

DIEGETIC MUSIC AND IDENTITY  
IN HOU HSIAO-HSIEN'S *A CITY OF SADNESS* (1989)

by

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## ABSTRACT

My thesis examines the functions of five diegetic songs, “Along the Songhua River,” “Red Dragonfly,” “Lorelei,” “Wagon Song,” and “Spring Flower,” in Hou Hsiao-hsien’s film, *A City of Sadness* (1989). This cinematic work illustrates the political, cultural and historical development in Taiwan after a fifty-year period of Japanese colonization. My analysis of five songs in chapters two to six addresses three perspectives: the significance of narrative, the allegory hinted at by the counterpoint of music and images, and the role of female protagonists in each scene. By discussing the political-cultural background in the society during late twentieth-century Taiwan, as well as comparing the differences amongst the five scenes in which the songs occur, I emphasize on not only the role of music and sound, but also the relation amongst music, protagonists’ characteristics, gender roles, and the issue of identity.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: FILM SOUND, MUSIC AND HISTORY

The Taiwanese film *A City of Sadness* was released in 1989 and directed by Hou Hsiao-hsien. The musical dimension, including diegetic and non-diegetic music, is essential in this film. Five diegetic songs, “Along the Songhua River,” “Red Dragonfly,” “Lorelei,” “Wagon Song,” and “Spring Flower,” pre-exist the film and convey their specific meanings in the film by combining their musical background and lyrical stories with the cinematic context.

In addition to the five pre-existing songs, there are important moments of both diegetic and non-diegetic music. Following the scene of “Spring flower,” another diegetic song, “A Destiny of Sadness,” is heard. This was composed specifically for *A City of Sadness* as the theme song. The song is sung by the song’s composer and producer Tsai Hen-nan, who acts as an erhu player in the film. Meanwhile, Tsai Chiu-feng (Kerris) not only acts as the singer of the last diegetic song, “Spring Flower,” accompanied by Tsai Hen-nan, but also released her album, “A Destiny of Sadness,” in 1989. This includes both “Spring Flower” and “A Destiny of Sadness.”<sup>1</sup> In addition, the original instrumental soundtrack was composed by the Japanese band S.E.N.S., who released the album “A City of Sadness” in 1990.<sup>2</sup> This album consists of seven instrumental tracks (no lyrics was written), titled “Opening Theme,” “Main Theme,” “City of Sadness Variation 1,” “City of Sadness Variation 2 (featuring Erhu),” “Theme of Hinomi, no.1,” “Theme of Wen-ching,” and “Dedicated to Hou Hsiao-hsien.”

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<sup>1</sup> Tsai Chiu-feng, *A Density of Sadness (Bei Qing De Ming-yun)*, Ailia music Ltd., ©1989.

<sup>2</sup> S.E.N.S., *A City of Sadness*, Fun House Inc., FHCF-1054, ©1990.

The film is set in a time of political and social turmoil. Based on *Ereberba* (2-2-8, or the February 28<sup>th</sup> incident) in 1947, the film illustrates the decline of the Lin family following political shifts in society. The February 28<sup>th</sup> Massacre was a harbinger of the White Terror, a period in which martial law was established by the Nationalist government from 1949 until 1987, which not only restricted freedom of speech but also caused widespread confusion of national identity and cultural differences among different ethnic groups in Taiwan. This followed another difficult time, the fifty-year period of Japanese colonization from 1895 to 1945, during which the Taiwanese public had been forced by the colonizer to accept a colonial modernity with respect to order, education, policy, and language. As a result, when the Kuomintang (or KMT, Nationalist Party) took over Taiwan after winning the Second World War, the misunderstanding of different ethnicities and cultures raised issues of identity in the Chinese ethnic group.<sup>3</sup>

Although martial law was officially rescinded in 1987, in 1989 it was still sensitive to directly discuss the political context. Yet *A City of Sadness* did just that: it is not only the first Taiwanese film to win an international award but also the first film to dare to address the political situation openly through a public medium. On the one hand, the film was an important work of the Taiwanese New Wave and enjoyed popularity in the film community and the Chinese-speaking public, which confirmed its international

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<sup>3</sup> During early seventeenth century, Taiwan was colonized by Netherlands and Spain. In 1895, the Qing dynasty ceded Taiwan to Japan through the Treaty of Shimonoseki. After Japan's defeat at the end of the Second World War, the Kuomintang, as the dominant party in China, reclaimed Taiwan. Since then, general classifications have divided Taiwanese into four ethnic groups: Taiwanese aborigines, Hoklo people, Hakka people, and Mainlander. Hoklo and Hakka people mainly immigrated to Taiwan from the Mainland in the eighteenth century. As such, the cultural conflict began in the early eighteenth century when they encountered each other and Indigenous Taiwanese. This was compounded by the immigration of Mainlanders in middle of the twentieth century. Most Mainlanders immigrated along with the army of the KMT, as the KMT gradually lost the dominant position on the Mainland to the Communist Party. The four ethnic groups above have their own dialects, lifestyles and cultures.

and national influence as well as its research value. Also, *A City of Sadness*, as a masterpiece of director Hou Hsiao-hsien, stimulated both the film industry and Taiwanese society. It has been recognized as a representative film, which “activated the beginning of the retrospection and introspection of the Taiwan cinema circle towards Taiwanese history.”<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, its reception in film scholarship has dwelt more on sound aesthetic, visual style, and cinematography than on music. My examination of existing scholarship of *A City of Sadness* has shown the musical dimensions indeed have been essentially ignored, and the purpose of this thesis is to fill in that gap. Some studies address sound: Rosemary Haddon’s “Hou Hsiao Hsien’s City of Sadness: History and the Dialogic Female Voice,”<sup>5</sup> and Liao Hsien-Hao’s “The South as Other: Language, Silence and History in ‘A City of Sadness’ and ‘Chine, ma douleur,’”<sup>6</sup> analyze the gender roles of two main characters, Hinomi and Wen-ching, in part by looking at the role of voice: Hinomi speaks frequently in voiceover, and Wen-ching does not speak at all, having lost his hearing as a child. And through post-colonial theory, Liao further addresses the idea of speaking politics from Luo Rui-zhi’s “Sound Aesthetics of *A City of Sadness*”<sup>7</sup> to claim the significance of various dialects and Wen-ching’s silence in the film.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Wen Tien-hsiang, trans. by Gan Sheuo Hui, “Hou Hsiao-hsien: A Standard for Evaluating Taiwan’s Cinema,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 9 (2008): 224.

<sup>5</sup> Rosemary Haddon, “Hou Hsiao Hsien’s City of Sadness: History and the Dialogic Female Voice,” In *Island on the Edge Taiwan New Cinema and after*, ed. Chris Berry and Lu Feiyi (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 55-65.

<sup>6</sup> Liao Hsien-hao, “The South as Other: Language, Silence and History in ‘A City of Sadness’ and ‘Chine, ma douleur,’” *Chung Wai Literary Quarterly* 22 (1994): 59-73.

<sup>7</sup> Luo Rui-zhi, “Sound Aesthetics of *A City of Sadness*,” *Chung Wai Literary Quarterly* 10 (1992):130-144.

