, denoting that "few plays of Spring Willow are ebullient" while most of them were sentimental and tragic, culminating

[15] Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), 62.
[16] Ibid., 40. Also see, *Shenbao* 24 September 1916.
[17] Eugenia Lean, "The Butterfly Mark: Chen Diexian, His Brand, and Cultural Entrepreneurism in Republican China," in Rea and Volland eds., *The Business of Culture: Cultural Entrepreneurs in China and Southeast Asia,* 76.
[18] Lee, *Revolution of the Heart*, 63.

either in death or in Buddhist renunciation.[19] The primary objective of such creations was to reflect "the dark side of society", where individuals resort to "passive resistance", such as suicide, due to a lack of viable solutions.[20] By extolling the preciousness of genuine emotion, sentimental dramas underscore the importance of combating the tyranny of family, society, and Confucian morality. After watching Ouyang's *Sea of Love and Desire*, the drama critic Bai Pin 白蘋 commented, "it awakened many common people, whom I hope will not ignore [its didactic values] because it is merely a play".[21] Seen from this perspective, civilized drama, especially drama of pathos, with its concern with politics rather than being "fossilized" upon the founding of the Republic, continued to serve as a political agitator to defy parental authority and delved into the important societal issues of the day. Although after only a few years Ouyang devalued his experience of composing civilized drama by claiming it to be a transient phenomenon, he still had to admit that sentimental melodrama mediated the social conflicts and moral chaos, such as the conflict between a pair of young lovers and their authoritarian parents, through an aesthetic means other than that of realism. When young cultural radicals placed Western realist drama at the top of the cultural evolutionary ladder and criticized civilized drama as "vaudeville", as Goldstein notes, they ignored the premium placed on the emotional resonance and the aim to move the audience closely resembled the aesthetic goals and values upheld by the May Fourth literary revolution.[22]

Additionally, Ouyang maximised his visibility by proving himself capable of dealing with a wide range of themes such as "muckraking", "detective", "comic", and so on to meet the rapacious appetite of the audience. An article titled "The Shanghai Audience's Psychology of Watching New Drama" written by Shen Suoyi 沈所一 in 1914 indicated the market orientation of the time. As it claimed:

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[19] Ouyang Yuqian, "Tan wenming xi 谈文明戏" (Talking about the Civilized Drama), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji* 欧阳予倩全集 (The Complete Works of Ouyang Yuqian) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1990), vol. 6, 196.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Bai Pin 白蘋, "Ping aiyu hai 评爱欲海" (Review of *Sea of Love and Desire*), *Xiju congbao* 戏剧丛报 (Drama Series Newspaper) 1, no.1 (1915): 84-85. [The original Chinese text:此等话头，点醒世人不少，望勿以戏而忽之也].
[22] Joshua L. Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-Creation of Peking Opera, 1870-1937* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2007), 138.

> In contemporary Shanghai, there is a plethora of theatres to go, making it challenging to decide which one to choose. Therefore, it is advisable to consult newspapers that evaluate the worthiness of the plays. It is prudent to select plays that have garnered popularity and received praise. If such options are not available, then attending plays adapted from celebrated fictions is a good choice. If none of this type is to be found, it is worthwhile to choose plays with titles that promise thrilling stories.[23]

The article suggests that Shanghai audiences at the time chose the plays they went to see largely based on the promises of newspaper advertisements, and thrilling stories and adaptations from popular fiction were of particular interest. Just as Jin Li suggests, the appeal of civilized drama merged with that of popular fiction of the *Butterfly* school, which served as a pastime to alleviate the modern urban condition of boredom and ennui.[24] Against this backdrop, Ouyang composed a play named *Wife of Staff Officer* (*Canmou taitai* 参谋太太, 1916). According to its advertisement on *Shenbao*, it was a play unravelling the scandal of an officer who relied on his wife's nepotism to gain promotion.[25] Ouyang wrote this play, which may have been influenced by the prevalence of a fictional genre—the muckraking story in Shanghai between 1916 and 1918. Aimed at exposing societal abuses and political corruption, this genre often blends scandals of people like charlatans, bureaucrats, or prostitutes in the pursuit of fame and fortune, with comic interludes, convening an effect of mimetic realism and satire.[26] In doing so, Ouyang designed a buffoonish act where a lower-class policeman misunderstood the officer's house as a brothel and his wife as a prostitute, who the policeman proceeds to molest. *Shenbao* appraised it as having "intricate plots" and "the funniest one among recent new dramas".[27]

Occasionally, to enhance the emotional richness and alluring effect, Ouyang attempted to incorporate as many sentimental formulas and popular motifs as he could into one title, even

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[23] Shen Suoyi, "Huren guan xinju zhi xinli 沪人观新剧之心理" (The Shanghai Audience's Psychology of Watching New Drama), in Zhuang Shuangyun ed., *Xinju shi*, 184.
[24] Li, "Theater of Pathos: Sentimental Melodramas in the New Drama Legacy," 101.
[25] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian*, 45. Also see, *Shenbao* 26 November 1916.
[26] David Der-Wei Wang, *Fin-de-Siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 183-184.
[27] See *Shenbao* 26 November 1916. [The original Chinese text: 此为予倩近编, 情节离奇, 趣味浓郁, 洵新剧中最有趣味之作].

though they sometimes appeared odd. For example , he wrote a play of "detective-cum-tragic love" (*zhentan aiqing xi* 侦探哀情戏) *Sanren ying* 三人影 (Shadow of Three People, 1915), and a play of "comic-cum-tragedy" (*huaji beiju* 滑稽悲剧) *Leiya chunchou ji* 泪压春愁记 (Tears and Sorrow in the Spring, 1917) among many others.[28] He blended many thematic elements under one rubric or at one time, including scandal, crime, detective, science-fiction fantasy, humour, and satire that were all labelled as popular literature. In this way he could attract as wide an audience as possible since everyone could enjoy the play because it would contain something to cater to all their tastes. In addition, an unexpected effect could be produced among the audience; as supported by the comments of *Sorrow in the Spring*, which reads:

> The play under review showcases the central theme of erotic love, punctuated with comedic elements and concluding in tragedy. The multifaceted nature of the play, incorporating eroticism, comedy, and tragedy, renders it appealing and replete with intriguing plot twists. The audience will be compelled to follow the storyline, and the transitioning between acts surprises, leaving viewers unable to anticipate the upcoming scenes. In comparison to other mundane and insipid plays, this production is distinct and captivating.[29]

The above evidence suggests that Ouyang appeared as a profit-making playwright who was preoccupied with popular aesthetics and mass amusement during the 1910s. This kind of performance was derided as the *Butterfly* school by some western-educated intellectuals around the 1920s, who advocated that literature's foremost purpose should be to facilitate national renewal and social progress. However, Ouyang's market awareness and his innovative approach to cater to customer demands drove his commercial success and raised his visibility at the time. This focus on private emotional experience, as pointed out by Lee, was "the unique and universal sign of their newfound inferiority, which is something startlingly modern.[30] The civilized drama that sentimentalized traditional values and ushered in a fad of pathos should be considered an essential aspect of "Chinese modernity".[31] Nonetheless, it always appears as oddly situated at the intersection between traditional opera and modern spoken drama,

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[28] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian*, 37 & 58.
[29] Ibid., 58. Also see, *Shenbao* 17 November 1917.
[30] Lee, *Revolution of the Heart*, 64.
[31] Li, "Theater of Pathos: Sentimental Melodramas in the New Drama Legacy," 96.

especially as the latter was sanctified as the realist bulwark of the May Fourth heritage.[32] For example, Edward Gunn defines modern spoken drama as the iconoclastic genre of May Fourth literature, while the civilized drama is criticized as "posturing and declamation".[33] This idea echoes the fervent promotion of "Ibsenism plays" of some Chinese intellectuals in early Republican China, who were infatuated with the West and were treated with disdain for their cultural conservatism. Despite the commonality of accessibility, frankness, and emotional resonance with the May Fourth appeal,[34] the popular civilized drama was not appreciated by some critics who debased it as catering to low tastes and strove to set a boundary between it and their own writing style. Perhaps, the most interesting aspect of Ouyang's literary career is that he transcended the divide between "popular" and "intellectual". The subsequent sections will illustrate how Ouyang simultaneously associated with the May Fourth literary elites and what they considered the opposing camp, the *Butterfly* School. His proven ability in balancing old and new literary forms to the delight of the domestic audience quickly established his prestige in both professional and intellectual circles, which provided him with new occupational opportunities in the ensuing years.

3.2 On the Scene of May Fourth: A Writer of the "New Camp"

Despite the adherents of realism devaluing it, either because of its sentimental contents or its melodrama, the civilized drama, particularly in its vernacular form, presented its "newness" when compared to traditional Chinese opera. Throughout the 1910s, Ouyang actively participated in both traditional Peking opera and civilized drama, establishing his initial cultural capital—"*nengxin nengjiu* 能新能旧" (excellence in both the old and the new) as newspapers of the time put it.[35] In the following years, Ouyang was involved in several literary activities associated with the prefix "new", writing "new fiction" and joining "new literature" societies. This section outlines Ouyang's engagement in these new literary activities, which is yet to be

[32] Ibid., 95.
[33] Edward Gunn, "Introduction", in Edward Gunn ed., *Twentieth-Century Chinese Drama: An Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), viii.
[34] Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, 137.
[35] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian*, 24 & 56. Also, "Advertisement of the Laughter Stage" in *Shenbao* 24 October 1917. It roughly translates to: Ouyang can perform both old and new drama, and he excels with operas adapted from *The Dream of Red* Chamber, which has helped him build a tremendous name and win the hearts of the large audience. [The original Chinese text: 其演戏也, 能新能旧, 尤以擅演红楼歌剧雄于时, 名震寰球, 一时无两, 所至万人空巷, 剧界中之泰山北斗也].

fully explored in existing scholarship. His experience forces us to confront once again the demarcation of the "old" *Butterfly* School and the "new" May Fourth camp in the Republican literary field. In this part, I aim to demonstrate that his engagement with the May Fourth Movement was an extension of his earlier dramatic career, which resonates with the concept of "cultural entrepreneurship", where an individual leverages their earlier career to further their other goals and interests.[36] However, he did not always conform to the programmatic aim of the May Fourth intellectuals, since they were not genuinely mainstream and functioning networks dominating the literary circles as they themselves envisioned. To attain social assets, or accumulate what Bourdieu called "social capital", such as membership in associations, links to social networks, connections with people in power, and other social resources,[37] Ouyang established connections with various literary groups at that time.

It is not entirely clear how Ouyang was able to effortlessly enter the May Fourth scene. He might have decided it was politically prudent to incorporate May Fourth topics into his dramas to ensure he was not later ostracized, or he might have felt times were changing and he needed to adapt his style to suit such change. Although the popular subjects in his civilized drama initially appealed to the audience, they were misinterpreted and criticized, especially when "New Literature", the westernized vernacular writing introduced during the late 1910s which became one of the instantly recognizable styles, gradually came into vogue. For instance, Ouyang composed *Divine Love* in 1915, a play combining tragedy and sensationalism in the form of a traffic accident and a murder. Moved by the story of a girl, who is accidentally killed while protecting her beloved from being shot, the drama critic Zong Tianfeng 宗天风 commented that while it was an exhilarating play expressing the infatuation between sexes, Ouyang's overdone performance made it "obscene".[38] Ouyang faced similar criticism when he performed the opera *Baochan songjiu* 宝蟾送酒 (Baochan Delivers Wine) adapted from the novel *Honglou meng*, in which the housemaid Baochan seduces her master Xue Ke 薛蝌. Because the onstage dialogue between the two characters was more explicit and erotic than in the original novel, a young student challenged the playwright about his impropriety and

[36] Rea and Volland eds., *The Business of Culture*, 10.
[37] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 68.
[38] Zhang Yin 张殷, "Chunliu juchang jitai jumu yanchu kao 春柳剧场几台剧目演出考" (Examination of Several Plays Performed at the Spring Willow Theatre), *Xiju yishu* 戏剧艺术 (Theatre Arts), no. 3 (2011): 21. [The oringinal Chinese text: 唯予倩演来稍微过火, 如以假道学者见之, 必谓其形涉淫荡也].

vulgarity, stating that Ouyang, as a college graduate, should promote modern Western ideas in place of lewd indecency in his plays.[39] These comments illustrate how popular drama was received amid the national modernizing process and served as the motivation for Ouyang to make further changes in the following years. In terms of Republican cultural entrepreneurs whose talents and capabilities supported their pursuit of multiple occupations in the cultural sphere, Rea suggests that their professional trajectories were either linear or circular by means of revisiting, renewing and expanding their earlier careers.[40] This is evidenced by the case of Ouyang, whose literary journey was partly motivated by his desire to assuage the criticisms he had received throughout his career in drama.

Ouyang's education in Japan may have also played a role in his entering the new literary sphere. In 1918, a Japanese-run newspaper in Shanghai, *Songbao* 讼报, invited Ouyang to talk about "Chinese drama reform", to which he contributed an article titled "My View on Reforming Drama" (*Yu zhi xiju gailiang guan* 予之戏剧改良观).[41] This article was reprinted in the journal *New Youth* in the same year. Founded in 1915 by Chen Duxiu 陈独秀, *New Youth* was the most pioneering Chinese magazine in spreading the influence of the New Culture Movement, where like-minded colleagues including famous writers, young scholars and thinkers (mainly from Peking University) joined to manage the journal collectively, publishing modern literary and cultural thinking. Ouyang used his experience in performing and writing drama to exchange his ideas with young scholars like Hu Shi and Fu Sinian on their "Special Issue of Drama Reform". The inclusion of Ouyang's essay alongside pieces from people with an academic but not drama-professional background promoted the journal's desire for diversity to strengthen their arguments. There, Ouyang abandoned his previous position but claimed that Chinese traditional opera was a kind of "*jiyi* 技艺" (literally, burlesque) and that civilized drama could fade as quickly as "withered grass".[42] Recognizing that his opinion was based on his experience on the "*gechang* 歌场" (singing stage), he advocated for the normalization of "literature of drama" (*xiju zhi wenxue* 戏剧之文学) consisting of "drama script, commentary,

[39] Jing Shen, "Theatrical Femininities: A Comparison of Mei Lanfang's and Ouyang Yuqian's *Honglou meng* Plays," *Southeast review of Asian studies* 34 (2012): 78.
[40] Rea and Volland eds., *The Business of Culture*, 18.
[41] Ouyang Yuqian, "Yu zhi xiju gailiang guan 予之戏剧改良观" (My View on Reforming Drama), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.5, 1.
[42] Ibid.

and theory".[43] In addition, he argued that "composing a script must embody a society or express an ideal to cope with the problems of life and remedy erroneous trends of thought".[44] Claiming respectability for writing in the vernacular style, this essay was considered a "final nail in the coffin of old drama".[45] It answered the May Fourth call for "New Literature" and to write "realistically". It also represented the beginning of Ouyang's migration from his earlier work on popular drama to the May Fourth scene.

Given this contribution, Ouyang was given the opportunity to engage with another influential journal and dabble in writing fiction, or modern short stories. Fiction, *xiaoshuo* 小说 in Chinese, was not consciously accorded artistic recognition and justifiable appraisal until the late Qing when Liang Qichao 梁启超 published the article "On Fiction and the Governance of the People" (*Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi* 论小说与群治之关系) in 1902.[46] Liang, in his essay, elevated *xiaoshuo* as an approved literary medium for modernizing and awakening Chinese society, after which writing fiction became an acceptable occupation for men of letters.[47] Immediately after Liang's intervention, as profound social changes occurred, the value of writing fiction increased rapidly. More and more people found ways through writing, editing, and publishing literary works to re-establish their "cultural distinction" and enhance their public image.[48] In 1919, Ouyang's fiction-debut *Duanshou* 断手 (Broken Hand) in vernacular form was published in the *Xinchao* 新潮 (*New Tide*, also *The Renaissance*, figure 3.1). Established by several young students of Peking University in November 1918, *New Tide*, together with *New Youth*, were known as "two 'newness' of Peking University" (*beida erxin* 北大二新), which had been given a mission to "save the nation", to enlighten the masses, and to sustain a collective literary conviction entitled "realism" (*xieshi zhuyi* 写实主义).[49] Its most fundamental characteristic and the resulting practice was to criticize social diseases and

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[43] Ibid., 2.
[44] Ibid. [The original Chinese text: 一剧本之作用, 必能代表一种社会, 或发挥一种理想, 以解决人生之难问题, 转移误谬之思潮].
[45] Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, 148.
[46] Denise Gimpel, *Lost Voices of Modernity: A Chinese Popular Fiction Magazine in Context* (Honolulu:University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 7.
[47] Ibid., 8.
[48] Michel Hockx, "The Literary Field and the Field of Power: The Case of Modern China", *Paragraph* 35, no. 1 (2012): 3.
[49] Xiaoming Wang, Hockx Michel, and Huters Theodore trans., "A Journal and a 'Society': On the 'May Fourth' Literary Tradition", *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 11, no. 2 (1999): 7-16.

"prescribe" solutions.[50] The circulation of these two journals indicated that writing fiction had become not just an acceptable occupation but a necessity for those with advanced knowledge and who were concerned about the future of their nation.[51]

Under this editorial criteria, Ouyang's "Broken Hand" presented itself as a vernacular short story seriously engaging with people's suffering under the control of warlords, one of the most prevalent social diseases at the time. It tells the tale of an ageing mother and her son who, having fled their hometown due to martial disorder, returned home because of starvation to find the man's wife had had her hand chopped off by warlords to steal her bracelet. Crafted in a manner that mirrors reality and marked by a subtle ironic tone, this piece of fiction doesn't seek to offer readers a comforting escapism, but rather, it provides them with intellectual stimulation concerning the pressing issues of the time. This work received Lu Xun's 鲁迅 (1881-1936) compliments and recognition in 1935 when he edited *Zhongguo xinwenxue daxi* 中国新文学大系 (Compendium of Chinese New Literature). As he claimed in the preface, "*New Tide* has cultivated fiction writers that *New Youth* did not, which included Wang Jingxi 汪敬熙 (1893-1968), Luo Jialun 罗家伦 (1897-1969), Yang Zhensheng 杨振声 (1897-1968), Yu Pingbo 俞平伯 (1900-1990), Ouyang Yuqian, and Ye Shaojun 叶绍钧 (1894-1988). Later, Ouyang Yuqian focused more on the drama script".[52] During that period, most of these individuals were aspiring young students at Peking University, actively participating in the May Fourth and New Culture Movement. By aligning Ouyang with this group, Lu Xun's words elevated Ouyang's status within the realm of political and intellectual circles, thereby complicating attempts to pigeonhole his public perception solely as "popular" and "commercial".

According to Denise Gimpel, the 1910s witnessed the development of a nascent Chinese literary field where the individuals involved in the publishing projects were seen to emerge from a homogenous pool of like-minded peers who shared common ideals from the outset.[53] It is also worth noting that both *New Youth* and *New Tide* were considered as relatively

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[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Lu Xun 鲁迅, "Zhongguo xinwenxue daixi erji xu 中国新文学大系二集序" (Preface of Compendium of Chinese New Literature II), in *Luxun quanji* 鲁迅全集 (The Complete Works of Lu Xun), 20 vol. (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981), vol. 6, 239.
[53] Gimpel, *Lost Voices of Modernity*, 177.

exclusive in that they largely only accepted pieces from "in-house" writers and seldom accepted pieces from unknown authors.[54] They developed their own editorial committee, distancing themselves from external editors, especially those who had divergent ideas. In other words, only their like-minded colleagues could publish works in these journals, while outside voices were only allowed to appear in their column of "Special Correspondence" (*tepi tongxun* 特辟通讯).[55] This information indicates that Ouyang had probably built solid connections with the May Fourth activists at the time. Moreover, writing fiction as a new occupation widened not only his social networks but also the "style" of his cultural life. Michel Hockx suggested that "style" in the Republican literary field included not only a writing style but also styles of organization and publication.[56] Publishing works that concerned the nation's problems brought Ouyang higher symbolic capital, further visibility, and placed him on a wider cultural circuit in the 1920s. He was invited into the Literary Association (*Wenxue yanjiu hui* 文学研究会), one of the most influential literary societies for New Literature. As a highly exclusive organization, the Literary Association had a limited membership, accepting Ouyang and registering him as the 139th of its 172 members.[57]

Perhaps the most impressive action Ouyang made on the May Fourth scene was his publication of an eponymous play *Pan Jinlian* 潘金莲 in another influential new literary journal, the *Crescent Moon* (*Xinyue* 新月), in 1928.[58] With an editorial policy of "*zhengzhong jinchi* 郑重矜持" (serious and reserved), the journal is closely linked with the Crescent Moon Society, a literary collective featuring poetry of modern rhyme. *Pan Jinlian* has always been considered Ouyang's most successful May Fourth work, which reinterpreted a detested stereotype that historically used to disparage women into a positive representation of rebellious "new women". Pan Jinlian, a literary figure in the fourteenth-century novel *The Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan* 水浒传), has always been regarded as a "*yinfu* 淫妇" (promiscuous woman) since she commits adultery with an affluent dandy and murders her husband.[59] As a more negative female figure than Baochan in Chinese literary traditions, Pan Jinlian and her pursuit

[54] Wang, Hockx, and Hunter trans., "A Journal and a 'Society': On the 'May Fourth' Literary Tradition", 9.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Michel Hockx, *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911-1937* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 5.
[57] Wang, Hockx, and Hunter trans., "A Journal and a 'Society': On the 'May Fourth' Literary Tradition", 5.
[58] See *Xinyue* 新月 (Crescent Moon) 1, no.4 (1928): 53-90.
[59] Shu Yang, "I Am Nora, Hear Me Roar: The Rehabilitation of the Shrew in Modern Chinese Theater", *Nan Nü* 18, no. 2 (2016): 306.

of sexual and emotional fulfilment attains justification in Ouyang's rewriting. He even elaborated on Pan Jinlian's admiration of her brother-in-law Wu Song 武松, which is a much underdeveloped plotline in the original novel.[60] In dealing with the scene of Pan Jinlian's seduction of Wu Song, Ouyang adapted it as a defence of free love, which accurately captured the May Fourth call for female self-empowerment. The fact that Pan Jinlian only turns to others after her real lover, Wu Song, has rejected her, in Ouyang's opinion, lessened the severity of her offense.[61] By adding a feminist twist to the plot, Pan Jinlian's affair was seen as indictment of social hypocrisy and outdated traditional morals. The celebration of a woman's freedom to choose her love is rooted in the May Fourth "Nora" rhetoric.[62] Woman's lust in this play presents a different voice, which is legitimised by a new concept of modernity. In addition, by giving a stage presence of Zhang Dahu 张大户 (a minor figure in the original story), Ouyang designed an escape for Pan Jinlian from Zhang's martial arrangement, which was very much in tune with the May Fourth convention of feminist rebellion against patriarchal oppression.[63] This play was successfully staged at the Shanghai University of the Arts and received many accolades. For instance, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978) once referred to Ouyang's *Pan Jinlian* as the "precursor of Nora" (*nala xianbei* 娜拉先辈).[64]

However, Ouyang's memoirs scarcely touch upon his involvement with the collective of New Literature, conveying an impression that he did not value this experience much. Following his publication of Pan Jinlian, Ouyang maintained only sporadic contact with the Literary Association, a society that would exist for more than twenty years.[65] What we can trace from the chronological material is his attendance at the banquet in 1924 to commemorate the 200th issue of their official journal *Literature Weekly* (*Wenxue Zhoubao* 文学周报).[66] After the meal, around twenty members went to Baoji 宝记 photographic studio to take a group photo to mark the occasion.[67] As Hockx highlights, New Literature must be viewed as but one style

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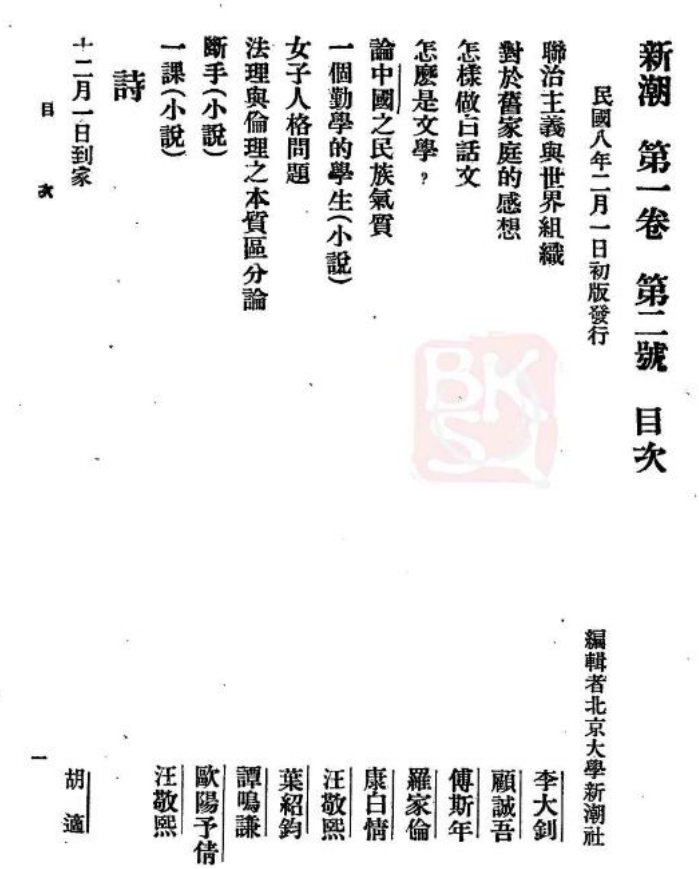
[60] Ibid.
[61] Yomi Braester, *Witness against History: Literature, Film, and Public Discourse in Twentieth-Century China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008), 62.
[62] Ibid., 63.
[63] Yang, "I Am Nora, Hear Me Roar: The Rehabilitation of the Shrew in Modern Chinese Theater", 308.
[64] Ibid., 303.
[65] Hockx, *Question of Style*, 47. According to Hockx, the Literary Association was established on 4 December 1920. The exact date of its demise is unknown, but its publications continue to appear under its name until 1947.
[66] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian*, 152.
[67] Ibid., 153. According to Jing, these members included Liu Dabai 刘大白, Chen Zuiyun 陈醉云, Zhao Jingshen 赵景深, Xu Gongmei 徐公美, Feng Zikai 丰子恺, Ouyang Yuqian 欧阳予倩, Li Jinhui 黎锦晖, Fan

in the Republican literary field that coexisted and contested with other styles throughout the pre-War decades, furthermore, this style was much less unified than it envisioned itself to be.[68] It would be inaccurate to presume that a single literary group held pervasive or programmatic sway over every member. Ouyang's engagement in "new" literary activities might have stemmed from a necessity to address directed criticisms, but he did not exclusively align himself with a specific literary style or group. The May Fourth movement should be acknowledged as a noteworthy, though not the exclusive or predominant, arena within the Republican literary landscape for him to enhance his standing. In contrast to some staunch adherents of the May Fourth Movement, Ouyang stands out for his involvement in other literary circles that they often dismiss. This is evident in his diverse literary activities in the years that followed.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詩

十二月一日到家 胡適

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Figure 3. 1 Ouyang "Broken Hand" in the table of contents of *New Tide* together with works from Li Dazhao, Fu Sinian, Luo Jialun, and so on, *Xinchao* 新潮 (New Tide) 1, no. 2 (1919): 3.

Zhongyun 樊仲云, Ye Shaojun 叶少钧, Yu Xiangsen 余祥森, Zheng Zhenduo 郑振铎, Xu Weinan 徐蔚南, Li Liewen 黎烈文, and so on.

[68] Hockx, *Question of Style*, 5.

3.3 Ouyang and the Tabloid Press: *The Crystal*

In 1919, Ouyang debuted as a fiction writer with the publication of his work "Broken Hand" that was introduced to the public through the *New Tide* platform during the May Fourth Movement. Nonetheless, it is questionable to acknowledge Ouyang's strong allegiance to the principles of the May Fourth Movement, especially evident in his enthusiasm for publishing other works in readily accessible media like Shanghai's tabloid newspaper *Jingbao* 晶报 (The Crystal), and other commercially oriented magazines. These publications were frequently dismissed as "inferior" and "competing" by the May Fourth literary intellectuals of the era. Ouyang's tight association with *The Crystal* was evident its declaration to hire him as one of the editors of its fiction column in addition to publishing his writings and performance information. As noted by Volland, literary production in Republican China faced an unprecedented choice of media and took place within a network of institutions that offered new resources to writers, immersing them on multiple levels in the processes of literary creation and distribution.[69] The most significant institutions were publishing houses and the editorial boards of literary journals.[70] As shown below, *The Crystal*'s editorial board not only hired Ouyang but also helped him advance professionally by praising and publicising his drama performances. On the one hand, the publishing houses and editorial boards served as social spaces that facilitated interaction among like-minded writers, involving them on multiple levels in the process of literary production and circulation; on the other these periodicals established standards of inclusion and exclusion for contributors and textual production.[71] Ouyang's case illustrates that the boundaries of different literary agency were sometimes fluid. At *The Crystal*, Ouyang's "peers", or "*tongren* 同人", were generally regarded as "old school literati" (*jiupai wenren* 旧派文人) in contrast to the May Fourth literary intellectuals, with the former denigrated as the *Butterfly*. During his time, Ouyang was something of a paradox with a foot in each of the opposing camps, making it difficult to label him as one or the other. This section examines how Ouyang practiced self-promotion and built a connection with a different, even opposing, literary group to the May Fourth community.

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[69] Nicolai Volland, "All the Literature That's Fit to Print: A Print Culture Perspective on Modern Chinese Literature", in Yingjin Zhang ed., *A Companion to Modern Chinese Literature* (West Sussex, England: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 364.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

Established by Qian Jiechen 钱芥尘 (1886-1969) in March 1919, *The Crystal* was one of four prominent tabloids (also "small newspaper" in contrast to broadsheets in terms of the size) in Shanghai, enjoying the reputation of the "four door gods", which all featured amusing stories as well as satirical socio-political commentary.[72] In its inaugural editions, *The Crystal* issued a prominently titled announcement named "To Our Readers" (*Aidu benbao zhujun jian* 爱读本报诸君鉴), serving as an illustration for the newspaper's contributors. As depicted in the accompanying image and table (Figure 3.2 and Table 3.1), Ouyang's role as one of the principal editors overseeing the fiction column was duly acknowledged. He shared this position with other esteemed editors and writers, including figures like Wang Dungen 王钝根 (1888-1951) and Zhou Shoujuan 周瘦鹃 (1895-1968).


愛讀本報諸君鑒

Figure 3. 2 The Announcement "To Our Reads" in the fiction column, *Jingbao* 9 April 1919.

[72] Catherine Vance Yeh, "A Public Love Affair or a Nasty Game? The Chinese Tabloid Newspaper and the Rise of the Opera Singer as Star", *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2003): 17-20. Other 'Four Door Gods' includes *Robinson Crusoe* (*Luobinhan* 罗宾汉), *Sherlock Holmes* (*Fuer mos*i 福尔摩斯), and *The Diamond* (*Jingang zuan* 金刚钻).

Table 3. 1 Contributors of *The Crystal*'s Fiction Column

Name	**Profession, Association, or Major Works**
Yan Duhe 严独鹤 (1889-1968)	Editor of *Xinwen bao* 新闻报 (The News), *Kuaihuo lin* 快活林 (Amusement)
Wang Dungen 王钝根 (1888-1951)	Editor of *Ziyou tan* 自由谈 (Free Talk), *Youyi zazhi* 游戏杂志 (Pastime)
Shuliu shanfang 漱六山房 (?-1935, also known as Zhang Chunfan 张春帆)	Author of the "depravity fiction" *Jiuwei gui* 九尾龟 (The Nine-Tailed Turtle)
Zhang Danweng 张丹翁 (1868-1937)	Editor of *Kuaihuo* 快活 (The Happy News)
Zhou Shoujuan 周瘦鹃 (1895-1968)	Editor of *Libai liu* 礼拜六 (Saturday), *Zi luolan* 紫罗兰 (Violet), *Liangyou huabao* 良友画报 (Liangyou Pictorial)
Shen Nengyi 沈能毅 (unknown)	Manager of *Shibao* 时报 (Eastern Times)
Hu Jichen 胡寄尘 (1886-1938)	Editor, member of the Southern Society (*Nanshe* 南社)

Analysing the table, it is evident that contributors of *The Crystal* were mainly professional editors of popular media, in contrast to the youthful May Fourth scholars. Although many of the tabloid contributors had made a name for themselves by this time, Juan Wang's perspective categorized these individuals as "low and middle-ranked literati".[73] This classification stemmed from the fact that they had received substantial traditional education but remained outside the circles of intellectual prominence and conventional power structures.[74] Their profile closely aligned with that of the "Butterfly writers", a group supposedly driven by the pursuit of sales figures, often employing popular literary techniques to amplify their work's allure. Despite originating from diverse social backgrounds and embodying a spectrum of values and attitudes, these figures, along with their literary creations, found themselves subjected to harsh critiques from the intellectual elites who had capitalized on the socio-political reforms.[75] Some reformist intellectuals saw the tabloid community's literature as a means of pleasing readers and spreading "obsolete" values, although this sense

[73] Juan Wang, *Merry Laughter and Angry Curses the Shanghai Tabloid Press, 1897-1911* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 12.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

of "obsolescence" is not one that necessarily belongs to the past, but is rather one which contrasts strongly with their values.[76] Seeing themselves as having no political power or intellectual influence, the rank-and-file literati devised their "aesthetic populism", which focused on entertaining the common people and took an antagonistic attitude towards the reformist elites.[77] The tabloid press therefore became one of their battlegrounds to retrieve their lost political identities, allowing them to be cynical and even defiant.[78] Unlike many intellectual elites that distanced themselves from the tabloids, Ouyang exhibited an astute and cooperative attitude, capitalizing on the popularity of tabloids among common readers to promote his literary works and dramatic performance.

Ouyang's approach to the tabloid press sets him apart from Hu Shi, the prominent advocate of the New Culture Movement and champion of New Literature. When the editor Zhang Danweng initiated a dialogue with Hu Shi on the pages of *The Crystal* about Hu's vernacular new poetry (*xinshi* 新诗), Hu received Zhang's comment as, "it is not bad, but I cannot say it is good when comparing it to Hu's traditional rhythmical poems".[79] Considering this critique as a "severe insult", Hu opted to sever communication with *The Crystal* in his reply letter, deeming Zhang an "unworthy tabloid literati" and unfit to evaluate his work.[80] Hu's reaction reflects a pervasive dismissive stance among intellectuals like him towards tabloid literati and their aspirations to monopolize anything considered "new" in literary circles. In contrast, Ouyang appears more cooperative and adaptable in leveraging the broader readership of the tabloid.

In addition to his role as the fiction column editor, Ouyang corresponded with the drama column "jujie xiaoxi 剧界消息" (Drama News) of *The Crystal*, which covered news related to popular theatres and actors. On July 12, 1919, the drama column editor, Feng Shuluan 冯叔鸾 (1883-?), wrote an article titled "My View on Yuqian's Northern Journey" (*Yuqian beixing yuji* 予倩北行余记), in which he criticized Ouyang for being an opera actor who had attained his

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[76] Hockx, *Questions of Style,* 197.
[77] Wang, *Merry Laughter and Angry Curses*, 20.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Tang Weijie 汤惟杰, " 'Yike xinger', 'maose jia' yu 'xin' de zhengzhi—Hushi yu zaoqi Jingbao guanxin xintan《一颗星儿》"毛瑟架"与"新"的政治——胡适与早期《晶报》关系新探" ("a Star", "Mauser's Frame" and the Politics of the "New"— a New Exploration of Hu Shihs Relationship with the Early Crystal), *Xindai zhongwen xuekan* 现代中文学刊 *(*Jounal of Modern Chinese*)*, no. 6 (2010): 35-36.
[80] Ibid.

fame in Shanghai and should not seek performance opportunities in Beijing. Despite this challenge, Ouyang's response was gracious, explaining that his purpose for travelling to Beijing was to recruit students for his upcoming drama school in Nantong. Moreover, he expressed his gratitude towards Feng for his "close attention" and requested his response be published in *The Crystal*.[81] The differentiation between professionalization and politicization within literary endeavours played a pivotal role in shaping the contrasting viewpoints of Ouyang and Hu Shi. As literary figures progressively engaged more directly with publishing houses and newspaper establishments, Hockx asserts that the nexus between writing, publishing, and politics underwent a dilution beginning in the latter part of the nineteenth century. [82] Consequently, literary pursuits and their accompanying publications assumed a more independent and specialized nature. [83] Notably, Ouyang appeared to be wary of offending the editors of *The Crystal*, a tabloid with an expansive readership that could potentially boost his dramatic career. Evidence of this is seen in the numerous favourable reviews and advertisements of his performances published in *The Crystal*, such as "Actors Well Worth Watching" and "Rising Stars in the Eyes of Yan Duhe".[84] Ouyang's ability to maintain a positive relationship with these editors had a positive impact on his success.

Moreover, Ouyang's literary contributions to *The Crystal* illuminate a perspective on the ongoing dispute among intellectual elites concerning the perceived "low and frivolous" nature of the tabloid community. Ouyang's short story "The Withered Tree" (*Kushu* 枯树), which saw publication in the pages of *The Crystal* in March 1919, delineated the societal quandaries arising from the clash between traditional values and the influences of Western civilization. [85] The narrative style employed in this piece bears resemblance to his earlier work "Broken Hand" that featured in the pages of the May Fourth journal *New Tide*. It is vital to acknowledge the distinct characteristics of popular tabloids and the emerging literary journals. Instead of disregarding these distinctions, I contend that Ouyang's voice in *The Crystal*

[81] Ouyang Yuqian, "Zhi Maer xiansheng 致马二先生" (To Mr. Ma Er), *Jingbao* 12 July 1919. Information of *Jingbao* is from the online database of Heidelberg Research Architecture: Early Chinese Periodicals Online (ECPO). Access date: 15 August 2021.
[82] Hockx, *Questions of Style,* 34.
[83] Ibid.
[84] "Hen gouqiao de yida 狠够瞧的一打" (Actors Well Worth Watching), *Jingbao* 3 April 1924: 2; "Duhe yanzhong de huadan 独鹤眼中的花旦" (Rising Stars in the Eyes of Yan Duhe), *Jingbao* 21 April 1924: 2.
[85] Ouyang Yuqian, "Kushu 枯树" (The Withered Tree), *Jingbao* 09 March 1919: 3.

occupies a third space that transcends binary categorizations. This position underscores the fallacy of baseless accusations of "frivolity" of the tabloids during the time.

"The Withered Tree" depicts a dispute between two brothers in a Confucian family. The elder brother, who has received traditional education, garners his mother's favour owing to his implicit compliance with the patriarchal hierarchy and his "*wei* 伪" (hypocritical) tendencies. Although he indulges in playing mah-jong and always attends late-night parties, he fabricates excuses to his mother by stating that he waits outside her chambers all night to inquire about her well-being, which tugs at his mother's heartstrings. However, the younger brother, who receives Western education, often chastises his mother over various matters and is deemed as unfilial since he challenges Confucian ancestor worship. For example, he suggests removing the withered tree adjacent to their doorway to avoid it being a shelter for rats and causing other issues related to bad hygiene, which his mother staunchly opposes, considering the tree's presence as emblematic of familial harmony and ancestral heritage. His constant sense of alienation with his mother leads his wife to advise adopting his elder brother's compliance and hypocrisy to gain his mother's love, stating, "It is the Chinese family philosophy". Despite his previous contempt for his brother's actions, he mirrors his behaviour by repairing their ancestral graves and learning about Confucian cosmology from his mother. However, a pivotal moment arrives when he observes a team of laborers cutting down withered trees for timber. This encounter serves as a catalyst, prompting a transformation in his outlook. It compels him to reassess his entrenched convictions about blindly adhering to unyielding traditions. Subsequently, he shares this realization with a child, imparting the wisdom that discarding outdated elements can pave the way for their conversion into something more valuable. In this way, he conveys the symbolism inherent in the act of uprooting withered trees.

In a satirical manner, Ouyang critiques the Confucian extended family by linking it to a "withered tree". His vision of an ideal family would be one that loosens restraints on parochial ties (parents and children, elder brother and younger brother) and liberates individuals from the repressive customs of Confucian clans. In the story, the younger son's wife is portrayed as a "familywise" woman who always comforts and provides solutions whenever her husband feels dejected regarding intractable family relations. This portrayal is a demonstration of the advantages of the nuclear family as compared to the traditional extended family with its myriad conspiracies. The younger son's anxiety may be seen as a clash of old and new values or

between traditional Chinese kinship practices and the civil law that emerged in 1919. The new civil law aimed to reform the traditional Chinese familial system and promote domestic equality by abolishing the rule that determined leadership based on order of birth. [86] In contrast, the new law seems not to have arrived in this family, since the second son must flatter his mother to receive equal inheritance rights, indicating the continued influence of patriarchal authority and Confucian clan beliefs. Through this story, Ouyang depicted the challenges faced by a society attempting to implement modern reforms while still being held back by deep-seated traditional cultural norms.

While the withered tree in this tale stands as a symbolic representation of the Confucian ethics that require discarding, the younger son's response to it is a nuanced journey fraught with intricacies, encompassing emotions that range from resentment and acquiescence to eventual disillusion. The closing dialogue between the young man and the child, however, introduces an air of uncertainty regarding the man's future trajectory—whether he will steadfastly reject the proponents of conventionalism personified by his mother and elder brother remains indistinct. To put it another way, the conclusion does not accentuate the younger son's forthcoming reformist actions in ushering in the new social order, even though he has awakened to the shortcoming of the old customs. His exposure to Western learning has instilled within him a distaste for ingrained traditions, yet his commitment and determination to the eradication of the old is not categorical. Rather than principled conviction, he seems to be motivated by his potential elevation in the family hierarchy (old customs) and the power brought about by the new civil law (new reforms). To some extent, this story offers a critical perspective on the self-serving and utilitarian nature of some reformist intellectuals with their learning. Despite being published in the popular tabloid, this fiction of concise vernacular language and satirical substance addressed a pervasive societal issue. It undermines the assumption that tabloid literature is necessarily "trivial" or "lacking in morality", and that a binary distinction must be made when assessing the literary form, language, and content. "Withered Tree" serves as a reminder of the potential complexity and depth of tabloid literature.

[86] Zhang Renshan 张仁善, "Xunqiu falü yu shehui de pingheng: lun minguo shiqi qinshufa jichengfa dui Jiazu zhidu de biange 寻求法律与社会的平衡: 论民国时期亲属法继承法对家族制度的变革" (Seeking a Balance between Law and Society: On the Transformation of the Family System in the Republic of China through Kinship and Succession Law), *Zhongguo faxue* 中国法学 (Chinese Law), no. 3 (2009): 128-141.

3.4 The Child Bride and the Detective

As previously demonstrated, categorizing Ouyang as belonging to either the May Fourth or *Butterfly* community is questionable, for he was associated with both. What bound them during the time was their shared concern for the pressing issues confronting the nation and their vision for a new social order. Though some acknowledged that many of China's socio-political realities necessitated adjustments, not all believed that the solution entailed destroying and rejecting the past. This section examines Ouyang's writing, "*Sansui de tongyang xifu* 三岁的童养媳妇" (A Three-Year-Old Child Bride, Child Bride hereafter), for a commercial magazine, which tackled a grave social problem by incorporating both old and new values into potential solutions. He provided a case to demonstrate that the boundary between the so-called "new" and "old" was blurred and that both could coexist in a single literary work.

In 1923, *Xinsheng banyue kan* 心声半月刊 (Sing Sing Half-Monthly)—a commercial magazine sponsored by a photographic gallery of the same name, sought contributions from Ouyang. To remain accountable to its photographic gallery patron, the magazine consistently featured photographs of celebrities and information of the latest photographic technology, alongside literary and artistic works. The editorial board was comprised of Wang Dungen, Liu Huogong 刘豁公 (1890-?), Zheng Zibao 郑子褒 (1900-?), and Xu Xiaoling 徐小麟 (the owner of the gallery, fig. 3.3), all prominent figures in Shanghai's publishing industry with extensive experience running commercial periodicals such as the renowned *Pastime* (1913) and *Saturday* (1914). In addition to the four resident editors, the magazine also had honorary editors, such as Yuan Hanyun 袁寒云 (1890-1931) and Bu Linwu 步林屋 (unknown).[87] Most of them have been placed into a particular cultural niche by history: they were representatives of the *Butterfly*, and the literary journals they managed were often characterized as "provincial" and "popular" (*tongsu* 通俗).[88] However, it would be inaccurate to label *Sing Sing* as representative of the "old" under their stewardship, for the magazine showcased cutting-edge photography that reflected the modern life of Western countries and garnered admiration from Chinese readers of the time. This photographic content resonated with the reformist spirit of the era, embodying a commitment to novelty and modernization. The magazine further boasted a segment titled

[87] Fan Boqun 范伯群, *Zhongguo jinxiandai tongsu wenxueshi* 中国近现代通俗文学史 (History of Pre-modern and Modern Chinese Popular Literature) (Nanjing: Jiangshu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), 642.
[88] Ibid., 643.

"Women's Literary Garden" (*funü wenyuan* 妇女文苑), disseminating new insights about hygiene, childcare, and related topics. Like many widely-read periodicals of its era, *Sing Sing* endeavoured to connect with readers across different strata—spanning the "high", "middle", and "low" levels—aiming to highlight societal concerns on a public platform. To familiarize readers with the magazine's contents, the editors of *Sing Sing* introduced a column titled "Editor's Chitchat" (*bianji zhuiyan* 编辑赘言), which discussed the distinctive features of each issue. In their fourth issue of the inaugural volume in 1923, editor Liu Huogong made the following comments about Ouyang:

> Many people have probably seen Mr. Ouyang Yuqian's brilliant operas such as *Mantou an* and *Baochan songjiu*…However, not many of you have seen his masterful writing. In this issue, we publish Ouyang's fiction 'Child Bride'. People who are interested at Yuqian's writing must subscribe to *Sing Sing*.[89]

Figure 3. 3 The editorial board: Xu Xiaolin, Liu Huogong, Zheng Zibao, and Wang Dungen, *Xinsheng banyuekan* 心声月刊 (Sing Sing Half Monthly) 1, no.1 (1922): 1.

[89] Liu Huogong 刘豁公, "Bianji zhuiyan 编辑赘言" (Editors's Chitchat), *Xinsheng banyue kan* 心声半月刊 (Sing Sing Half Monthly) 1, no.4 (1923): 10. [The original Chinese text: 欧阳予倩先生的拿手好戏如馒头庵玉堂春宝蟾送酒等等,大概谁都见过; 欧阳予倩的得意文字见过的却是不多。本期有予倩君做的一篇小说叫做三岁的童养媳妇, 欲观予倩文字的不可不看心声半月刊].

Not only did this edition of *Sing Sing* present readers with an opportunity to read Ouyang's writing, but it also included six other "must-see" items, including the calligraphy of Wu Changshuo 吴昌硕 (1844-1927), an opera review from the famous actor Yu Shuyan 余叔岩 (1890-1943), the collective fiction (*jijin xiaoshuo* 集锦小说) of *Butterfly* writers Gong Shaoqin's 贡少芹 (1879-1923), He Haiming 何海鸣 (1884-1944), and Tao Baopi 陶报癖 (1886-1927), to name just three of them.[90] *Sing Sing*'s editorial board appeared to target a salaried and educated readership, who turn to literature and arts for relaxation and pleasure after finishing their working day. As claimed by Liu Huogong, Ouyang's contribution is unique because he stands out as a famous opera singer who rarely writes fiction. His short story "Child Bride" served as a good for sale specifically tailored to the curious readers of *Sing Sing*. Ouyang's positive interpersonal relations with the editorial board is also evidenced by the publication of a still photo of him on stage (fig. 3.4). According to Lee, the modern magazine played a role in retailing culture into the urban dweller's home, where the individual could browse and pick whatever appealed to them in their own private space.[91] Introducing readers to a captivating stage photograph of Ouyang, the magazine encouraged them to experience the full pleasure of his performance in person for a nominal entrance fee. By showcasing Ouyang's image, the magazine effectively served as a promotional tool, extending the reach of his performance to a wider audience, and fostering a mutually advantageous promotional alliance between the artist and the publication. This once again underscores how Ouyang's roles in both drama and literature contributed to their mutual success.

[90] Ibid.
[91] Haiyan Lee, " 'A Dime Store of Words': Liberty Magazine and the Cultural Logic of the Popular Press", *Twentieth-century China* 33, no. 1 (2007): 58.

Figure 3. 4 The Stage Photo of Ouyang Yuqian (left) and Pan Haiqiu in Costume, *Xinsheng banyuekan* 2, no.3 (1923):1.

The fiction "Child Bride" discusses the egregious custom of "child daughter-in-law" (*tongyang xi* 童养媳) where a poverty-stricken girl is sold to a younger boy from a wealthy family as his nursemaid and future wife. In terms of this story, Fan Boqun believes it should be read as a tear-jerking piece of "popular fiction" (*tongsu xiaoshuo* 通俗小说) as it places emphasis on capturing the everyday existence of urbanites belonging to the lower-middle class, which aligns with the editorial sensibilities of *Sing Sing*.[92] However, the concept of the "child bride" was also a prominent topic within the realm of "new fiction" during that period. This topic carried connotations of the enduring presence of unsettling traditions upheld by rural communities, which intellectuals appropriated for reformist or opposing agendas aimed at promoting moral enlightenment. The renowned writer Shen Yanbing 沈雁冰 (1896-1981, also known as Mao Dun) once championed "blood and tears" (*xue he lei* 血和泪) literature in 1921 to highlight the suffering of the underprivileged and contrasted this genre of literature with what he regarded as "comfort" writing from *Butterfly* writers.[93] The most influential literary

[92] Fan Boqun, *Zhongguo jinxiandai tongsu wenxueshi*, 642. [The original text: 《心声》更为集中地表现街坊和弄堂的生活, 因此刊物就更具有都市世俗色彩。童养媳的生活是街坊邻里之间热点话题之一].
[93] Shen Yanbing 沈雁冰, "Ziran zhuyi yu Zhongguo xiandai xiaoshuo 自然主义与中国现代小说" (Naturalism and the Modern Chinese Fiction), *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 小说月报 (Fiction Monthly) 13, no.7 (1922): 8-19.

works regarding the plight of the child bride and matrimonial oppression on young women included Shen Congwen's 沈从文 (1902-1988) short story *Xiaoxiao* 萧萧 (1929) and Xiao Hong's 萧红 (1911-1942) *Tales of Hulan River* (*Hulanhe zhuan* 呼兰河传, 1940). In Shen Congwen's work, the eponymous protagonist Xiaoxiao, a twelve-year-old girl was married to a two-year-old boy, and after engaging in an affair with a farmhand she becomes pregnant. While Xiaoxiao's actions bring dishonour upon her family, the absence of Confucian education among her in-laws spares her from the penalty warranted by her transgression, allowing her to give birth to the child. In line with the precepts of Confucian morality, a woman involved in an affair like Xiaoxiao's would invariably find herself condemned. The episode where Xiaoxiao garners understanding from her in-laws, who lack exposure to Confucian rules, underscores Shen's criticism of the Confucian moralists and their rigorous and exploitative approach to ethical considerations pertaining to women. This instance stands as a platform for his support of modern ideals, including women's self-awareness and the affirmation of their self-determination in matters related to sexual conduct.[94]

Ouyang's story depicts the miserable experience of Ah Mao 阿毛, a three-year-old girl from a poor family. Her mother sells her as a child bride to their neighbour, the family of Qian. However, the family of Qian is only marginally better off than Ah Mao's family and relies on Mrs Qian's handicrafts for financial stability. After the premature death of Mrs Qian, Mr. Qian has trouble raising his own child, let alone Ah Mao. Even worse, he considers it too expensive to return Ah Mao to her own family since he cannot afford to pay the travel expenses to find Ah Mao's mother. Therefore, he tortures Ah Mao to the brink of death by starving and beating her. His neighbours feel angry at his treatment of Ah Mao but are afraid to intervene until they ask help from a detective, who eventually saves Ah Mao. Like Xiaoxiao, Ah Mao is treated under the old marriage customs as a commodity, representing a life of pitiable desperation for girls from impoverished families. Mr. Qian, who is depicted as the embodiment of evil in this narrative, not only abuses Ah Mao but also capitalizes on his wife's labour. He is unable to support his family after his wife's passing, thereby exposing himself as an impotent man who thrives solely on gender inequality, using the females in his life for his own self-enrichment until they no longer provide value.

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[94] Ban Wang, "Nature and Critique of Modernity in Shen Congwen", *Prism* (Durham, N.C.) 16, no. 1 (2019): 128.

Unlike Xiaoxiao, however, Ah Mao's salvation comes not from the absence of Confucian doctrine but from a chivalrous detective, thereby linking the story to another popular literary genre, "detective fiction". Introduced into China during the late Qing period by the literary reformists as a type of "new fiction" that promoted rationalism, it was considered that detective fiction could even "exert a positive influence on society and politics".[95] As suggested by King-fai Tam, the May Fourth writers were less censorious of detective fiction than they were of other popular genres.[96] According to Jeffrey Kinkley, detective fiction promoted scientific advances, rationalism and was welcomed by May Fourth writers, as it was helpful for China in progressing and developing judicial practices.[97] Therefore, Cheng Xiaoqing's 程小青 (1893-1976) Huo Sang tales and Sun Liaohong's 孙了红 (1897-1965) Lu Ping stories, which were "scientific, precise, and technically advanced", could be regarded as an "affiliate of China's 'serious' May Fourth literature".[98] Kinkley's insights provide a useful angle to gauge how Ouyang portrayed the role of the detective. Can we consider Ouyang's detective as a scientific and rational hero? Ouyang's depiction of his detective reads as follows:

> When I went to see Ah Mao, she was still alive, the detective claimed. Therefore, I gave Mr. Qian ten *yuan* and warned him to divide the money in half. I requested he uses the half to find Ah Mao's mother and the other half to purchase two cotton coats and some food for Ah Mao.[99]

The detective's strategy to save Ah Mao in Ouyang's fiction partly aligns with Chinese traditional *youxia* 游侠 (knight-errant) beliefs, which has often been described as restoring order in times of crisis, as an outsider and by means of force. To some extent, Ouyang's detective resonates the chivalrous values of aiding the weak and supporting the poor (*furuo jipin* 扶弱济贫) in traditional Chinese *gongan* 公案 (court-case) literature, which was

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[95] Yan Wei, *Detecting Chinese Modernities: Rupture and Continuity in Modern Chinese Detective Fiction (1896–1949)* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 6.
[96] King-Fai Tam, "The Detective Fiction of Ch'eng Hsiao-Ch'ing", *Asia Major* 5, no. 1 (1992): 113-132.
[97] Jeffrey C. Kinkley, *Chinese Justice, the Fiction: Law and Literature in Modern China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 195-199.
[98] Ibid., 223.
[99] Ouyang Yuqian, "Sansui de tongyang xifu 三岁的童养媳妇" (A Three-Year-Old Child Bride), *Xinsheng banyue kan* 心声半月刊 (Sing Sing Half Monthly) 1, no.4 (1923): 1-7.

dismissed as outdated, irrational, and brutal by the May Fourth literary intellectuals.[100] In contrast, they appreciated modern detective heroes who faithfully imitated Western types and are usually depicted as possessing acute skills in observation and logical deduction to catch the culprit.[101] The plot in "Child Bride" does not prioritize science, which the May Fourth literary intellectuals consecrated as one of the saviours of China, as a solution to the problem. The detective, under Ouyang's pen, acts as a hybrid character, who initially investigates the crime in a rational way by concealing himself to observe the criminal and collect evidence, but ultimately resorts to a martial method of threat to achieve fairness outside the law. Here, the old-style knight-errant spirit could be read as a mirror image of the perilous reality of modern China, where justice is kept by the lawlessness of chivalrous heroes. Through blending the narrative elements of modern detective fiction with his nostalgia for traditional morality, Ouyang's fiction points to the gap between institutional justice in Western detective literature and the lawless social reality of Republican China. He juxtaposed elements of the "new" and "old", the alluring and the utilitarian, indicating that he not only embraced the traditions of older elite culture but also observed emerging cultural trends. In his literary endeavours, Ouyang focused on exploring practical benefits to society rather than rigidly categorizing concepts as "new" or "old". Whether published in widely read periodicals such as *Sing Sing* or the more intellectually oriented May Fourth journals like the *New Tide*, his fictions consistently addressed contemporary issues and challenges, actively engaging in discussions on how the nation could derive tangible benefits from these considerations.

Conclusion

Ouyang Yuqian's significance in Chinese literary and cultural history has often been overshadowed by his pioneering contributions to the civilized and modern spoken drama. His literary outputs, which indicated a wide range of interest in popular subjects, have been inadequately acknowledged. This chapter attempts to revive a character of Ouyang, who gained notoriety due to his acute awareness of the leisure industry and his remarkable willingness to soothe and entertain urban dwellers. Then, the chapter investigates Ouyang's occupation of fiction-writing in the 1910s and early 1920s by examining his engagement with various publishing outlets, including the May Fourth journals, Shanghai tabloids, and commercial magazines. These outlets constitute a "field of force" for him to strive for fortune, prestige, and

[100] Wei, *Detecting Chinese Modernities,* 15.
[101] Ibid.

power in his early career, in which he not only worked as a perceptive cultural businessman with a commercial ethos but also as an intellectual claiming lofty national objective. As demonstrated earlier, Ouyang was embraced as an in-house contributor to the May Fourth periodicals and established himself as a practitioner of "new fiction". Scholarly discourse has consistently brought to light and amended the term "May Fourth", which has been mistakenly perceived as possessing cultural dominance or repressive attributes within the realm of Republican literary circles for a long time, as Ouyang's multifaceted literary career indicates. He sustained his involvement with the popular press, nurturing strong connections with what the May Fourth community deemed the opposing faction: the *Butterfly* writers. He managed their journals and published his own works within that sphere. Definitively demarcating his allegiances between the May Fourth intellectuals and the so-called *Butterfly* literati proved to be a complex endeavour.

Despite the three fictions explored in this chapter, namely "Broken Hand", "The Withered Tree", and "Child Bride", being published in publications with divergent ideologies, all contributed to the cause of social reform. This phenomenon raises questions about the validity of clear-cut divisions between the so-called "new" and "old", as well as between the "serious" and "popular" realms. In essence, Ouyang's literary journey is multifaceted, driven not solely by his literary prowess and educational background but also by his adeptness at establishing and nurturing diverse social networks—integral components of his "cultural entrepreneurship". The Republican literary landscape can be perceived as a relatively autonomous community intertwined with various social and cultural interactions. Within this context, discerning cultural entrepreneurs like Ouyang Yuqian frequently leveraged support and seized occupational opportunities from various quarters. Through Ouyang's case, we may also infer that within the cultural field of the Republican China, the "new" and the "old", despite their constant clashes, did not culminate in one prevailing over the other definitively because there were still individuals like Ouyang who sought to engage with both simultaneously to foster exchanges of idea, reputation, or even interests. Put it differently, Ouyang's story may offer insights into the fluidity of boundaries between the "new" and the "old" in the cultural field of Republican China. Rather than merely crossing these boundaries, Ouyang's trajectory suggests a transcendence of ambiguous categorizations driven by his entrepreneurial spirit. When examining his activities and literary output, labels such as "May Fourth" or "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies", as well as distinctions between "intellectual" and "popular", prove insufficient to accurately gauge the depth of his sophistication.

Chapter Four

Walking in the Garden of Forking Paths: Ouyang Yuqian in the Film Field

The field of early Chinese filmmaking can be envisaged as "a garden of forking paths", where numerous historical agents "crossed ideological, medial, and geographical borders, which are, more often than not, artificial".[1] One of the artificial borders, which I focus on in this chapter, is the classification of cultural backgrounds of early Chinese film practitioners. As Leo Ou-fan Lee shows in an early study, Chinese film historians have divided early filmmakers as *wenren* 文人 (people in the literary circles, mostly writers) and *xiren* 戏人 (people primarily connected to drama).[2] Accordingly, films of the period typically fall under two categories. First, *wenren dianying*, were films made by those from the May Fourth literary circle, such as Tian Han, Xia Yan, Hong Shen, and other leftist writers who entered the film world in the 1930s.[3] Second, *xiren dianying*, were films made by craftsmen-directors whose aesthetic was derived from the conventions of Chinese drama, in particular, the civilized drama.[4] Lee also suggests that *wenren* filmmaking, which superseded *xiren* filmmaking, dominated the film scene from the 1930s and changed "the quality of Chinese cinema from frivolous entertainment into a serious art of social criticism that served to advance the cause of revolution".[5] This view was accepted by most Chinese scholars. For example, Wang Di claims in his article "Xia Yan and *Wenren* Filmmaking" that *wenren* filmmaker refers to the literary intellectuals who dabbled in writing film scripts.[6] Usually possessing a strong sense of social responsibility and nationalism, the

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[1] Xuelei Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking: Crossing Borders, Connecting to the Globe, 1922-1938* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 2.
[2] Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 99.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Wang Di 王迪, "Xia Yan yu wenren dianying 夏衍与文人电影" (Xia Yan and *Weren* Filmmaking), *Dianying yishu* 电影艺术 (Film Art), no. 1 (1997): 6.

style of their filmmaking is "*pushi* 朴实" (plain) or "*pingdan* 平淡" (flat).[7] Liu Yinxing declares that *wenren* filmmaker denotes the "modern intelligentsia" who were receptive to intellectual discourse from the West and focused on "social-critical power and the lyrical poetics of the story".[8] These views might have been affected by the canonisation of "May Fourth" and the marginalisation of *Butterfly* School in the political narrative and further stereotyped due to ideological differences between the "left-wing" and "right-wing" filmmakers regarding the relationship between Chinese film arts and politics in the 1930s.

However, Emilie Yeh puts forward a different understanding of *wenren* filmmaking. She introduced the phrase "film literati" (*dianying wenren* 电影文人) to point out the so-called *Butterfly* writers' involvement with motion pictures as critics, scriptwriters, and directors.[9] These film literati include Zhou Shoujuan, Bao Tianxiao 包天笑 (1876-1973), and Xu Zhuodai 徐卓呆 (1881-1958), and so on, who were generally associated with writing popular fiction in Republican China. In other words, she used *wenren* to refer to literary professionals or people who made a living by "selling their writing" rather than solely May Fourth literary intellectuals and claims they were "decisive players" in the early film business.[10] Chen Jianhua makes a similar amendment to *wenren*'s ambiguity and polysemy in the Republican film world. He proposes the term "*xinshi wenren* 新式文人" (new-style literati) to highlight the *Butterfly* authors' "mediation" between enlightenment and entertainment, tradition and modernity, and local and cosmopolitanism.[11] More importantly, he suggests that in terms of films' functions, those "new-style literati" shared the same expectation as the reformist intellectuals like Liang Qichao, who aspired to "enlighten the masses" through cinema or fiction.[12]

Compared to the diversity of views regarding *wenren* filmmaking, the scholarly voice towards *xiren* filmmaking is much more unified. *Xiren* signifies people who write, critique, or

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Mia Yinxing Liu, *Literati Lenses: Wenren Landscape in Chinese Cinema of the Mao Era* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019), 3.
[9] Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, *Early Film Culture in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Republican China Kaleidoscopic Histories* (Baltimore, Maryland: Project Muse, 2018), 246.
[10] Ibid., 247.
[11] Chen Jianhua 陈建华, *Ziluolan de meiying: Zhou Shoujuan yu Shanghai wenxue wenhua, 1911-1949* 紫罗兰的魅影:周瘦鹃与上海文学文化, 1911-1949 (The Phantom of the Violet: Zhou Shoujuan and Shanghai Literary Culture, 1911-1949) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2019), 484.
[12] Ibid.

perform drama. For example, Zheng Zhengqiu 郑正秋 (1889-1935), the widely accepted father of Chinese cinema, who once worked as a Peking opera critic and ran a commercial drama troupe named the New People Society (*Xinmin she* 新民社), can be regarded as a qualified drama professional. The notion of "*xi* 戏" has been regarded as the kernel of early Chinese filmmaking since some of the earliest movies were indebted to Peking opera performance and "*wenmingxi bandi* 文明戏班底"— the personnel, tableaux, and script of the civilized drama.[13] During the period, it was relatively common for actors who worked during the day for film studios to perform at night on the stage of civilized drama.[14] *Xi,* in Chinese cinematic experience, is also an attendant stylistic and aesthetic strategy, including "the prevalence of medium-long shot, non-perspective spatial relations".[15] In other words, *Xi* was an unconscious guiding principle for those drama professionals not only in terms of their thematic predilections but also the style in which the films were shot. As Zheng Zhengqiu recalled, he "naturally thought of traditional Chinese drama" when he started making films.[16]

Resonating with those scholarly concerns, my study considers the following questions: Does a border between *xiren* and *wenren* filmmakers really exist? Where was Ouyang Yuqian situated within the two? Should we draw a boundary and research the respective spheres and styles? How did Ouyang's practice of cultural entrepreneurship illuminate these questions? As Paul Pickowicz suggests, it is easy to "accept without adequate reflection the vague but politically charged suggestion that nothing very modern or socially progressive happened on Shanghai movie screens until 1931".[17] We should be mindful of the danger involved in any artificial attempt to fix a border, especially when discussing the highly syncretic Chinese film culture. My study debunks such classification by reviewing Ouyang Yuqian's multifaceted public persona and filmmaking activities. It recognises that generalisation fails to account for the heterogeneous cultural backgrounds of early Chinese filmmakers. Sharing much in common with Zheng Zhengqiu, Ouyang attained his reputation on the drama stage. They were not only outstanding actors and managers of commercial troupes but also dramatist-intellectuals eager to comment on socio-political affairs. In addition, as demonstrated earlier,

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[13] Zhen Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 99-100.
[14] Vivian Shen, *The Origins of Left-Wing Cinema in China, 1932-37* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 9.
[15] Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen,* 373.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Paul Pickowicz, *China on Film: A Century of Exploration, Confrontation, and Controversy* (Lanham, Md.: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2012), 38.

Ouyang was also actively involved in the May Fourth literary scene by contributing to influential journals such as *New Youth* and *New Tide.* His multifaceted career and social network made his presence in the film field far from one-dimensional.

Concerning Ouyang Yuqian's public persona, I do not intend to diminish the division between *wenren* and *xiren*; rather I aim to explore the interstices between his literary, dramatic, and cinematic practices, discussing how he crossed these medial boundaries. The first part of this chapter explores how Ouyang leveraged his connection with people from the drama and literary circle to enter the film industry, where he transferred his expertise from multiple cultural spheres into his filmmaking. In a detailed examination of his films—particularly *Why Not Her* and *After Three Years*—the second section reveals that Ouyang's early ventures into filmmaking predominantly involved the adaptation of works he had previously showcased in both literary and dramatic platforms. This phenomenon, which I analyse through the lens of "cultural entrepreneurship", highlights Ouyang's strategic utilization of his existing repertoire across various cultural platforms to navigate the burgeoning film industry of his time. Beyond that, Ouyang was described as a "left-wing" filmmaker in the Marxist teleological and linear view of history, according to which his 1930s movies were considered more "socially progressive" than those of the 1920s.[18] In the last two sections, this project will challenge this view through examining his multifaceted filmmaking activities in the 1930s and scrutinizing his 1936 film *Ling Lingzi*, a production that appears to transcend the divide between leftist and rightist factions.

4.1 Entering the Film Garden: Crossover from *Wen* and *Xi*

As shown earlier, Ouyang Yuqian had accumulated significant literary and dramatic experience before becoming involved in the film industry. Prior to making his film debut in 1926, he took on the roles of opera actor, teacher, writer, and editor, among others. His cinematic career was indebted to his previous endeavours, especially his expertise and interconnection in the drama and literary fields. Through an examination of Ouyang's chronological trajectory, self-referential materials, and periodical records of the time, I will tease out how he entered the film

[18] It refers to the Chinese language scholarship, *The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema* (*Zhongguo dianying fazhanshi* 中国电影发展史) by Cheng Jihua, Li Shaobai, et al. Although written from an orthodox Marxist-Leninist position and flawed in its approach, it provides a major source of information for research on Chinese cinema before 1949.

world and reveal how his interconnected career helped him take up a new occupation. I suggest that the classification between *wen* and *xi* does not reflect Ouyang's entering the film garden of forking paths of Republican China. Ouyang's involvement in the film industry was not only indebted to his drama experience but also to his post-May Fourth literary activity. His filmmaking was entangled within a vast network beyond any assumed borders.

In his autobiography, *Dianying banlu chuajiaji* 电影半路出家记 (Records of My Switch to Filmmaking), Ouyang described his first encounter with the boss of Minxin 民新 Motion Picture Company:

> Bu Wancang introduced me to the Minxin Company, and they extended a warm welcome when we began interviewing. Soon thereafter, I overheard Doctor Zhou remarked that she had previously seen my opera performance and particularly enjoyed my "Daiyu Buried Flowers", noting that I was "Lin Daiyu" on stage. Consequently, when Bu Wancang recommended me, they were confident in my aptitude to craft compelling screenplays.[19]

In this story, two people contributed to Ouyang entering the cinema industry. One was Bu Wancang 卜万苍 (1900-1973), a prolific Chinese film director and screenwriter active between the 1920s and 1960s. According to Ouyang himself, he met Bu Wancang in 1922, when Bu worked for a motor corporation and was fascinated with Peking opera.[20] Through his request to learn opera from Ouyang, they became friends. Bu's recommendation and their shared interests helped Ouyang establish a connection to the boss of the Minxin Company, Li Minwei 黎民伟 (1893-1953, also known as Lay Min-wei). Li, having been raised in Hong Kong, was an active participant in promoting civilized drama in the 1910s. He organised the first civilized drama troupe in Hong Kong to propagandise Sun Yat-sen's revolution. He used dramatic tableaux to produce Hong Kong's first movie *Zhuangzi shiqi* 庄子试妻 (*Zhuangzi*

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[19] Ouyang Yuqian, "Dianying banlu chujiaji 电影半路出家记" (Records of My Switch to Filmmaking), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji* 欧阳予倩全集 (The Complete Works of Ouyang Yuqian) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1990), vol.6, 359. [The original Chinese text is: 卜万苍介绍我进民新, 一谈, 他们就表示欢迎。后来听周医生说, 他们曾经看见过我演戏, 特别喜欢《黛玉葬花》, 说我就是台上的林黛玉, 因此听卜万苍一说, 就相信我必能编剧].

[20] Ouyang Yuqian, "Records of My Switch to Filmmaking", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 356.

Tests His Wife, 1914).[21] When Ouyang came to Minxin for an interview, Zhou Shufen 周淑芬, the wife of another Minxin boss Li Yingsheng 李应声, told Ouyang it was his operatic expertise that attracted them to employ him to write screenplays. This story contributes to a deeper understanding of a cultural practice that Rea has conceptualized as "cultural entrepreneurship", wherein cultural agents initiate their endeavours in a specific field, establish a reputation, and subsequently diversify into or layer on additional domains.[22] Furthermore, it resonates with Wen-Hsin Yeh's insight that specific skills open doors for aspiring individuals, offering them opportunities to embark on new careers with the potential for commercial success.[23]

In effect, the crucial cultural arenas for those early filmmakers gathering and getting to know each other, as Xuelei Huang highlights, were the "stage of theatre" and "field of publishing".[24] Many of them were practitioners and patrons of civilized drama and traditional opera or dabbled in the publishing industry before becoming involved in the movie industry. Ouyang had many opportunities to be acquainted with these future film entrepreneurs (or filmmakers). In 1936, Ouyang joined the Mingxing 明星 Film Company, where he found many acquaintances from drama and literary circles. For example, through the introduction of his brother-in-law in 1913, Ouyang befriended Song Chiping 宋痴萍 due to their shared literary interest in his hometown Changsha.[25] During that period, Song served as the editor of *Mingguo ribao* 民国日报 (Republican Daily) and later became Ouyang's colleague at Mingxing Company. Alongside Zheng Zhenqiu, mentioned earlier, four other founders of Mingxing had prior experience managing drama troupes. For instance, Zhang Shichuan (1889-1953) hailed from the People's Voice Society (*Minming she* 民鸣社), Zhou Jianyun (1893-1969) established the Society for Enlightening the People (*Qimin she* 启民社), and Zheng Zhegu (1880-1925) originated from the River East Society (*Dajiangdong jushe* 大江东剧社).[26]

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[21] Zhou Chengren 周承人 and Li Yizhuang 李以庄, *Zaoqi Xianggang dianyingshi* 早期香港电影史 (Early Hong Kong Film History) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2009), 31.
[22] Christopher G. Rea and Nicolai Volland eds., *The Business of Culture: Cultural Entrepreneurs in China and Southeast Asia, 1900-65* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 18.
[23] Wen-Hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843-1949* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2007), 1.
[24] Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking*, 76-86.
[25] Ouyang Yuqian, "Shehui jiaoyutuan 社会教育团" (Society of Social Education), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 33.
[26] Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking,* 80-81.