<sup>8</sup> For other Chinese scholarship see, Liao Ping-hui, “The Deaf and Mute Photographer,” in *The Death of Taiwan New Cinema: From “Save Everything For Tomorrow” to “A City of Sadness,”* ed. Mi Zou and Liang Xinhua (Taipei: Tangshan publication, 1991), 129-134; Liao Ping-Hui, “Passing and Re-articulation of Identity: Memory, Trauma, and Cinema,” *Tamkang Review* 29 (1994): 85-114.



Other studies, like Ti Wei's "How Did Hou Hsiao-Hsien Change Taiwan Cinema? A Critical Reassessment,"<sup>9</sup> and Wen Tien-Hsiang's "Hou Hsiao-Hsien: A Standard For Evaluating Taiwan's Cinema,"<sup>10</sup> focus on director Hou's cinematic aesthetic, filming style or "re-writing" of history. For instance, Wen, a film critic, lays out the detailed background of several of Hou's representative films including *City of Sadness* to verify Hou's political, economic, social and aesthetic influences in both Taiwanese society and the film industry. As in Liao's analysis of Wen-ching's silence, Wen also interprets Lin Wen-ching's muteness as reflecting his personal struggle following the changes in society. Yet he focuses on the film's profound influences on political development and its remarkable box-office records, aesthetics and successful business model (bringing the film directly to an international film festival). Thus, he deemphasizes the role of the male character's disability in *City of Sadness*. Nonetheless, through his observations, I will be able to acknowledge Hou's general style and address its interaction with the society at that time, which also helps to explain why *City of Sadness* had a profound impact.

A few scholars have paid attention to both soundscape and plot, like Michael Berry, Su Yen-ying, Chiao Hsiung-ping and Lin Wen-shuang. Berry points to the relationship between Lin Wen-ching's disability and politics: Lin is a photographer, and since he cannot speak to what he has seen, these "images" of politics and history become inaccessible evidence. In Su Yen-ying's doctoral dissertation, *Music and Sound in Post-*

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<sup>9</sup> Ti Wei, "How Did Hou Hsiao-hsien Change Taiwan Cinema? A Critical Reassessment," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 9 (2008): 271-279.

<sup>10</sup> Wen Tien-hsiang, trans. Gan Sheuo Hui, "Hou Hsiao-hsien: A Standard for Evaluating Taiwan's Cinema," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 9 (2008): 211-238.

1989 *Taiwan Cinema*,<sup>11</sup> she devotes one chapter to *City of Sadness* and stresses how Wen-ching's muteness and deafness translate to the concept of the void or *liubai*, meaning emptiness, or blankness. Su's theoretical framework is also underpinned by Michel Chion's notion of anempathetic music, in which sound deliberately "ignores" the image, which is opposed to Eisenstein's notion of counterpoint. On the one hand, her recognition of the function and importance of one song, "Lorelei," prompts me to further discuss the five diegetic songs played in the film. On the other, by I argue that the music is contrapuntal, as defined by Eisenstein, rather than anempathetic, so my analysis will emphasize how the image and music work together to develop the diegesis. Chiao Hsiung-ping,<sup>12</sup> one of the most famous film critics in Taiwan, commends how the sound usage, musical selection and visual communication work effectively in the film.

In Lin's Masters dissertation, *Heterogenous Culture and Memory: Songs in Taiwanese Films During Post-Martial Law Period*,<sup>13</sup> she devotes the second chapter to interpreting "how the discussion of Japanese memory gradually changed in Taiwan."<sup>14</sup> According to her analysis of songs and filmic observation in three films, *Strawman* (Wang Tung, 1987), *A City of Sadness*, and *A Borrowed Life* (Wu Nien-jen, 1994), she emphasizes the five songs of *A City of Sadness* in the section on "The Opening Up of Cultural Difference." In this section, she further analyzes the role of "Red Dragonfly" and "Wagon Song" as "controversial images of Japan," and writes that "Along the Songhua River," "Lorelei," and "Spring Flower" reflect "[t]he possibility of returning to

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<sup>11</sup> Su Yen-ying, "Music and Sound in Post-1989 Taiwan Cinema," (PhD. diss., Royal Holloway, 2012), 95-110.

<sup>12</sup> Chiao Hsiung-ping, "In Search of Taiwan Identity: The Regional Consciousness of New Taiwan Cinema and Hou Hsiao Hsien's *A City of Sadness*," *Journal of Beijing Film Academy* 2 (1990): 13-27.

<sup>13</sup> Lin Wen-shuang, "Heterogenous Culture and Memory: Songs in Taiwanese Films During Post-Martial Law Period," (MA Thesis, National Tsing Hua University, 2008), 38-54.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

the homeland.”<sup>15</sup> In the conclusion, she insists that five songs in *A City of Sadness* indicate Taiwanese’s nostalgia for Japan, the birth and death of imagery of the Mainland, and the difficult process of constituting self-identity in Taiwan. Thanks to their brief discussions of music in *A City of Sadness*, all of them inspired my concern about what kind of role the setting of music occupied in director Hou’s film aesthetics.

More specifically, the intellectuals’ dialogue and musical dimension in the scene of “Lorelei” both stressed by Berry and Su, motivate me to analyze this song at length. Lin’s investigation of culture and musical memory encouraged me to further explore the five songs of *A City of Sadness*. While Chiao’s discussion and criticism about the political and social dimensions of music and sound in the film including five songs, help me to verify the vital function of music in Hou’s *A City of Sadness*. Hence, in my thesis, I will further offer my detailed analysis of all five songs, and the scenes and characters they engaged, to address the importance of film music in *A City of Sadness*. My detailed analysis will not only broadly concern about the cultural, social, economic and political dimensions each song ordinarily has, but also query of the communication between spectator-audience and film, which emerges from the interaction between the ordinary background of the song and the image.

Dealing with this analytical complexity, the basic methodology for this research project involves adapting existing film music theory and terminology to the film to examine my hypotheses: music functions as bridge between the film and the audience that enables them to communicate with each other, and the multilayered meaning of film content can be interpreted when the film’s visual content and songs’ background overlap.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 3.

More specifically, I hope to answer the following questions of the film within five chapters: how do songs help construct the diegesis – the characters’ interior and exterior realities? What kinds of allegory are hinted at by putting songs and multiple backgrounds together? Delving further into these questions, my research concerns the political-cultural background during late twentieth-century Taiwan to consider what kind of role music plays in a famous politically- and historically- based film.

In particular, although film is often understood as an “essentially visual”<sup>16</sup> medium, it needs not only to be seen by spectators but also heard by auditors. It is absolutely impossible to neglect the participation of film music, a platform and tool that contributes to both the internal and external logic of music and film itself<sup>17</sup> as “image, speech, music, and noise” are essential laws of cinema that film is *composed* of these pre-existing forms of expression.<sup>18</sup> In addition, by applying the terminology of the non-diegetic and diegetic explored by Claudia Gorbman to illustrate the relationship between sound, including music, and the scene of the film, scholars are able to become both spectators and auditors to “hear the meaning of film music within a specifically narrative and more precisely narratological context.”<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, based on Eisenstein’s notion of counterpoint, in which music and image might seemingly contradict one another to produce new levels of meaning, the five songs among *A City of Sadness* are not interpreted as being anempathetic or disconnected from the scene; on the contrary, I will

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<sup>16</sup> Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne, and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics* (Routledge: New York, 1992), 59.