It was generally held that the owners of civilized drama troupes were chiefly focused on financial profits and were considered as mere "craftsmen-directors", only one-step removed from providing "frivolous entertainment".[27] Ouyang, however, insisted that their dramatic endeavours were closely related to national issues of the time. In 1918, Ouyang was invited to write a prelude for the opera magazine *Jubu congkan* 菊部丛刊 edited by Zhou Jianyun, in which he recalled his encounter with Zhou on the stage of the civilized drama and applauded Zhou for his plays filled with national concerns and intellectual responsibility.[28] In Ouyang's eyes, Zhou was an aspiring young man, and their life paths converged on the drama stage and publishing industry. Receiving a Western-style education at a missionary school, Zhou Jianyu cared about social affairs and frequently voiced his opinion to reform in revolutionary periodicals like *Xinmin congbao* 新民丛报 (New People's Gazette) and *Minhu bao* 民呼报 (People's Signs).[29] Ouyang's remarks are likely to indicate the outlook, persona, and moral values of esteemed playwrights such as Zhou Jianyun during that era. His remarks also challenge the notion that *xiren* filmmakers were solely perceived as "craftsmen" who merely offered superficial entertainment. In effect, many of them displayed an enthusiasm for engaging in the nation-building endeavour of their time.

Although many of the people mentioned above actively engaged in drama, it is inaccurate to adopt the term "*xiren*" to generalize their sophistication and range of professional interests. In addition, using the terms "*xiren*" and "*wenren*" would draw and reassert the dubious boundaries between the dramatists, literary intellectuals, and common literati. In the previous chapter, we learn that Ouyang had an affinity with students and young scholars who contributed to the New Culture Movement and the accompanying May Fourth Movement. This connection continued in the following decades and would facilitate Ouyang's film career. In fact, after making three films in Minxin, Ouyang suspended his film career around 1927, and did not return to this industry until 1935. During the gap, he participated in the Anti-Chiang Kai-shek campaign, the Fujian Rebellion (*Minbian* 闽变) against the Nanking Central

[27] Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, 99.
[28] Ouyang Yuqian, "Ti Jianyu laoyou jubu congkan 题剑云老友《菊部丛刊》" (Prelude to *Chrysanthemum Series* of My Old Friend Jianyun), in Jing Libin 景李斌, *Ouyang Yuqian yiwen jijiao yu yanjiu* 欧阳予倩轶文辑校与研究 (Collection and Research on Ouyang Yuqian's Anecdotes) (Beijing: Zhongguu xiju chubanshe, 2019), 66.
[29] Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking*, 74.

Government in 1933. Due to the failure of the rebellion, he took shelter in Hong Kong and Europe for a while. When he returned to Shanghai and accepted an invitation to work for the film company Xinhua 新华, the political and social environment had changed.

Even so, Ouyang might not have felt too unfamiliar with the new filmmaking environment, where he could still find many acquaintances, such as Hong Shen (1894-1955) and Tian Han. Hong Shen joined Mingxing in 1924 and was trusted by the boss Zhang Shichuan as both a screenwriter and a scout to source new recruits for the company.[30] Prior to this, Hong Shen, as a young student graduating from the United States, had returned to Shanghai and joined the Drama Cooperative Society (*Xiju xieshe* 戏剧协社) under the recommendation of Ouyang in 1923. He took a teaching post at Fudan University and led the Fudan Drama Troupe (*Fudan jushe*, 复旦剧社) in 1925 that featured Western plays and became a constituent member of the Leftist Drama League in 1930.[31] Tian Han had joined the CCP in 1932 and was a leading figure of another influential leftist organization, the League of Left-wing Writers (*Zhongguo zuoyi zuojia lianmeng* 中国左翼作家联盟, the Leftist Literary League hereafter). Before entering the film industry, he organized the spoken drama troupe and training school Southern Drama Society (*Nanguo she* 南国社) in 1927, where Ouyang was hired as a teacher. The Drama Cooperative Society and Southern Drama Society both turned "left" and joined the Leftist Drama League in 1930. Notably, by this time, Ouyang was not a member of the CCP, and his relationship with the KMT was ambiguous. His close alliance with the Leftist Drama League is questionable. Still, his left-leaning proclivity was evident in several plays he wrote in the government-funded Guangdong Drama Research Institute (*Guangdong xiju yanjiu suo* 广东戏剧研究所, 1929-31), which demonstrated sympathy for workers and lower classes.[32] During his days in Guangdong, the agitated drama "Roar, China!" which depicted imperialist intrusion and the suffering of Chinese labourers was successfully staged under Ouyang's negotiation with KMT members.[33] Although his political orientation was

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[30] Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking*, 115.
[31] Cao Shujun 曹树钧, *Julian yu zuoyi xiju yundong* 剧联与左翼戏剧运动 (Drama Societies Association and Left-Wing Drama Movement) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2014), 7-12.
[32] These works include *Chenfu zhijia* 车夫之家 (Coachmen's House),*Xiaoying guniang* 小英姑娘 (Miss Xiaoying), and *Tongzhu de sanjiaren* 同住的三家人(Three Families in a House).
[33] Gei Fei 葛飞, *Xiju, geming yu dushi xuanwo: 1930 niandai zuoyi juyun, juren zai Shanghai* 戏剧、革命与都市漩涡:1930 年代左翼剧运、剧人在上海 (Drama, Revolution, and Urban Vortex: Leftwing Operas and Actors in Shanghai in the 1930s) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008), 24.

complicated at that time, we can still detect Ouyang's footprints in the left-wing cultural network. When Shanghai's main film studios sought creative staff with a leftist background in the 1930s, Ouyang's individual experience and social nexus made him a suitable employee.

Another driving factor behind Ouyang's choice to return to Shanghai from Hong Kong and join the Xinhua Company was, in his own words, the need to secure his livelihood. In the face of a recession in Shanghai's economy exacerbated by the looming Japanese war and his precarious relationship with the government, Ouyang expressed, "During that period, I required a job for my survival".[34] Therefore, he accepted the invitation of his old friend and the boss of Xinhua, Zhang Shankun 张善琨 (1907-1957), to make a film. Their friendship could be traced back to the 1910s when Ouyang performed the Peking opera for the theatre *Gong wutai* 共舞台 (Theatre Gong) owned by Zhang. Like most studios of the time, Xinhua was also looking for people with left-wing backgrounds to produce defence films.[35] What made Ouyang stand out in the eyes of the company bosses was not only his expertise and fame, but his wide social, political, and business connections. As Huang discovers, Ouyang's brother-in-law, Tang Youren 唐有壬 (1894-1935), took a leading post at the government and the Jingcheng Bank 金城银行 who had discretionary power to make loans to film companies.[36] This solid political background and family resource undoubtedly made Ouyang a desired employee in an industry requiring considerable financial investment. Based on the above account, Ouyang's involvement with the film industry has been influenced in many ways. His early working experience in the theatres and various literary groups acquainted him with numerous future film entrepreneurs who were impressed with his talents. He also had a connection with the left-wing organisation that powerfully infiltrated the film industry in the 1930s; meanwhile, his family background also facilitated him finding work when his economic difficulties arose. In this tangled and interconnected cultural web, we will never know which factor played the most crucial role. As Laikwan Pang asserts, early Chinese filmmaking was not an independent event but a converging point of many social, cultural, local and international discourses.[37] In this labyrinth of forking paths, Ouyang stood at the crossroads of numerous complementary and

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[34] Ouyang Yuqian, "Records of My Switch to Filmmaking", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 371.
[35] Zheng Jianjian 郑健健, *Xinhua yingye gongsi tanxi* 新华影业公司探析 (Exploration of *Xinhua* Film Company) (Shanghai: Dongfang chuban zhongxin, 2017), 49.
[36] Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking,* 124.
[37] Laikwan Pang, *Building a New China in Cinema: The Chinese Left-Wing Cinema Movement, 1932-1937* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 19.

contradictory interests. Like many of his friends, he had more than one persona spanning the fields of literature, drama, and film. To sum up, adopting the polarised classification of *wen* and *xi* to delineate the nexus between individuals and the film industry at that time is oversimplified.

4.2 Recycling Old Stories: Across Medial Borders

When describing his film career, Ouyang said it was little more than a "halfway switching" (*banlu chujia* 半路出家), indicating that he lacked formal training and that his love of art and bravery in the face of failure was what kept him going.[38] Closely examining Ouyang's film career also contributes to our understanding of "cultural entrepreneurship". How, for example, did Ouyang, without professional learning, produce a film? How did he make his works competitive with other colleagues and palatable to audiences? What kind of benefits did filmmaking bring him? Throughout his film career, he participated in writing and directing twelve movies, nine of which were completed in Shanghai and three in Hong Kong in the late 1940s (see table 4.1). This study mainly focuses on his Shanghai filmmaking.

Ouyang first appeared on the silver screen in 1926 when the Minxin Company launched the movie *Why Not Her*. It was the first time Ouyang wrote a movie script and played a role in the film. When the audience familiar with Ouyang saw him on-screen, they could not help but compare his acting to his performances in Peking opera. A moviegoer, Chen Jixun 陈绩勋, commented in the *Minxin Special Issue* (*Minxin tekan* 民新特刊, the promotional journal of Minxin) that Ouyang changed his stage image of impersonating female characters and vividly played the role of a sordid merchant in the film, which was "really amazing".[39] Chen's remark demonstrates that the previous drama experience was helping brand Ouyang's cinematic career among the audience. As Xuelei Huang suggests, in the early Republican cultural sphere, printed material, stage plays, and films were a matter of mutual influence, which constituted a textured picture that intertwined a web of words, images, symbols, and meanings.[40] Sai-Shing Yung and Christopher Rea described a similar

[38] Ouyang Yuqian, "Records of My Switch to Filmmaking", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 356.
[39] Chen Jixun 陈绩勋, "Ji Yujie bingqing 记玉洁冰清" (Records on *Why Not Her*), *Minxin tekan* 民新特刊 (Minxin Special Issue), no.2 (1926): 62-63.
[40] Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking*, 8.

technique of recycling stories between newspaper, paperback book, and silver screen as "one chicken, three dishes" when they evaluated Law Bun's recreational enterprise of substantial trans-media experience in Southeast Asia in the 1950s.[41] Employing this tactic in the 1920s, Shanghai filmmakers like Ouyang proved to be much earlier practitioners. Ouyang not only garnered much attention from the film audience through his established dramatic reputation but also interacted with written and stage works as his way of filmmaking.

Table 4. 1 The Films Ouyang Yuqian Participated in Producing in Shanghai

Title and Year	Ouyang's Responsibility	Film Company
Yujie bingqing 玉洁冰清 (Why Not Her, 1926)	Screenwriter (Director: Bu Wancang)	Minxin
Sannian yihou 三年以后 (After Three Years, 1926)	Director and Screenwriter	Minxin
Tianya genü 天涯歌女 (A Wandering Songstress, 1927)	Director and Screenwriter	Minxin
Xin taohua shan 新桃花扇 (The New Peach-Bloom Fan, 1935)	Director and Screenwriter	Xinhua
Qingming shijie 清明时节 (Around the Qingming Festival, 1936)	Co-Director and Screenwriter	Mingxing
Xiao Lingzi 小玲子 (Little Lingzi, 1936)	Screenwriter (Dir. Cheng Bugao)	Mingxing
Haitang hong 海棠红 (The Red Begonia, 1936)	Screenwriter (Dir. Zhang Shichuan)	Mingxing
Ruci fanhua 如此繁华 (So Busy, 1937)	Director and Screenwriter	Lianhua
Mulan congjun 木兰从军 (Mulan Joins Army, 1937)	Screenwriter (Dir. Bu Wangcang)	Xinhua

[41] Sai-Shing Yung and Christopher Rea, "One Chicken, Three Dishes: The Cultural Enterprises of Law Bun", in Rea and Volland eds., *The Business of Culture: Cultural Entrepreneurs in China and Southeast Asia*, 151.

Figure 4. 1 Ouyang played the role of sordid merchant Qian Weide 钱维德 in his scripted and directed film *Why Not Her* (*Yujie bingqing* 玉洁冰清, 1926), *Minxin tekan*, no.1 (1926): 23.

In terms of his experience in writing films, Ouyang once expressed, "it would be fine if we take materials from 'the existing drama'…for example, the fiction *Konggu lan* 空谷兰 (Orchid in the Empty Valley) and *Duoqing de nüling* 多情的女伶 (A Romantic Actress) were adapted into Wang Youyou's drama masterpieces. If we adapted them into film scripts, there should be another kind of fun".[42] "Orchid in the Empty Valley" and "A Romantic Actress" were originally works of fiction written by Bao Tianxiao. Owing to their immense popularity, they underwent adaptations into stage plays by Wang Youyou 汪优游 (1888-1937) a decade prior to being adapted for the screen by the Mingxing Company in 1926. When Ouyang worked as an actor of civilized drama in the Spring Willow Theatre, the most popular repertoire was what he called "Spring Willow tragedies", often centring on madness, suicide or Buddhist renunciation. I argue that Ouyang's early filmmaking actively interacted with the stage plays, echoing the public's fascination with sentimentalism and melodrama.

[42] Ouyang Yuqian, "Yingpian jiaoben caize zhi biaozhun 影片脚本采择之标准" (Criteria for Selecting Film Scripts), *Minxin tekan*, no.1 (1926): 17.

Ouyang's film debut, *Why Not Her*, is redolent of the flavour of a civilized drama, especially the blockbuster of the Spring Willow Society entitled *Jiating enyuanji* 家庭恩怨记 (A Tale of Family Affairs, 1912) written by Lu Jingruo. They all depicted fragile, tragic, and emotional characters in the Confucian patriarchal family. *A Tale of Family Affairs* tells a story of a pair of lovers, Chongshen 重申 and his fiancée Meixian 梅仙. The young couple inadvertently disrupt an affair of his father's concubine. Lest Chongshen discloses her affair to his father, the concubine decides to destroy the relationship between the father and son by falsely accusing Chongshen of sexually harassing her. Under a series of unjust accusations, Chongshen commits suicide to attest innocence to his father. His fiancée loses her mind when she witnesses her beloved shooting himself. Centring on inexplicable strong emotions, *A Tale of Family Affairs* initiated a current of "family melodrama" that saturated both cinema and civilized drama in the early Republic.[43] The sentimental climax of the play is the scene in which the father encounters the distraught Meixian in the garden as she grieves the loss of her lover. As Ouyang recounted, the actor who played the role of Meixian would often collapse backstage and shed tears after performing this scene.[44] Chongshen's suicide and Meixian's madness became a symbol of virtue, which, although judged as "posturing" and "poor craftsmanship" in contemporary criticism,[45] captured the audience of the time.

Ouyang might have noticed how the figures of "sentimental women" grew fashionable as a measure of the literary merit and market value of the civilized drama at the time. Ouyang was probably inspired by Lu's drama when he worked out the poignant and touching plot for his film debut in 1926. *Why Not Her* is a film relying largely on romantic themes and emotional tensions. Bojian 伯坚, a young student, falls in love with a fisherman's daughter, Suxian 素仙. However, Bojian's father wants him to marry a rich merchant's daughter and pressurises Suxian to break up with her lover and leave their city. The separation plunges Bojian into depression and sends Suxian insane, culminating in her suicide by jumping into the river. The scene, in which Suxian stands on a high mountain with her arms outstretched, exemplifies the theatrical tableaux and hyperbole of affection (fig. 4.2). It functions as a ritual of emotional

[43] Jin Li, "Theater of Pathos: Sentimental Melodramas in the New Drama Legacy", *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 24, no. 2 (2012): 107.
[44] Ouyang Yuqian, "Huiyi chunliu 回忆春柳" (Remembering the Spring Willow Society), in *Ouyang Yuquan quanji*, vol.6, 169.
[45] Edward M. Gunn ed., *Twentieth-Century Chinese Drama: An Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 3.

catharsis due to the victimisation for love, eliciting strong sympathy for her innocence among the audience. The powerlessness of Bojian when confronted with his tyrannical father and the descent into madness of Suxian evoke the tragic elements seen in the story of Chongshen and Meixian from "A Tale of Family Affairs". However, what sets the former apart is the heightened intensity achieved by capturing the character's demeanour in a realistic setting, rather than relying solely on on-stage dialogues. Lu Jingruo's civilized drama and Ouyang's film demonstrate that the popular penchant for the delicacy and weakness of the female character did not die among the Republican audience. From Meixian to Suxian (the same Chinese character in their names makes it easier to reveal connectivity between the two), the audience desired femininity characterised by fragility and sensibility. As an existing type of popular cultural production, the civilized drama provided ready materials for filmmakers to draw upon, especially in terms of its mode of excess and romantic hyperbole.

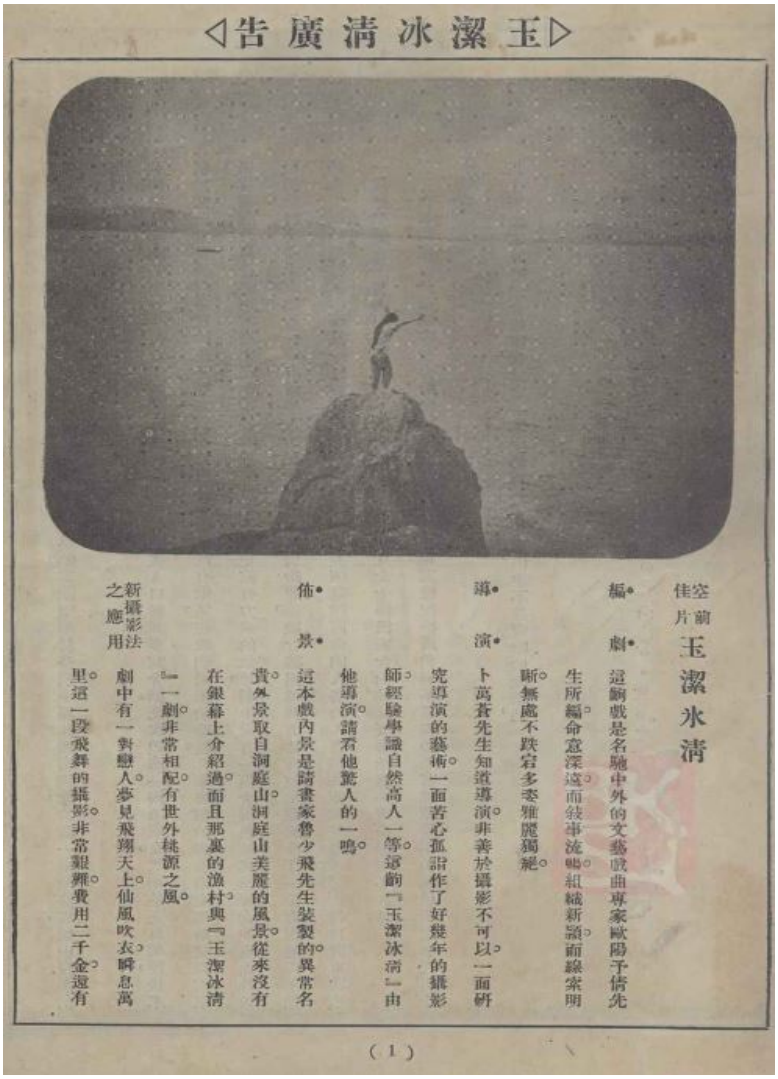

Figure 4. 2 Film photo of Suxian standing on the Dongting 洞庭 Mountain, *Minxin tekan*, no.1 (1926): 3.

This practice of crossing media boundaries between print, stage, and screen is perhaps even more evident in Ouyang's second film, *After Three Years* (1926). As a "family problem" movie, it portrays disputes in a Confucian extended family between two brothers Gangfu 刚夫 and Yifu 毅夫, husband and wife Yifu and Huizhen 慧珍, and mother-in-law and daughter-in-law Taiyi 太宜 and Huizhen. After a series of conflicts, separations, adventures, and final reconciliations, this big family is reunited. In his review of this movie, Tian Han claimed that it was influenced by the synopsis of the traditional Peking opera *Zijing shu* 紫荆树 (Redbud Tree), in which three brothers and their wives fight to separate their family property and finally decide to reunite because they notice that the old redbud tree beside their door died as a result of their discord.[46] Here, the redbud tree is given an allegorical function as a warning: people should not feud over material gains but instead form harmonious bonds within the extended family. It is remindful of the short story "Withered Tree" Ouyang published in the May Fourth literary journal *New Tide* in 1919, in which he compared a decayed tree to a Confucian household full of disputes between parents and brothers. The tree and its symbolic association with family serve as a narrative vehicle for exposing the drawbacks of the traditional extended family as opposed to the nuclear family, a trope recycled in both Ouyang's fiction and films. Another critic also pointed out that there were obvious similarities between this movie and Ouyang's 1922 stage drama *Huijia yihou* 回家以后 (After Returning Home), in which a rural wife with Confucian virtues is abandoned by her husband of Western educational background.[47] Her husband eventually recognises her virtue after his second marriage to a modern city girl. Therefore, the film script of *After Three Years* can be read as a melodramatic derivation of Ouyang's existing work.

Contrary to the peaceful daily routine and the heroine's virtues that promote the reconciliation between the couple in the spoken drama *After Returning Home*, the reunion of Huizhen and Yifu in the movie is full of tensions that cannot be described more aptly than "emotional excess" and "performative exaggeration", characteristics of melodrama as defined by Peter Brooks.[48] The family's harmony is restored through the arduous adventures of

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[46] Tian Han, "ABC de duihua ABC 的对话" (Dialogue between ABC), *Minxin tekan*, no.3 (1926): 13-17.
[47] Sun Shiyi 孙师毅, "Cong huijia yidao dao sannian yihou 从回家以后到三年以后" (From After Returning Home to After Three Years), *Minxin tekan*, no.3 (1926): 38-39.
[48] Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 202.

Zhuanger 庄儿, the young daughter of Huizhen and Yifu. After Huizhen is driven back to her original family by her mother-in-law and Yifu departs their home to Shanghai, Zhuanger sets out to find her parents and suffers a lot on her journey. In fact, the plot of "parents-hunting" (*xunqin* 寻亲) has a long-standing emotional appeal throughout the long literary tradition in China, frequently appearing in folklore and traditional operas. Early examples can be traced back to "Mulian Rescues His Mother" (*Damu qianlian minjian jiumu* 大目乾连冥间救母) in the Tang Dynasty.[49] The story revolves around how devout monk Mulian rescues his mother, who was punished in hell for abandoning her pious lifestyle. After navigating different hells, each characterised by a horrifying penalty for sinners, Mulian eventually locates and saves his mother. Ouyang's movie is not religious, but it does imitate Mulian's struggles and unusual experiences as he searches for his mother. Zhuanger looks for her mother across mountains and ridges in the movie, relying only on her vague memories of her upbringing and the knowledge that her mother has returned to her birthplace. Fainting through exhaustion, she is fortunately rescued by a passing farmer and taken to her mother's house. It is not surprising that the audience of the time was moved to tears due to the bravery and determination of the little girl, when she finally hugs her mother on the silver screen.

However, Ouyang revised such "parents-hunting" folktales with a visible modern makeover, which featured a traffic accident that almost derails Zhuanger's quest for her father. In 1926, *Minxin Special Issue* launched the advertisement for the film, highlighting its main selling points. It stressed the plot of twists and turns — a car on a busy street hits an eight-year-old girl. Just as she is about to be crushed, a man rushes out and saves her: it turns out to be her biological father, whom she has endured many hardships to find.[50] As Ouyang recalled in his memoirs, his cinematographic and editing techniques were not sufficiently refined to show the intensity of sensation demanded of the plot.[51] However, he still attempted to film it. This is because, for Chinese moviegoers in the early 20th century, the simulation and sensation caused by traffic hazards were still novel sensory experiences.[52] Modern vehicles of the time, in

[49] Sai-shing Yung, "Mulian Rescues His Mother: Play Structure, Ritual and Soundscapes", in Patricia Sieber and Regina Llamas eds., *How to Read Chinese Drama: A Guided Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 349-367.
[50] "Sannian yihou guangdao 三年以后广告" (Advertisement on *After Three Years*), *Minxin tekan*, no.3 (1926): 5.
[51] Ouyang Yuqian, "Records of My Switch to Filmmaking", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 366.
[52] Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking*, 169.

particular trains and their roars and smoke, always seemed to represent danger and destructive power that disrupts the tranquillity of the countryside in the movies at that time.[53] The audience would feel stronger emotions if Zhuanger, a little child with no knowledge of modern cities, was bodily threatened by city traffic. Because of her sincere love for her father, the little rural girl nearly died in the perilous metropolis, thereby connecting an interior family drama to a larger public scene. At this point, Zhuanger also completes her adventure and redemption in two completely different worlds, the rural and the metropolis. The estranged parents resolve to reconcile on the narrative level due to their daughter's near-death experience and excessive emotionalism. According to Zhen Zhang, a specific cinematic landscape existed in the 1920s when trials with diverse forms—old and new, indigenous and translated—released a "neurotic drive" in search of the success formula.[54] *After Three Years* is a market-driven and folktale-based reproduction that addressed an ongoing fascination with the combination of traditional socio-ethics and a visible modern look.

It is worth noting that Ouyang was one of the few early filmmakers in the 1920s who had direct links to the May Fourth Movement proper. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, he was involved in the Literary Association, a major intellectual organ founded in 1921. However, the film *After Three Years* revealed his mixed feelings toward the May Fourth convictions. In the movie, the husband Yifu finds a job in Shanghai because he cannot bear the strife of his extended family in the countryside and is not satisfied with his arranged marriage with Huizhen. However, after spending some unpleasant time with a Shanghai modern singsong girl, he rediscovers the Confucian virtues of his first wife. In other words, this film touches upon the shadow brought about by "self-chosen marriage" and "personal freedom" as modern concepts advocated by May Fourth intellectuals. It is Yifu's abuse of radical liberalism that drives Huizhen to emotional and financial crises. She is evicted from her husband's house and forced to separate from her daughter. Huizhen's name contains the characters *hui* (wise) and *zhen* (chaste), which reveal an apparent connection with Confucian virtues. When she returns to her birthplace, she continues her moral principles and supports herself by diligently undertaking farm work. In contrast, Yifu's second wife is depicted as an avatar of commodity fetishism, and their broken marriage is partly due to her excess desire for adornments and consumption. This plot underscores the danger of the nuclear family in the modern city and

[53] Ibid.,170.
[54] Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*, 192.

highlights the "negative" Western influence encountered by urban women. In this movie, Huizhen can readily be seen as a paragon of Confucian virtue. However, her demonstrated capability to lead an independent life and her initial realization of women's rights render her not entirely detached from the concept of the "new woman". At the same time, it should be acknowledged that the May Fourth ideology did impact on the movie but in a nuanced way to show how elements of the "old" and the "new" could co-exist.

Ouyang once mentioned this idea in his memoir: "The original content I wrote was that Li Huizhen refused to return to the He family and instead fell in love with someone else, forming a small new family. However, the company believed that a reunion would be more in line with their business interests, so I changed the ending to reflect that".[55] "The business interest" of the film company is a reference to what Zhen Zhang calls "*datuanyuan* 大团圆", a pervasive mode in early Chinese filmmaking that "rests upon the completion of circular formula rather than closure of a Hollywood-style linear narrative".[56] According to Ouyang, the film manager of the Minxin company preferred that the film ends with conciliation between the couple. Zhuanger's emotional and dramatic intervention plays a vital role in this circular narrative, in which conflicting values and lifestyles could eventually compromise. Balancing Ouyang's conflicting stance towards the May Fourth ideology and the market-driven expectations of the film company, the movie concludes with a "reunion" with a twist — Huizhen proposes a three-year trial period for Yifu. This act holds a profound significance, implying that the restoration of the shattered family and the preservation of Huizhen's feminine dignity can only be achieved once the notion of "untamed masculine banditry", [57] as referred to by Zhang, is thoroughly eradicated. In conclusion, during the initial stage of his filmmaking career, Ouyang aligned himself with the prevalent melodramatic genre, akin to his contemporaries in the commercial entertainment industry of the 1920s. Additionally, he carried forward his previous experience from the realms of literature and drama. A notable aspect of his work was the emergence of ambivalent sentiments towards the May Fourth intellectual movement, which permeated his literary, dramatic, and cinematic creations, transcending the

[55] Ouyang Yuqian, "Records of My Switch to Filmmaking", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 362. [The original Chinese text: 原来我写的是李慧贞不肯再回何家,另外爱上了一个人,组成了小家庭,公司认为还是团圆比较合乎生意眼,我便改为以上那样的结局].
[56] Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*, 182.
[57] Ibid., 186.

boundaries of different artistic mediums and defying the categorization of the *wenren*- and *xiren*-filmmaker groups.

4.3 A Leftist Filmmaker?

According to the manner of Ouyang's entry into the Shanghai film industry, we can see the arbitrariness of the division between *wenren* and *xiren*. This arbitrary classification is also accompanied by a view that the focus of Chinese cinema from popular *Butterfly* stories in the 1920s changed to severe social criticism under the efforts of May Fourth intellectuals and their successors, the left-wingers in the 1930s.[58] This narrative, which inadvertently draws a line between 1920s and 1930s filmmaking, was heavily influenced by the canonisation of "May Fourth" particularly after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, and accepted by Communist film historians especially in an official history of Chinese cinema, *Zhongguo dianying fazhanshi* 中国电影发展史 (History of the Development of Chinese Cinema, *Cinema History* hereafter) in 1962.[59] The intention of those who sponsored the project, such as Xia Yan and his associates, is easy to understand. To contend against their rivals with a career background in Yan'an, they attempted to stress their "leftist" orientation by devaluing so-called "rightist" and *Butterfly* writers, when they were stuck in the turbulent early Mao period.[60] Under their pens, the 1930s cinema industry was depicted as the scene of ferocious battles between leftists and rightists.[61]

In the narrative of *Cinema History*, Ouyang was depicted as "left-wing and progressive" in contrast to "right-wing and commercial", entering Mingxing in charge of the script committee of Studio II that was marked as being supported by the CCP underground organisations and party members like Zheng Boqi 郑伯奇 (1895-1979), Qian Xingcun 钱杏邨 (1900-1977), and so on.[62] Some academic views tend to endorse the close link between

[58] Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, 99.
[59] Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking*, 5.
[60] Ibid., 70.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Cheng Jihua 程季华 et al., eds., *Zhongguo dianying fazhanshi* 中国电影发展史 (The History of the Development of Chinese Cinema) (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1980), 423.

Ouyang and the leftist leadership.[63] Furthermore, *Cinema History* divides Ouyang's film production into two groups, asserting that three of his "early works" (*zaoqi zhizuo* 早期制作) around 1926 "express sympathy for the working class and reflect the bitterness of the petty bourgeoisie who cannot find a way out".[64] It was not until after the January 28th Incident in Shanghai in 1932 that Ouyang underwent an ideological transformation.[65] This claim implies that Ouyang began making "progressive" movies in the early 1930s under the influence of left-wing ideology. In this section, I explore Ouyang's filmmaking endeavours, delving into the underlying political motivations that may have driven him. By critically examining the authenticity of the official claim and assessing the extent to which Ouyang can be categorized as a left-wing filmmaker, I aim to shed light on the actual connection between the individual filmmaker and the collective leftist agenda in the 1930s as exemplified in Ouyang's case. I argue that this connection is better understood as a loosely bonded relationship. As Huang highlights, it is more constructive to conceptualize 1930s filmmaking as a complex network of power dynamics, influenced by interpersonal connections, commercial interests, and social discourses, rather than a simple dichotomy between the factions of the "left" and "right".[66] Influenced by this perspective, this section aims to illustrate the problematic nature of the classification of Ouyang as a left-wing filmmaker in official history.

Upon the introduction of Marxism by the intellectuals who craved Western ideas to combat the West, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was founded in 1921 as a response to obsession for Westernization.[67] Due to the Kuomintang's (KMT, also known as GMD) massacre in 1927 and their timid response to the Japanese invasion in the 1930s, a spontaneous support for left-wing ideologies and the Communist Party developed among intellectuals in the Shanghai cultural world from the late 1920s.[68] The leftist ideologies, which were believed as anti-government ideologies and powerful means to help fight against the Japanese military and Western capitalism, took hold and grew among the Chinese intelligentsia.[69] On January 28th,

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[63] For example, in his monography, Poshek Fu regards Ouyang as a "Communist fellow traveller who had long been critical of the Nationalist state". See, Poshek Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2003), 17.
[64] Cheng, *History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*, 108.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking*, 18.
[67] Pang, *Building a New China in Cinema*, 20.
[68] Ibid., 21.
[69] Ibid.

1932, the Japanese army started to bomb Shanghai, and the bombardment lasted over one month. This act of aggression greatly impacted Shanghai filmmakers, who decided to maintain their fragile business, producing anti-Japanese content, and recruiting left-wing screenwriters.[70] At the same time, people from leftist organisations, such as the Chinese League of Left-wing Dramatists (*zuoxi xijujjia lianmeng* 左翼戏剧家联盟, Leftist Drama League hereafter), observed the popularity of film reviews in the mass periodicals and planned to engage in the film industry for economic returns.[71] Before they could produce the films, the leftists' first step was to take control of the newspaper's film sections and organise themselves into powerful critical voices to guide film-going activities among the common audience.[72] In doing so, the Leftist Drama League formed their "film critics group" (*yingping xiaozu* 影评小组) and cultivated influential left-wing critics in the 1930s, such as Xia Yan. In a slight departure from this perspective, Laikwan Pang contends that forming a film critics group, which incorporated Marxist concepts, reflected some intellectuals' hostility towards films they regarded as detrimental to society with their hidden promotion of capitalist culture.[73] Therefore, they used critical methodology to form an intervening force and educate the audience, no matter how subjective and imprecise their voices were.[74] In any case, these leftist critics gradually became a force to be reckoned with in the eyes of film studio executives. Throughout the 1930s, more and more intellectuals and revolutionaries entered the film industry as screenwriters, directors, performers, and technicians due to the mutual passion between studio managers and the leftists.

In Ouyang's 1961 memoir, when explaining why he joined the Xinhua, Mingxing, and Lianhua 联华 film companies in the 1930s, which had attracted many left-leaning intellectuals at the time, Ouyang did not say that he had received any instructions or had a collaborative plan with any left-wing cultural organisations. In 1931, the Leftist Drama League, which merged some drama troupes active in the 1920s, decided to pay attention to filmmaking. In its opening declaration, "The Directive of the Most Recent Activities", the League proposed a decision to create film scripts and dispatch their members to different

[70] Shen, *The Origins of Left-Wing Cinema in China,* 15-16.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Pang, *Building a New China in Cinema*, 31.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., 32.

film studios.[75] This document, as Pang claims, is evidence of the strategic participation of left-wing intellectuals as a collective in Shanghai's film industry.[76] Even though Ouyang had previously taken part in several member troupes of the Leftist Drama League, such as the Drama Cooperative Society and Southern Drama Society, their relationship became subtle in the 1930s. It is because Ouyang began to befriend certain senior KMT officials at that time, such as Li Jishen 李济深 (1885–1959), to advance his drama career with their backing. One result of the collaboration was that Ouyang took the leading position at the Guangdong Drama Research Institute in 1929. Nevertheless, this decision proved to be highly vexing for Ouyang's comrades, particularly Tian Han, who declared his disappointment towards the KMT government and proclaimed his "left turn" in 1930.[77] Consequently, Ouyang's friendship with Tian and his association with the Southern Drama Society began to sour. In a 1946 essay, Tian expressed, "Yuqian and I had always maintained a strong friendship, but we diverged in terms of our artistic trajectory. I leaned towards an independent artistic path, whereas Yuqian tended to maintain his connection with the officialdom".[78] The Southern Drama Society joined the Leftist Drama League in 1930,[79] where Tian served as a secretary, while Ouyang did not have a position.

Ouyang entered Mingxing in 1936 as the head of the script committee of Studio II, a position considered under the collective support of leftist filmmakers in the official history.[80] According to the press at the time, Ouyang's career was not smooth and pleasant. For example, the film magazine *Diansheng* 电声 (Electric Voice) published an article titled "Ouyang Yuqian was Unhappy in His Heart; Hands in Letter of Resignation" in this year.[81] During that time, there were many similar reports, such as "Battle for Dignity not for Money, Ouyang Yuqian Resigns" and "Ouyang Throws His Crown" (figure 4.3),[82] all of which

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[75] Ibid., 3.
[76] Ibid., 37.
[77] Tian Han, "Women de ziji pipan 我们的自己批判" (Our Self-Criticism), *Nanguo yuekan* 南国月刊 (Southern Society Monthly) 1, no 2 (1930): 5.
[78] Tian Han, "Ouyang Yuqian xiansheng de daolu 欧阳予倩先生的道路" (Mr. Ouyang Yuqian's Path), in *Tianhan wenji* 田汉文集 (The Collected Works of Tianhan) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1986), vol. 15, 459-460.
[79] Cao Shujun, *Julian yu zuoyi xiju yundong,* 2-7.
[80] Cheng, *History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*, 424.
[81] "Ouyang Yuqian xinli bugaoxing, shangshu cizhi 欧阳予倩心里不高兴,上书辞职" (Ouyang Yuqian was Unhappy in His Heart; Hand in Letter of Resignation), *Diansheng* 电声 (Electric Voice) 5, no.48 (1936): 1286.
[82] For example, "Ouyang Yuqian guan shamao 欧阳予倩掼纱帽 "(Ouyang Yuqian Throws His Crown), *Diansheng* 5, no.47 (1936): 1243; "Zhengqi bu zhengcai, Ouyang Yuqian tichu cicheng 争气不争财,欧阳予倩

implied discord between Ouyang and Mingxing Company. Purportedly, it was because Ouyang's movie *Around the Qingming Festival* was slated to be screened later than *Unchanged Heart in Life and Death* (*Shengsi tongxin* 生死同心), which was directed by Ying Yunwei 应云卫 (1904-1967) and scripted by the CCP member Yang Hansheng 阳翰笙 (1902-1993), despite the former being finished first. Managers of Mingxing made this decision because they regarded Ying's movie as much "harder" (*yingxing* 硬性) and more appealing.[83] However, Ouyang regarded it as breaching a regular screening practice. Therefore, according to the report, Ouyang "felt insulted", "lost his temper", and decided to resign from Mingxing.[84] In the following year, he left Mingxing and joined Lianhua Company. The value of this trivial event perhaps provides a different scenario from the official narrative. Ying Yunwei, a member of the Drama Cooperative Society in the 1920s, joined the film industry in 1934 and was regarded as a "left-wing" filmmaker as well.[85] When asked why he had joined Mingxing, Ying admitted, according to tabloid journalists, one of the reasons was his previous employer had refused to raise his salary.[86] While we should always be mindful of the efforts the tabloid press made to attract readers, these reports convey an impression that Ying and Ouyang were not assigned by a certain organisation to create films, and their relationship in Mingxing was not solid. There appears to be a deficiency in collective ethos and centrally directed regulation among them, with the pursuit of personal gains overshadowing any sense of camaraderie they might have had.

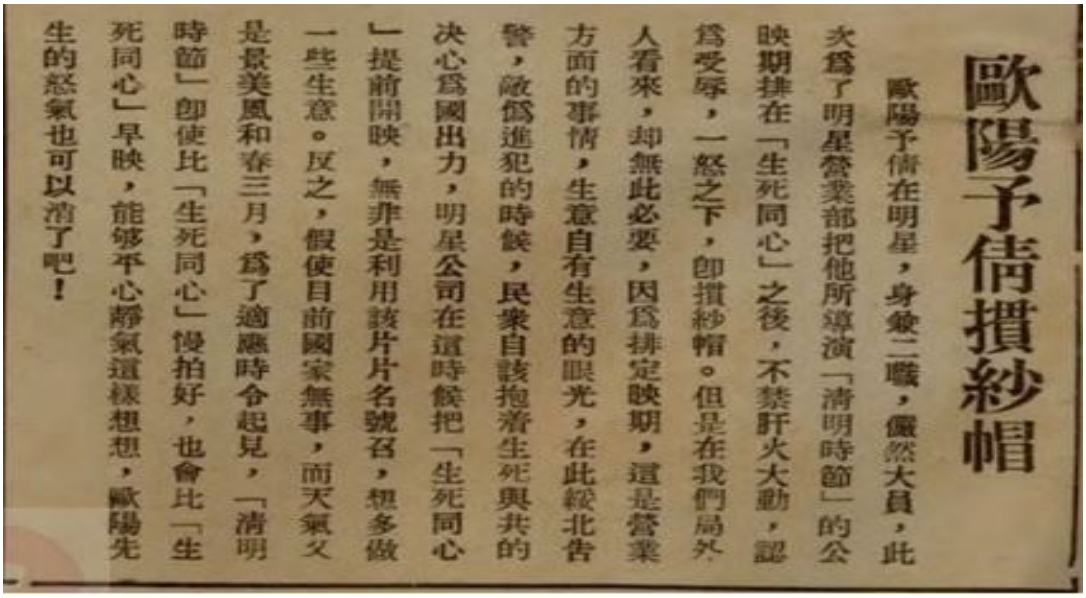
提出辞呈" (Battle for Dignity not for Money, Ouyang Yuqian Resigns), *Dianying yu funü tuwen zhoukan* 电影与妇女图文周刊 (Film and Women Illustrated Weekly) 1, no.1 (1936): 5; "Xiang Mingxing tichu cicheng, yuanyin shi banshi jishou 向明星提出辞呈, 原因是办事棘手" (Resignation to Mingxing; Because Doing Things is Difficult), *Dianying zhoubao* 电影周报 (Movie Weekly) 1, no.2 (1936): 11.

[83] "Ouyang Yuqian was Unhappy in His Heart; Hand in Letter of Resignation", *Diansheng* 5, no.48 (1936): 1286.

[84] "Ouyang Yuqian Throws His Crown", *Diansheng* 5, no.47 (1936): 1243.

[85] Cheng, *History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*, 429.

[86] Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking*, 125.



歐陽予倩撚紗帽

歐陽予倩在明星，身兼二職，儼然大員，此次爲了明星營業部把他所導演「清明時節」的公映期排在「生死同心」之後，不禁肝火大動，認爲受辱，一怒之下，即撚紗帽。但是在我們局外人看來，却無此必要，因爲排定映期，這是營業方面的事情，生意自有生意的眼光，在此緩北告警，敵爲進犯的時候，民衆自該抱着生死與共的決心爲國出力，明星公司在這時候把「生死同心」提前開映，無非是利用該片片名號召，想多做一些生意。反之，假使目前國家無事，而天氣又是景美風和春三月，爲了適應時令起見，「清明時節」即使比「生死同心」慢拍好，也會比「生死同心」早映，能够平心靜氣這樣想想，歐陽先生的怒氣也可以消了吧！

Figure 4. 3 The Report “Ouyang Yuqian Throw His Crown”, *Diansheng* 5, no.47 (1936): 1243.

It is intriguing that when Ouyang recalled this experience in his memoir written in the 1960s, he provided a different story. He asserted that he got along well with the crew of *Unchanged Heart in Life and Death*, particularly with the actors Yuan Muzhi 袁牧之 (1909–1978) and Chen Boer 陈波儿 (1904–1951), who worked for the film industry in Yan’an in the latter half of the 1930s.[87] The reason Ouyang left Mingxing is something he “cannot remember at all”.[88] Ouyang’s account provides us with two ways of understanding this matter. One is that the “discord” did not happen, and it was a publicity ploy manipulated by the tabloid press to attract readers. The other possibility is that it was a history Ouyang intended to erase, since it challenged the myth that the leftist collective had a coherent policy toward filmmaking and its operatives systematically implemented it.

Another event that occurred in the following years prompts us to question the validity of conventional politically motivated groupings and reminds us of the complex nature of the Republican filmmaking field. In 1937, Ouyang scripted the movie *Mulan Joins the Army* with the cooperation of his old friend, Bu Wancang, who had helped Ouyang enter the cinema business in the 1920s. The screenplay is based on a Chinese folk legend about Mulan, a warrior maiden, who disguises herself as a man and defends her nation in place of her ailing

[87] Ouyang Yuqian, “Records of My Switch to Filmmaking”, in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 381.
[88] Ibid., 385.

father. The film interwove an allegory of national resistance against Japan with a touch of romance, such as Mulan's affection for Liu Yuandu 刘元度, hailed by critics in Shanghai as a masterpiece of the highest achievement to instruct people on what and how they should respond to foreign invasion.[89] However, since it was produced on "Orphan Island" (i.e., the foreign settlements in Shanghai unoccupied by the Japanese before the end of 1941), it aroused suspicion from the cultural elites who had fled from Shanghai to the unoccupied interiors. With a mix of nostalgia and resentment, they attacked Shanghai filmmakers on their entertainment bent instead of joining national resistance in the harsh areas.[90] Against this backdrop, *Mulan Joins the Army* was burned after its screening in January 1940 in Chongqing, the temporary capital of the KMT government during the war, putting the reputations and careers of the company boss Zhang Shankun and the film crew Bu and Ouyang at risk. They were accused of "harming national feeling" and "damaging endeavours of resistance" as they emphasised the romantic life of Mulan and were suspected of using the enemy's fund and Japanese Fuji film.[91]

How Ouyang and his colleagues handled this problem is interesting. An article detailing the responses of each of the three was published in *Dianying shenghuo* 电影生活 (Movie Life, figure 4.4). It stated that Hong Shen and Ma Yanxiang 马彦祥 (1907-1988) were the ones to first criticise the movie as "traitorous".[92] In response to this charge, "Zhang Shankun refuted; Bu Wancang intended to appeal to the court in Chongqing", and "Ouyang contacted General Bai; Chen Lifu and Pan Gongzhan will make their verdict after watching the film".[93] The "General Bai" refers to Bai Chongxi 白崇禧 (1893-1966), a senior KMT military officer.[94] Under the negotiation of Bai, Chen Lifu 陈立夫 (1900-2001) and Pan Gongzhan 潘公展 (1894-1975), both influential Nationalist cadres, agreed to have an

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[89] Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong,* 19-21.
[90] Ibid., 39.
[91] "Mulan Congjun beifanan xuxun 木兰从军被焚案续讯" (The Continued Reports on Burning *Mulan Joins Army*), *Dianying shenghuo* 电影生活 (Movie Life), no.7 (1940): 8.
[92] "Mulan Congjun beifenshi kuoda 木兰从军被焚事扩大" (The Accident of Burning *Mulan Joins Army* Expanded), *Dianying shenghuo*, no.6 (1940): 4.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid. As the report states, "The screenwriter, Ouyang Yuqian, who is currently taking the role of curator of Guangxi Drama and Music Museum expressed great indignation at being insulted for no reason, and the General Bai Jiansheng called the film authorities in Chongqing to inquire about this matter. Xia Yan and others strongly defended this movie". [The original Chinese text: 该剧编者欧阳予倩目下担任广西戏剧音乐馆馆长之职,对于无端被辱,表示极大愤慨,已有白健生将军去电重庆电影当局查询此事,夏衍等极力为木兰从军辩白].

investigation into the movie's alleged treasonous feature. These reports also demonstrated that Ouyang was connected to different political forces, since Xia Yan, a Communist member, "stands up to defend the innocence of the film", and this defence was primarily for Ouyang.[95] In the same year, Xia Yan's commentary on this incident was published in another influential film magazine, emphasizing that "the screenwriter [Ouyang Yuqian] should not be held responsible for the actions of other key figures", as directing and acting methods can often lead to deviations from the original plot in the final film.[96] In this declaration, Xia vehemently defended Ouyang, who was then living in the Nationalist-controlled area, Guilin, and asserted that he could guarantee Ouyang's "innocence".[97] These reports show a web of power relations in which the participants had multifaceted political orientations and complicated social relations. For instance, Ouyang and Hong Shen became antagonists in this incident despite being friends in the spoken drama circles in the 1920s. Ouyang attained the trust and support from the KMT high-ranking officials, while simultaneously receiving public endorsement from the Communist Xia Yan as a friend. Primary sources provide a valuable opportunity to explore the intricate socio-political dynamics surrounding an individual. Ouyang's case serves as an example, challenging the oversimplification of categorizing 1930s filmmakers as either left-wing or right-wing. It becomes evident that their political identities were far more complex. For many of these filmmakers, the pressing concern of making ends meet and navigating through challenging times took precedence over aligning themselves with a left or right, or indeed any, "camp".

[95] Xia Yan, "Yige dianying juzuozhe de hua 一个电影剧作者的话" (Words from A Film Scriptwriter), *Dianying shijie* 电影世界 (Film World), no.11 (1940): 26-27.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.


內地文化界掀起軒然大波

「木蘭從軍」被焚事擴大

洪深與馬彥祥著論反對最烈

夏衍等人挺身而出力為辯白

歐陽予倩請白將軍去電查詢

陳立夫潘公展要閱後下評斷

張善琨表示準備據理力爭

卜萬蒼擬向渝地法院控訴

Figure 4. 4 The report of reactions of people related to the incident of "burning *Mulan congjun*" including Hong Shen, Xia Yan, Ouyang Yuqian, Zhang Shankun, Bu Wancang, and KMT officials, *Dianying shenghuo*, no.6 (1940): 4.

4.4 *Little Lingzi*: The Dubious Legacy of Ouyang

As noted above, *Cinema History*, a project endorsed by the Communist government in the 1960s, extols the contribution of left-wing filmmakers to give the Shanghai film industry a "completely new appearance".[98] Ouyang's films from the 1930s are regarded as "left-wing" in this narrative. In 1936, he wrote and directed the movie *Little Lingzi*, which received acclaims from Nationalists and Communists alike. For instance, it was awarded first place in a 1937 Nanjing government-sponsored film competition for its depictions of "darkness in a modern city". [99] It is also praised by the CCP's official history, which claims that it exposes the "deception" and "evil" of the bourgeoisie towards the lower class.[100] In this section, I examine

[98] Cheng, *History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*, 200.
[99] Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking*, 254.
[100] Cheng, *History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*, 430.

why *Little Lingzi* received acclaim from both sides. I regard this movie as a vital illustration of how the dividing line between left and right and 1920s and 1930s filmmaking were overemphasised.

The title character Lingzi is an attractive country girl who gains the affection of two men: the young peasant Ah Mao 阿毛 and the flamboyant playboy Jia Youqing 贾佑清 (fig.4.5). Jia tempts Lingzi to move to Shanghai by sending her to school and treating her to a luxurious lifestyle. As Jia grows tired of her, he abandons her, which leads Lingzi to become a singsong girl in Shanghai's ballroom to sustain herself. When Ah Mao learns of her situation, he sells his home to fund the trip to Shanghai to rescue his girlfriend, and he eventually takes Lingzi back to the countryside, where nothing has changed.[101] The movie touches upon a popular theme, "cultural contamination", addressed by many directors and screenwriters of the time.[102] In their works, the unspoiled countryside represents the essence of Chinese moral virtues, whereas cities like Shanghai are portrayed as corrupt, material, and brimming with foreign culture. *Little Lingzi* resonates with this logic. Before migrating to Shanghai, Lingzi is a pure and hardworking village girl. In Shanghai, she becomes connected to foreign-style nightclubs, dance halls, cigarettes, and foreign liquor, which are all seen as non-Chinese ways of living and the symbolism of pleasure-seeking and sexual gratification. As highlighted by Pickowicz, the dichotomy of countryside/city was a response of the 1930s Chinese filmmakers, particularly the cultural conservatives, to the global trend of assaulting Western bourgeois liberalism initiated in the 1920s by European fascists and Stalinists alike.[103] The notion that bourgeois liberal culture was decadent and corrupt had gained traction throughout Europe in the 1920s.[104] Ouyang's case, however, shows that the Chinese response could also be traced back to the 1920s when he made the film *After Three Years.* In this 1926 production, the dual structure between the city and country had become a yardstick for the audience to recognise good and evil. The virtuous Huizhen, rooted in the countryside, gains control of the household, asserting herself as the conqueror of her spiritually deteriorated husband Yifu. She subjects him to a three-year test to determine his eligibility to return to their idyllic rural home. In contrast, Yifu's second wife, a courtesan in Shanghai,

[101] Ouyang Yuqian, "Records of My Switch to Filmmaking", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 384.
[102] Pickowicz, *China on Film: A Century of Exploration, Confrontation, and Controversy,* 44.
[103] Ibid., 55.
[104] Ibid.

epitomizes foreignness and materialistic tendencies. She serves as a captivating yet degenerate villain, revealing the unaffordability and disillusionment of urban life to Yifu.

Figure 4. 5 Xiao Lingzi and her two lovers, the young peasant Ah Mao and the playboy Jia Youqing, *Mingxing* 6, no.1 (1936): 3.

In these two movies, "class", a concept usually seen as a unique ingredient of left-wing filmmaking, is not the primary analytical category of Ouyang, though he touched upon the "class differences" as other intellectuals had done since the 1920s.[105] Lingzi's encounter with the bourgeoisie represented by Jia Youqing is not irredeemable. She may be healed by choosing to leave Shanghai, the centre of spiritual pollution. The moviegoers perhaps also never doubted that after her husband confesses his faults, the betrayed Huizhen will forgive him for being drawn to the bourgeois life. People like Lingzi and Yifu are lured into abandoning their Chinese roots and lovers by the "bourgeois culture" portrayed by the director's stereotypical and coarse imagination. In other words, the director's primary critique was not of the bourgeoisie as a social and economic system but the radical anti-

[105] The "working class" or "*laogong* 劳工" had become an intellectual discourse of the May Fourth period and found its way in *Xin qingnian* issues in the 1920s. See, Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking,* 238-239.

traditionalism and receptivity to Western liberal culture during the New Culture and May Fourth era, which had crept into earlier fiction and drama. Since the 1920s, Ouyang had adopted a sympathetic view of a vaguely defined traditional morality. It was very much in the ideological bent of the Nationalist government in the 1930s, which believed that embracing Western culture could threaten the ruling class's interest. As Eastman demonstrates, the leadership of the Nationalist administration endorsed a set of traditional values—"*liyi lianchi* 礼义廉耻", and behavioural traits to restore social stability and a sense of national pride during the 1930s.[106] To them, Western liberalism represented political freedom and individualism, which may lead people to disregard societal imperatives.[107]

To some extent, Lingzi complies with Chiang Kai-shek's promotion on *li,* or social order accomplished by the moral cultivation of individuals, when she decides to stop drinking and return to her agricultural roots (fig. 4.6). A 1937 film review entitled "Lessons from *Little Lingzi*" echoed this idea, claiming that social virtues like "man farming and female weaving" would prevent personal tragedies like Lingzi's while simultaneously boosting grain production for the national defence endeavour.[108] In this regard, it is unsurprising that *Little Lingzi* won awards in the government's film competition. The Marxists also liked *Little Lingzi*, as they attempted to draw a caricature of capitalist culture and their rival's rule by connecting it to the trappings of a corrupt society, such as a luxurious and degenerate lifestyle. For instance, *Cinema History* regards *Little Lingzi* as meaningful because it sets an example for young Chinese women about the perils of "debauched" capitalist life.[109] What the official history failed to acknowledge is that there were some areas where the ideologies of the two adversaries in Republican China overlapped.

Additionally, despite the burgeoning left-wing culture's encouragement of a struggle brought on by class disparities and social inequities in the 1930s, Ouyang's lower-class characters—such as the peasant and the worker—are powerless, lacking the intention to fight. Jia Youqing takes Ah Mao's property and girlfriend, putting him under physical and

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[106] Lloyd E. Eastman, "The Kuomintang in the 1930s", in Charlotte Furth et al.,eds., *The Limits of Change Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 192. "*Liyi lianche* 礼义廉耻" is loosely translated as propriety, justice, integrity, and self-respect.
[107] Ibid., 194.
[108] Ying Hongfei 应竑蜚, "Xiao Lingzi de jiaoxun 小玲子的教训" (Lessons from *Little Lingzi*), *Chenguang zhoukan* 晨光周刊 (Morning Light Weekly) 6, no.25 (1937): 28-29.
[109] Cheng, *History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*, 432.

psychological pressure. Despite this, Ah Mao shows no signs of resistance. As he travels to bring his girlfriend back home, they discover "nothing has changed, aside from a few more patches on parents' clothes and villas on their lands purchased and built by Jia at a low price".[110] Ouyang's1936 film, *Around the Qingming Festival*, depicts working-class life, which *Cinema History* considers to represent the broadening of his artistic vision as a result of his embrace of left-wing ideology .[111] In this movie, Chunlan 春兰, a housemaid of the Li family, is raped by the master and gives birth to a child before being expelled from the house by the master's wife. Wang Youcai 王有才, a factory worker, sympathizes with her predicament and introduces her to the Shanghai yarn mill as a female worker. They subsequently get married and live happily ever after. A few years later, master Li dies in a car accident. To prevent other relatives from taking possession of their money, his wife desires to adopt Chunlan's child as her stepson. In the end, the working couple is compelled to leave Shanghai under threat and cannot prevent Mrs. Li from stealing Chunlan's son. Possibly anticipating discomfort from Marxist film historians regarding the plot, Ouyang clarified in his memoir that, during that period, his primary political focus was on highlighting the drawbacks of the "feudal" family system.[112] He admitted to the inadequacy of his consideration for the resistance of the working class, attributing it to a "paucity of thinking" at the time.[113] Nonetheless, Shanghai filmmaking in the 1920s and 1930s remained socially engaged, addressing a spectrum of issues including social inequality, class distinctions, and women's emancipation.[114] Filmmakers from diverse cultural backgrounds undertook the responsibility of informing the public and capturing the social dynamics of the era. These social issues were not monopolized by any specific group but were collectively embraced by all Chinese filmmakers who shared an "obsessive concern with China".[115]

[110] Ouyang Yuqian, "Records of My Switch to Filmmaking", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 384
[111] Cheng, *History of the Development of Chinese Cinema*, 432.
[112] Ouyang Yuqian, "Records of My Switch to Filmmaking", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 380.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking,* 248.
[115] Ibid.

Figure 4. 6 Lingzi drowns her sorrows in alcohol in Shanghai; Lingzi returns to her rural hometown and mends clothes, *Mingxing* 5. no.5 (1936): 3.

Conclusion

In his 1961 memoir, as Ouyang endeavoured to recount his vibrant journey in filmmaking, he found himself grappling with a self-defining dilemma. He reflects, "During the production of *After Three Years*, my thoughts were in disarray, lacking any specific artistic doctrine or

affiliation with a particular school".[116] Nevertheless, as we have seen above, he did have his likes and dislikes in terms of aesthetic taste and ideology. For instance, he was previously fixated on the "melodrama" of sensationalism and emotional hyperbole across the civilized drama stage and silver screen. Additionally, a critique of radical cultural liberalism was one of his continuous concerns in his dramas and films from the 1920s. To be sure, Ouyang, like many early Chinese filmmakers shared the dual objective of pursuing financial success while simultaneously contributing to the nation-building project. However, he ultimately decided to conceal these dimensions and adopted a hazy description of his life. I think a significant reason for so doing is that, like many of his contemporaries, he was unable to find an "unimpeachable" position in the politicised, teleological Chinese film historiography of the Maoist era. Many sources could point to his "betrayals", "contradictions", and encroaching on the authority's cultural taboos.

Taking Ouyang Yuqian as an example, this chapter refutes the stereotype and rigid definition of *wenren* and *xiren* filmmakers, the leftist and rightest, and 1920s and 1930s filmmaking, arguing that early Chinese filmmakers of heterogeneous cultural backgrounds stood at the junction of intellectual discourses and commercial benefits. Ouyang's foray into the film industry stemmed from a fluid exchange between cultural elites in the intertwined realms of literature and drama and bore different historical labels. Leveraging his pre-existing reputation and literary and dramatic prowess, he expanded his professional horizons into the realm of filmmaking, which echoed a form of cultural entrepreneurship that involved transitioning and incorporating additional domains once a solid reputation had been established.[117] Therefore, his presence in the movie field was multifaceted, and any label could obscure his sophistication and "the dynamics of the cultural activities".[118] His filmmaking relied heavily on recycling scripts he once performed and created, which is nothing but a "border-crossing journey": from staged/desktop drama to film. Furthermore, an examination of his film activities in the 1930s reveals that Ouyang was not simply navigating between the boundaries demarcated by left and right ideologies within the film industry. Instead, his actions, propelled by entrepreneurial ambition, hinted at a transcendence beyond these rigid classifications. His case provides us with a glimpse of the interstices between the literary,

[116] Ouyang Yuqian, "Records of My Switch to Filmmaking", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 369.
[117] Rea and Volland eds., *The Business of Culture*, 18.
[118] Huang, *Shanghai Filmmaking,* 101.

drama, and cinematic practices of early Chinese filmmakers in what is a highly complicated web of associated art forms.

Chapter Five

Treading on Thin Ice: Ouyang Yuqian in the Political World

As noted in previous chapters, Ouyang Yuqian's initial achievements were attributed to his stellar performances on the drama stage. However, unlike many actors who hailed from humble backgrounds, Ouyang was born into an esteemed family and received a college education, which granted him the identity of a cultured individual. From the late 1910s, Ouyang's dissatisfaction with solely focusing on opera performances drove him to invest more of his capital, time, and energy into political pursuits. Taking the role of a "cultural entrepreneur", he recognized his social responsibility and engaged in political activities to advance the development of drama-related enterprises, such as theatres, acting schools, troupes, and more. His deep involvement in public cultural affairs gradually politicized his career, enabling him to acquire resources and support from a range of patrons and employers. Ouyang's collaborations extended to renowned industrialists, government officials, and left-wing intellectuals, and he even found himself entangled in the bureaucracy of the People's Republic of China around the establishment of the new regime in 1949. Zhang Jian, Chen Mingshu, and the Guangxi warlord group exemplified diverse political orientations while maintaining personal ties with Ouyang, resulting in intriguing interactions. A detailed exploration of Ouyang's political life, enigmatic identities, and boundary-crossing activities offers insights into the complex socio-political transformations experienced by Chinese intellectuals during the Republican era.

Ouyang belonged to the cohort of Chinese intellectuals born during a period marked by significant fragmentation within the country. Regional militarists posed a persistent threat to the central government, while the ongoing armed conflict between the Nationalists and Communists added to the atmosphere of political instability. In such tumultuous times, fear pervaded among intellectuals, contributing to a sense of profound uncertainty and disorientation. A nuanced exploration of Ouyang's personal life and his boundary-crossing endeavours prompts a reassessment of traditional, politically motivated categorizations and

unveils the intricate dynamics within the Republican cultural sphere. This chapter is organized around Ouyang's political trajectory, focusing on three significant locales: Nantong, Guangzhou, and Guilin. It probes into Ouyang's interactions with his diverse patrons, illuminating how he adeptly traversed domains associated with various political parties, factions, geographical regions, and ideological spectrums. I aim to demonstrate that his strategy for survival transcends mere struggles and defies the rigid confines of the left/right dichotomy. Rather, he hinges upon a flexible approach characterized by learning, adaptation, and an embrace of diversity, including the acknowledgment of hidden complexities. Furthermore, the chapter elucidates how Ouyang leveraged and marshalled resources from these diverse sources to augment his prominence, while also delving into the obstacles he encountered along the way. It also examines the interplay between his cultural entrepreneurship and political engagement, unveiling the intricate connections interlinking these two spheres. Notably, the research methodology employed in this chapter integrates both conventional historical sources and ahistorical material. This fusion allows for a comprehensive exploration of the past since that the discipline of history has long moved beyond the obsession of an elusive "objective" truth.

5.1 Three Years in Nantong

By the end of the 1910s, Ouyang was gradually recognized by the public as a new intellectual and accomplished actor and playwright, which boosted his broader social relations. In 1919, under the invitation of Zhang Jian 张謇 (1853-1926), a former official of the late Qing court who later resigned to run a cotton mill as an industrialist, Ouyang came to Nantong 南通 (known as Tongzhou prior to 1911) in the province of Jiangsu, situated between Shanghai and Nanjing, yet generally considered culturally backward. In Nantong, Ouyang dedicated himself to Zhang Jian's ambitious project of establishing Nantong as a "model community" (*mofan xian* 模范县), assuming responsibility for constructing the modern theatre and drama school, known as the Gengsu Theatre (*Gengsu juchang* 更俗剧场, meaning "changing customs"), as well as the Linggong Acting School (*Linggong xueshe* 伶工学社, meaning "acting worker"). Ouyang's endeavours in Nantong can be perceived as a collaborative effort between external cultural intermediaries and local reformist elites, who sought an "authentic" Chinese approach to modernization rooted in local initiatives, due to their disillusionment with the ineffectiveness

of the warlord government and the moral decay prevalent in treaty ports.[1] Ouyang's practice in Nantong expanded the notion of the "cultural entrepreneur"— an individual who skilfully amalgamated political activism and business acumen by leveraging knowledge, resources, and literacy. His role in Nantong aligned closely with what Joan Judge refers to as the "new middle realms" of Republican China, acting as a bridge between the upper echelons of society (particularly officials and those in authority) and the general populace, infusing traditional literati practices with new visions and values.[2] However, after investing three years in the endeavour, Ouyang was compelled to depart Nantong and sever ties with the Zhang family, as both parties had lost patience with each other. Shao Qin characterizes Ouyang's collaboration with Zhang Jian as a "mismatch" and views his endeavours in Nantong as an "abortive attempt".[3] This section aims to delve into several key elements of their relationship: What led to their collaboration? How did Ouyang merge his "cultural entrepreneurship" with the drama business in Nantong? What were the underlying reasons behind the breakdown of the relationship between Zhang and Ouyang?

According to Shao, to preserve and expand the fruits of the late Qing reform against the Republican president Yuan Shikai's 袁世凯 (1859-1916) dissolution of all local self-government institutions, the local elites in Nantong began to shape the image of their county as a model place of modernity and local initiative as a means to both legitimatize their continued dominance and attract outside support in 1914.[4] At the forefront of the local elite and directly responsible for pioneering what later became known as the "Nantong model" was Zhang Jian. Zhang, the son of a rich peasant of Nantong, was a respected educator, industrialist, official, and entrepreneur in modern China. He had achieved the highest academic degree, *zhuangyuan* 状元, in the imperial civil service examination in 1894, and subsequently served at the Hanlin 翰林 Academy. Disappointed by China's feeble performance in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), which coincided with his father's death, Zhang Jian returned to Nantong to establish a cotton mill under the commission of the late Qing official Zhang

[1] Qin Shao, *Culturing Modernity: The Nantong Model, 1890-1930* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2004), 5.
[2] Joan Judge, *Print and Politics: 'Shiba' and the Culture of Reform in Late Qing China* (Stanford, Calif: Standford University Press, 1996), 34.
[3] Qin Shao, "The Mismatch: Ouyang Yuqian and Theater Reform in Nantong, 1919-1922," *CHINOPERL* 19, no. 1 (1996): 40.
[4] Shao, *Culturing Modernity: The Nantong Model,* 2.

Zhidong 张之洞 (1837-1909) in the hope of competing against foreign imports.[5] By 1911, the Zhang family had established themselves as key players in the local elite society, and they began to expand their influence by promoting Nantong as a noteworthy example of modernity.[6] The "model-building" campaign in Nantong was accompanied by a series of spatial, institutional, and cultural makeovers to transform the county seat into a modern and even cosmopolitan city. It attracted many celebrities and opinion-makers of the day to work in, visit or promote Nantong.[7] With the objective of bolstering the cultural reputation of the city, Zhang made the strategic decision to establish a modern theatre and acting school, attracting renowned actors to perform and garnering attention from external spectators. Zhang enlisted Ouyang Yuqian as one of his key aides, as elucidated in an article appearing in the drama journal *Shiri xiju* 十日戏剧 (Ten Days of Drama) presumably authored by a descendant of Zhang Jian. The article expounded upon the initial connection forged between the Zhang family and Ouyang, stating:

> "In the sixth year of the Republic, Ouyang Yuqian, a promising young dramatist who had recently returned to his homeland following his graduation from Japan, paid a visit to my ancestor, Zhang Cha 张詧 (also known as Tuiweng 退翁), in Tongzhou. Recognizing Ouyang 's exceptional talents, Tuiweng introduced him to another of my ancestors, Zhang Jian, who was highly impressed. It is worth noting that Ouyang hailed from a scholar-gentry family in Hunan Province and was not an ordinary individual. Given their surplus from industrial ventures, these two respected elders sought Ouyang and Xue Bingchu's help in constructing the Gengsu Theatre on Taowu Road, designed in a Westernized architectural style".[8]

As Judge asserts, the emergence of the "new middle realm", characterized by its elevated moral standards and activist spirit, was more a product of the upper than the lower

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[5] Qin Shao, "Space, Time, and Politics in Early Twentieth Century Nantong," *Modern China* 23, no. 1 (1997): 100.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Shao, *Culturing Modernity: The Nantong Model,* 2.
[8] "Nantong Linggong xueshe zhuiyi 南通伶工学社追忆" (Memories of Nantong Linggong School), *Shiri xiju* 十日戏剧 (Ten Days of Drama) 1, no.35 (1938): 13-16. [The Chinese text: 民六,新剧文艺家欧阳予倩留东归。来通谒家祖（退翁）,爱其才, 引见先叔祖力誉之。予倩湘之世家子,自不同凡二老乃令与薛秉初君,取新舞台式。以实业盈余,建更俗剧场于桃坞路].

stratum of society, many of whom descended from esteemed literati lineages.[9] In light of the aforementioned observation, it becomes evident that Ouyang, owing to his educational and social background, stood apart from the ordinary populace and commanded respect from local authorities such as Zhang Jian. Furthermore, his exposure to new, or Western, learning distinguished him from some members of the upper echelons of society. The year 1919 proved to be a pivotal period for Ouyang. Just a few months prior to his invitation to Nantong that year, Ouyang published the essay "My Opinion on Drama Reform" during the fervour of the May Fourth Movement, in which he stated his cultural ideals: the advancement of dramatic literature, the cultivation of dramatic theory and criticism, and the establishment of modern acting schools.[10] These endeavours propelled him into the public spotlight as a new-style intellectual, whose embrace of new learning was perceived as the key to uplifting the masses and fortifying the nation. When Zhang Jian presented the idea of entrusting him with the management of the dramatic institutions, Ouyang enthusiastically embraced the opportunity, envisioning Nantong as an ideal locale to put his ideas into practice. To realize the overarching objective of transforming Nantong into a paragon of modernity, Ouyang, in collaboration with the Zhang family, devised a comprehensive drama reform plan encompassing the establishment of a modern theatre, a corresponding drama school, and a dedicated drama journal.

In September 1919, Ouyang assumed the role of executive director at the Linggong School, thereby assuming the responsibility of recruiting and training staff and students. By eradicating the prevalent practice of physical punishment within traditional drama troupes, Ouyang introduced a modern curriculum at the school, encompassing a wide array of subjects including English, mathematics, geography, and Western music.[11] Embracing the belief that well-rounded actors should possess a comprehensive understanding of both Chinese and Western cultures, he personally undertook the responsibility of instructing in the history of Chinese and Western drama.[12] Moreover, Ouyang's social connections were key during the early stages of the school's establishment. Drawing upon his network, he enlisted learned friends and former classmates from college to serve as mentors within the institution. For instance, Song Chiping assumed the role of teaching Chinese literature, while Xu Banmei 徐

[9] Joan Judge, *Print and Politics*, 34.
[10] Ouyang Yuqian, "Yu zhi xiju gailiang guan 予之戏剧改良观" (My View on Reforming Drama), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.5, 1.
[11] Shao, *Culturing Modernity: The Nantong Model,* 180.
[12] Ibid., 181.

半梅 (1881-1958) was a gymnastics instructor.[13] It is worth noting that, being a relatively small county, Nantong did not possess the same allure as Shanghai for these highly educated individuals to settle down. Nevertheless, they willingly chose to work in Nantong due to their personal friendship with Ouyang.

With the patronage of Zhang Jian, the establishment of the Gengsu Theatre coincided with the founding of the Linggong School in October 1919. Modelled on the style of Shanghai's Western theatres, Ouyang himself was involved in the design of the actual stage (fig.5.1).[14] As the principal manager of the theatre, Ouyang made a deliberate effort to eliminate what he perceived as antiquated and superstitious customs. Notably, he prohibited the placing of shrines, a practice common in traditional theatres, and abolished certain traditional performance rituals such as "opening the stage" (*kaitai* 开台) and "hurrying the actor up" (*cuixi* 催戏).[15] These measures were implemented not solely in alignment with Ouyang's personal vision for reforming traditional drama culture but also to support his patron in promoting the accomplishments of the "model community" under the influence of the West.

[13] Ibid.
[14] Chen Naixiang 陈乃详 and Zhu Jianhua 朱建华 eds., *Jingju gaige de xianqu* 京剧改革的先驱 (The Pioneer in the Reform of Peking Opera) (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 1982), 3.
[15] Shao, *Culturing Modernity: The Nantong Model,* 182.