<sup>17</sup> Gorbman Claudia, “Narrative Film Music,” *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980): 188.

<sup>18</sup> Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 58.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Long, *Beautiful Monsters: Imagining the Classic in Musical Media* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 19.

demonstrate the connections between music and image, and subsequent implications for national identity.

Each chapter is named for the song it analyzes, and the chapters follow the order in which the songs appear in the film. Each introduces the song's musical, historical and cultural background to reveal the multiple-layered meaning produced in the filmic world. I will focus on the discussion of functional film music based on my interpretation of the five songs, when these sequences show momentous juxtapositions between music and the filmic setting of the scene, such as dialogue, characters' attitude to the song, overall atmosphere, filming method and so on.

The first chapter, "Along the Songhua River," opens the discussion of cultural difference and self-identity. It emphasizes how the same Japanese colonial experience bonds Northeast China to Taiwan through the song and the characters' conversation in the scene. The second chapter, "Red Dragonfly," analyzes the relationship between Japan and Taiwan. By considering the meaning of the lyrics, the background and function of the song, as well as people's relationship in the scene, the chapter discusses the feminine atmosphere created by the song and how the setting of the song expresses Japanese cultural impact in Taiwan under the fifty-year Japanese colonization. The third chapter, "Lorelei," consists of two parts: the melody of "Lorelei," and the singing of Taiwanese Opera. In this chapter, I initially explore how two diverse songs are effective in explaining why Wen-ching became deaf and mute, as well as representing his childhood habit of mimicking the opera singer. In addition, the comparison between "Along the Songhua River" and "Lorelei" at the end of the chapter demonstrates how two similar songs collaborate in expressing a development of identity. The fourth chapter, "Wagon

Song,” explains a musical allegory implied by this imperialist Japanese song, which was also inspired by the real history of Zhong Hao-dong during the 228 Incident. Also, as the only non-diegetic song, “Wagon Song” is compared with “Red Dragonfly” to investigate its different musical role and function in the scene. The comparison of two Japanese songs not only offers a way to observe the colonial influence of Japan, but also contributes a gendered angle (from masculine to feminized) for the audience to understand how song’s meaning works for cinematic construction. The last chapter, “Spring Flower,” further analyzes the different responsibilities the song shoulders when the music switches between non-diegetic and diegetic. Moreover, as with “Wagon Song,” “Spring Flower” has a closer connection with the reality that reflects a common but hard life of a wife in a patriarchal society during that period.

## CHAPTER 2: “ALONG THE SONGHUA RIVER”: THE SONG OF THE EXILES<sup>1</sup>

In the scene containing the first song in *A City of Sadness*, “Along the Songhua River,” most of the male characters join in unison singing outside a restaurant. By considering two jokes about the national flags of Japan and the Republic of China, as well as the historical and political background of the song in Northeast China, the scene shows the shift of Taiwanese identity from a Japanese colonial mentality to allegiance to Mainland China. The conflicts of two different cultures, the modern culture which the colonizer brought, and traditional Chinese culture, feed the new identity of Taiwan.

In this scene, at this point most of the intellectuals in the film support the new leading party Kuomintang/KMT/Nationalist government, because it means they are finally reunited with the homeland rather than being colonized by other countries. Nonetheless, the public are confused by this new political system. Hence, the song’s role within it, allows spectator-audiences to rethink identity after the characters joke about it. As such, I consider the remix of the image, the dialogue and music say that identity in Taiwan is never an oversimplified question. Identity is more than a nonrepresentational concept of who a person is: it is a way for people to recognize their cultural, historical or political background, and what their memory belongs to. Consequently, in this scene, we cannot pose the discussion between Chinese culture and identity in Taiwan without posing the problem of Japanese colonialism at the same time.

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<sup>1</sup> Film timecode 0:18:57 – 0:24:05

During the longest colonial period of Taiwanese history, the people had been subject to colonial ideology through state apparatuses. More specifically, through the four stages of colonialism under Japanese rule,<sup>2</sup> its educational, cultural and political policies not only affirmed the superiority of Japanese culture but also strictly restricted the development of traditional Chinese culture in Taiwan. The escalation of the conflict in the post-war period was avoidably stimulated by such cultural differences between the Mainland and Taiwan, which had experienced different kinds of Japanese invasion or colonization.

Furthermore, when Nationalist government received Taiwan back after the surrender of Imperial Japan, the governing Nationalist government realized that Japanese colonization had profound impact on lifestyle, language usage, and costume,<sup>3</sup> which exceeded their expectations. Despite their own tough war with Imperial Japan, the new government did not understand how miserable the Taiwanese experience had been. In the fifty-year Japanese colonization, people had to follow their rules and law, whether they agreed with them or not. As such, I believe that we need to pose the problem of Chinese culture in Taiwan with posing the problem of colonialism together. All kinds of cultures in Taiwan, especially Chinese culture, were developed under the odd conditions.

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<sup>2</sup> Taiwan “underwent at least four stages of colonialism under Japanese rule: 1) assimilation as the main policy from 1895 to 1919; 2) integration from 1919 to 1930; 3) differential incorporation and coercion from 1930 to 1937; 4) the subjugation (kominkan (皇民化), literally meaning "Japanization" or "imperial subjectification") and mobilization of "imperial subjects" to participate in the "holy" war in Asia from 1937 to 1945.” Liao Ping-Hui, Der-Wei Wang and David, *Taiwan Under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1895-1945: History, Culture, Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 2.

<sup>3</sup> See Liao Ping-Hui, Der-Wei Wang and David, *Taiwan Under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1895-1945: History, Culture, Memory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006; Patrick Heinrich, "Visions of Community: Japanese Language Spread in Japan, Taiwan and Korea," *International Quarterly for Asian Studies* 44 (2013): 239-258; Komagome Takeshi, Mangan J. A., “Japanese Colonial Education in Taiwan 1895-1922: Precepts and Practices of Control,” *History of Education* 26 (1997): 307-322.



In Northeast China, Japanese occupation started when Japan won the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. Before the September 18 Incident in 1931, Peter Duss points out, the presence of a Japanese “informal empire” in Northeast China was “less secure or stable than it was in the colonial empire,”<sup>4</sup> such as Taiwan. Nonetheless, compared with other colonies, which “provided little cause for strategic concern once they came under Japanese control,” the Japanese created “far more potent and complex myths”<sup>5</sup> in Northeast China. When the Japanese proclaimed “a set of obligations, responsibilities, and commitments” just like they generally did in the colonial empire, it “challenged by Chinese nationalism.”<sup>6</sup> Hence, far-reaching consequences in the cultural, economic, and political perspectives were caused by Japanese colonization, but they contributed different circumstances in two areas, Northeast China and Taiwan. In both places, they planted similar roots in culture and language.