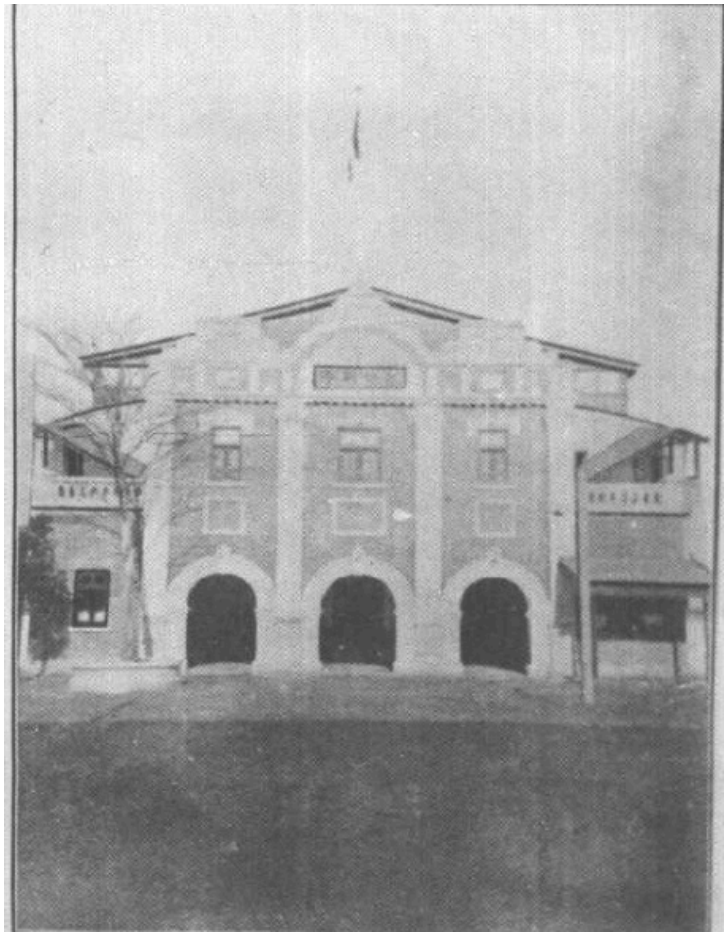

Figure 5. 1 The Gengsu Theatre in Nantong, in *Jingju gaige de xianqu*, 8.

Additionally, to harmonize his cultural convictions with his commitment to his patron, Ouyang embarked upon the notable endeavour of establishing a Western style orchestra to perform at the theatre (fig.5.2), despite facing opposition and ridicule from many quarters. For Ouyang, the establishment of this ensemble served a dual purpose. Not only would it enable his students to acquire proficiency in Western music, aligning it with the principles advocated by the Linggong School, but it would also fulfil certain requirements of socializing with visitors from outside the county and serve as a platform to showcase the achievements of the Zhang family, even though it eventually became a source of discontent between Ouyang and the Zhang family. According to the magazine *Meiyu* 美育 (Aesthetic Education), a Western-style concert took place at the Gengsu Theatre in 1920, with the explicit aim of entertaining the

guests of Zhang Jian.[16] The magazine also unveiled a comprehensive program, which included a chorus titled "Song of Nantong Park" (*Nantong gongyuan ge* 南通公园歌) that was composed and performed by Ouyang and his students.[17] This musical composition served to showcase the infrastructure developments of the city and its projected image to visitors. As Ouyang recounted, the band was also compelled to perform at various banquets hosted by Zhang Xiaoruo 张孝若 (1898-1935), the son of Zhang Jian.[18] Nevertheless, Ouyang harboured minimal enthusiasm for the numerous social gatherings he was obliged to attend, expressing his discontent that his contributions to the school and theatre merely served as "ornaments" to highlight Nantong's developments as showed off by the Zhang family.

In accordance with Ouyang's agenda for reform, the establishment of the *Gongyuan ribao* 公园日报 (Park Daily), a small in-house newspaper, also took place in 1919. This publication took on the responsibility of nurturing critique of drama, updating information on the performing arts, and promoting Nantong's public image. [19] Among its regular contributors were Ouyang himself, individuals involved in managing the acting school, and some of Ouyang's former colleagues from the Spring Willow Society drama troupe, including Wu Wozun 吴我尊 (1881-1942).[20] In addition to reviewing plays and advocating refined theatre etiquette, the newspaper emerged as a crucial platform for promoting Ouyang and his performances to a broader audience in Nantong. Notably, when advertising various shows, the newspaper consistently emphasized Ouyang's name in bold and prominent font on the central page, juxtaposing it with information about Mei Langfang, the preeminent Peking opera star of the era (fig. 5.3). Through this use of large typeface, the publication positioned Ouyang and Mei as esteemed superstars within the realm of theatre, distinguishing them from the other actors. It is alleged that the newspaper once published messages echoing the May Fourth Movement, including topics such as women's liberation and the eradication of superstition

[16] "Nantong Linggong xueshe zhi yinyue hui 南通伶工学社之音乐会" (The Concert of Nantong Linggong Acting School), *Meiyu* 美育 (Aesthetic Education), no.2 (1920): 89.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ouyang Yuqian, "Zai Nantong zhule sannian 在南通住了三年" (Living in Nantong for Three Years), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 100.
[19] Qin Shao, "The Mismatch: Ouyang Yuqian and Theater Reform in Nantong, 1919-1922," *CHINOPERL* 19, no. 1 (1996): 47.
[20] Ibid.

while, due to opposition from the local gentry, the newspaper shifted its focus primarily to previewing shows.[21]

Figure 5. 2 The Western-style orchestra organized by Ouyang, in *Jingju gaige de xianqu*, 10.

Figure 5. 3 As the page shows, the names of Mei Lanfang and Ouyang Yuqian are more prominent than the rest of actors, *Gongyuan ribao* 公园日报 (Park Daily) 15 January 1920.

[21] Xu Haiping 徐海萍, "Cong Xigongyuan juchang dao Gengsu juchang 从西公园剧场到更俗剧场" (From the Western Park Theatre to the Gengsu Theatre), in *Jingju gaige de xianqu* 京剧改革的先驱 (The Pioneer in the Reform of Peking Opera) (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 1982), 106.

Initially, Ouyang and Zhang Jian shared a common vision of attaining prominence through cultural modernization, or what could be better understood as westernization. This collaborative undertaking propelled them to actively innovate, garnering accolades from the media as pioneering figures. In 1922, *Tongsu jiaoyu congkan* 通俗教育丛刊 (General Education Series), a Beijing-based educational magazine, for instance, extolled Ouyang's vanguard experiments in Nantong, hailing them as a ground-breaking initiative in Chinese arts education. [22] However, it is essential to underscore another crucial factor contributing to Ouyang's initial success and popularity in Nantong—a factor that encapsulated the essence of "cultural entrepreneurship" prevalent during the early Republican era. The cultural modernization project he initiated in Nantong involved applying his unique educational and professional background to cater to the demand for a new, elite form of education among the aspiring residents in this relatively small city. This was because the ordinary residents of Nantong had fewer opportunities to experience Western-style drama and the associated "modern" concepts found in these performances, especially when compared to people in metropolitan areas like Shanghai, who were curious about such offerings. As Michael Gibbs Hill highlights, whether residing in metropolitan centres or smaller urban areas, there were individuals who possessed an unwavering desire for self-improvement, a fervent wish to contribute to the construction of a modern China, and, at times, a fear of being perceived as backward or uneducated. [23] Ouyang's background in Western education and Zhang Jian's commitment to constitutional reforms during the late Qing dynasty instilled in the intellectually inclined youth of Nantong a belief that the theatre under their patronage stood apart from ordinary theatres. Attending performances at the Gengsu theatre held the promise of exposure to training in both the new and Western performance and ideology. In November 1919, the *Park Daily* published an advertisement, proclaiming, "The Gengsu Theatre gathers the cultural elites of the day, presenting renowned works by Shakespeare and plays centred around science, which could expand the audience's cultural horizons and offer a distinct departure from previous productions; Students will benefit from watching these plays, as they provide an educational experience akin to studying sociology, ethics, and more".[24]

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[22] "Linggong Xueshe jinwen 伶工学社近闻" (Recent News from the Linggong School), *Tongsu jiaoyu congkan* 通俗教育丛刊 (General Education Series), no.14 (1922): 150.
[23] Michael Gibbs Hills, "Culture by Post: Correspondence Schools in Early Republican China", in Rea and Volland eds., *The Business of Culture: Cultural Entrepreneurs in China and Southeast Asia*, 93.
[24] *Park Daily* 17 November 1919.

Ouyang's endeavours in Nantong resonated with the aspirations and longings of individuals residing outside the major cultural hubs of China, who were often excluded from the intellectual discourses on cultural and social progress and the realm of new learning. This sentiment is exemplified in a letter penned by a local student in 1921, providing further evidence of the profound impact Ouyang and Zhang Jian's initiatives had on the local population. Wang Qihong 王泣红, a student attending a normal school in Nantong, corresponded with Ouyang to express his admiration for Ouyang's unique identity as a modern-educated scholar and performer in the dramatic arts.[25] Wang conveyed his enthusiasm for having Ouyang present in Nantong, noting that despite his financial constraints as a poverty-stricken student, he and his classmates would save up to purchase tickets to attend Ouyang's performances during their holidays.[26] This suggests that Ouyang held a prominent position as a figure who bridged the worlds of intellectual elites and popular actors, and his cultural persona played a vital role in the thriving drama scene in Nantong. However, Wang also voiced his disappointment with Ouyang in the letter. While expressing his fervent desire to explore Western learnings for their political and cultural content through Ouyang's reformed drama, nevertheless, he felt disheartened as Ouyang gradually veered towards traditional sentimental opera in the Gengsu Theatre. In the face of Wang's complaint, Ouyang's response was:

> I am grateful for the advice I received. If I can manage the Gengsu Theatre for five years, I will certainly transform it into a 'theatre of culture' (*wenhua zhi juchang* 文化之剧场). We are currently in a transitional period where the art is still budding, but the capitalists fail to understand, causing me great distress that is difficult to express fully. Nevertheless, I will press forward with courage and not disappoint those who appreciate me. In terms of the play of love, it has the power to move audiences, but stories like *Dream of the Red Chamber* are things of the past. Gengsu Theatre will undergo changes in the second half of the year. Whether it ultimately becomes a general educational institution or a

[25] "Wang Qihong ji Ouyang Yuqian shu 王泣红寄欧阳予倩书" (A Letter from Wang Qihong to Ouyang Yuqian), in *Tonghai xinbao* 通海新报 (Tonghai Newspaper) 5 August 1921.
[26] Ibid.

sophisticated entertainment venue, I'm afraid it cannot be achieved in only two to three years. Please accept my cautious response.[27]

Such correspondence highlights Ouyang's role as a "middle realm" figure, bridging the gap between the upper class represented by Zhang Jian and common people like Wang Qihong by introducing significant cultural innovations, which initially gave him confidence. However, despite his efforts, Ouyang faced failure especially when he chose to put the modern spoken drama into the theatre. He encountered challenges in engaging his expanding audience, particularly the townspeople of Nantong who remained indifferent towards Western music and the modern spoken drama advocated by Ouyang. The locals, accustomed to the refined lyrical style of Kun opera (*Kunqu* 昆曲), voiced their complaints about the Western instruments diminishing the vocal beauty of traditional opera, and found the plain and didactic nature of spoken drama uninteresting.[28] According to Ouyang's recollection in "Living in Nantong for Three Years", during the performance of the spoken drama *Yurun zhuyuan* 玉润珠圆 (Moist Jade ad Round Pearl, 1919), which depicted the long-awaited reunion of two devoted young lovers and their dedication to social causes, only a few individuals applauded at certain moments, while the majority responded with silence.[29] This lacklustre audience reaction disappointed Ouyang. Furthermore, he encountered a noticeable disparity between his vision of training modern actors and the reality. Ouyang had hoped that actors would not only possess skill in their craft but also be well-educated in literature and social affairs. To facilitate this, he subscribed to journals like *New Youth* and *New Tide* for his students to read.[30] However, as Ouyang observed, many of his students lacked a substantial education and displayed little interest in engaging with these materials. In contrast to their enthusiasm for acquiring new knowledge, these actors exhibited a greater concern for their financial earnings. Zhang Jian, the main patron, also expressed dissatisfaction with Ouyang's emphasis on teaching general knowledge to the actors. For instance, Zhang once criticized Ouyang for setting high standards

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[27] "Ouyang Yuqian fu Wang Qihong shu 欧阳予倩复王泣红书" (Ouyang Yuqian's reply to Wang Qihong), in *Tonghai xinbao* 9 August 1921. [The original Chinese text is: 奉书承指教,甚感谢,更俗剧场,倩如能支持至五年,必使之为文化之剧场。日下过渡时期,艺术正在萌芽,而资本家又不能相谅,感受痛苦, 不一而足。然必当勇往直前, 以慰海内识者之意。爱情之剧, 或易动人, 红楼则已成过去。更俗剧场,下半年必稍更面目。实际成为通俗教育机关,或高等娱乐机关,恐非二三年中事耳。予倩谨白].

[28] Shao, *Culturing Modernity: The Nantong Model,* 186.

[29] Ouyang Yuqian, "Zai Nantong zhule sannian", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 91.

[30] Ibid., 87. [The original text is: 我不愿我的学生什么都不懂, 所以买了许多新杂志和新小说等奖励他们看, 如《新青年》, 《新潮》, 《建设》等等都抽空去讲解些].

and an extended duration for educating the actors, stating, "Other schools can train performers in three months; when will Linggong School have its own performances... you don't really need your actors to receive the same level of education as you have".[31] These factors led to a gradual deterioration in the relationship between Ouyang and his patrons.

Furthermore, Ouyang failed to satisfactorily manage the relationship with his colleagues in Nantong. He had initially invited some friends from Shanghai to assist him in managing the drama business in Nantong, but over time, conflicts and animosity arose between them. One such example was Yuan Hanyun, who had previously worked with Ouyang at the tabloid *The Crystal* and the *Sing Sing Half Monthly* magazine. Being good at singing opera, Ouyang invited Yuan to Nantong to perform,[32] and being the son of Yuan Shikai, the former president of the Republic of China, he was treated with great respect by the Zhang family.[33] However, Yuan's arrogant demeanour clashed with Ouyang's efforts to eliminate outdated customs such as the aforementioned "*cuixi*", the practice of hurrying up the renowned opera stars for their delayed entrances.[34] Yuan's actions, according to Ouyang himself, attained the tacit support of the Zhang family.[35] Additionally, Yuan's opium addiction occasionally had a detrimental impact on the quality of his performances, which Ouyang regarded as a decadent lifestyle far removed from his vision of a "modern actor". These conflicts ultimately left Ouyang dissatisfied with his career in Nantong.

Meanwhile, Ouyang's relationship with Zhang Jian was deteriorating, influenced by multiple factors, one of which was their divergent positions regarding drama reform. Zhang Jian viewed the reform primarily to showcase the city's "progressive and pioneering" image and impress visitors from outside the county.[36] As a result, he placed less importance on the training of actors and the role of drama in disseminating modern knowledge, which consumed significant financial resources. However, these were the focal points for Ouyang, and he focused significant energy on issues that were against his patron's wishes. In essence, during

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[31] Ibid., 88.
[32] Ouyang Yuqian, "Zhi Yuan Hanyun shu 致袁寒云书" (A Letter to Yuan Hanyun), in *Park Daily* 13 December 1919.
[33] Ouyang Yuqian, "Zai Nantong zhule sannian", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 94.
[34] Ibid. [The original Chinese text is: 他那鸦片烟瘾老过不足, 剧场的时间不像请客一样可以随便迟到, 可是他尽管催请五六次还不下楼].
[35] Ibid.
[36] Shao, "The Mismatch: Ouyang Yuqian and Theater Reform in Nantong, 1919-1922," 55.

his time in Nantong, Ouyang displayed a stronger inclination towards the political vision of establishing a genuinely modern theatre, rather than solely focusing on its economic aspects. This distinction underscores what sets him apart from being merely a businessman. As a cultural intermediary or a representative of the "new middle realm", Ouyang may not have been fully aware of the paradox that arose as he sought to utilize cultural modernization to engage and cater to the interests of both the upper class and the general populace. During this process, the common people voiced their grievances about not seeing the performances they desired, while the upper echelons, represented by the Zhang family, chastised Ouyang for neglecting his duties. In Ouyang's early vision, Nantong seemed like an ideal haven to evade political pressure and, ultimately, to realize his cultural ideals. However, he overlooked the fact that it was predominantly Zhang Jian's kingdom, and the entrenched local powers held little enthusiasm for his innovative cultural experiments. Despite sharing a reformist stance aimed at revitalizing the people and strengthening the nation, they interpreted the reform agenda through different lenses. Eventually, Ouyang departed Nantong in 1922, his dreams shattered and his heart heavy with disappointment, relocating to Shanghai.

5.2 Uneasy Partner in Guangdong

Though his experience in Nantong ultimately ended in failure, Ouyang's ambition to utilize his cultural capital to expand his influence in multiple fields, especially in politics, remains clear. The divergence between Ouyang and Zhang Jian may have unsettled him, but it did not shatter his determination. In subsequent years, Ouyang sought the appointments of the government and a compatible patron who shared his interests and disposition. One such patron emerged in the form of Cheng Mingshu 陈铭枢 (1889-1965), a prominent figure within the KMT. Ouyang leveraged his cultural talents to make an impression on this new patron, which paved the way for his entry into the realm of politics. He assisted Chen in establishing drama-related research institutes in Guangdong province around 1929 and took part in Chen's rebellion against Chiang Kai-shek's central government from 1933 to 1934. The main objective of this section is to examine the risks undertaken by Ouyang as a cultural entrepreneur. His story may indicate that the visibility of cultural entrepreneurs tends to expand alongside their increasing engagement in a diverse array of endeavours; nevertheless, this heightened visibility can yield both positive and negative consequences. The official historical accounts have predominantly overlooked the multi-faceted political complexity of Ouyang. This study attempts to illuminate the diverse

dimensions of Ouyang's public image by delving into the records of the popular press during his time. In contrast to the acclaim and admiration he receives within literary and artistic circles, Ouyang's political image, as portrayed in these sources, falls short of commendation. His political stance is frequently regarded as ambiguous and intricate. The objective of this investigation is not to determine Ouyang's political loyalties, but rather to reveal an alternative depiction of him to that portrayed in the popular press at the time. When examining materials from popular journalism Xuelei Huang suggests that readers should exercise caution regarding their accuracy and reliability, although such sources can serve as valuable historical references when evaluated within their own terms, offering a distinctive perspective on the complex lives of intellectuals during the Republican period.[37]

Chen Mingshu, hailing from Guangxi province, achieved heroic fame as one of the commanders of the 19th Route Army during the Shanghai Incident in 1932. Alongside KMT military officials Jiang Guangnai 蒋光鼐 (1888-1967) and Cai Tingkai 蔡廷锴 (1892-1968), they valiantly defended the city against the Japanese forces for thirty-three bloody days without supplies or support from the central government.[38] This incident catapulted them into the national spotlight, recognised as symbols of selfless patriotism and courage. Nevertheless, their elevated status strained their rapport with Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Nanjing central government, who viewed them as a potential regional threat to his authority over the entire nation.[39] As a result, Chiang transferred them to Fujian province for a reorganization process a mere four months later, aiming to subject them to confrontations with the Communist Party of China (CCP) and hoping for their ultimate demise in the ensuing conflicts.[40] Following their assumption of power in Fujian, these generals initiated the Fujian Rebellion (*Minbian* 闽变) in November 1933, launching a direct confrontation against the Nanjing government.

Prior to this pivotal clash with the Nanjing regime in the 1930s, Chen Mingshu had harboured grievances against the party's dominant leadership and displayed uncertain loyalty towards Chiang Kai-shek.[41] Initially appointed by Chiang as chairman of the provincial

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[37] Xuelei Huang, "Hong Shen in the Popular Press, 1924–1949," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 27, no. 2 (2015): 10.
[38] Lloyd E. Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China under Nationalist Rule, 1927-1937* (Cambridge, Mass: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1990), 91.
[39] Ibid., 92.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 87

government in Guangdong in 1928, Chen stepped down from this position in May 1931 and shifted his focus to commanding the anti-Communist forces in Jiangxi.[42] During his tenure in Guangdong, Chen held the belief that political reforms alone would be insufficient without addressing cultural and economic challenges. As a result, he took the lead in establishing the Guangdong Institute of Dramatic Art (*Guangdong xiju yanjiusuo* 广东戏剧研究所, referred to as the Guangdong Institute hereafter) and extended an invitation to his friend Ouyang to assume a prominent role among its principals.

In the winter of 1928, Ouyang accepted the invitation from Chen Mingshu and travelled from Shanghai to assume the position of head of the Guangdong Institute.[43] Ouyang's affiliation with Chen Mingshu became a topic of considerable discussion in the press, generating a wide range of opinions and viewpoints. In an article featured in the political magazine *Laoshi hua* 老实话 (The Truth), the origins of Ouyang and Chen Mingshu's friendship were outlined, tracing back to Chen's travels to Southeast Asia and Europe in the autumn of 1928. According to the article, a significant bond formed between Ouyang and Chen during this journey, particularly when Chen expressed his admiration for Ouyang's play, "Pan Jinlian".[44] Ouyang himself later recounted this experience in his memoir, highlighting their shared literary interests and the exchange of similar ideas about Buddhism during their trip. He wrote, "Zhenru [Chen Mingshu's courtesy name] had immersed himself in modern fiction and drama, and he considered *The Lady from the Sea* [a play written in 1988 by Henrik Ibsen] as an exemplary work for exploring gender issues... It was the first time I encountered a military commander so deeply engrossed in literature".[45] While caution must be exercised when considering self-referential material, it is evident to see the continuing influence of literature and drama as the most prominent aspects of Ouyang's public life. In recalling the specific details of the trip, Ouyang perceives it as a gathering of individuals possessing remarkable talents and cultural prestige, which read as:

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian,* 173.
[44] Gongcheng 公成, "Ouyang Yuqian zai Fujian 欧阳予倩在福建" (Ouyang Yuqian in Fujian Province), *Laoshi hua* 老实话 (The Truth), no.49 (1934): 6.
[45] Ouyang Yuqian, "Yueyou suoji 粤游琐记" (Trivia of Travel in Guangdong), *Ouyang Yuqian quanji* 欧阳予倩全集 (The Complete Works of Ouyang Yuqian) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1990), vol. 6, 281. [The original text: 真如读近代的小说戏曲颇为不少, 他对两性问题, 说《海上夫人》最为公平…在军人中文学趣味如此丰富的, 我倒头一次见].

> My roommate at that time was Mr. Sun Xiwen 孙希文 (1892-1948), who served as Zhenru's secretary-general. Mr. Sun hailed from Huiyuan, Anhui Province, and possessed remarkable skills in writing poetry and iambic verse. It was through Mr. Sun that I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Guang Mingfu 光明甫 (1876-1963), reputed as a talented scholar of the Tongcheng 桐城 Literary School [a Chinese literary school advocating the philosophy of the Neo-Confucian values].[46]

From Ouyang's perspective, this journey resembled more of an intellectual gathering rather than a politically motivated group. In fact, he derived pleasure from Chen's appreciation and made the choice to involve himself in Chen's various undertakings. Following this journey, Ouyang became involved in a small publishing venture called *Shenzhou guoguangshe* 神州国光社 (Divine Land Enlightenment Society), in which Chen acquired a controlling interest in 1930. Additionally, Ouyang assumed the role of an editor for its in-house journal, *Dushu zazhi* 读书杂志 (The Research Monthly), where he published numerous articles, such as "Youou suoji 游欧琐记" (Trivialities of Traveling in Europe).[47] According to Lloyd E. Eastman, the purpose of this publishing house, despite the editors' assertions of providing a platform for creative writing and intellectual debates, went far beyond that.[48] It functioned as a compelling force for political dissidents, drawing in individuals who harboured an aversion towards both the Communist Party and the Kuomintang.[49] These dissidents reportedly formed the core of a newly established political organization known as the Social Democratic Party, with Chen Mingshu assuming leadership.[50] In these public platforms, Ouyang openly acknowledged his connection with Chen.

During that period, certain reports strongly emphasized that the friendship between Ouyang and Chen was entirely apolitical. They contended that Ouyang, deeply committed to his role as a dramatist, cultivated relationships with officials primarily to secure funding for

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[46] Ibid.
[47] Ouyang Yuqian, "Youou suoji 游欧琐记" (Trivia about travelling to Europe), *Dushu zazhi* 读书杂志 (The Research Monthly) 3, no.2 (1933):364-379.
[48] Lloyd E. Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution,* 88-90.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

the advancement of Chinese modern drama.[51] Publications like *The Truth* lauded Ouyang's unwavering dedication in this regard. However, not all media outlets shared this favourable perspective. Some cast doubts on the nature of their friendship. They viewed their relationship through a lens of moral corruption, depicting Ouyang as Chen's protégé, a political opportunist, and even insinuating involvement in activities as a male escort. For example, an article published in the magazine *Social News*, which focused on social affairs and political anecdotes, shockingly referred to Ouyang as Chen's "male concubine" (*nanqie* 男妾).[52] The article insinuated that Ouyang, being an opera actor, engaged in a romantic affair with Chen and served as his male escort, significantly deviating from Ouyang's established image in official drama history and the conventional characteristics associated with Chinese intellectuals. Similar "derogatory" and "erotic" terms appeared elsewhere, further fuelling the controversy. For example, an article published in the political journal *Weekly Reviews*, which is managed by the Hubei Province Executive Committee of the KMT, adopted a provocative and sexually suggestive title — "The Skills of Rent Boy Ouyang Yuqian" (*Ouyang Yuqian de xianggong shu* 欧阳予倩的相公术).[53] These reports subtly insinuated a widespread practice of dallying with the opera actor (*xiadan* 狎旦) in Chinese opera culture, which implies an improper intimate relationship between opera singers and their literati and government official admirers.

In the history of Chinese opera performance, until women were allowed to appear on the stage in the 1910s, female roles were exclusively entrusted to male performers. Regarded as objects of fascination by the aristocracy, male actors impersonating females in Chinese opera were admired not only for their artistic prowess but also for their perceived sexual allure.[54] The feminine qualities, voice, and temperament of these performers became crucial determining factors in their popularity and reputation. However, their alleged association with homosexual activities led them to be despised by conservative elites.[55] Throughout his operatic career,

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[51] "Ouyang Yuqian zai Fujian 欧阳予倩在福建" (Ouyang Yuqian in Fujian), *The Truth*, no.49 (1934): 6. [The original text: 客又言欧阳之所以与陈接近者, 不过鉴于新剧尚在萌芽时代, 如人才之训练…欲籍此取得经济环境之改善耳].

[52] "Dangzhen wenhua miwen: Ouyang Yuqian yexiang furi 党政文化秘闻: 欧阳予倩也想赴日" (Party and Cultural Secrets: Ouyang Yuqian also wants to go to Japan), *Shehui xinwen* 社会新闻 (Social News) 7, no.3 (1934): 38-39.

[53] "Ouyang Yuqian de xianggong shu 欧阳予倩的相公术" (The Skills of Rent Boy Ouyang Yuqian), *Meizhou pinglun* 每周评论 (Weekly Review), no.163 (1935): 12.

[54] Tian Min, "Male Dan: The Paradox of Sex, Acting, and Perception of Female Impersonation in Traditional Chinese Theatre," *Asian Theatre Journal* 17, no. 1 (2000): 82-83.

[55] Ibid.

Ouyang was renowned for his impersonation of young female characters. The alleged intimacy and "special relationship" with Chen Mingshu were intertwined with the opera culture he belonged to. However, the accuracy of the allegations concerning Ouyang's sexual allure remains a subject of debate. To what extent were these claims grounded in reality?

According to Min Tian, the popularity of male actors impersonating female roles peaked in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[56] During this period, exceptional male performers were selected at a young age based on strict criteria, including "charming facial features, slender figures, and feminine voices".[57] However, as these actors transitioned into adulthood, much of their sexual allure diminished, even though they had achieved artistic maturity.[58] Mei Lanfang, the most renowned Chinese female impersonator, commenced his stage career at the age of ten, and it was only at the age of sixty-two when his acting prowess eclipsed his physical appearance, marking the zenith of his professional journey. In contrast to the conventional trajectory followed by sexually alluring male actors, Ouyang embarked on a path characterized by a more amateur approach. He gained recognition for his impersonation of female characters during his adult years, bypassing the stringent physical selection process typically undergone by young male impersonators. An article titled "The Last Fate of Fat Peking *Dan* in Guangdong" published in the magazine *Literary and Artistic News* in 1931, once satirized Ouyang's unremarkable physical condition as a female impersonator. It mockingly referred to him as a "fat woman" (*feipo* 肥婆), highlighting his less-than-ideal physique.[59] The author of this article claimed that Ouyang did not possess physical appeal, who, at forty years old, failed to captivate the Cantonese-speaking audience with his plays in Mandarin and only relied on government subsidies to sustain his career.[60] Contrary to the views that accused Ouyang of being Chen's male escort, this article dismissed any notions of him being a sexually alluring "rent boy". In the overall accounts of the relationship between Ouyang and Chen Mingshu, as depicted in the popular journalism at the time, two contrasting aspects come to the fore. One perspective highlights their friendship based on a sense of trust and camaraderie, while the other accentuates the notion of their homosexuality.

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[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Folang 佛郎, "Ouyang Yuqian de 'Yang guifei': Feipo jingdan zai Guangdong zhi zuihou mingyun 欧阳予倩的'杨贵妃':肥婆京旦在广东之最后命运" (Ouyang Yuqian's "Lady Yang": The Last Fate of Fat Peking *Dan* in Guangdong), *Wenyi xinwen* 文艺新闻 (Literary and Artistic News), no.24 (1931): 1.
[60] Ibid.

Apart from the various perspectives surrounding Ouyang's unconventional relationship with his patron Chen Mingshu, there were also several articles that raised questions about his complex political stance and alleged "flattery". One article claimed that he was an opportunist who aligned himself with different political factions, including the CCP, the Young China Party, and the Productive People's Party.[61] The article employs scathing words, such as "*ou* 呕" (disgusting), to criticize Ouyang's ambition to cater to both the left and the right political camps simultaneously. It was revealed that Ouyang managed to win favour with the Communist Party by writing plays that highlighted the struggles of the working class, while simultaneously maintaining close ties with the A.B. Corps, a prominent anti-communist organization associated with the KMT.[62] These publications also raised doubts about Ouyang's moral character. They circulated news suggesting that Ouyang had established the Guangdong Institute for personal gain and had earned a commission of over 30,000 *yuan* by assisting Chen Mingshu to sell his residence in Guangdong.[63] The narrative presented in these reports provide us a rare view of Ouyang, one that is different from those presented in chronologies of his life and biographies. However, it is important to note that the authenticity of these popular publications cannot be fully guaranteed, especially considering the possibility of censorship imposed by Chiang's central government at that time.

According to these publications, Ouyang is portrayed as an opportunistic figure with moral shortcomings, adept at navigating between conventionally divided political factions. This raises the question: is Ouyang truly crossing the boundaries of politics, or, to put it differently, are the divisions between these political parties truly clear-cut? The portrayal of Ouyang in certain popular press accounts diverges from the predominant narrative found in official Chinese drama historiography, which depicts Ouyang as a virtuous individual gradually drawn towards the CCP and aligning more closely with it. However, scholarly research indicates that the period spanning the 1920s to the 1940s was marked by political and military turmoil in China, during which Chinese intellectuals found themselves navigating the demands

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[61] "Ouyang Yuqian de xianggong shu", *Meizhou pinglun*, no.163 (1935): 12.
[62] Ibid.
[63] "Dangzhen wenhua miwen: Ouyang Yuqian biaoshi buwan 党政文化秘闻: 欧阳予倩表示不玩政治" (Party and Cultural Secrets: Ouyang Yuqian Indicates No Politics), *Shehui xinwen* 社会新闻 (Social News) 6, no.12 (1934): 168-169. [The original Chinese text: 自欧阳被陈真如爱悦以来,在南京广州, 藉改良戏剧为名, 发点小横财。当他代陈真如拍卖广州住宅时,一次弄得佣金三万余金].

and expectations of both leftist and rightist ideologies, reflecting the intricate political landscape of the era.[64] Unfortunately, conventional historiography has largely overlooked the grey area of their experiences, failing to explore the complexities of their identities.[65] In this regard, the popular press offers an alternative perspective. Through this lens, we gain insight into the fluidity and validity of different political boundaries, as well as the human complexities often overlooked by official history.

Prior to embarking on his career in Guangdong in 1929, Ouyang briefly served for Chiang Kai-shek's government in 1927, during which he played a role in the establishment of the Guomin Theatre and formed connections with Tian Han's drama troupe, the Southern Society, at the same time.[66] The Southern Society was a vanguard organization actively engaging with the cause of the left-wing from the late 1920s and openly claimed its "left turn" in 1930.[67] Before formally accepting employment with Chen Mingshu, Ouyang worked as a teacher in the literary department of the Southern Society. When Ouyang made the decision to go to Guangdong, his colleagues at the Southern Society immediately expressed their discontent. One such colleague was Zuo Ming (1902-1941), who had joined the CCP in 1925 and was involved in the production of the leftist drama "Put Down Your Whip".[68] Zuo Ming claimed that Ouyang chose to join the government-backed Guangdong Institute because he could not endure the economic hardships of the Southern Society, an organization that relied on self-funding.[69] When recalling this event in 1946, Tian Han, also expressed dissatisfaction with Ouyang's career trajectory in Guangdong, perceiving it as a "betrayal" for him to part ways with the Southern Society at that particular juncture.[70] Seemingly, Zuo Ming and Tian Han were adamant about emphasizing their independence and lack of political affiliation, especially when compared to the Guangdong Institute, which was generally considered

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[64] Huang, "Hong Shen in the Popular Press, 1924–1949," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 27, no. 2 (2015): 12.
[65] Ibid., 13.
[66] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian*, 160.
[67] Tian Han, "Women de ziji pipan 我们的自己批判" (Our Self-Criticism), *Nanguo yuekan* 南国月刊 (Southern Society Monthly) 1, no 2 (1930): 5.
[68] Song Liping 宋立平, "Zuoyi xijujia Zuo Ming shengping 左翼戏剧家左明生平" (The Life of Left-Wing Dramatist Zuo Ming), *Xinwenxue shiliao* 新文学史料 (History of New Literature), no.1 (1998): 205
[69] Zuo Ming, "Women de xiju yundong 我们的戏剧运动" (Our Dramatic Movement), in Yan Zhewu 阎折梧 ed., *Nanguo de xiju* 南国的戏剧 (Drama of the Southern Society) (Shanghai: Mengya shudian, 1929), 40.
[70] Tian Han, "Ouyang Yuqian xiansheng de daolu 欧阳予倩先生的道路" (Mr. Ouyang Yuqian's Path), in *Tianhan wenji* 田汉文集 (The Collected Works of Tian Han) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1986), vol. 15, 459-460.

"government-run" and aligned with the right-wing. However, press coverage from the late 1920s and 1930s shed light on a more nuanced relationship between the Southern Society and the Guangdong Institute, indicating that they were not mutually opposed as suggested by Zuo Ming and Tian Han.

Following his visit to Chen Mingshu in Guangdong during the winter of 1928, Ouyang penned an essay titled "Thoughts on the Trip to Guangdong" ("Yueyou suoji 粤游琐记"), outlining his plans for reforming the local Yue opera (*yueju* 粤剧). The essay gained recognition and was published in the official journal of the Southern Society, *Nanguo yuekan* 南国月刊 (Nanguo Monthly). In this piece, Ouyang expressed his unwavering commitment to continue collaborating with his colleagues from the Southern Society, even after his departure to Guangdong.[71] After assuming his new position in Guangdong, the official publication of Southern Society still regarded Ouyang as a "member" and continued to document his personal whereabouts and the continued affiliation with them. For example, the *Nanguo Weekly* featured an article in the "member news" column (*sheyuan jinxun* 社员近讯), applauding Ouyang's endeavours in promoting drama in Guangdong and extending congratulations to his wife on her second pregnancy.[72] This publication showcased the Southern Society's keen interest in Ouyang's new role and their concern for his personal affairs. The close bond between Ouyang and the Southern Society was further demonstrated through their collaborative performances, highlighting their intertwined relationship. In August 1929, the *Nanguo Weekly* published a photograph of Ouyang's play, accompanied by a caption that read, "Mr. Ouyang Yuqian's remarkable adaptation of '*Renmian taohua'*, first performed in Guangdong, received tremendous acclaim".[73] It is worth noting that Zuo Ming, who had previously expressed criticism towards Ouyang's departure from the Southern Society, appeared in the photograph as one of the principal actors, standing alongside Ouyang (fig. 5.4). Following this performance, Zuo, along with other members of the Southern Society such as Tang Huaiqiu 唐槐秋 (1898-1954) and Ma Yanxiang, stayed and continued to collaborate with Ouyang in Guangdong.[74] During this time, Zuo Ming created the play *Brothers in Hardship* (*Nanxiong nandi* 难兄难弟,

[71] "Thoughts on the Trip to Guangdong", *Nanguo yuekan* 南国月刊 (Nanguo Monthly), no.1 (1929): 173-185..
[72] "Sheyuan jinxun 社员近讯" (News for Members), *Nanguo zhoukan* 南国周刊 (Nanguo Weekly), no.2 (1929): 94-95.
[73] "Renmian taohua 人面桃花" (Peach-blossom Face), *Nanguo Weekly*, no.2 (1929): 1.
[74] Song Liping, "Zuoyi xijujia Zuo Ming shengping", *Xinwenxue shiliao,* no.1 (1998): 138-205.

1929) and published it in a Guangzhou-based literary magazine, *Chenzhong* 晨钟 (Morning Bells).[75] This serves as another example that showcases the connections between intellectuals like Zuo Ming and Ouyang and their affiliations with different political forces. Ambiguous political stances and multiple identities were significant aspects of their lives. Based on what has been disclosed in the popular press, the boundaries between the so-called pro-left and pro-right factions were not as clear-cut as conventionally assumed. Individuals could not be easily categorized within these factions. Instead of merely crossing borders, they often transcended somewhat ambiguous boundaries for a multitude of reasons, including economic, interpersonal, or livelihood considerations. This also suggests a more intricate and fluid dynamic at play within the political landscape during the Republican China.

Figure 5. 4 Stage photo of *Renmin taohua* performed in Guangdong. From left to right: Shao Zhigui, Ouyang Yuqian, Zuo Ming, and Hong Shen, *Nanguo zhoukan* 南国周刊 (Nanguo Weekly) , no.2 (1929):1.

[75] Zuo Ming, "Nanxiong nandi 难兄难弟" (Brothers in Hardship), *Chenzhong* 晨钟 (Morning Bells), no.215-234: 41-52.

When reflecting on this experience in his memoir, Ouyang acknowledged that, "all social causes cannot be separated from political relations".[76] His tenure in Guangdong illustrates his inclination to collaborate with the government. Through his association with the prominent official Chen Mingshu, Ouyang not only secured a role within a government-operated institution but also gained financial stability for his cultural initiative. However, this alignment with the authorities subjected him to scrutiny from various quarters. As Yuri Pines notes, a recurrent trait in Chinese intellectual history is their "voluntary attachment" to serving rulers, which offers them rewards, prestige, and influence but necessitates the acceptance of a subservient role.[77] The commitment to a powerful leader necessitates the follower to embrace their role as "servitors", demonstrating unwavering loyalty to the leader.[78] However, this loyalty can engender persistent frustration and lead to numerous tragic circumstances.[79] During this period, Ouyang found himself bound by the imperative of loyalty to his patron, a commitment that carried varied interpretations when viewed from external perspectives. While Chen's patronage initially facilitated Ouyang's cultural career and provided him with opportunities within the government, it also sowed seeds of bitterness. The emergence of various reports containing "accusations" and "speculation" against him became a source of frustration that Ouyang had to endure.

5.3 The Guangxi Episode

Ouyang's allegiance to Chen Mingshu could be seen as a failed gamble, as Chen's rebellion was swiftly suppressed by Chiang Kai-shek's forces, forcing them to flee overseas in early 1934. Ouyang sought refuge in Japan for over six months.[80] Upon his return to Shanghai in the autumn of that year, he secured employment in the film industry until the full-scale Japanese invasion of China in July 1937.[81] This invasion marked a pivotal moment that brought about significant transformation in both the political and cultural landscape of the country. Towards the end of 1938, due to the ongoing war, China was effectively divided into three distinct zones:

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[76] Ouyang Yuqian, "Ziwo yanxi yilai" (Since I have been Performing Opera), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 130.
[77] Yuri Pines, *The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and Its Imperial Legacy* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2012), 77.
[78] Ibid., 82.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian*, 181.
[81] Ibid.

one under Japanese occupation, one under Nationalist control, and one under Communist control. Despite the contrasting political and military conditions experienced across these zones, it was the Nationalist-controlled areas that garnered the greatest appeal among intellectuals during that period.[82] Amidst an "exodus" of intellectuals and cultural figures fleeing the Japanese occupied territories to seek refuge in the Nationalist- or Communist-controlled zones, Ouyang reached Guilin in April 1938.[83] Guilin, once the capital of the southwestern province of Guangxi, was a prominent location within the Nationalist-controlled areas. Throughout wartime China, the province of Guangxi assumed a vital role in the nation's resistance against the Japanese invasion. Its alluring "open-door" policy made it an appealing destination for those disenchanted with Chongqing, the temporary capital designated by the Nationalist government.[84] Between 1938 and 1944, the province of Guangxi flourished as a vibrant epicentre of wartime culture, drawing in intellectuals from diverse backgrounds who sought solace in its comparatively liberal environment when contrasted with Chongqing.[85] Within this dynamic setting, this section sheds light on how Ouyang, following the setback of the Fujian Incident, managed to rebuild trust with the authorities and showcase his talents to his new political patrons—the Guangxi warlord group. One crucial yet often overlooked aspect of Ouyang's strategy to fortify his influence in Guangxi involved his collaboration with the esteemed Shanghai opera star Jin Suqin 金素琴. Through rebranding himself as the "patriotic entertainer", an increasingly valuable label in China, he facilitated his political career and made himself and his cultural productions rapidly accepted in Guangxi, a place of different cultures and political cliques.

Ouyang's assimilation into Guilin society was made possible through a web of social and political connections. His grandfather, Ouyang Zhonghu, had served as a provincial magistrate in Guilin during the late Qing dynasty, which bestowed upon him a significant degree of influence within the local community. Ouyang had spent much of his formative years with his family in Guilin and regarded it as his second home.[86] During this period, he had cultivated friendships with various local officials who continued to support his career even

[82] Pingchao Zhu, *Wartime Culture in Guilin, 1938-1944: A City at War* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017), xiv.
[83] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian*, 199.
[84] Zhu, *Wartime Culture in Guilin,* xxiv.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ouyang Yuqian, "Ziwo yanxi yilai" (Since I have been Performing Opera), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 22.

after his grandfather's passing in 1911.[87] Furthermore, Ouyang's former classmates during his studies in Japan, Ma Junwu 马君武 (1881-1940) and Bai Pengfei 白鹏飞 (1870-1948), held prominent positions within the government of Guangxi. Towards the end of 1937, they played key roles in establishing the Guangxi Drama Reform Society (*Guangxi xiju gaijinhui* 广西戏剧改进会) with the objective of expanding the influence and authority of the local government.[88] As highlighted by Pingchao Zhu, numerous political officials in Guangxi identified themselves as Nationalists, but their allegiance was not solely to Chiang Kai-shek; instead, they aligned themselves with the Guangxi warlord group, led by figures such as Li Zongren 李宗仁 (1891-1969), Bai Chongxi 白崇禧 (1893-1966), Huang Xuchu 黄旭初 (1892-1975), and others.[89]

Although the group had previously allied closely with Chiang's army during the Northern Expedition in 1926, they maintained distinctive regional militaristic traits and aspired to retain a measure of semi-independence from the Kuomintang.[90] In the following decades, they sought to safeguard their own political agenda separate from the control exerted by the central government.[91] During the 1930s and 1940s, the Guangxi warlord group earned recognition for their resolute resistance against the Japanese invasion, in stark contrast to Chiang's emphasis on suppressing the Communists rather than prioritizing resistance against the Japanese. Unlike the stifling atmosphere in Chongqing, where the KMT tightly controlled and imposed stringent censorship on liberal activities, the political landscape in Guangxi appeared to offer more openness and freedom.[92] The resistant stance of the Guangxi warlord group resonated with numerous patriotic intellectuals, prompting their migration there after the outbreak of the war. These circumstances laid the groundwork for Ouyang's entry into Guangxi. In July 1937, following the Lugou Bridge Incident (also known as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident), Ouyang decided to become a member of the Shanghai Cultural Salvation Association (*Shanghai wenhuajie jiuwang xiehui* 上海文化界救亡协会), an organization with a firm anti-

[87] Ibid., 29. As recalled by Ouyang, when he started his opera career in Shanghai, some officials from Guangxi (he did not mention the names) came to support him.
[88] Chen Jianjun 陈建军, *Ouyang Yuqian yu Zhongguo xiandai xiju* 欧阳予倩与中国现代戏剧 (Ouyang Yuqian and Chinese Modern Drama) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2016), 80.
[89] Pingchao Zhu, *Wartime Culture in Guilin,* 3.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Zhu, *Wartime Culture in Guilin,* 36.

Japanese stance.[93] This caught the attention of the Guangxi authorities. In April 1938, Ouyang's classmate Ma Junwu, who also held the position of principal at Guangxi University, extended an invitation for Ouyang to participate in local efforts of cultural reconstruction and mass mobilisation for the war.[94] Upon his arrival, Ouyang received recognition from Huang Xuchu, one of the main leaders of the Guangxi warlord group, as reported by the *Zhongguo yitan ribao* 中国艺坛日报 (China Art Daily).[95] Subsequently, he was appointed as the director of both the Guangxi Drama Reform Society and the Guangxi Provincial Performing Arts Academy, and in addition took on the role of government consultant.[96] His accomplishments within Guangxi's cultural community were described in a magazine as "arrogating all powers to himself".[97]

As discussed earlier, Ouyang's reputation underwent notable fluctuations before his arrival in Guangxi, owing to his active engagement in a wide range of cultural and political pursuits. Despite his perceived affiliation with Chen Mingshu and opposition to Chiang Kai-shek's central government, it did not deter the interests of the Guangxi leaders, who sought a degree of independence from Chiang's control. Instead, his numerous cultural initiatives may have demonstrated to the leaders his potential to contribute to the growth and prosperity of Guangxi's cultural landscape. To further earn the recognition of the leaders and persuade them that he could be an asset with significant influence in the cultural sphere after he settled in Guangxi, I believe Ouyang made concerted efforts from two fronts. On the one hand, he actively advanced the political interests of the regional government by creating literary works that aligned with their objectives. On the other hand, he extended an invitation to an actor whom he had mentored and had garnered a certain level of acclaim within the opera community to bolster his own dramatic career across different regions.

As mentioned earlier, wartime China was divided into three distinct zones, each governed by different political and social systems. The development of wartime culture within

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[93] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian*, 195.
[94] Ibid., 196.
[95] "Ouyang Yuqian zai Guilin 欧阳予倩在桂林" (Ouyang Yuqian in Guilin), *Zhongguo yitan ribao* 中国艺坛日报 (China Art Daily), no.25 (1941):1.
[96] Ibid.
[97] "Guilin yitan dongtai: Ouyang Yuqian daquan dulan 桂林艺坛动态: 欧阳予倩大权独揽" (Ouyang Yuqian arrogates all authority to himself in Guilin Artistic Scene), *Qingqing dianying* 青青电影 (The Chin-Chin Screen) 5, no.30 (1940): 18.

each zone was intricately intertwined with the surrounding political and geographical circumstances, shaping the cultural personalities of intellectuals, and fostering their literary inspirations.[98] For the sake of survival, intellectuals had to first acclimatise themselves to the "political climate" in their chosen geographic setting. It was against this backdrop that Ouyang penned his one-act spoken drama titled *Keai de Guilin* 可爱的桂林 (Lovely Guilin). Set on a simple stage adorned with a bench, the play unfolds through a dialogue between two common inhabitants of Guilin, identified as Jia 甲, Yi 乙, and a traveller named Bing 丙. Deliberately bestowed with nondescript names, the characters lack distinctive traits meant to captivate the audience. Instead, the spotlight is firmly directed at their conversation. Through hymnal spoken dialogues of the characters, the play serves as a homage to the political platform and social initiatives of the local government, effectively showcasing the numerous contributions made by the Guangxi warlord group within the province. During their conversation Jia and Yi eagerly extol the accomplishments of the local warlord group to the traveller Bing, including the establishment of military and economic infrastructure, universities, the press, factories, and urban entertainment venues. The play also venerates the political principle of "self-defence", which forms part of the "Three Self Policy" (*sanzi zhengce* 三自政策) advocated by the Guangxi warlords that emphasizes self-reliance and independence for Guangxi in the midst of a turbulent period.[99] The playwright in Ouyang skilfully associates the Guangxi military troops with the distinctive mountainous landscape of the region. He reveres them as capable defenders leading the charge against the Japanese forces, portraying their valour and resilience in the face of adversity. This portrayal resonates with the audience, evoking a sense of admiration and pride, which read as:

> As your eyes behold the majestic Duxiu 独秀 Mountain, its prominence soaring from the flat earth and piercing the heavens, it immediately captures your attention upon your arrival in Guilin. This iconic landmark serves as a powerful symbol, embodying the indomitable spirit of the Guangxi troops. It represents their core qualities of independence, self-reliance, and unwavering determination. Just as you observe its awe-inspiring presence, it conjures the

[98] Zhu, *Wartime Culture in Guilin,* 75.
[99] Ibid.,9.

image of a remarkable figure, standing with resolute posture, towering above all, and fearlessly fixing their gaze upon the adversary.[100]

At this juncture, Ouyang's "voluntary attachment" to the ruling authority shines through once more, and he is not the sole individual driven by such fervour. As highlighted by Liang Luo, during the era of national crisis, numerous intellectuals found themselves captivated and allured by aligning themselves with military units and leading semi-military lives as members of propaganda troupes under the control of military institutions.[101] Against the backdrop of the hinterland period, Ouyang's political activism underwent a metamorphosis, evolving into an exhilarating creative endeavour. In addition to propagandizing the achievements of the Guangxi warlords, Ouyang was faced with the task of persuading his new patrons of his substantial influence in the cultural realm and his capability to meet the requirements of mass mobilization. Under the challenging circumstances of war, the "resurgence of tradition", particularly through traditional opera, held the potential to effectively rally the masses and disseminate war-related messages.[102] As the pursuit of a "national form" emerged as a crucial political and cultural agenda, it presented an opportune moment for people with a longstanding passion for opera writing and performance to flourish in their careers. What sets Ouyang apart in this scenario is his bold initiation of a collaboration with the renowned opera actress from Shanghai, Jin Suqin, a partnership that garnered attention from the press and was described as "*yaojue ru Gui* 邀角入桂" or an extraordinary collaboration.[103] Jin Suqin symbolized the vibrancy and advancement of Shanghai's opera scene. Ouyang astutely incorporated Jin's fame to elevate his political career in Guangxi, a region that was seeking cultural development. This strategic move by Ouyang, reflecting a key attribute of a "cultural entrepreneur", fulfilled the expectations of his patrons, the Guangxi authorities, who desired a culturally prosperous controlling area in comparison to other war-torn areas. Through the transregional performance that promoted the spirit of resistance during the war, Ouyang and

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[100] Ouyang Yuqian, "Keai de Guilin 可爱的桂林" (Lovely Guilin), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.2, 308. [The original Chinese text: 你看这个山, 它从平地长出来, 撑空独立, 名叫独秀峰。你一到桂林就会注意到这个山。它象征着广西军队独立自强坚韧不屈的精神。你看, 它不是像一个伟丈夫, 挺着胸脯直瞪着当前的敌人吗].

[101] Liang Luo, *The Avant-Garde and the Popular in Modern China: Tian Han and the Intersection of Performance and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 113.

[102] Ibid., 115.

[103] See "Ouyang Yuqian yaojue ru Gui 欧阳予倩邀角入桂" (Ouyang invited stars into Guilin), *Diansheng* 电声 (Electric Voice) 9, no.11 (1940): 1.

Jin earned acclaim as "patriotic artists" from the media, greatly enhancing his image in the public realms.

Originating from Hangzhou, Jin Suqin rose to prominence as a Peking opera actress, primarily in the lower Yangtze region during the 1930s. It was during the late 1920s that Ouyang first encountered Jin while undertaking his plan of reforming Chinese traditional opera.[104] Captivated by Jin Suqin's exceptional vocal talents, Ouyang extended an invitation for her to take part in his "reformative opera" (*gailiang jingju* 改良京剧).[105] Subsequently, Jin found herself at the centre of divergent opinions. Some applauded her as an "old-school actor with new ideas", recognizing her willingness to embrace Ouyang's experiments of new drama, while others criticized her, claiming that she had been "poisoned" by these trials, contending that they compromised the aesthetic essence of traditional opera.[106] In spite of the voices of discontent, Jin's career journey from an obscure actress to a figure capable of capturing public attention and sparking discussion was undeniable. Ouyang, who had made his name within the drama circle during the 1920s and 1930s, played a pivotal role in enhancing Jin's standing and advancing her career. The press at the time often portrayed their relationship as that of master and pupil. For instance, the fan magazine *Dianying* highlighted Ouyang's cultivation of Jin, noting that he not only penned scripts for Jin's performances but also utilized his connections with friends in the Shanghai press to mitigate some of the negative publicity surrounding her.[107]

In reciprocation, Jin Suqin publicly expressed her unwavering support for Ouyang's career, promising to assist him whenever and wherever possible.[108] When Ouyang relocated to Guangxi, he was entrusted by the local government with the responsibility of establishing the Nanhua 南华 Theatre. The theatre received subsidies from the local government and was divided into four sections; two dedicated to local Gui 桂 opera, one for spoken drama, and

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[104] "Xianhua Jin Suqin 闲话金素琴" (Discussion on Jin Suqin), *Shiri xiju* 十日戏剧 (Ten Days of Drama) 2, no.4 (1939):4.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] "Ouyang Yuqian zhihan huyou ti Jin Suqin da tuitanggu 欧阳予倩致函沪友替金素琴打退堂鼓" (Ouyang Yuqian writes to Shanghai friends to beat a retreat on behalf of Jin Suqin), *Dianying* 电影 (Cinema), no.30 (1939): 1011.
[108] "Ouyang Yuqian weiwang zhonghua jutuan, zuijin laihan guiquan Jin Suqin jiemei 欧阳予倩未忘中华剧团，最近来函规劝金素琴姐妹", *Diansheng* 7, no.28 (1938): 556.

another specially for Peking opera.[109] To ensure its success, Ouyang made extensive efforts to mobilize his contacts and invited his friends to take on managerial roles or perform on stage. However, a significant challenge emerged: Guangxi, typically regarded as a culturally underdeveloped province, isolated from central and eastern China, faced a scarcity of professional Peking opera and spoken drama performers. Moreover, the region's limited transportation infrastructure and prevailing economic hardships dissuaded renowned actors from performing there. Despite Ouyang's numerous attempts to entice Shanghai opera stars to perform in Guangxi, the response was largely lukewarm, except for Jin Suqin.[110] In 1938, the *Electric Voice* magazine published an article titled "A Letter from Ouyang Yuqian: Jin Suqin Prepares to Go to Gui", announcing that Jin and her entire troupe would be heading to Guilin to support Ouyang's work in the region.[111] Her arrival not only brought a more skilled cast to Ouyang's theatre but also injected vitality into what was once a quiet locale. The authorities were delighted by this development, as part of their wartime strategy was to shape Guangxi into a model province, renowned nationally for its cultural prosperity and inviting atmosphere.[112]

It is also worth noting that by the end of 1930, Jin had already achieved great popularity among Shanghai audiences. Her performances were often accompanied by flower baskets, framed couplets, and collections of photographs in costume, all presented by her enthusiastic fans.[113] Jin's willingness to travel to Guangxi and perform can be attributed to her deference and emotional connection with Ouyang. Her dedication undoubtedly played a significant role in boosting Ouyang's political career and shaping the external image of the Guangxi cultural scene. During her stay in Guangxi, Jin participated in the inauguration ceremonies of the Nanhua Theatre. Additionally, she assumed the roles of "female warriors" in Ouyang's plays, depicting iconic figures like Liang Hongyu and Li Xiangjun, who embodied the spirit of national unity and determined resistance against the enemy. These performances resonated strongly with the local audience and garnered significant media attention. Articles praising Jin as a "progressive actress" (*qianjin kunling* 前进坤伶) or a "patriotic artist" (*aiguo yiren* 爱国

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[109] "Ouyang Yuqian paiyuan lai Hu yaojue 欧阳予倩派员来沪邀角" (Ouyang Yuqian sent staff to Shanghai to invite the star), *Electric Voice* 9, no.14 (1940): 1.
[110] Ibid.
[111] "Ouyang Yuqian yifengxin, Jin Suqin zhunbei fu Gui 欧阳予倩一封信,金素琴准备赴桂 " (A letter from Ouyang Yuqian, Jin Suqin prepares to go to Gui), *Electric Voice* 7, no.39 (1938): 771.
[112] Zhu, *Wartime Culture in Guilin,* 22.
[113] "Jin Suqin dengtai 金素琴登台" (Jin Suqin on stage), *Cinema*, no.14 (1938): 421.

艺人) often featured photographs of her and Ouyang, celebrating their collaboration and contributions (see fig 5.5). These reports took an active role in reshaping Ouyang's public persona. It is because of the expanding personal brand that Ouyang's involvement in culture and politics further increased in the following years. Later in the war, he received an invitation from the New China Drama Society, established in Guilin in 1941 and allegedly led by the Communist Party, to join them as a consultant for their performances in Taiwan in 1946.[114] Through the plays, including Ouyang's *Peach Blossom Fan* (also *The Story of Li Xiangjun*, 1937), they aimed to introduce Chinese culture and foster connections with the Taiwanese in the post-war period.[115] Ouyang's affiliation with the Communist Party may not have originated at this point, and it likely predates it. The intricacies of Ouyang's personal journey compel us to recognize the complex and multifaceted political dimensions of Republican-era intellectuals, who frequently traversed the boundaries of various factions. Ouyang's association with the Communist Party and his subsequent political trajectory would persist until the regime's ascendance in 1949, a topic that will be examined in detail in the following chapter.

[114] Xu Yaxiang 徐亚湘, "Xin Zhongguo jushe laitai yanchu kaobian fenxi 新中国剧社来台演出考辨分析" (Analysis of the New China Drama Society's performance in Taiwan), *Xiju yanjiu* 戏剧研究 (Journal of Theater Studies), no. 19 (2017): 83-110.
[115] Ibid.


Miss Chin Su-chin China's most progressive Actress

Since the first shot was fired at Lukoukiao, Miss Chin Su-chin has been devoting herself to the performance of Mr. Ouyang Yu-tsien's "Reformed Peking Drama," which, while retaining the traditional form of Chinese opera, has an entirely new content. Most of these plays are patriotic in meaning, and have received the favorable comments of the public.

Figure 5. 5 The report praising Jin Suqin as a "progressive artist" and the group photo of Jin, Ouyang Yuqian, and others, *Xingguang* 星光 (Sin Chew Jit Poh Pictorial Supplement), no.1 (1939): 11.

Conclusion

Within the spatial and temporal framework, this chapter traces Ouyang's political trajectory, mapping his connections with patrons of different backgrounds. Like many intellectuals of his generation, who navigated complex political landscapes, Ouyang's nuanced positions, uneasy experiences, and multifaceted humanity have often been overlooked by conventional historical narratives. In terms of Ouyang's political stance, Tian Han once criticized him, stating,

"Yuqian was born with a silver spoon and cannot imagine carrying on the drama movement without governmental support, relying solely on hard work...he could not survive for three months without the 'emperor's support".[116] Compared to Tian Han, Ouyang demonstrates a greater inclination to adopting political positions (both decorative and leadership), seeking a patron who would value his talents and exhibiting what Yuri Pines refers to as a "voluntary attachment" to serving the ruler.[117] Ouyang's willingness to align himself with the ruler-centred political system stemmed from his expectations of receiving recognition, social prestige, visibility, and both tangible and intangible rewards, which aligns with the typical behaviour of Republican "cultural entrepreneurs". As observed from the popular press of the time, he had close and seemingly indiscriminate interactions with figures such as Zhang Jian, Chen Mingshu, the Guangxi warlord group, and even the CCP. His political connections appear as shrewd business manoeuvres aimed at purchasing support from various political factions. Moreover, insights gleaned from the popular press underscore the nuanced nature of political affiliations, challenging the simplistic view of distinct factional divides. During the Republican China, individuals could not be neatly confined to one specific faction. Rather than simply crossing borders, people like Ouyang often transcended somewhat ambiguous boundaries for a myriad of reasons, including economic, interpersonal, or livelihood considerations. These calculated actions proved to be crucial in navigating the challenging environment. Fan-sen Wang's quote captures the experience of individuals like Ouyang with multifaceted political orientations. Wang notes, those seeking to save themselves and their country often find their life paths wandering and changing.[118] They might adopt different ideologies, such as Taoist, Confucian, Buddhist, and transition between various political parties like the Youth Party, the Communist Party, and the Nationalist Party, and their lives are marked by fragmented identities, continually influenced by inner desires and external factors, leading to constant change and chaos.[119] By scrutinizing Ouyang's political activities and associations, we can begin to unravel the enigmatic aspects of his life.

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[116] Tian Han, "Ouyang Yuqian xiansheng de daolu", in *Tianhan wenji*, vol. 15, 459-460.
[117] Pines, *The Everlasting Empire the Political Culture of YAncient China and Its Imperial Legacy*, 77.
[118] Fan-sen Wang 王汎森, *Sixiang shi shenghuo de yizhongfangshi: Zhongguo jindai sixiangshi de zaisikao* 思想是生活的一种方式: 中国近代思想史的再思考 (Thought as a Way of Life: Rethinking the History of Modern Chinese Thought) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2018), 292-293. [The original text: 至于对各别青年而言，在追求生命及国家对救赎过程中，他们的生命轨道往往游移变化…思想上生活上经历了无数的跌宕，忽而道，忽而儒，忽而佛；忽而青年党，忽而共产党，忽而国民党，彷佛于十数年中，即过了数世纪].
[119] Ibid.

Chapter Six

Entering the PRC: Ouyang Yuqian in the Dance Realm

In Maoist China (1949-1976), according to Rea and Volland, cultural entrepreneurs were replaced by "cultural bureaucrats" or "cultural workers".[1] Unlike their predecessors, who cultivated their commercial awareness in coastal treaty-ports, the success of these individuals was now primarily determined by their close ties to the ruling party.[2] Cultural bureaucrats aligned themselves to the new political order, and achieving honour and reputation was more related to conformity and adherence to party ideology than the entrepreneurial spirit seen before 1949.[3] By actively engaging with politics, cultural workers managed to secure positions as salaried employees, allowing them to participate in political power and enjoy the associated prestige. As Shuyu Kong elucidates, this prestige created an ideal platform for talented individuals to enhance their lives and ascend the social hierarchy, even though the process itself was often long, unjust, and exasperating.[4]

In 1949, when Chiang Kai-shek's administration fled mainland China for Taiwan, Ouyang Yuqian sought temporary refuge in Hong Kong. Likely influenced by the counsel of friends, family pressures, or the absence of a more compelling alternative, Ouyang ultimately opted to return to mainland China. Despite the intricacies involved, pinpointing the exact catalyst for his decision remains elusive. During this period, some of his friends began offering advice and proposals to the new government. Collaborating with 16 other colleagues, he co-authored the "Offering Suggestions on Film Policies". In April, he received an invitation from the CCP government to attend the First Cultural Congress in Beijing. In September, he participated in the Political Consultative Conference, followed by the Founding Ceremony in October, where he participated as a non-party member. In recognition of his expertise and

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[1] Christopher G. Rea and Nicolai Volland eds., *The Business of Culture: Cultural Entrepreneurs in China and Southeast Asia, 1900-65* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 10.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Shuyu Kong, *Consuming Literature: Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2005), 12-13.

contributions, he was later appointed as the first principal of the Central Academy of Drama (*Zhongyang xiju xueyuan* 中央戏剧学院, CAD for short) in April 1950.[5] This final chapter delves into Ouyang Yuqian's "metamorphotic" cultural entrepreneurship and his continued border-crossing endeavours after 1949, as he navigated through the socialist landscape of China until his passing in 1962. The primary aim of this chapter is to address the following inquiries: Firstly, how did Ouyang's cultural entrepreneurship evolve during Maoist China, and what were the notable changes? I argue that Ouyang Yuqian's penchant for boundary-crossing persisted during this period. Specifically, he completed the transition from the Republic of China to the People's Republic of China (PRC), and furthermore, he ventured from the realm of drama into the domain of dance. Consequently, I also explore the motivations behind Ouyang's continuous boundary-crossing, as well as the aspects of his identity and pursuits that experienced transformation and steadfastness as a result of these border-crossings.

As illustrated in earlier chapters, drama served as a potent domain that amalgamated tradition and modernity in Republican China. It not only afforded Ouyang an expansive network and support system but also enabled him to engage in multiple occupations. Would drama continue to play a significant role in the PRC? Through ongoing exploration of Ouyang Yuqian's chronological records, reminiscences from other people, reports, and editorials in the official newspaper *People's Daily*, and archival resources available via the Database for the History of Contemporary Chinese Political Movements, this chapter will first embark on an investigation into how Ouyang succeeded in garnering the trust of the new regime and securing employment in Communist Beijing. Subsequently, it explores Ouyang's ambitious yet arduous journey within the realm of dance, a new field in which he invested his energy and talents. With the fundamental transformation of cultural production and the reshaping of cultural agency in Socialist China, Ouyang, like his contemporaries, had to adjust his previous cultural perspective to meet the demands of the new political landscape. In the concluding section, I conduct a textual analysis of Ouyang's adaptation work *Hatred of a Black Slave* to explore how Ouyang reinvented his artistic legacy in the post-1949 era. This analysis sheds light on the transformative process he underwent to navigate the evolving cultural landscape and leave a lasting impact within this new context.

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[5] Jing Libin, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian,* 241.

6.1 Going to Beijing

The military defeat of the KMT in 1949 marked a turning point in the cultural project of the CCP, since it found itself in a position to largely monopolize the services of educated elites and professionals who sought to demonstrate their allegiance to the new regime.[6] After the KMT's downfall, the CCP eagerly consolidated its control over urban centres and was in dire need of intellectuals with diverse cultural backgrounds, especially those well-versed in mass media.[7] In this pursuit, the party extended leadership positions to influential figures in these disciplines, contingent upon their ability to showcase their revolutionary credentials.[8] However, those who failed to capture the attention of the authorities would face demotion and diminished status.[9] This approach allowed the CCP to strengthen its grip on cultural institutions and shape the narrative of the emerging society, while simultaneously rewarding those deemed loyal and committed to the new revolutionary cause. Ouyang's active participation in high-profile cultural gatherings on the eve of the establishment of PRC exemplified his autonomous cultural entrepreneurial spirit, as he sought a place in the post-war cultural field. During this period, his public activities benefitted from his extensive prior experiences and cultural involvements. Through a sense of initiative, Ouyang journeyed to the new capital of Beijing, where he managed to stand out amidst the bureaucratic recognition and selection process conducted by the party. His story may illuminate the fact that the practice of self-promotion, a crucial aspect of personality-driven cultural entrepreneurship, did not cease within the PRC. Instead, it provided opportunities for people like Ouyang to integrate into the new system.

Unlike some cultural icons who fled mainland China with doubts and fears, Ouyang chose to remain in the wake of the 1949 political transition. In his recollections from 1955, Ouyang attributed his decision to remain on the mainland to his association with Communists who had collaborated since the late 1930s.[10] However, we must approach this claim with caution. As detailed in earlier chapters, there is insufficient evidence to definitively align

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[6] Brian James DeMare, *Mao's Cultural Army: Drama Troupes in China's Rural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 146.
[7] Jeremy Brown and Paul Pickowicz, *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), 260.
[8] Ibid. 261.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ouyang Yuqian, "Wo yaowei shixian weida de Gongchan zhuyi lixiang gongxian yiqie 我要为实现伟大的共产主义理想贡献一切" (I am fully committed to realizing the great Communist ideal), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 417.

Ouyang with a specific political faction. His decision to stay may have been influenced by various factors, such as the influence of his friends, family considerations, or the absence of viable options for escape overseas. At present, my research has not yielded conclusive findings regarding the precise motivations behind his choice. During his stay in Hong Kong, he strategically attended some genteel gatherings and seemingly apolitical events, indirectly lending support to the Communist hegemony. In January 1949, Ouyang participated in a cultural forum held at 8 Hong Lok Street in Hong Kong.[11] The forum aimed to deliberate on a collective proposal regarding future film policies that would be submitted to the CCP, as it was preparing to establish a new government just a few months later. This proposal, titled "Offering Suggestions on Film Policies" (*Dianying zhengce xianyi* 电影政策献议), was signed by influential filmmakers including Ouyang, Xia Yan, Sun Yu, Cai Chusheng, and twelve others.[12] This "Suggestions" served as a testament to their political commitment in the face of the impending transformation in China. In line with the interests and economic policies of the CCP, they advised the government to nationalize private studios and implement new censorship measures.[13] Despite some of the proposers having held ambiguous political stances prior to 1949, they emphasized the significance of scrutinizing and purging filmmakers with "dubious or uncertain" backgrounds.[14] In March, a similar cultural gathering took place. As reported by *Xinmin wanbao*, some prominent Chinese dramatists and filmmakers who were temporarily residing in Hong Kong, including Ouyang, Cai Chusheng, Cao Yu, and others, attended and delivered speeches that underscored the importance of "addressing current issues, keeping pace with the times, and utilizing art to serve the people".[15] This gathering provided a platform for these individuals to express their shared commitment to staying attuned to the ever-evolving social and political landscape. These public activities reflected Ouyang and his peers' recognition of the need to align themselves with the ideological objectives of the CCP and to actively contribute to the construction of a new cultural order. By advocating for nationalization and rigorous vetting, they demonstrated their willingness to adapt and support the party's vision for the cultural industry in the new China.

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[11] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian,* 243.
[12] "Dianying zhengce xianyi 电影政策献议" (Offering Suggestions on Film Policies), in Wu Di 吴迪 ed., *Zhongguo dianying yanjiu ziliao 1949-1979* 中国电影研究资料 1949-1979 (Chinese Film Research Materials 1949-1979) (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1982), 3.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] See "Xianggang yingjuren qingzhu xijujie 香港影剧人庆祝戏剧节", in *Xinmin wanbao* 新民晚报 (New People Evening News), 2 March 1949.

Another example that demonstrates Ouyang's willingness to align himself with the new regime is his frequent visits to Liu Yazi 柳亚子 (1887-1958). Chinese scholars generally agree that the CCP had already taken notice of Liu Yazi during that period and entrusted him with the task of recruiting non-Communist elites.[16] As early as January 1949, Ouyang began visiting Liu at his residence in Hong Kong, and he made six visits in April alone.[17] During one of them, Ouyang participated in a banquet organized by Liu to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Southern Society.[18] Furthermore, he even took his younger brother, Ouyang Jianchou 欧阳剑俦, to visit Liu, which demonstrates the significance of their relationship and the importance Ouyang placed on cultivating this connection. In addition, he engaged in numerous seminars and excursions involving individuals from the opera and literature circles, capitalizing on his previous cross-border career and vast network of interpersonal connections. For instance, in May, he attended the national congress of literary and artistic workers in Beijing alongside his former colleagues from the Literary Association, such as Shen Yanbing and Ye Shengtao.[19] In July, he also participated in the meeting of the national committee for opera reform, where he was elected director of the committee.[20]

Through these activities, often viewed as being manipulated by the party, intellectuals from different backgrounds were instructed to set aside controversies and to identify themselves with the revolutionary culture that originated in CCP controlled areas, particularly Yan'an.[21] Setting the future creative direction of serving "workers, peasants, and soldiers" and recognizing Mao Zedong's thoughts as the guiding principle, the CCP's cultural program gradually shifted to "hegemony" and unfolded its increasingly radical practices from that point forward.[22] Despite the CCP's inherent political bias and unjustifiable treatment towards intellectuals associated with the Nationalist-controlled regions, Ouyang's consistent attendance

[16] For example, Zhu Xinghe 朱兴和, "Liu Yazi Mao Zedong shiyuan jianshi—yi 1949 nian qianhou 'liumao changhe 'wei jujiao 柳亚子毛泽东诗缘笺释—以 1949 年前后'柳毛唱和'为聚焦" (Poetry Exchange between Liu Yazi and Mao Zedong), *Shanghai jiaotong daxue xuebao* 上海交通大学学报 (Journal of Shanghai Jiaotong University) 21, no.6 (2013): 86-100.
[17] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian,* 243-244.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., 246.
[20] Ibid., 247.
[21] Xiaomei Chen, "Socialist Literature Driven by Radical Modernity, 1950-1980", in Yingjin Zhang ed., *A Companion to Modern Chinese Literature* (West Sussex, England: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 84.
[22] Ibid., 85.

allowed him to attain exposure, re-establish connections, and collaborate with esteemed figures across diverse fields. His active participation in these activities not only showcased his multiple talents but also demonstrated his significant influence within the cultural sphere to the government, ultimately making him stand out as a candidate in the bureaucratic selection process. Ouyang's experiences during the 1949 takeover illustrate that those cultural figures like him, had already adapted their perspectives to align with the creation and operation of the Socialist cultural hegemony, before Mao initiated the remoulding of the "new socialist man" and the suppression of artistic styles disapproved by the regime. Motivated perhaps by the allure of newfound power and prestige, rather than solely political coercion, these figures sought inclusion within the state sector to engage in a broader arena of cultural activities. However, little did Ouyang and his peers anticipate the future misery this would bring.