The scene that first approaches these issues starts in a traditional Chinese restaurant. It shows a gathering of Mr. He (a journalist in Tang Shan city, Hinoe’s friend, played by Zhang Da-chun), Mr. Lin (a teacher in Taiwan, Hinoe’s senior, played by Jan Hung-tze), Mr. Wu (a teacher in Taiwan, Hinoe’s friend, played by Wu Nien-jen), Mr. Shie (a teacher in Taiwan, Hinoe’s friend, played by Shie Tsai-jiun), Hinoe (played by Wu Yi-fang), Hinomi (a nurse, Hinoe’s sister, played by Hsin Shu-fen), and Lin Wen-ching (Hinoe’s friend and Hinomi’s future husband, played by Tony Leung Chiu-wai). Before they gather, Hinoe initially brings his friends to Lin Wen-ching’s photo studio and

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Duus, “Japan’s Informal Empire in China 1895-1937: An Overview,” in *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895 -1937*, ed. by Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), xii.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, xxix.

then introduces Wen-ching to all of them. Wen-ching is not unfamiliar with them, since Hinoe has always mentioned these people in their daily conversation. Through Hinoe's introductions, the audience grasps all the characters' last names, jobs, relationships and hometowns, and also realizes how effectively Wen-ching communicates through written words, on paper or with his hands.

Before the song "Along the Songhua River" participates in the narration, two key points in the characters' conversation relate to the construction of national identity. The first, mentioned by Mr. Wu, is the public's confusion about whether it is correct to raise the "new" national flag. The new national flag not only indicates a new regime but also contains particular concepts and symbols of the nation itself.

On the one hand, neither the public nor the mayor of the town acknowledge that it is appropriate to raise the national flag of The Republic of China. On the other hand, people do not consider the national flag of Japan to be relevant anymore; they even use it to make children's underwear. Such situations are just considered as a funny joke by the intellectuals at the gathering in this scene. The second point is that they intentionally skip around Hinoe's argument about Chen Yi, who was appointed by the KMT as the governor of Taiwan when the Japanese government left. At first, when Mr. Lin asks how they consider the situation in Taiwan since the end of the Sino-Japanese War, everyone except Hinoe agrees with Mr. Shie's answer, "Everything is going great" and "We are finally reunited to our motherland." More curiously, they also all refuse to comment on political issues, saying "Enough politics," when Hinoe pronounces Chen Yi's governance of Taiwan to be that of a bandit. These two key points on the one hand indicate a positive attitude at the beginning of the KMT governance, although the people need time to adjust

to it in their daily lives, such as acknowledging the national flag and the right way to raise it. On the other hand, if the government can represent the sense of homeland as well as reunification, the pause in the political discussion shows the people at first prefer to cherish a better future than to argue it.

When the camera moves out of the restaurant, we begin to hear a vague, offscreen voice singing “Along the Songhua River.” The singing is in unison. Meanwhile, the song is composed in a binary form, which has simple enough melody for people to join in partway through the song. At this time, the scene cuts to a close-up of the leading character, Lin Wen-ching, who has gone outside to buy snacks, although he does not react to the song because he is deaf. Meanwhile, inside, all of them except Hinomi speak about how they learned the song (from the radio) and their passion for singing the song together. When Lin Wen-ching comes back into the restaurant to share snacks, all the intellectuals except Hinomi have already begun singing. As they sing, they not only stand up to open the window and sing louder than before, responding to the voices singing outside of restaurant, but they also begin to hug each other in front of the window. The singing moves from onscreen to offscreen as the camera shifts to a peaceful image of mountains and rivers outside of the restaurant. At the end of the scene, when they sing the lyric, “mother and father,” we heard a loud, deep thunder growling. Based on the characters’ attitude to the song, the thunder generates an ironic atmosphere for the audience who might be familiar with the background of song and the meaning of the lyrics.

“Along the Songhua River” is part of a song set entitled “The Song of the Exiles,” which also consists of two other songs, respectively called “The Exiles,” and

“Battlefield.” “Along the Songhua River,” written and composed by Zhang Han-hui in 1936, is the first song of the set. It was not only a patriotic song but also the most famous of the set in China since the early twentieth century. In early 1938, based on “Along the Songhua River,” the composer, Liu Xue’an, and lyric writer, Jiang Ling, completed their latter two songs, “The Exiles” and “Battlefield.” By further adding a subtitle, “Away From Home,” to “Along the Songhua River,” they rearranged the three songs as a song set which constituted a famous patriotic opera of the same name during the Sino-Japanese War period (1937-45).<sup>7</sup> In the 1960s, Chinese Premier Zhou En-lai suggested that the first song, “Along the Songhua River,” should be included in *The East is Red: A Song and Dance Epic* as the beginning of Scene Four, “The Flames of Anti-Japanese War,” which further introduced the song to the public around the nation.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For an exploration of Sino-Japanese War, see Lloyd E. Eastman, “Nationalist China during the Sino-Japanese War 1937–1945,” in *The Cambridge History of China. Vol. 13, Republican China, 1912-1949. Part 2*, ed. John King Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 547-608.

<sup>8</sup> According to historical material authors found, Li and Tian insist that “When ‘The Song of the Exiles’ was completed in December 23, 1937...the popularization of the song brought it to more than twenty provinces, areas or counties including Hubei, Henan, Shandong, Xiaodong, Dongbei, Shanxi, Jiangxi, Shanghai, Hunan, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Guizhou, Sichuan, Qinghai, Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, Yunan and Xinjiang. The range of the audience who became familiar with the song was also wide, including literary and artistic groups in the military of the communist party and Koumingtang, pupils, students in middle schools, colleges and universities, workers, officers. In ethnic minority areas, the song even was translated into Miao script and the Uygur language. Hence, it is true that hearing and singing ‘The Song of the Exiles,’ in whatever metropolis, town or countryside, were very common and popular.” Li Li, Tian Ke-Wen, “Liu Xue’an in Wuhan During the Initial Stage of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression,” *Huang Zhong (Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music)* 2 (2012): 3-14.; The author Pu Fang emphasized the importance and function of Kang Zhan Music including “The Song of the Exiles” during the war period. For instance, the song was selected as “My Favorite Top 10 Kang Zhan Songs” through an online vote in 2015, which was sponsored by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of The People’s Republic of China. Pu Fang, “Historical ‘Record’ and ‘Memory’ of Kang Zhan Music (Music Produced Against Japanese Aggression),” *Arts Criticism* 10 (2015): 15-21.; And Ding Ruyan’s article lists various kinds of historical records during that period to not only explore the difficult process of musical creation of Liu Xue’an, but also verify the vital role of “The Song of the Exiles” during the war period. Ding Ruyan, “The Resurgence of the First Kang Zhan Opera: Exploring and Recording ‘The Song of the Exiles,’ and Thinking of Liu Xue’an’s Musical Creation,” *Music Research* 1 (2016): 33-42.

The song, based on the September 18 Incident (or Mukden Incident) in 1931, illustrates the status of people who had lost their homeland around the Songhua River after the Japanese invasion. The lyrics not only shows people's great love for Northeast China, the area where they grew up, but also express an indignant but helpless feeling and hope that their homeland, Northeast China, would regain independence and sovereignty from Japanese colonization. The date, September 18 in 1931, is generally considered as the beginning of the Japanese invasion of China<sup>9</sup> and as the prologue to the Second Sino-Japanese War between the Republic of China and the Empire of Japan. From 1932 until 1945, the Northeastern area experienced fourteen years of Japanese colonization, which controlled the area through the puppet government of Manchukuo until Imperial Japan surrendered at the end of World War II.<sup>10</sup> Nowadays, September 18 is a National Remembrance Day in Mainland China to teach people about the crisis of the war and remind them that the beginning of Japanese colonization in Northeast China was a tough historical period.