6.2 Transitioning to the World of Dance

Upon entering the PRC, Ouyang embarked on a field new to him — choreography and dance research. In the 1950s, he played a pivotal role in promoting the art of dance through his writings in the official newspaper *Renmin ribao* 人民日报 (People's Daily), particularly promoting the achievements of "brother countries" such as the Soviet Union, North Korea, Hungary, and Mongolia. His efforts aimed to counter the prevailing influence of Westernized ideals and the colonial modernity discourse popular among intellectuals of the May Fourth era. In existing research on Ouyang, there has been limited scholarly attention to his involvement in the field of dance. Therefore, this section aims to address this gap by exploring the reasons behind Ouyang's successful integration into dance following the 1949 takeover. It also aims to explore, in the face of the new political climate, whether the adjustments and changes made by Ouyang betray his past.

The campaign to reform drama was just one among several initiatives undertaken during the early years of the PRC. Like other campaigns, its objective was to overhaul drama institutions and individuals while asserting the control of the CCP.[23] Each genre of regional drama, starting with Peking Opera, underwent meticulous scrutiny of its repertoire to determine

[23] Wilt L. Idema, *The Metamorphosis of Tianxian pei: Local Opera under the Revolution (1949-1956)* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2015), 12.

which plays would be forbidden, which were subjected to modification, and which were deemed acceptable.[24] In November 1949, Ouyang assumed the position of principal of the Central Academy of Drama (CAD), becoming a middle-ranking bureaucrat in Communist Beijing.[25] However, he seemed reluctant to engage in drama, as his previous artistic perspectives often clashed with the prevailing ideologies of the new regime. At a national conference in July 1950, Zhou Yang 周扬 (1908-1989), the cultural czar of the time, outlined guidelines for the reform of traditional drama. He emphasized the appropriate utilization of folktales and historical themes in new and revised operas.[26] Under pressure to make their works serve socio-political objectives, many playwrights who started their careers during the Republican era transformed well-known stories into direct illustrations of modern discourse, with historical figures voicing the new ideas of the day.[27] This approach, labelled "anti-historicism" by cultural officials of CCP, would be subject to scrutiny and criticism. Furthermore, during the conference, Zhou Yang clarified that plays demonstrating resistance against foreign aggression and class oppression, promoting love for the motherland, freedom, and labour, could be preserved, while any play that upheld "feudal" (a Marxist terminology) morality or propagated primitive, violent, or lascivious behaviours would be rejected.[28]

Ouyang might have found that many of his previous endeavours did not align with the cultural policies surrounding "traditional opera" in the tide of socialist construction. One notable example is his highly acclaimed adaptation, *Pan Jinlin* (1926). Derived from a Ming dynasty novel and infused with the May Fourth ethos of passionate pursuit of romantic love and yearning for individual freedom, the play could easily attract criticism in socialist China as an antiquated story from the "feudal era", associated with debauchery and violence. Moreover, Ouyang's adaptation significantly deviated from the novel, transforming Pan Jinlian, originally depicted as a nymphomaniac driven by sexual desires and cruelty, into a modern and liberated woman who rebels against an unjust society. In contrast, the heroic figure Wu Song is depicted as a dull person who remains stubborn, bound by Confucian values. These elements

[24] Ibid.
[25] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian,* 249.
[26] "Wenhuabu xiqu gaijin weiyuanhui zucheng, shouci huiyi queding xiqu jiemu shending biaozhun 文化部戏曲改进委员会组成, 首次会议确定戏曲节目审定标准" (The Ministry of Culture's Opera Reform Committee was Formed and Met for the First Time to Determine the Criteria for the Validation of Opera Programmes), *Renmin ribao* 29 July 1950.
[27] Idema, *The Metamorphosis of Tianxian pei,* 11.
[28] Ibid., 12.

easily allow this play to be categorized as "anti-historicist" and render it to be deemed irrelevant for the socialist construction. A critical article published in *Renmin ribao* in 1950 noted that "many advocates of old drama reform are fond of working on Pan Jinlian", but due to the differing standards of heroism between the new and old societies, "their adaptations fail to bring any innovations to the plot of 'poisoning of Wu Da'".[29] Perhaps under the pressure of the new oppressive cultural policies on drama, Ouyang was in a period of creative stagnation. During an official conference of Beijing's literary and artistic circles in 1951, Ouyang openly criticized himself for "not producing good works" during the two years he had worked in the CAD.[30] Interestingly, while his drama career stagnated, Ouyang's focus had shifted towards the field of dance. Dance was a realm he had barely explored prior to 1949, which meant he did not have to dwell on past "errors". Instead, he just needed to demonstrate his present efforts at self-improvement in this uncharted territory. Thus, the unfamiliar world of dance for Ouyang came brimming with new possibilities and opportunities.

Having primarily worked in Nationalist-controlled areas such as Guangdong and Guangxi provinces, Ouyang was disconnected from the CCP's numerous cultural struggles and artistic experiments in the previous decade. On entering the PRC, he had to undergo a necessary transformation by embracing Maoist principles and ideology as a guiding force for both his political and artistic actions. Aligning his ideas with the authority, he embarked on a path followed by most socialist cultural workers: conducting research, seeking "progress", and eliminating any elements deemed undesirable by the party.[31] It is noteworthy that Ouyang, while expressing loyalty to Mao, also embraced a socialist international discourse of the revolutionary era. Starting from 1950, he frequently published essays celebrating cultural inspirations from countries in the Socialist camp, dedicating considerable energy to incorporating Maoist ideas within an international framework. This echoes a similar endeavour he made in 1926 when he sought to introduce the art of Western opera in his essays "On

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[29] Wang Zhaowen 王朝闻, "Shuihu zhuan li de yige liangmianxing de dianxing 水浒传里的一个两面性的典型" (A typical example of the two faces in the Water Margin), *Renmin ribao* 13 August 1950. [The original text: 据说不少改革旧剧的朋友喜欢在潘金莲上面用功夫, 但往往不能使药杀武大具备新的意义].

[30] Ouyang Yuqian, "Zai Beijing wenyijie xuexi dongyuan dahui shang de fayan 在北京文艺界学习动员大会上的发言" (Speech at the Conference of Studying and Mobilizing for Beijing's Literary and Artistic circles), *Renmin ribao* 16 December 1951. [The original text: 中央戏剧学院两年来没有产生出好的作品, 也没有演出有代表价值的戏, 也还是由于思想方面存在着问题].

[31] Igor Iwo Chabrowski, *Ruling the Stage: Social and Cultural History of Opera in Sichuan from the Qing to the People's Republic of China* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 285.

Western Opera" and "Tomorrow's New Opera", though the countries he promoted at that time were Italy, France, Germany, England, and Russia.[32] I posit that Ouyang's enduring cultural commitment fuses modernity with internationalism. He transitioned the initiative from a backdrop of colonial modernity influenced by Occidentalism into an ideology rooted in Socialist internationalism, which stressed their uniqueness and opposed Western cultural assimilation.

Mao Zedong's 1942 speech, "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art", articulated a vision for culture in the new China. Mao emphasized the importance of drawing inspiration from folk and vernacular culture as the foundation for revolutionary art.[33] While advocating for the embrace of a "national form" and "national style", Mao also urged communist artists to shed any sense of superiority or elitism towards the impoverished rural population.[34] Directly and indirectly, Ouyang resonated Mao's ideas in his research essays on national and folk forms of countries like the Soviet Union, North Korea, Hungary, Mongolia, and others in the early 1950s. In his article titled "I Saw the Highly Compelling Art of Dance", Ouyang highlighted the significance of Soviet dancer Galina Ulanova's performance, particularly noting her utilization of techniques inspired by Uzbek national and folk traditions.[35] Displaying his admiration for Hungarian arts, he praised their incorporation of folk elements, stating, "It is not the exoticism that attracted us, but the youthful and joyful flair... What is especially valuable is the grounded quality, where every movement and breath are intimately connected to people's lives".[36] Furthermore, when discussing the allure of Mongolian dance, Ouyang emphasized its incorporation of the Mongolian horsemanship tradition, which serves as the primary vocabulary of movement.[37]

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[32] See "Mingri de xin geju 明日的新歌剧" (Tomorrow's New Opera) and "Xiyang geju tan 西洋歌剧谈" (On Western Opera), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.5, 298-301 & 302-320.
[33] Mao Zedong, and Bonnie S. McDougall trans., *Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art": A Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980), 55-86.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ouyang Yuqian,"Wo kandao le juyou gaodu ganranli de wudao yishu 我看到了具有高度感染力的舞蹈艺术" (I Saw the Highly Infectious Art of Dance), in *Renmin ribao* 15 November 1952.
[36] Ouyang Yuqian, "Wo xiai Xiongyali renmin de yishu 我喜爱匈牙利人民的艺术" (I Enjoy the Hungarian Arts), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.5, 275-276.
[37] Ouyang Yuqian, "Jinjin de woshou, chengken de xuexi 紧紧的握手, 诚恳的学习" (Tight Handshakes and Sincere Learning), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.5, 277-279.

Seeking international connections, Ouyang aligned himself with Maoist rhetoric that championed "the folk" and "the national" as foundations for socialist excellence. Interestingly, there exists a link between his emphasis on "national forms" and "folk" during the 1950s and his earlier intellectual debates regarding the extent to which Chinese opera should draw inspiration from Western cultural practices of the 1920s. In his discussions on Western opera as a potential source of learning for Chinese opera in 1926, he advocated for a blended approach.[38] Ouyang argued that progress could be achieved by incorporating Western progressive orchestral music alongside traditional Chinese instruments, creating a harmonious synthesis that adhered to specific plot requirements. While not explicitly using rhetoric such as "national form", Ouyang emphasized the significance of "Chinese melodies" and an authentic "Chinese tone of speaking" when it came to creating opera. Despite being in different times, the artistic viewpoints Ouyang brought to his work in socialist China were at one with those he developed earlier. In the face of a new political climate that rendered references to Western advancements dangerous, he instead embraced Maoist ideology, emphasizing centralized and national-level expressions, and connecting them to socialist internationalism. This approach was instrumental in garnering government trust.

While Ouyang's steps in the drama field may have slowed down in Socialist China, it cannot be denied that his drama experience played a role in shaping his newfound creative field of dance. In fact, his new career benefited from his previous resources in the field of drama, particularly his friendship with Wu Xiaobang 吴晓邦 (1906-1995) and Dai Ailian 戴爱莲 (also known as Eileen Isaac, 1916-2006). The nexus between Ouyang and Wu Xiaobang can be traced back to the 1930s when Wu, a recent graduate in modern dance from Japan, entered Shanghai's cultural scene as a latecomer around 1935. As demonstrated by Nan Ma, upon Wu's transition from Tokyo to Shanghai, he encountered the challenge of adapting his dance works for a markedly different urban culture and socio-political environment.[39] This "maladaptation" propelled him to resort to other more established modern arts and personal connections to advance his modern dance.[40] Notably, Wu found support and opportunities within the realm of spoken drama, particularly through his association with Ouyang.[41] He inserted his

[38] Ouyang Yuqian, "Xiyang geju tan 西洋歌剧谈" (On Western Opera), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.5, 302-320.
[39] Nan Ma, "Transmediating Kinesthesia: Wu Xiaobang and Modern Dance in China, 1929–1939", *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 28, no. 1 (2016): 140.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

choreographic debut into the 1935 spoken drama *Nala* 娜拉 (Nora), and for a considerable period, his living expenses and public performances were supported by drama troupes and schools.[42] The close bond between Wu and Ouyang is further evident in Wu's own words:

> While residing in Yingcun, I had the privilege of befriending renowned individuals such as the painter Ye Qianyu and Liang Baibo, the musician Ding Shande, Chen Yuxin and Chen Gexin, and the dramatist Ouyang Yuqian. My friendship with Ouyang Yuqian spanned from 1931 until his passing in 1962, a period of thirty-one years. During that time, he resided in No. 2 Yingcun, while I lived in No. 10. Upon our acquaintance, Ouyang even entrusted his two daughters, Manru and Jingru, to my institute for dance instruction.[43]

In the subsequent years, Wu developed a dance style known as "New Dance" (*xinxin wuyong* 新新舞踊) in Shanghai. This style claimed the Western genesis and embodied the spirit of colonial modernity that resonated with the ideals of the May Fourth intellectuals, and thus created a sense of competition with Mao's *Yangge* 秧歌 movement within the Chinese dance scene in the 1940s.[44] Simultaneously, in 1941, Dai Ailian, a dancer with a different artistic perspective, arrived in China from her birthplace in the UK. Seeking to overturn the ethnic hierarchy and drawing inspiration from the non-Han aesthetics and forms, Dai initially focused her efforts on the southwestern region of China, a place inhabited by Chinese minority ethnic groups and often considered culturally backward by urban intellectuals.[45] Dai spent one year in Guilin, Guangxi province, where Ouyang happened to be serving for the local government and researching the Gui opera. At Ouyang's request, Dai attended an opera performance by the local actress Xiao feiyan 小飞燕, which she later adapted into her own dance repertoire titled *Yazi beifeng* 哑子背疯 (The Mute and the Cripple) in 1944.[46] When reflecting on this experience, Dai emphasized the role of Ouyang Yuqian, who was the director

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[42] Ibid., 141.
[43] Wu Xiaobang, "Liuxue Riben 留学日本" (Studying in Japan), in *Wu Xiaobang wudao wenji* 吴晓邦舞蹈文集 (Wu Xiaobang Dance Anthology) (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 2017), 22.
[44] Emily Wilcox, *Revolutionary Bodies, Chinese Dance, and the Socialist Legacy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2019), 30-31.
[45] Ibid., 32.
[46] Dai Ailian, *Wode yishu yu shenghuo* 我的艺术与生活 (My Art and Life) (Beijing: Renmin yinyue chubanshe, 2003), 88.

of the Guangxi Arts Museum at the time, in suggesting her exploration of dance art from studying Chinese folk operas.[47]

Based on these findings, it is evident that although Ouyang Yuqian was not directly involved in the development of Chinese dance during the Republican era, he played a role in supporting the early careers of key participants, including Wu Xiaobang and Dai Ailian. Towards the end of the 1940s, both Wu and Dai made the political decision to align themselves with CCP cultural activists, even though their prior artistic convictions clashed with Mao's ideology. Starting in 1947, Wu Xiaobang partnered with cultural activists from Yan'an and initiated cooperation with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to create a mobilization dance that integrated military elements.[48] Meanwhile, on the brink of the new regime, Dai Ailian explored a path for the future of Chinese new dance by merging Frontier Dance (*bianjiang wu* 边疆舞) and *Yangge*.[49] Their contributions in the dance field led to their participation as delegates in the First All-China Literature and Arts Worker Representative Congress in July 1949. Given the relatively small number of dance experts compared to other artistic disciplines, a discussion arose during the Congress regarding their placement within music or drama institutions.[50] The precise influence of their previous connections and friendships remains uncertain, but it is noteworthy that Ouyang Yuqian, Wu Xiaobang, and Dai Ailian crossed paths in Beijing and eventually became colleagues at the CAD, where Ouyang served as the principal and Dai took charge of the CAD Dance Ensemble, where their friendship and communication continued to flourish and deepen. In the subsequent months, Ouyang created a dance drama, *Heping ge* 和平鸽 (Peace Dove), under the assistance of Dai and Wu.

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[47] Ibid.
[48] Nan Ma, "Transmediating Kinesthesia: Wu Xiaobang and Modern Dance in China, 1929–1939," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 28, no. 1 (2016): 164.
[49] Wilcox, *Revolutionary Bodies, Chinese Dance, and the Socialist Legacy*, 47.
[50] Ibid., 50.

Figure 6. 1 Members of the dance department of the Central Academy of Drama (CAD) in 1951, with Ouyang and Wu Xiaobang sitting in the middle of the second row, *Wu Xiaobang wudao wenji* (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 2017), 97.

6.3 Researching Ballet

In October 1950, Ouyang Yuqian took on the roles of composer and director of the seven-act dance drama *Peace Dove* at the CAD as a tribute to the international peace movement and the Stockholm Appeal, a campaign initiated by the World Peace Council in March to advocate nuclear disarmament and prevent atomic warfare. Dai Ailian and Wu Xiaobang were responsible for the performance and supervision of this work, which incorporated a variety of dance techniques including Ballet, Western modern dance, Chinese *Yangge*, and Frontier Dance.[51] Its storyline was abstract and symbolic, with the central character being a personified dove performed by Dai Ailian. The dove symbolized an individual fleeing from the persecution of US imperialism, aided by the Chinese working class, and seeking refuge in the peaceful city of Beijing. Given the subject matter, *Peace Dove* was expected to be an impeccable production as Ouyang's first offering to the new regime. However, it unexpectedly garnered criticism and was labelled "inappropriate".

A disgruntled voice in *Renmin ribao* described the performance of *Peace Dove* as "a stage filled with ballet dancers' bare thighs, something that the worker-peasant-soldiers cannot

[51] Ibid., 55.

tolerate" (fig. 6.2).[52] As a result, it was banned after only a few performances, apart from certain occasions where only the final act, "Dove Fly to Beijing", featuring the use of *Yangge* 秧歌, was performed. Guang Weiran 光未然 (1913–2002), the head of the education department at CAD, held Ouyang responsible for prioritizing balletic movements in the choreography.[53] In his article "Facing up to My Mistakes", Guang asserted that *Peace Dove* was a clumsy failure in terms of dance techniques and overall aesthetic execution, attributing it to Ouyang's lack of understanding of the preferences of common people.[54] The frustration he experienced, coupled with a series of stringent cultural policies implemented in the subsequent years, likely influenced Ouyang's perspective on ballet. It is possible that he no longer regarded ballet as a "divine" and "impeccable" art form, as he asserted in his 1952 public speech.[55] Instead, he began to endorse the notion that ballet should serve as a reference for the invention of Chinese dance. This approach, which I term "dynamic adaptation", underscores the responsiveness and awareness of socialist cultural practitioners to the prevailing norms.

Figure 6. 2 The Ballet Ensemble in *Peace Dove*, *Renmin huabao* 1, no.6 (1950):38. Photographers: Wu Yinbo and Xia Yuqing. Image provided by China Foto Bank. Access date: 7 June 2023.

[52] Guang Weiran 光未然, "Zhengshi ziji de cuowu 正视自己的错误" (Facing up to My Mistakes), in *Renmin ribao* 22 January 1952.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ouyang Yuqian, "I Saw the Highly Compelling Art of Dance", in *Renmin ribao* 15 November 1952.

Ballet originated in Europe in the fifteenth century and gained a foothold in China in the 1920s, primarily through the introduction of Russian immigrants who fled the Bolshevik regime and sought refuge in Chinese cities such as Shanghai, Tianjin, and Harbin.[56] Ballet performances, featuring highly skilled artists, became a prominent aspect of the cultural landscape in Republican China, showcased in theatres and nightclubs as a symbol of bourgeois culture.[57] However, this ballet culture became entwined with notions of colonial modernity, class distinctions, and Western values that were seen as incompatible with the emerging socialist culture of China. According to Emily Wilcox, being perceived as a foreign form, ballet positioned itself as the "subservient Other" in relation to the Chinese dance "Self", which was, in fact, neither a dominant dance form nor emblematic of revolutionary culture in socialist China prior to the mid-1960s.[58] Given this perspective, it raises the question of why Ouyang opted for ballet as his primary dance vocabulary. Furthermore, how would Ouyang respond to the accusations levied against his choice?

Ouyang's choice of ballet as the primary movement vocabulary for *Peace Dove* can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, it can be linked to the weariness of urban intellectuals towards the *Yangge* dance that is rooted in the lives of peasants and requires dancers to frequently twist their hips and heads.[59] Ouyang had a lukewarm stance towards *Yangge*, rarely discussing it in public, whether in his later reviews published in official media or in his subsequent research essays on different dance styles. Instead, Ouyang demonstrated a penchant for ballet as an art form stressing lyricism, softness, and grace. In one of his articles, he referred to the remarkable physique of Soviet ballerina Galina Ulanova as "*xianren* 仙人" (immortal).[60] During the Sino-Soviet cultural exchange in the early 1950s, the captivating Russian ballet dancers and their physicality might have embodied Chinese intellectuals' idealized image of socialist women. In this context, *Peace Dove*, as China's inaugural ballet production, can be interpreted as a realization of Ouyang's early vision of socialist Chinese women, embracing a glamorous and aesthetically refined womanhood distinct from the rural *Yangge* dancers. By choreographing the intricate movements of ballet, Ouyang aimed to showcase his nuanced

[56] Wilcox, *Revolutionary Bodies, Chinese Dance, and the Socialist Legacy*, 123.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., 133.
[59] Chang-tai Hung, *Mao's New World: Political Culture in the Early People's Republic* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2011), 75
[60] Ouyang Yuqian, "Wo kandao le juyou gaodu ganranli de wudao yishu", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.5, 272.

understanding of Chinese socialism. Furthermore, advocating ballet, which was perceived as a "state directive" to "draw lessons from the Soviet Union", held considerable political significance for cultural practitioners such as Ouyang.[61] This was especially pertinent during the early 1950s when the government actively fostered friendship and cultural ties between the two nations. However, the unexpected criticism regarding the perceived sexual connotation of ballet dancers' "bare thighs" reveals the complex and delicate relationship between the intentions of Maoist cultural workers and the political agenda. As some scholars note, even during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), when Chinese choreographers made concerted efforts to eliminate sexualized depictions, ballet could still be subject to pornographic interpretations, with audiences harbouring unauthorized desires and personal sexual fantasies within their own dance realm.[62]

As Wilcox suggests, the dance field in China prior to the mid-1960s exhibited heterogeneity and competing agendas, and ballet's unique status in Socialist China necessitated practitioners to engage in delicate self-censorship and dynamic adaptation.[63] Ouyang played a significant role in legitimizing and defending this form of dance. As early as 1952, when he publicly commented on ballet, he sought to establish its connection with Greek sculpture, highlighting its "universal" (*pubian* 普遍) nature and "heritable" values that could transcend ethnic, ideological, and class boundaries.[64] This viewpoint resonated with Mao's earlier writings on revolutionary art during the Yan'an era, which acknowledged that certain elite cultural forms associated with the European Enlightenment held inherent values for China's socialist cultural mission.[65] Despite Ouyang's attempts to dispel suspicions and counter the perception of ballet as anti-revolutionary, doubts remained regarding its association with Western sensibilities and lifestyles. Cultural authorities emphasized the importance of creating

[61] In the early years of its governance in 1949, the CCP displayed a resolute commitment to absorbing knowledge from the Soviet Union. From 1949 to 1956, China embraced and implemented Soviet practices, often without a critical evaluation, across a broad spectrum of fields. For more details, see Thomas P. Bernstein, *China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1949-Present*, Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010).
[62] See Laikwan Pang, *The Art of Cloning: Creative Production During China's Cultural Revolution* (London: Verso, 2017), 190; Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 166.
[63] Wilcox, *Revolutionary Bodies, Chinese Dance, and the Socialist Legacy*, 139-140.
[64] Ouyang Yuqian, "I Saw the Highly Infectious Art of Dance", in *Renmin ribao* 15 November 1952.
[65] See Mao Zedong, and Bonnie S. McDougall trans., *Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art": A Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980), 55-86.

Chinese national forms and deemed ballet insufficient in fulfilling this objective.[66] In Ouyang's 1954 public comment titled "After seeing the Soviet Dance Drama 'Notre Dame de Paris'", he shifted his defence of ballet from a technical and bodily perspective to one highlighting the success of the production's adaptation of the original novel's romantic subjects within the framework of socialist realism, which read as:

> This dance drama conveys the humanitarian spirit of the original work and fully showcases its affinity to the people. In addition, the dance drama also strives to respect the original work while cleansing the unhealthy and unnatural aspects of the romantic writing style... Although it is an adaptation of Hugo's novel, the entire production appears as a new creation. The director, composer, and actors have all demonstrated valuable creative talents, showing a high level of political cultivation from every perspective.[67]

In his article, Ouyang implied that ballet, in terms of technique, lacked sufficient educational value and was not a suitable form to express themes related to contemporary life in China. However, he backlogged that through "correct" adaptation, i.e., by focusing on and supplementing contents that reflects "peoplehood" and "revolution", ballets can still be appreciated and researched.

In 1959, Ouyang reassessed ballet, when it regained prominence with the establishment of the PRC's first professional ballet ensemble. This was also a time when the Great Leap Forward Movement was taking place. This economic and political campaign, emphasizing collective labour, also influenced the cultural spheres, including perceptions of ballet among cultural workers. In the article "Soviet Ballet was the Best in the World" published in *Renmin ribao* in October, Ouyang acknowledged that ballet once again brought him aesthetic

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[66] Wilcox, *Revolutionary Bodies, Chinese Dance, and the Socialist Legacy*, 130.

[67] Ouyang Yuqian, "Kanle Sulian wuju 'Bali shengmuyuan' yihou 看了苏联舞剧'巴黎圣母院'以后" (After seeing the Soviet dance drama 'Notre Dame de Paris'), in *Renmin ribao* 29 December 1954.[The original text: 这个舞剧表达了原作的人道主义精神, 充分地显示出这一作品的人民性。非但如此, 这个舞剧极力尊重原作，同时也把过去浪漫主义创作方法不健康, 不达近人情的描写洗刷干净…这个戏虽是根据雨果的小说改编的, 整个的看来是一个新创作。导演、作曲和演员都发挥了可贵的创作才能, 无论从哪方面看, 都显示出高度的政治修养、艺术修养和极其纯熟的技巧锻炼].

satisfaction.[68] However, this satisfaction stemmed not from the feminine body, but from the dancers' collaboration with the musical accompaniment and the literary narrative. He emphasized the "collaborative" nature of ballet, attributing the successes of two Soviet dance dramas he had watched to the synchronization in thoughts and emotions between the dancers and musicians, as well as the alignment in thinking between the choreographers and associate screenwriters. Instead of viewing ballet as an art form that stimulates a fusion of libidinal energy and revolutionary fervour, Ouyang regarded the large-scale ballet dramas of this period as vehicles for collective strength. This perspective was different from his previous notion of ballet as a high art form akin to Greek sculpture that resists utility and the intuitive reception of the ordinary people. Rather, Ouyang promoted ballet as a form of art that could be comprehended and appreciated by a broad audience through literary narrative and musical elements. This viewpoint was in line with the ethos of the era of mass mobilization.

Through Ouyang's public comments on ballet in 1952, 1954, and 1959, we can observe his efforts to bolster the viability of this art form during its precarious infancy and validate its presence in the nascent Socialist China. While the political climate tightly regulated artistic autonomy, cultural entrepreneurs entering the PRC discovered that not all personal space was restricted. Although his research and public comments on ballet were used as a means of demonstrating his adherence to the party's cultural policies, through appropriating the Maoist political rhetoric, he was still able to assert his own artistic proposition, especially for his preferred art form, ballet.

6.4 Reinventing Traditional Chinese Dance

The 1950s and early 1960s marked a period of vibrant and dynamic development for Chinese dance. As Wilcox notes, the definition of "Chinese new dance" was still elusive during the time, prompting dancers to take risks and "create" with what they had, resulting in a high level of formal innovation and diverse aesthetic experiments.[69] The Ministry of Culture recognized the significance of national dance and invested in several dance institutions from the early

[68] Ouyang Yuqian, "Sulian balei shijiediyi 苏联芭蕾世界第一" (Soviet Ballet was the Best in the World), in *Renmin ribao* 13 October 1959.
[69] Wilcox, *Revolutionary Bodies, Chinese Dance, and the Socialist Legacy*, 75.

1950s, each of which developed its own distinct focus.[70] For instance, the Central Song and Dance Ensemble specialized in *Han* folk dance, while the Central Academy of Nationalities Cultural Work Troupe focused on ethnic minority dance.[71] The CAD, where Ouyang was the founding principal, also established a department for dance. Under Ouyang's leadership and the efforts of other staff, it gradually established itself as a centre of excellence in Chinese "classical dance" (*gudian wu* 古典舞), a new dance style based on the movement conventions of traditional opera.

This section will briefly explain how Ouyang leveraged his resources, talent, and knowledge of dance to ensure CAD's prominent position among many dance institutions. It also delves into Ouyang's research on classical dance as an entry point to address the question of how he managed to avoid the government's punitive campaigns against intellectuals in the 1950s. As Rea and Volland point out, the post-1949 era saw a shift in the Chinese cultural landscape, where the market and profit were no longer the primary drivers for cultural entrepreneurs who thrived in the Republican era.[72] The new cultural production in the PRC was shaped by ideology and state planning, requiring individuals to adapt to these modes. However, Ouyang's work may stand as a testament to the enduring influence of his talent, astuteness, earlier interpersonal relationships, and cross-border activities even after entering the PRC. These factors played a pivotal role in shaping his cultural production, earning him recognition and rewards in his field.

In August 1950, Ouyang Yuqian reconnected with his old acquaintance Wu Xiaobang and proposed the establishment of a training programme at the CAD.[73] This programme, known as the Dance Movement Cadre Training Course (*wuyun ban* 舞运班), primarily focused on Western dance training, including ballet, which Wu Xiaobang specialized in. The curriculum encompassed lectures on dance theory and composition methodology, with the overarching goal of cultivating a new generation of dancers who would serve as dance cadres,

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[70] Ibid., 94.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Rea and Volland, *The Business of Culture*, 254.
[73] Wu Xiaobang, "Zai zhongyang xiju xueyuan wudao yundong ganbu xunlianban 在中央戏剧学院舞蹈运动干部训练班" (In the Dance Movement Cadre Training Course of CAD), in *Wu Xiaobang wudao wenji*, 96. [The orginal Chinese text: 我记得就在他（欧阳）的推动下, 为繁荣我国的舞蹈事业, 建立了中国第一个由戴爱莲先生主持的专业舞蹈团; 同时在崔承喜来我国后, 在他的协助下, 又成立了"崔承喜舞蹈班"; 还有我所主持的"舞蹈运动干部训练班"].

poised to assume leadership roles in China's burgeoning dance field. According to Wu's memoir, it was Ouyang who believed that the balletic form could be effectively adapted to "create" a national dance form.[74] However, given the ongoing uncertainty regarding the compatibility of ballet and Chinese new dance, as demonstrated before, Ouyang eventually implemented both training methods concurrently. Along with Wu's training course, Ouyang also contributed to establish the Dance Research Course (*wuyan ban* 舞研班) in 1951. Choe Seung-hui 崔承喜 (1911-1969), a Korean dancer who merged elements of traditional opera into Chinese new dance, was recruited as a coach for this course.

Born in Seoul in 1911, Choe Seung-hui pursued her studies in modern dance in Tokyo starting in 1926. During the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45), she performed in various Chinese cities under Japanese occupation to entertain Japanese soldiers.[75] However, due to challenging political circumstances in Japan and South Korea towards the end of the Pacific War, she ultimately returned to North Korea.[76] In 1950, following China's involvement in the Korean War, Choe visited China once again, where she was warmly received by Chinese cultural officials who appreciated her efforts in promoting Sino-North Korean friendship and supporting the anti-American war cause. For example, in a public letter, Ouyang and the vice principal of CAD, Cao Yu, extended their greetings to the literary and artistic workers coming from North Korea to China.[77]

From the early 1940s, Choe recognized the potential of Chinese traditional opera's movement and imagery as a foundation for an innovative dance form.[78] During her extended stay in China in the new political context, she restarted a long-term project to create "Chinese classical dance", rooted in Chinese opera, that would not only express East Asian culture but also challenge that of the West.[79] Her vision resonated with her old acquaintances in the Chinese opera scene, including Mei Lanfang and Ouyang. Choe's ambition not only gained recognition from Ouyang but also inspired him to explore a parallel training method that would

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[74] Ibid., 97.
[75] Emily Wilcox, "Crossing Over: Choe Seung-Hui's Pan-Asianism in Revolutionary Time", *무용역사기록학* (The Journal of Society for Dance Documentation and History of South Korea), no. 51 (2018): 67.
[76] Ibid.
[77] "Zhongyang xiju xueyuan quanti jiaozhi xueyuan zhihan 中央戏剧学院全体教职学员致函" (Letter from all faculty and students of the Central Academy of Drama), in *Renmin ribao* 29 July 1950.
[78] Wilcox, "Crossing Over: Choe Seung-Hui's Pan-Asianism in Revolutionary Time", 75.
[79] Ibid.

complement Wu Xiaobang's ballet-based approach. As recalled by Wang Kefen 王克芬 (1927-2018), one of the staff members at CAD, Ouyang held a belief of crafting dance through expressive postures, gestures, acrobatics, and other displays of physical virtuosity found in traditional opera, and he advocated the use of the flowing rhythms of opera, contrasting them with the more rigid rhythms of ballet, in training students.[80] With the advent of opera-based dance, Chinese choreographers found themselves liberated from the constraints of selecting between *Yangge*, minority dance, or Western ballet as the options for creating new works. Instead, they now had access to a repertoire of techniques derived from dramatic traditions like Peking opera, which could be incorporated into their choreography for dancers.[81] During that time, both Wu's Western-style dance and Choe's concept of "classical dance" were seen as potential approaches to meet the demands of emerging dance culture in new China. By involving Wu and Choe in CAD, Ouyang demonstrated his recognition of these two forms as new socialist dance pedagogical systems. He aimed to maintain a balance and emphasized the importance of experimenting with various forms within CAD. Furthermore, this decision showcased his efforts to establish a distinct position for CAD through differentiation and competition within the evolving dance landscape, especially when various specialized dance institutions were established in subsequent years.

Arguably, the most profound influence and source of inspiration that Choe and her dance company provided to Ouyang was the concept of forging a new form of Chinese dance by inheriting and integrating traditional performance arts. In 1956, when Ouyang attended a Northern Korean drama performance, he articulated the necessity of studying the practices of Korean cultural workers in their efforts to "preserve heritage and promote tradition".[82] Based on his observations, it seemed a logical progression for the advancement of the Chinese new dance art to delve into historical learning. In that same year, Ouyang established the Dance History Research Group (*wudaoshi yanjiu xiaozu* 舞蹈史研究小组, see fig. 6.3) within the CAD. Its primary goal was to systematically investigate the characteristic and emblematic movements and gestures derived from dance and various other performance arts within Chinese

[80] Wang Kefen 王克芬, "Yi Ouyang Yuqian yu Mei Lanfang tanwu 忆欧阳予倩与梅兰芳谈舞" (Recollecting Ouyang Yuqian and Mei Lanfang Talking About Dance), *Beijing wudao xueyuan xuebao* 北京舞蹈学院学报 (Journal of Beijing Dance Academy) 1 (2014): 1-3.
[81] Wilcox, *Revolutionary Bodies, Chinese Dance, and the Socialist Legacy*, 72.
[82] Ouyang Yuqian, "Changju Shenqing zhuan de yishu chengjiu 唱剧《沈清传》的艺术成就", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.5, 291-293.

history. Aligned with this project, he took the initiative to organize and assume the role of the primary editor for the inaugural post-1949 publication on the history of dance, titled *Tangdai wudao* 唐代舞蹈 (Dance of the Tang Dynasty, see fig. 6.4), in 1958. Beyond delving into the examination of ancient court dances as its principal focus, this work also explored religious performance. In essence, for Ouyang Yuqian, the inception of Chinese "classical dance" signified an innovative means of conveying novel experiences and ideas, all while underscoring the significance of gleaning insights from dance traditions of the past.

Figure 6. 3 Members of the Dance History Research Group in 1956. From left: Lu Jing 陆静, Wang Kefen 王克芬, Ouyang Yuqian 欧阳予倩, Sheng Jie 盛捷, Yin Falun 阴法鲁, in *Pioneers of Chinese Dance Digital Archive* (https://quod.lib.umich.edu/d/dance1ic). Access date: 18 September 2023.