The lyrics of the song, included with a translation in Example 2.3, demonstrate that the native people are proud of the place where they used to live, as it retains precious resources such as forest, food, and coal. For them, these resources not only were the representative of the area, but also used to belong to the local people rather than Japan.

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<sup>9</sup> Matsusake Y. Tak, "Managing Occupied Manchuria," in *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931-1945*, ed. Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, Mark R. Peattie, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 103.

<sup>10</sup> Louise Young, "Imagined Empire: The Cultural Construction of Manchukuo," in *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931-1945*, ed. by Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, Mark R. Peattie, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 71.

# 松花江上三部曲

慢 沉痛

教 G 調 4/4 第一部 離家 佚名

育  
通  
帆  
第三卷  
第六期

1. 3 | 5. 5̇ 1̇ 5 | 5. 6 5 1 2 | 3 — 6̇ 1̇ | 5 3 — 2 1 | 2 — 6̇ 1̇ |

我的家在東北松花江上那裏有森林煤礦，還有那滿山

5 4. 3 2 1 3 2 | 1 — . 1. 3 | 5. 5̇ 1̇ 5 | 6. 5 6 5 1 2 | 3 — 6̇ 1̇ | 5 3 — 2 1 |

遍野的大豆高粱我的家在東北松花江上那裏有我的同胞還有

2 — 1̇ 5. 3 | 5 4 3 2 3 | 1 — . 1̇ 7 | 3/4 6 — 2̇ 1̇ | 5 — 6 | 6 3 2 2 3 |

那哀老的爹……娘……九一八，九一八，從那悲慘的

1̇ 7 | 6 | 6 — 1̇ 7 | 6 — 2̇ 1̇ | 5 — 6 | 6 3 2 2 3 | 1̇ ? 6 |

時候……九一八，九一八，從那悲慘的時候……

6 — 6 | 6 7 6 5 6 | 6 — 3 | 5. 6 7 1̇ | 6 7 6 5 6 | 6 — 3 |

……說離了我的家鄉，拋棄那無盡的寶藏……流

2 — 3 | 2 — 3 | 4/4 5̇ 1̇ 6 5 3 | 3/4 2 — 3 | 2 — 3 | 6 — 3 |

浪，流浪，整日價在關內，流浪，那年那

5 — 5. 6 | 1̇ — 6. 7 | 6 5 6 6 7 | 2̇ — 5 | 5 — 3 | 6 — 3 |

月才能夠回到我那可愛的故鄉……？那年那

2 — 5. 6 | 1̇ — 6 7 | 6 5 3 2 3 | 4/4 2̇ — 1̇ — | 3/4 3̇ — 2̇ 1̇ | 6 — . |

月才能夠收回我那無盡的寶藏？爹娘啊！

2̇ — 1̇ 6 | 5 — 3 | 6 — 3 | 5 — 5 6 | 4/4 3̇. 2̇ 3̇ 1̇ | 1̇ — . ||

爹娘啊！什麼時候才能歡聚在一堂？！

Example 2.1: Numbered music score of “Along the Songhua River” with Chinese lyrics<sup>112</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Anonymous, “The Song of the Exiles I: Far Away from Home (Along the Songhua River),” *Education Communication* 3 (1940), 15. 佚名，松花江上三部曲第一部：離家，教育通訊 3（1940），15。

<sup>12</sup> “It did not give the author’s ordinary name, because his friend Wang Lin who helped Zhang Han-hui published the song considered the possible persecution Zhang would suffered. 王林担心写出尚在西安第二中学教书的张寒晖的真姓名，会使张氏受到迫害，因而未署名。” Xu Da-cheng, “From ‘Along the Songhua River’ to ‘The Song of the Exiles: the process of the music production,’” *Musical Works* 8 (2015): 119. 徐大成，从《松花江上》到《流亡三部曲》：论抗战套曲《流亡三部曲》的诞生历程，音乐创作 8（2015）：119。

# Along the Songhua River

Transcribed by Tangmuyang Zhang

Away From Home

Anonymous

$\text{♩} = 40$

我的家在东北松花江上，那里有森林煤矿，还有  
那满山遍野的大豆高粱。我的家在东北松花江上，那里  
有我的同胞，还有那衰老的爹娘。九一八，九一八，从  
那个悲惨的时候，九一八，九一八，从那个悲惨的时候。  
脱离了我的家乡，抛弃那无尽的宝藏。流浪，流浪，整  
日价在关内，流浪，流浪，那年那月才能够回到  
我那可爱的故乡？那年那月才能够收回我那无尽的  
宝藏？爹娘啊！爹娘啊！什么时候才能欢聚在一  
堂？！

Example 2.2: Transcribed music score of “Along the Songhua River with Chinese Lyrics

In addition, the repetition of the lyrics “father and mother” with the accent at the end of the song, further emphasizes their homesickness by evoking the family bond with their old parents. Especially, a large number of native people have been driven far away from their homeland and been parted from their old parents by the war. In Chinese

culture, the sense of home always relates to the family, the place you grown up, and the memory of the landscape. Taking care of old parents and respecting those who have raised the children and supported their dreams and goals is the most essential point in the conventional morality in Chinese culture.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, as Chiao Hsiung-ping argues, the setting of the scene, especially by emphasizing the singing of the song, and the lyrics ‘What will I eventually be reunited with you?!,’ indicates “a complex relationship between Mainland and Taiwan.”<sup>14</sup> Consequently, when such words and phrases occur in the song, it establishes a bond between Taiwan and Mainland China, especially Northeast China, through the shared understanding of the sense of home, and the same origin, Chinese culture.

我的家在东北松花江上，

*My home is located near Songhua river,*

那里有森林煤矿，

*It is not only covered in dense forest, mines  
and coal,*

还有那满山遍野的大豆高粱。

*but also grows soybean and sorghum  
anywhere.*

我的家在东北松花江上，

*My home is located near Songhua river,*

那里有我的同胞，

*It raises my compatriot,*

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<sup>13</sup> “There are five things which are pronounced in the common usage of the age to be unfilial. The first is laziness in the use of one's four limbs, without attending to the nourishment of his parents. The second is gambling and chess-playing, and being fond of wine, without attending to the nourishment of his parents. The third is being fond of goods and money, and selfishly attached to his wife and children, without attending to the nourishment of his parents. The fourth is following the desires of one's ears and eyes, so as to bring his parents to disgrace. The fifth is being fond of bravery, fighting and quarrelling so as to endanger his parents.” Mengzi/Mencius, “Li Lou II, 58” in Chinese Text Project. Chinese Text Project Library, <https://ctext.org/mengzi/li-lou-ii> (accessed March 31, 2019); Also see James Legge, *The Works of Mencius* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970).

<sup>14</sup> Chiao Hsiung-ping, “In Search of Taiwan Identity: The Regional Consciousness of New Taiwan Cinema and Hou Hsiao Hsien’s A City of Sadness,” *Journal of Beijing Film Academy* 2 (1990): 20.



还有那衰老的爹娘。	<i>where my old parents still live there.</i>
九一八，九一八，	<i>September 18, September 18,</i>
从那个悲惨的时候。	<i>Since that miserable date,</i>
脱离了我的家乡，	<i>I have had to depart from my hometown</i>
抛弃那无尽的宝藏。	<i>and abandon that priceless treasure.</i>
流浪，流浪	<i>Exile, exile</i>
整日价在关内，流浪	<i>I am exiled the outside of the border</i>
	<i>everyday</i>
哪年哪月才能够收回我那无尽的宝藏？	<i>What will I retrieve my priceless treasure?</i>
爹娘啊！爹娘啊！	<i>Father! Mother!</i>
什么时候才能欢聚在一堂？！	<i>What will I eventually be reunited with</i>
	<i>you?!</i>

Example 2.3: Chinese lyrics of “Along Songhua River”<sup>15</sup> and English translation<sup>16</sup>

Taking this background into account, I argue that the song not only evokes this original context, but also contributes to the multiple layers of meaning that overlap in the narration of the film, which the director intentionally links to the images and the plot. This means that when the song engages in the interaction between the film and the spectator, the meaning of lyrics, such as “father and mother”, “during that miserable time” and “that is my true homeland”, serve as a kind of musical mediation that indirectly expresses the characters’ consciousness of identity of homeland. Furthermore, if we

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<sup>15</sup> Chinese lyrics cites from Example 2.1.

<sup>16</sup> Author’s translation.

return to the two points of the conversation before the song occurs, the jokes about the national flag as the representative of one nation also express their shifted recognition of identity. As Chiao believes, such setting of characters' dialogue not only indicate "the rise of a new political power," but also concern about "the real discussion of the film, the problem of identity."<sup>17</sup> In doing so, I consider that, before they sing the song, the purpose of the two key points of dialogue is not only a responsive chord in the issue of identity this nostalgic song indicated; it also corresponds to the song in the hearts of its listeners, whether in the diegesis or the movie theatre.

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<sup>17</sup> Chiao Hsiung-ping, "In Search of Taiwan Identity: The Regional Consciousness of New Taiwan Cinema and Hou Hsiao Hsien's *A City of Sadness*," *Journal of Beijing Film Academy* 2 (1990): 19.

### CHAPTER 3: “RED DRAGONFLY”/“AKA-TOMBO”<sup>1</sup>

The second diegetic song, “Red Dragonfly,” is the first Japanese song that is sung in Japanese rather than Mandarin. The song features the relationship between the young Japanese woman, Shizuko, and her Taiwanese friends, Hinomi and Hinoe. Significantly, this scene shifts the narrative from the consideration of Mainland China to Japan through the musical presentation.

“Red Dragonfly” (or “Aka-tombo” in the Japanese pronunciation), is a nursery rhyme well known to the Japanese-speaking community during the late twentieth century. It expresses a young child’s memory of a joyful childhood spent with her nanny, who left the young child when she married. In the film, the song “Red Dragonfly” is framed by the memory of Shizuko, the daughter of the Japanese school director, Mr. Ogawa. She is introduced through Hinoe, who explains Shizuko’s situation to Wen-ching. During this time, Hinoe’s answers in their written conversation are represented through intertitles. Shortly after the scene containing “Along the Songhua River,” the film moves to Hinoe’s memory at Shizuko’s home, when she tells him and Hinomi about her father’s ill health and their immanent departure, announced by the Japanese government. Their return to Japan comes as a result of the political context: Taiwan will soon be returned to the Republic of China, governed by the KMT party. Imperial Japan has accepted the unconditional surrender of the Second World War and the Potsdam Declaration demanding that its sovereignty shall be limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido,

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<sup>1</sup> Film timecode 0:25:10 - 0:29:45.

Kyushu, Shikoku and such minor islands.<sup>2</sup> Thus, through the song, the film addresses issues of memory and the Japanese presence in Taiwan.

Immediately following the scene in which “Along the Songhua River” occurs, the camera returns to the main door of the hospital where Hinomi works. Shizuko appears at the hospital to give Hinomi farewell gifts before she and her father go back to Japan. When she has given all the gifts to Hinomi and explained them, she recalls a memory involving Hinoe at her music lesson. She is playing the organ to teach and sing the song “Red Dragonfly” at school. Subsequently, the film moves to her memory of a day at her home with her brother and Hinoe writing a poem (one of farewell gifts) together. My analysis will contextualize the music in the broader context of the narrative. In this scene, I begin by considering language (who the speaker is), farewell gifts (who the sender and receiver are, respectively, and cultural meaning represented in the gifts) as well as gender roles as vital for understanding the musical function of “Red Dragonfly.” As such, my hypothesis is that the song and its instrumentation form a musical mediation that conveys Japanese culture and colonial influences through Shizuko, her farewell gifts, and the gender role indicated by her memory, especially the time she spent with her Taiwanese friend, Hinoe.

Firstly, the use of language in the scene leading up to the “Red Dragonfly” establishes the extent of Japanese colonization of Taiwan. When Shizuko arrives at the hospital and asks the nurse and the doctor for a meeting with Hinomi, all of the characters, including the Taiwanese Hinomi, are able to speak fluent Japanese. Yet the

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<sup>2</sup> “Birth of the Constitution of Japan-The constitution and Other Important Documents-Potsdam Declaration,” in National Diet Library, <http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c06.html> (last accessed in November 14, 2018).

conversation between the nurse and the doctor remains in Taiyu. On the one hand, their usage of Japanese verifies the reach of Japanese colonization in educational policies, especially the linguistic impact on the public.<sup>3</sup> More specifically, the hospital – an institution tightly controlled by the government – is a showcase institution, one of the greatest strengths of colonial modernity, and a symbol of the powerful impact of colonial modernity on the individual. The hospital and modern clinics are an exotic concept from the West, showing colonial modernity brought by the colonizer Japan, which was the most developed country in East Asia. For Chinese society, especially in colonized Taiwan, it is undeniably exotic compared with traditional Chinese medicine.<sup>4</sup> In this way, the director transmits his message to the audience effectively through the setting and characters' behavior, especially a friendly attitude to the Japanese Shizuko. Conversely, the nurse and doctor are not only medical staff but also members of the public in Taiwan, who still converse in local dialect, Min'nan or Hokkien, at the hospital. Their speaking Min'nan, one of the main dialects in Taiwan and Fujian Province, emphasizes Taiwanese local culture and language, even though they experienced colonization for over half a century. Thus, their attitude and behavior before the song is heard are foregrounded not only to remind the audience of the past colonial relationship and experience, but also to rethink colonial modernity left by Japan in postcolonial Taiwan.

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<sup>3</sup> See Liao Ping-Hui and Wang David Der-Wei, eds., *Taiwan Under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1895-1945: History, Culture, Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> See Ralph C. Croizier, *Traditional Medicine in Modern China: Science, Nationalism, and the Tensions of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); Dominique Hoizey and Marie-Joseph Hoizey, *A History of Chinese Medicine* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1993); Zheng Man-qing and Lin Pin-shi, *History of Chinese Medicine* (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 2000); Guo-li, Pi, *Nationality, Chinese Medicine and Patients: Medical treatment and body in Modern China* (Taipei: Wu-Nan Book Inc., 2016).