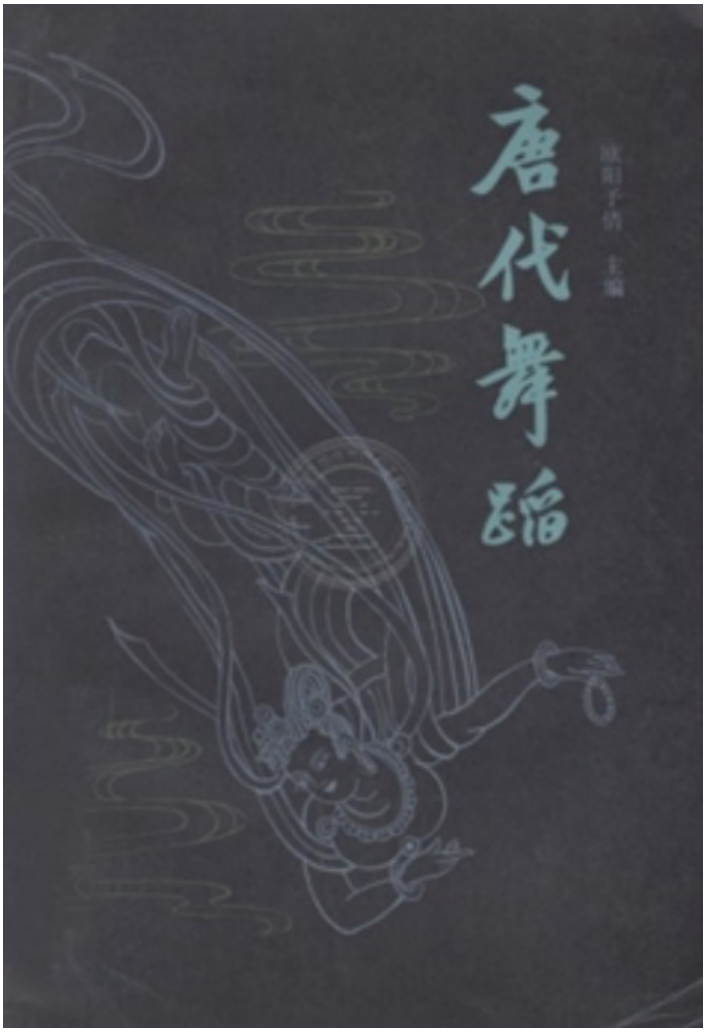

Figure 6. 4 The Cover of *Dance of Tang Dynasty*. The manuscript was completed in 1958 but was not printed until 1980 by Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House.

Yet this project should not be perceived merely as a historical study; rather, it could be considered as a political project that likely shielded Ouyang from purges during the Hundred Flowers Movement and the subsequent Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957. This safeguarding was achieved through Ouyang's commitment to a set of interpretive principles and critical benchmarks grounded in Marxist ideology, which he applied to assess ancient Chinese dance and performance arts. Clifford Edmunds highlights that the radical Marxist approach to history places a significant emphasis on dramatizing the moral conflict arising from class struggle

throughout different time periods.[83] This perspective acknowledges the pivotal role played by the "labouring masses" in propelling historical progress, while critiquing and disregarding the cultural influence of the "feudal" ruling class.[84] In its most extreme form, this approach advocates for the complete eradication of all remnants of feudal ruling-class culture from historical records.[85] Ouyang assumed the role of helping the regime to ideologically reform the people, through endorsing the Hundred Flowers Movement and advocating for a Marxist-based approach to replace a dynasty-centred dance history of China. In March 1957, he openly expressed his belief that Mao's policy of "Let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools contend" provided an opportunity to explore and rediscover China's rich cultural heritage, emphasizing the importance of embracing this legacy and promoting traditional practices.[86] He attributed the creation of dance traditions to the "labouring people" rather than the ruling class and cultural elite. For instance, in his study of dance history during the Tang Dynasty, he argued that Emperor Xuanzong hindered the development of physically powerful dances like the "sword dance" (*jianqi wu* 剑器舞) due to his personal preference for gentle dance styles.[87]

Assessing the extent of Ouyang's true submission to Party ideology is a challenging task, but it is evident that he chose to cloak himself as obedient during the harsh political campaigns. The question of whether he was a staunch loyalist of the party, and its supreme leader remains difficult to answer, but there are several factors worth considering. Despite adopting a Marxist critical perspective on history that downplays the influence of the court and the elite, his study can be considered as an indication of his personal interest in the "feudal" artistic tastes, which could have potentially subjected him to blame and punishment. He was surely aware of the party's punishment of other dissident intellectuals, such as the persecution

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[83] Clifford Edmunds, "The Politics of Historiography: Jian Bozan's Historism", in Goldman, Cheek, and Hamrin eds., *China's Intellectuals and the State: in Search of a New Relationship* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, 1987), 68.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid., 69.
[86] Ouyang Yuqian, "Tingle Mao zhuxi de baogao de jidian tihui 听了毛主席的报告的几点体会" (A Few Lessons Learned from Listening to Chairman Mao's Report), in *Renmin ribao* 19 March 1957.
[87] Ouyang Yuqian, "Jianqi 剑器" (sword-armor), in *Tangdai wudao* 唐代舞蹈 (Dance of Tang Dynasty) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1980), also see *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.5, 253. [The original text: 唐玄宗自以为有中兴之功, 纵情声色, 居安而不思危。他所爱的舞蹈多半是软舞。原来是健舞的, 他也把它改成软舞].

of Hu Feng. In 1955, Ouyang participated in the condemnation of Hu and criticized his "discrepancy" between his professed literary principles and actual implementation.[88]

As elucidated in the preceding chapters, it is imperative to acknowledge that Ouyang Yuqian has committed himself to a cultural vision that promotes advancement in the domains of both "tradition" and "modernity" over the course of his lifetime. Even amid a series of restrictive policies implemented after 1949, his concurrent engagement with "classical dance" and "ballet dance" during his tenure at CAD does not seem to contradict this overarching aspiration. His submission to the party leadership was not necessarily indicative of his willingness to abandon his professional values. It is likely that he strategically retreated on the professional front to secure his political position and pursue career advancement within the system. As Ning Wang suggested, the regime's power of remoulding an individual's ideology may not be so effective and omnipotent, and intellectuals are not just sad victims of state repression and manipulation, despite the many personal tragedies that happened in the CCP's punitive campaigns.[89] A case in point is Ouyang, who strategically employed compliance to navigate an oppressive political climate and fortify his resilience. The efficacy of this strategy is evident through his election as the Vice-President of the Chinese Federation of Literature and Culture, his appointment as President of the Chinese Dancers' Association, and the honour of being received by the paramount leader, Mao Zedong, in 1960 (see fig. 6.5).[90]

Regarding Ouyang's relatively fortunate avoidance of severe purges and punishments in the volatile ideological climate of the late 1950s (though he was reportedly asked to read large-print posters about himself), his grandson, Ouyang Wei 欧阳维 (1958-, the second child of Ouyang's daughter Ouyang Jingru and Tian Han's son Tian Shen), offers an explanation based on his personal observations:

> My maternal grandfather and paternal grandfather led different lives on the surface. My maternal grandfather hailed from a prestigious family in Liuyang, while my paternal grandfather was the son of a farmer from an orchard in Changsha. Maternal

[88] Ouyang Yuqian, "Yingdang chedi qingsuan Hu Feng de fandang xingwei 应当彻底清算胡风的反党行为" (Hu Feng's anti-Party behaviour should be thoroughly liquidated), in *Renmin ribao* 18 May 1955.
[89] Ning Wang, "Bowing to Chairman Mao: Western-Trained Intellectuals and the State in the Early PRC", *The Journal of Contemporary China* 27, no. 110 (2018): 312.
[90] Jing, *The Chronology of Ouyang Yuqian,* 296-297.

> grandfather was known for his gentle demeanour, and paternal grandpa possessed a passionate spirit. Maternal grandfather wrote both serious dramas and comedies, and his life followed the path he envisioned, thankfully avoiding major hardships. My paternal grandpa delved into tragic tales and love conflicts, with fervor and sincerity. However, his life experienced its share of ups and downs, and he suffered brutal persecution in his later years, leading to a miserable end.[91]

If Ouyang Wei's observations are correct, we can speculate that Ouyang's mild temperament can account for his compliance with the Party and diminished the suspicion from the ruling authorities. He could be considered as a mixture of an astute opportunist and accommodationist, which allowed him to secure a relatively safe position prior to the frenzy of the harsher political campaigns in the 1960s.

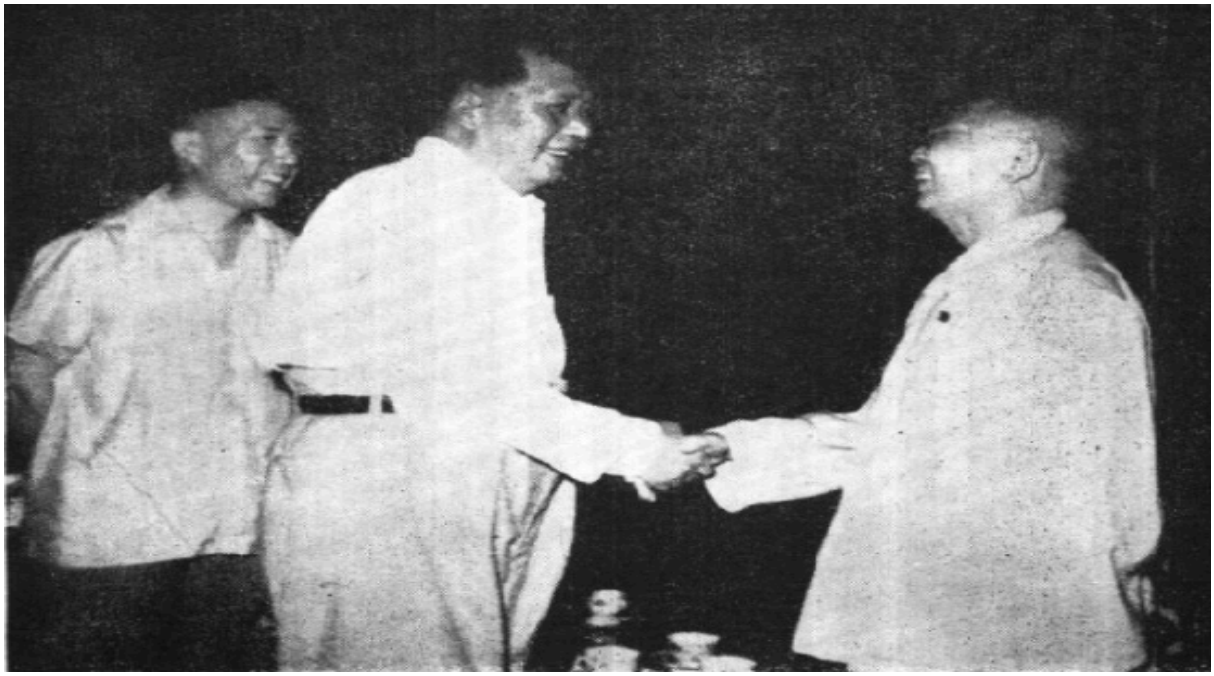

Figure 6. 5 Chairman Mao Zedong met and shook hands with Ouyang Yuqian during the Third Congress of Literary and Artistic Workers in 1960, *Dance of Tang Dynasty* (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1980), 9.

[91] Ouyang Wei, "Wode waigong Ouyang Yuqian he yeye Tian Han 我的外公欧阳予倩和爷爷田汉" (My Maternal Grandfather Ouyang Yuqian and paternal Grandfather Tian Han), in *Beijing ribao* 北京日报 (Beijing Daily) 6 March 2020. [The original text: 表面上看, 外公和爷爷的人生很不同: 外公出生于浏阳望族, 爷爷是长沙县果园的农家子弟; 外公温和, 爷爷热烈; 外公写正剧, 也写喜剧, 一生按他的想法走下来了, 幸好没有受到大的折磨; 爷爷爱写悲剧和爱情冲突, 一腔赤诚, 但他的人生起伏跌宕, 晚年受到残酷迫害, 最终以悲剧告终].

6.5 To Do Things "Right" with Words

As evident from the previous analysis, Ouyang's alignment with the Communist Party was predominantly manifested through ritualized discursive practices. Notably, one of his most successful endeavours was the adaptation of a five-act spoken drama, in which he had performed during his studies in Japan, into a new version staged on the socialist platform in 1961. This production, titled *Heinu hen* 黑奴恨 (Hatred of a Black Slave, *Hatred* hereafter), earned accolades, with Tian Han praising that it "deals with the historical story of more than a hundred years ago at the new height of socialism".[92] *Hatred,* as Ouyang's sole drama written after 1949 and his final work before his passing due to heart disease in 1962, serves as a representative example of his evolution from a newcomer of the socialist cultural scene into a mature "cultural worker" for the Party, producing art that aligned with the state's vision. Through doing things with the "right" words, he navigated complex interactions with Communist political authorities, earning political favour, ensuring employment and security, and possibly maintaining a certain level of artistic autonomy.

During his time of study in Tokyo, Ouyang and some of his friends of the Spring Willow Society presented their adapted play *Heinu yutian lu* 黑奴吁天录 (Black Slave's Cry to Heaven), which is considered a precursor to Chinese modern spoken drama. The play was based on Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of 1852 and its Chinese translation by Lin Shu and Wei Yi in 1901. In their performance, they condensed the original 44 chapters into a five-act drama that focused on the experiences of two enslaved black men, Tom, and George, as they reacted to being sold by their white owners. While no scripts from the 1907 production have been preserved, an informative poster preserved at Waseda University in Japan provides valuable information for today's readers to understand this play. The synopsis printed on the poster reveal how the members of the Spring Willow Society envisioned the original tale with a more revolutionary twist. In the 1907 adaptation, the character of Tom, who symbolized Christian endurance in the original novel, was diminished, and the focus shifted to the rebellious George Harris and his triumphant struggle against injustice and racism.[93] Additionally, the fate of Tom, which was originally a sacrificial one, was altered so that he

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[92] Tian Han, "Tan Heinu hei 谈黑奴恨" (Talking about *Hatred of a Black Slave*), in *Renmin ribao* 12 July 1961.
[93] Siyuan Liu, *Performing Hybridity in Colonial-Modern China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 47.

stood alongside George as another brave protester.[94] This adaptation was partially inspired by Lin Shu's translation, which recontextualized American slavery as the plight of Chinese laborers in the United States during the height of "Yellow Peril" discrimination.[95] However, the main driving force behind this adaptation was the deep national anxieties felt by the Chinese intelligentsia, who feared the encroachment of "White Supremacy" and colonialism as the twentieth century approached. In order to emphasize the contrast between Orientals and Westerners, which replaced the black-white antagonism in the original book, Ouyang and his colleagues, even enlisted their Japanese and Indian classmates to portray enslaved individuals on stage, incorporating improvised songs and dances into the performance.[96] In comparison to the original novel and translation, the 1907 production intentionally omitted certain narratives in order to prioritize the portrayal of a radical uprising by the oppressed Asian race. This selective approach served to emphasize the themes of resistance and revolution.

Half a century after his role as "Little Harry", the son of George, in 1907, Ouyang penned his own version in 1959. His play, which premiered in 1961 at the National Experimental Theatre, expanded into nine acts. The play also served as a response to the principles of Afro-Asian solidarity and Zhou Enlai's 1955 speech at the Bandung Conference, which emphasized racial equality and mutual respect. Furthermore, it was considered a form of state-sponsored propaganda, highlighting China's leading role in the liberation of oppressed nations. However, adapting an American story for the socialist stage posed several political challenges that needed to be addressed. Since Mao once claimed that the artistic value of "foreign stories" to be on par with Chinese folktales that portrayed "feudal" themes of kings, generals, scholars, and beauties, which were deemed inappropriate for staging without careful modification.[97] Given this viewpoint, it was expected that the 1907 production would face problems in gaining approval from the cultural authorities, since it appeared to be disconnected from socialist life. Consequently, the main challenge for Ouyang was to transform the characters from the "problematic" story into the ideological spokesmen and align the play with contemporary issues.

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[94] Ibid, 47-48.
[95] Huang Aihua 黄爱华, *Zhongguo zaoqi huaju zai riben* 中国早期话剧在日本 (Early Chinese Spoken Drama in Japan) (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2001), 56
[96] Ibid.
[97] Zhang Lianhong 张炼红, *Lilian jinghun: xin zhongguo xiqu gaizao kaolun* 历炼精魂: 新中国戏曲改造考论 (Refining the Soul: A Research on the Reform of Chinese Opera in New China) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2013), 8.

The most significant alteration in the 1961 production compared to the 1907 version was the transformation of Tom's character. In the new version, Tom shifted from an active resistor to a victim of "old society". Through his impassioned speeches filled with socialist rhetoric, the revised portrayal of Tom diminished his act of resistance, instead portraying him as trapped in a predicament and longing for justice or, more precisely, a promising deliverance orchestrated by the party. When Cassy, a slave girl from Tom's village, despairs over their impending doom, Tom reassures her, saying, "Those who have committed wrongful acts will face their punishment, and their debts will be repaid. If we cannot settle the score with them today, we will do so in the future."[98] In the final act, as Tom faced imminent execution by the slaveholder Simpson Legree, he once again warned of "settling scores". During the revolutionary period, the slogan "settling accounts" (*suan zongzhang* 算总账) along with its paired phrase "speaking bitterness" (*tu kushui* 吐苦水) served as a socialist rallying cry of the party. Its purpose was to amplify the grievances of the general population and empower the party to identify and target its opponents. These political slogans prompted the lower classes to recount their experiences of suffering under the "old China" and assign blame for their miseries to specific groups identified and isolated by the party, such as landlords, capitalists, and counterrevolutionaries. As noted by Julia Strauss, the political campaigns of the CCP in the 1950s declared its "paternalistic care" for those deemed part of revolutionary society and unleashed terror upon those considered outside the boundaries of revolutionary society, utilizing coercive power to enforce both approaches.[99]

In Ouyang's new version, Tom was reimagined as a suffering peasant, a kind of person the party sought to unite, while the slaveholder Legree symbolized the exploiting class who should be suppressed and avenged according to the socialist economic structures. Onstage, the suffering Tom solemnly accused the abuser Legree, mirroring the actions of a socialist citizen in their offstage performance driven by the party's promotion of class hatred. To some extent, toning down Tom's inclination to resist in the 1961 version can also be seen as a measure to avoid misinterpreting Tom as a "counter-revolutionary" and any ambiguity regarding the

[98] Ouyang Yuqian, "Heinu hen 黑奴恨" (Hatred of a Black Slave), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.5, 463-544.
[99] Julia C. Strauss, "Paternalist Terror: The Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries and Regime Consolidation in the People's Republic of China, 1950-1953", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 1 (2002): 81.

position of "suffering peasants" within the social structure. He is not permitted to "cry to the heavens" and directly engage in violent demonstrations, as only the party empathizes with his "hatred" and is able to rescue him.

In dealing with the character George, who is defiant in the original, Ouyang explained his resistance as "revolutionary-minded" and being a "courageous man of action".[100] While Ouyang allowed George to engage in violent protest, it was on the condition that he embraced a more class-conscious attitude. When George resists his oppression, he boldly declares, "I do not believe that class cannot be changed",[101] ultimately achieving a triumphant victory in his struggle against the slaveholder. Ouyang's intention with this portrayal of George was for the audience to identify him based on his social class rather than racial identity, transforming him from a discriminated person of color to a representative of the underclass in need of sympathy within a socialist society. After George kills his master, he exclaims, "There will come a day for the oppressed to rise".[102] The phrase "rise" (*fanshen* 翻身), as an ideological rhetoric of class struggle, was prevalent in the CCP's land reform dramas (*tugaixi* 土改戏).[103] The term "*fanshen*" used here referred to the transfer of property and power to the lower classes, and it also served to legitimize the CCP's use of violence to overthrow the ruling party. During the Chinese land reform movements in the early 1950s, this term was employed to incite the peasants to compare and transform their precarious situation with the promised life they would experience under the rule of the Communist Party. As a justification for violence, it carried the implicit notions of "liberation" or "emancipation" within the socialist context, implying the desired life the CCP envisioned for its citizens. This vision is depicted in the 1961 play as a satisfactory outcome for George after his struggle. By appropriating this socialist rhetoric, or more accurately, behavioral patterns, Ouyang revived a common formula used in land reform dramas, in which Tom and George, representing peasants living in hardship, narrate their sufferings at the hands of landlords, accuse them, and exact revenge to achieve their "rise" under the support of the CCP.

This emphasis on "rise" also suggests that the 1961 version is equally concerned with domestic class struggles as it is with the legitimacy of China's international political campaigns.

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[100] Ouyang Yuqian, "Heinu hen", in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.5, 545.
[101] Ibid., 502.
[102] Ibid., 519.
[103] DeMare, *Mao's Cultural Army*, 117.

When George celebrates a day of "rise", the script actively engages with the discourse of Afro-Asian solidarity prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s, which justified the use of violence by nations in their fight against racial oppression and bias. Due to its politically conscious perspective, the 1961 version of the play has been and continues to be regarded as significant. Drawing from Bourdieu's framework of language and symbolic power, the use of political and ideological jargon can be seen as a product of the Communist linguistic market.[104] By incorporating Maoist rhetoric into the narrative, Ouyang achieved the practical competence necessary to navigate this "marketplace". While he may have been aware of the hollowness of these words, he also recognized the potential rewards that could come from aligning with the articulatory style of the Party-state.

Conclusion

The establishment of the PRC needed praise and affirmations.[105] Lending support, adulatory or heartfelt, to the new regime provided individuals not only with a way of acquiring recognition, but also a way for them to engage in a metamorphosis of cultural entrepreneurship. As pointed out by scholarship, where private profit was restricted or non-existent, a constrained form of entrepreneurship could manifest itself through alternative means of gain.[106] When cultural entrepreneurs from the Republican era entered Maoist China, they lost the profit-oriented vocationalism they had previously pursued, as the state intervened in cultural production. However, they did not cease their efforts to establish themselves as legitimate cultural workers, albeit through official channels and bureaucratic methods. In other words, when the Party bureaucracy assumed the role as the sole external arbiter of Chinese art, the ability to be collectivized into the bureaucracy based on one's talents, to receive financial security or patronage from the state, and to strategically adapt to oppressive cultural policies became the new cultural entrepreneurship of the period.

It is possible to interpret Ouyang's metamorphosized cultural entrepreneurship in the early PRC as endeavours to obtain acceptance and tolerance from officialdom. On the eve of the establishment of the PRC, Ouyang proactively engaged with the CCP's co-optation policy by seeking access to leaders and high-level assemblies. As Wang points out, while the CCP's

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[104] Pierre Bourdieu, John B. Thompson ed., *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity in association with Basil Blackwell, 1991), 37-90.
[105] Chen, "Socialist Literature Driven by Radical Modernity, 1950-1980", 91.
[106] Rea and Volland, *The Business of Culture*, 261.

propaganda prowess and claimed privileges spurred people's affiliation to the regime, individuals' reason, deliberation, and calculation also played a role in this process.[107] These very qualities were precisely the important aspects for Ouyang to navigate his journey in socialist China. After entering the PRC, he quickly adapted to the cultural polices (friendly or forcible) and cloaked himself in obedience for self-protection and rewards. Through examining his experience, we see how he shrewdly carved out a professional space by virtue of political correctness or taking advantage of political winds. Perhaps out of pressures on the new regime's heavy-handed censorship of mass medial culture, such as drama, he devoted more energy to the dance field, where the specialists and established institutions appeared relatively late in socialist China. Personal fame and extensive networks established in the days of Republic China, such as his relationship with famous dancers Wu Xiaobang and Dai Ailian, proved useful and valuable in this process. Despite lacking prior direct dancing expertise, Ouyang was chosen as one of the leading figures in the reinvention of Chinese new dance, which must be viewed as a successful self-promotion.

Nevertheless, despite Ouyang's professed allegiance to the government and his astuteness, he could not fully protect himself from being attacked as the CCP's agenda of cultural reform fluctuated with the shifting political climate and international conditions. The two styles of dance Ouyang involved himself in, Western ballet and classical dance, failed to prove themselves as perfect forms for expressing the socialist new culture throughout all of the 1950s and early 1960s. Therefore, Ouyang's career after 1949 can also be seen as an effort to defend the limited autonomy granted to cultural production. The post-1949 cultural landscape cannot be reduced to a simple model where political authorities have heavy hands and cultural workers ostensibly comply. Qiliang He offers an interesting analogy, likening the interaction between cultural workers and political authorities to a ping-pong game. This dynamic is not a one-sided domination by the Party-state; rather, cultural workers have the agency to score points.[108] They have secured their livelihoods, expanded their influence, and protected their reputations, either through their talents, their accumulation of interpersonal network, and alertness of navigating political tumult. In Maoist China, how can this not be considered a practice and great reward for cultural entrepreneurship? Ouyang may also not have failed in

[107] Wang, "Bowing to Chairman Mao: Western-Trained Intellectuals and the State in the Early PRC", 314.
[108] Qiliang He, *Gilded Voices: Economics, Politics, and Storytelling in the Yangzi Delta since 1949* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 6.

this ping-pong match, as he remained vigilant about the shifting political directives and at times needed to veil his support for his preferred art forms, which protected him from even greater shocks before his death in 1962. But it was a game in which he participated with great difficulty, for it was full of expedient tactics, moral dilemmas, and hollow rhetoric that often contradicted its true intentions.

Conclusion

My motivation to embark on this study of Ouyang Yuqian was stirred by the various intriguing definitions employed to portray him, emanating from both official historical accounts and Ouyang's own self-representation. Given his monumental stature in Chinese cultural and literary history, I was intrigued by the ambiguity, ambivalence, and contrariness of his image within these portrayals. Who was the real Ouyang Yuqian and what is his legacy? The official historical narrative of modern Chinese drama often hails Ouyang Yuqian as one of the most influential and "progressive' luminaries in both the "new" and "old" realms.[1] However, the Communist historians' interpretation of the term "new" is often constrained by a narrative that adheres to a teleological perspective and relies on neat binary divisions, such as those between the elite and the popular, or between China and the West. If that is the case, how did Ouyang navigate the realms of the "new" without overtly opposing the facets of the "old"? What underpinned his reputation as a "progressive" figure, despite his deep understanding of elements often deemed archaic, particularly "tradition", which is often interpreted as "feudalism" in Marxist terms? Put more directly, how did he successfully navigate these seemingly conflicting territories and earn recognition?

Ouyang's life spanned three pivotal periods of China; he was born in 1889 at the end of the Qing Dynasty, lived through the Republic of China from 1912 to 1949 and danced with the People's Republic of China in the final stage of his life until his death in 1962. He traversed the entirety of his existence within an epoch characterized by tumultuous political upheavals, witnessing the hasty transition from imperial to Republican rule, the ordeal of foreign invasion, and observing the intense struggle of the Communists competing for supremacy. Ouyang was influenced, often by the necessity to survive and make a living, during these turbulent times. In his memoirs written in the 1950s, he retroactively traced the genesis of his political awareness to the late 1910s, placing particular emphasis on the transformative impact of the

[1] For example, Chen Baichen 陈白尘 and Dong Jian 董健 eds., *Zhongguo xiandai xiju shigao* 中国现代戏剧史稿 (History of Chinese Modern Drama) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1989), 13; Qian Liqun 钱理群 and Wun Rumin 温儒敏 eds., *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue sanshi nian* 中国现代文学三十年 (Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Literature) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998), 126-132.

May Fourth Movement on his life.[2] However, it is hard to deny that his initial foray into the public sphere commenced through his engagement with a student drama troupe and the introduction of civilized play during the late Qing period, both of which were recognized for their political activism and desire to relate art to reality. Like many of his contemporaries, he found himself entangled in the vortex of two overarching forces called the "new" and the "old", which exerted a profound influence on his cultural production and activities in the public realm. The "old" and "new" facets of Ouyang's life encompass the Confucian education bestowed upon him by his traditional scholar-gentry family, and the novel things he encountered during his studies abroad. The entanglement of "new" and "old" also underpins Ouyang's persistent commitment to infusing modern concepts into traditional cultural forms that may have appeared "obsolete" at that time. It extends to his cross-boundary engagements with self-claimed "new" literary groups and those labelled as "old". It also accounts for his utilization of emerging media, such as cinema, to engage an audience whose preferences harked back to the past. Moreover, it explains his foray into new ventures with the support of old friends and his adjustment to the requirements of the new socialist regime by revising his previous works created under different circumstances. Arguably, Ouyang's case defies a simplistic interpretation of the "new" as being entirely alienated from the "old". His intricate engagement with both provided him with the capacity to navigate complex cultural landscapes, becoming a lifelong practice.

As an analogous instance of cultural entrepreneurship examined by other scholars, his story resonates a mode of cultural production prevalent during the Republican era. This production is defined by a dynamic textual and visual landscape marked by a fervent quest for expansion. It is further characterized by the consistent and concurrent emergence of diverse cultural artifacts within this sphere.[3] Additionally, there exists a frequent interplay and cross-referencing among these cultural products, transcending the boundaries delineating various texts, genres, and media.[4] Beyond that, Ouyang introduces novel dimensions to Christopher

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[2] Ouyang Yuqian, "Ziwo yanxi yilai 自我演戏以来" (Since I have been Performing Opera), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, vol.6, 145. In this account, Ouyang claimed that due to his early dedication to "*weimei zhuyi* 唯美主义" (aestheticism), he seldom touched upon the contents about "*shehui jiaoyu* 社会教育" (social education) in his works. He held the belief that art and propaganda should be in opposition to each other in his earlier career, a perspective that he later revised after exposure to left-wing artistic discourse after the May Fourth Movement.
[3] Alexander Des Forges, *Mediasphere Shanghai: The Aesthetics of Cultural Production* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 16.
[4] Ibid.

Rea's notion of "cultural personalities", which is one of three models of cultural entrepreneurship in Rea's framework.[5] Here, the cultivation of fame among cultural figures extends beyond mere talent to encompass the ability to captivate and sustain audience intrigue. As detailed in Chapters Three and Four, Ouyang's prominence in literature and cinema relied significantly on the curiosity of readers and viewers regarding his aptitude as a dramatist to deliver compelling fiction or produce exceptional films. In essence, the audience judges his personal brand not solely based on his competence. Another factor contributing to Ouyang's maintenance of his popularity is the occasional imposition of public opinion upon him. For instance, the media or his social circle may cast doubt on his involvement in political manoeuvring or question whether his focus on commercial ventures is excessive. These situations often place Ouyang in a precarious position, potentially conflicting with the prevailing narrative and risking damage to his reputation or professional stature. Faced with such challenges, it becomes clear that the cultivation of "capital" by cultural personalities like Ouyang is fraught with risks. It demands his willingness to navigate through uncertain terrain and make calculated decisions that may deviate from conventional expectations. Essentially, maintaining visibility and influence in the cultural sphere entails a willingness to take risks. In navigating these challenges, individuals like Ouyang must exhibit flexibility and determination to weather storms while continually seeking opportunities and responding appropriately to circumstances. Through this approach, they can sustain their position in an ever-changing environment and lay a solid foundation for their achievements and influence.

In the sense of border-crossing, this research reveals that Ouyang crossed the occupational spheres, engaging in diverse roles such as an opera singer, educator, editor, filmmaker, government official, choreographer, and so on. These facets of his professional life were interconnected, mutually promoting, and reinforcing each other throughout his career. Despite the prevailing tendency in official historiography to disproportionately emphasize Ouyang's achievements in drama, a closer examination reveals that his customary approach to cultural production involved the exchange of experiences and influences across different domains. In this sense, Ouyang's cultural practice also crossed the boundaries of the medium. For instance, Ouyang astutely recognized the appeal of sentimental romance among audiences, a realization drawn from his experiences on the stage of the civilized play. Drawing on this

[5] Christopher G. Rea and Nicolai Volland eds., *The Business of Culture: Cultural Entrepreneurs in China and Southeast Asia, 1900-65* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 18.

insight, he incorporated a similar narrative arc into his inaugural screenplay. Upon the film's release, with Ouyang in a lead role, a multitude of attendees flocked to the cinema, driven by their enthusiasm for Ouyang and his story now on the silver screen. Exploiting his position as an editor for popular periodicals, he utilized the press as a site of publicity by publishing his stage photos in these publications. The wellspring of inspiration for his vernacular fiction can be traced to a diverse tapestry of stories found in traditional Peking Opera. He gained renown for his innovative portrayals of stereotypical female characters from traditional novels within the context of modern spoken drama. Furthermore, the study also highlights that Ouyang's activities crossed the geographical confines. Not only did he travel to significant cities across China, but he also wielded influence in regions such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. In essence, Ouyang's career can be aptly described as a journey marked by continuous "border-crossing". More importantly, Ouyang's case holds significant implications for our understanding of the phenomenon of borders in modern China. Through an examination of Ouyang's engagements across diverse professional domains, I identified instances where Ouyang transcended conventional boundaries and limitations rather than merely crossing them. His trajectory illustrates that certain borders, like those demarcating the May Fourth literary intellectuals from the Butterfly School, or distinguishing between leftist and rightist factions, were frequently exaggerated and overemphasized. It is the fluidity, ambiguity, and elusiveness of these delineations that allowed individuals like Ouyang to shape their responses and actions. Such activities may have been driven by entrepreneurial spirit, social pressures, economic needs, or a combination thereof. Ouyang's multifaceted career demonstrates how individuals in dynamic cultural landscapes could navigate both within and beyond perceived boundaries, shaping their paths and leaving enduring legacies.

Furthermore, upon examining Ouyang's diverse cultural productions, I find that his frequent questioning of the "new ideas" promoted by the New Culture Movement and his nostalgia for certain traditional values became a recurring theme throughout his work. He challenged prevailing ideologies such as developmentalism, progress, and rationalism in his operatic adaptations, modern spoken dramas, vernacular fiction, and films. For example, as I have discussed, his 1916 operatic adaptation of the story "Mantou an", from *Dream of the Red Chamber*, imbued the timid nun Zhineng with attributes of a "modern woman" championed by May Fourth intellectuals. Rather than enduring injustice in silence, under Ouyang's pen, Zhineng takes a bold stand for women's empowerment. Nevertheless, Ouyang retains her tragic fate in the narrative, and she ultimately succumbs to moral judgment. This adaptation

demonstrates Ouyang's intricate engagement with traditional values and modern ideals simultaneously as he grappled with the transformation of Chinese society. This contemplation is further manifested in his 1928 spoken drama *Pan Jinlian*. Often considered Ouyang's most profound work embodying the May Fourth spirit, this play shares a common theme with "Mantou an", raising questions about the potential of infusing feminism and concepts of women's liberation to rescue characters from otherwise tragic destinies. However, *Pan Jinlian* garnered greater acclaim, attributed in part to its adoption of a Western-style artistic form and its performance for students in classrooms. Moreover, Ouyang's critique of May Fourth thinking, particularly regarding the self-serving and utilitarian nature, is discernible in his short story "The Withered Tree" (1919). In this story, the protagonist is submissive to stifling customs of his Confucian family, and therefore it challenges the notion that new knowledge can easily transform Chinese society. In his 1926 film *After Three Years*, Ouyang expressed his empathy for women who, despite embodying Confucian virtues, find themselves repressed by men presumably equipped with "new ideas" regarding marriage and family relations.

Nonetheless, my study does not aim to dismiss Ouyang from the ranks of intellectuals who desired to enlighten the masses during that period. As illustrated above, he certainly engaged with May Fourth ideology through a variety of cultural endeavours, aligning himself with the pressing socio-political agendas of the time. My intention is to illustrate that his deviation is as important as his engagement with May Fourth intellectual agenda. Individuals like Ouyang elude categorization within the modern Chinese cultural landscape; oversimplification risks obscuring their inherent complexity. I interpret Ouyang's practice as an expression of his own bewilderment and ambivalence toward new and old. His stance is one that neither fully embraces nor categorically rejects Western influence. This positioning underscores the peculiarity of his contributions to the May Fourth Movement, carving out a nuanced approach to societal reform. I contend that the concept of a "cultural entrepreneur" aptly encapsulates Ouyang's persona, deftly navigating the realms of profound national commitment and ambitious career pursuits. An admirable testament to Ouyang lies in his ability to remain relevant and unscathed during what were chaotic times, especially in the aftermath of 1949. He charmed capitalists during their ascendancy and enticed Communists upon their assumption of power. He might be described as a cultural or even political chameleon, able to change his colours to suit the needs of those in power. That skill alone is testament to Ouyang's ability to pursue his love of drama despite the political challenges faced

by him and his theatrical peers. Very few of his contemporaries were able to sustain prominence and navigate such turbulent times as successfully as Ouyang.

Revisiting the inquiry posed in the introduction, how shall we redefine Ouyang Yuqian outside of the official narrative of modern Chinese drama? My research has shown that he was a talented man who entered the dazzling labyrinth of Republican-era cultural production, driven by both a sense of national duty and personal interest. He undoubtedly bore the influence of May Fourth intellectual trends, while also exhibiting a keen interest in the burgeoning commercial media and popular facets of urban entertainment culture during his era. Rather than fixating solely on distinguishing between "new" and "old" cultures, his primary concern lay in strategically investing his talents and energies across various cultural domains to transform them into both material and symbolic capital. His career can be interpreted as a response to the emerging opportunities for entrepreneurship facilitated by technological advancements and societal changes during the period. In this adventure, diverse encounters brought him into contact with individuals from various backgrounds, some of whom later played pivotal roles in expanding his reputation and influence. These relationships sometimes transcended ideology and partisan stances. While he committed to shouldering the responsibility of enlightening the masses, it is essential to acknowledge his human side in coping with the challenges during a period of political, economic, and social turbulence. By viewing Ouyang's activities as entrepreneurial cultural practices that transcend specific categories, we can gain new insights into the broader landscape of cultural production and the history of drama in modern China.

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