The scene subsequently moves to the meeting between Shizuko and Hinomi in a Washitsu (a Japanese-style room). Shizuko gives three gifts to Hinomi: a Japanese sword, a poem and a kimono. The sword belonged to Shizuko's brother who has passed away. The poem was written by Shizuko's brother as Hinome sat as the "spectator" beside him; the gift is thus an artefact of their time together. The last gift, the kimono, is the most precious item for Shizuko. In Chiao's analysis, giving gifts to a Taiwanese friend expresses "the director's tolerance and understanding of humanity and interpersonal relationship, instead of a denunciation of Japan."<sup>5</sup> As such, I further argue that here Hinomi function as a representative of the public. Meanwhile the three gifts from the Japanese Shizuko stand in as classic images of Japan and colonial influences left behind in Taiwan.

First, the Japanese sword, the classic weapon in a Japanese army, represents the spirit of Japanese warriors. Through suicide, Japanese warriors show their bravery, determination, and loyalty to the Japanese Emperor and nation of Imperial Japan. The culture of death can even be traced back to eleventh-century Japan, the period of Kamakura *bakufu* among the *bushi*, during which the Japanese warrior class actively sought death in battle directly through suicide.<sup>6</sup> Second, the narration of the poem verifies how such a spirit continues amongst Japanese youth in and beyond the subsequent Meiji period, a more modern and westernized era. As the poem demonstrates, the culture of death further extends to the younger generation, who see the value of suicide to be a way to achieve completion of life. Finally, the last gift, the kimono, is the most characteristic

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<sup>5</sup> Chiao Hsiung-ping, "In Search of Taiwan Identity: The Regional Consciousness of New Taiwan Cinema and Hou Hsiao Hsien's *A City of Sadness*," *Journal of Beijing Film Academy* 2 (1990): 20.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Morillo, "Culture of Death: Warrior Suicide in Medieval Europe and Japan," *The Medieval Journal* 4 no. 2 (2001): 242.

costume of a Japanese female, displaying symbolic imagery of traditional habitude and morality of Japan. Because this ethnic garment represents Japanese lifestyle and family values, especially female gender roles in the family, it reminds the audience that Taiwan experienced and even unconsciously recognized Japanese culture during the fifty-year colonization. As Shizuko's dialogue illustrates, "When you [Hinomi] wear the kimono, it will remind you of me." Or, I prefer to interpret the sentence to mean that even though Taiwan was no longer colonized, Japanese morality, rules and spirit influenced Taiwanese people physically and mentally for fifty years. As such, the influence of cultural colonization in postcolonial Taiwan is unavoidable.

Music emerges as part of Shizuko's memory of the music lesson she gives at the primary school as Hinoe looks on. Shizuko is the music teacher who sings "Red Dragonfly" while playing the organ.

赤とんぼ  
Aka-tombo  
Red dragonflies

三木 露風 作詞  
Miki Rohū lyrics  
山田 耕柝 作曲  
Yamada Kōsaku music

ゆるく おだやかに (♩ = 60)  
Lento e tranquillo

1. ゆう や け こ や け の あ か と ん ぼ  
Yu - u - ya ke ko - ya - ke no a - ka - to - m - bo

2. や ま の は た け の く わ の み を  
Ya - ma no ha - ta - ke no ku - wa no mi o

3. じゅ う ご や ね え や は よ め に ゆ き  
Ju - u - go de ne - e - ya wa yo - me ni yu - ki

4. ゆ う や け こ や け の あ か と ん ぼ  
Yu - u - ya ke ko - ya - ke no a - ka - to - m - bo

(ややおさえて / poco ritén.)

お わ れ て み た の は い つ の ひ か  
o - wa - re te mi - ta no wa i - tsu no hi ka

こ か ご に つ ん だ は ま ぼ ろ し か  
ko - ka - go ni tsu - n - da wa ma - bo - ro - shi - ka

お さ と の た よ り も た え は て た  
o - sa - to no ta - yo - ri mo ta - e - ha te ta

と ま っ て い る よ さ お の さ き  
to - ma tte i ru yo sa o no sa - ki

YOKOYAMA Shin-ichiro's Sheet Music Library 横山真一郎の楽譜書庫 <http://shin-ichiro.seesaa.net/>  
© Creative Commons License Attribution 4.0 International 12.07.2016

Example 3.1: Piano-vocal score of “Red Dragonfly” with Japanese lyrics<sup>7</sup>

Through the pastoral mode, complemented in the film by bright lighting, the song tells the story of a young child, born in an upper-class family, cherishing the memory of her nanny, who never contacted the child again after she got married and moved away. As a nursery rhyme, the strophic song uses an easily remembered, soft and short melody with simple lyrics. This song type and melodic style are designed for educational

<sup>7</sup> “Aka-tombo (Yamada, Kōsaku),” in IMLSP Petrucci Music Library, [https://imslp.org/wiki/Aka-tombo\\_\(Yamada%2C\\_K%25%8Dsaku\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Aka-tombo_(Yamada%2C_K%25%8Dsaku)) (last accessed November 6, 2018).



purposes, namely music lessons at primary school, the starting point of education for almost everyone. Also, the song evokes the pentatonic scale and minimizes large intervallic leaps, which also makes it easy for beginners to learn and to memorize the song.

Here, Shizuko is the instructor of the song even as she narrates her memory to Hinomi. The children in the classroom are both students and listeners of the song, who are being educated to sing it in Japanese, understand its meaning and learn the musical memory. For adult spectators of the film who learned the song as children, remembering “Red Dragonfly” is easy. For the director, choosing the song essentially aims to awaken such musical memories for his audience members in order to provoke them to further interpret the purpose of the song.

With its flashback structure, the cinematic context is already layered, but the history of the song itself contributes additional layers. The song “Red Dragonfly” was composed by Yamada Kosaku<sup>8</sup> with Japanese lyrics written by Miki Rohu in 1927:

*Red dragonflies at sunset, red in the afterglow*

*Could it be the last time I saw their flights I was a child*

*On my Nanny’s back*

*Dark purple mulberries in the hillside fields*

*I gathered them into my little basket*

*Was that a dream or real?*

*Just fifteen, dear Nanny traveled far away, became a bride*

*Since then not one word comes*

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<sup>8</sup> Morihide Katayama, “Kosaku Yamada,” in Naxos, <https://www.naxos.com/person.asp?personid=%2F20862> (last accessed March 9, 2010).

*From my sister dear*

*Red dragonfly at sunset, red in the afterglow*

*There on the bamboo fishing pole it rests*

*As I remember*

Example 3.2: English Translation of “Red Dragonfly”<sup>9</sup>

As the translated version of the lyrics in English shows, the song tells the audience the story of a young child’s memory of a joyful childhood spent with her nanny. It is no coincidence that children are learning the song in this scene. The period when the singer is “on the nanny’s back” to see red dragonflies and to pick mulberries was the last time in her childhood that she had fun with the nanny. The fifteen-year-old nanny “became a bride” yet “not one word comes” from her. Therefore, the child enquires asks herself, “Was that memory [of her nanny] a dream or real?”

The lyrics also reveal an unequal relationship between the (wealthy) child and the (poor) nanny. The nanny is actually a little girl who has to be sold to a rich family when she is roughly ten to work as a nanny, in order to earn money and food for herself and her poor family. During the Second World War in Japan, this was a normal but tragic life for a girl born into a poor family. This may offer an extra dimension to Japanese identity in *A City of Sadness*, not just as colonizers but as people (such as Shizuko) who suffer personal loss, and collectively, as a nation which has lost the war and lost Taiwan. In a rich family, the nanny not only shoulders the responsibility of all the housework but also needs to take care of their children from the time that they are born. Hence, the nanny plays roles both as nanny of the family and playmate of the children, which indeed

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<sup>9</sup> Yamagishi Katsuei, trans., “Red Dragonflies,” <http://jiten.cside3.jp/Akatombo.html> (last accessed November 6, 2018).

cultivates a close relationship with the child. The rich family will allow the nanny to get married when she is grown up, yet from this time they will no longer employ her as the nanny. Based on this song's background, I argue that this unequal relationship between the nanny and the child she cares for further cues a kind of one-directional relationship between Japan as colonizer and colonized Taiwan. Here, Taiwan is represented by the lower-class nanny who had no choice but to be in service to the upper-class family, Japan. Once Taiwan grows up, it will find its way to develop its own life in a new family. When the nanny never contacts the child after getting married, it tells the audience about the relationship between Japan and Taiwan: colonization never constitutes friendship between the colonizer and the colonized.

Furthermore, in the next part of the sequence, when the music shifts from diegetic organ and voice to non-diegetic piano only, it not only interrupts the memory of the past but also warns of the departure of Japan and the return of Taiwan to China. The scene moves to Shizuko's next memory with her brother and Hinoe together in her home. Her brother writes a poem along with Hinoe and she practices ikebana beside them. Following this shift in her memory, the song also switches to piano melody without voice. On the one hand, the switch of the instrument from (diegetic) organ to (non-diegetic) piano indicates to the audience that life also will soon change. As Richard Leppert believes, "the history of piano design, manufacture, and distribution in the nineteenth century serves not only as a perfect metaphor of capitalist economic principles in operation but also as an agent of capitalism's political, economic, and ideological success."<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the noticeable change of music instrument, from organ to

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<sup>10</sup> Richard D. Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 153.

piano, not only indicates the westernized development of piano manufacturing brought by the colonizer Japan, but also symbolizes piano as a kind of modern order: equal and orderly, just like the 12 equal temperaments in Western classical music. On the other hand, when the Japanese Shizuko stops singing and is interrupted by the piano, alongside the shift in sound from the diegetic to the non-diegetic, it also tells the audience that Japan is no longer the colonizer of Taiwan: they have lost the authority of speech and the colonial power of education.

Moreover, the piano is suggestive of gender. Richard Leppert further argues that the piano had become interchangeable with the ideology of femininity in Europe, impacted by middle-class culture, especially bourgeois patriarchy, since the eighteenth century. He considers that, when the piano, especially the domestic piano, serves as a marker of social status and accomplishment, it was initially understood as part and parcel of domesticity. Also, in middle-class culture, especially during Victorian era, the “piano firstly was an object of beauty and then was to be heard.”<sup>11</sup> At the same time, women were also defined according to principles of domesticity based on bourgeois patriarchy. He concludes that it is the compulsion for men to symbolize women, which is not only tied to “the demands of identity, sexual difference, and power but also to the equally troublesome categories ‘desire’ and ‘pleasure.’”<sup>12</sup>

During this scene, Chiao also recognizes that Shizuko shoulder the role of female narrator. Throughout the film, she argues that the existence of female narrators including Hinomi, Shizuko and Ah-shue (the daughter of Lin Wen-xiong, the oldest brother, who engages in Spring Flower later), not only “enhances the multiple-layered narrative

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

construction of the film,” but also “guides other women who lived in the hierarchy to speak out their internal voice and independent thoughts.”<sup>13</sup> In particular, when Shizuko sings “Red Dragonfly,” Chiao advises and encourages audiences to be enthusiastic and “active to track relevant information, hints or allegories behind.”<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Su Yen-ying argues that the role of Hinomi in the film is not only a female narrator and observer, but also a speaker who “informs audiences about crucial points of the plot that haven’t been fully displayed or that have been completely omitted on screen.”<sup>15</sup>

Hence, I believe that the piano stands in for femininity in a way that is further amplified by the absence of Japanese men, like Shizuko’s brother who passed away, or her father who appears to be mentally disturbed. Granted, Shizuko’s brother and Hinoe are visible in the memory at the point when the piano music begins, but this is a memory and at the point in the film when Shizuko gives the farewell gifts, they are absent. One might read the synchronization of the two men in her memory along with the piano music as a loss of masculine presence. More importantly, whether before the song emerged or during the period that music engaged, all of the male characters are absent / do not speak out / sing the song, it suggests again that Japan lost authority and power in Taiwan. Accordingly, I argue that the scene of the “Red Dragonfly” intentionally reduces masculinity to further emphasize the power of women, not only as the narrators of the history, like Hinomi, but also as speakers and “preservers” of the past, like Shizuko. At the same time, it also establishes the imagery of Japan as a friend, like Hinomi and Shizuko, instead of the colonized relationship filled with oppression. In other words, the

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<sup>13</sup> Chiao Hsiung-ping, “In Search of Taiwan Identity: The Regional Consciousness of New Taiwan Cinema and Hou Hsiao Hsien’s *A City of Sadness*,” *Journal of Beijing Film Academy* 2 (1990): 22.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>15</sup> Su Yen-ying, “Music and Sound in Post-1989 Taiwan Cinema” (PhD. diss., Royal Holloway, 2012), 102.

song constructs a feminine counterpoint of colonialism as friendly through the feminization of memory (of colonialism), rather than the more combative, masculine approach we find in “Along the Songhua River” or “Wagon Song.”

Having considered the musical implications for the “Red Dragonfly” within the diegesis of the scene, I now move to the broader implications of the song for various audiences. The original background of the song not only indicates public familiarity with the piece but it also constitutes a pastoral space for escaping reality through cinema. The lyrics ask: “Was that a dream or real?” Was colonization a dream or was it real? Was returning to China a dream or reality? The song assists the director in confronting audiences with these questions, without explicitly saying so.

For Japanese audiences, the implications are quite different. When “Red Dragonfly” was composed in 1927, it became one of the best-known nursery rhymes/doyo in Japanese culture, and it was later introduced to the public school by the publication of a songbook and CD.<sup>16</sup> As a well-known nursery rhyme in the Japanese-speaking community during the late twentieth century, it was instituted as the chimes in Japan to remind the public of disaster through the Disaster Administrative Radio System. Initially enacted in 1950, the system was built by national and local governments in order to secure a means to collect and transmit disaster information in the times of emergency.

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<sup>16</sup> The Japanese Mint released a children’s song coin set, named “Aka-tombo (Red Dragonfly)” in 2008. The introduction of the coin set states that it is “a children’s song written about 80 years ago, but it still makes us feel nostalgic, so many Japanese are familiar with this song.” Japanese Mint, “2008 Children’s Song Coin Set “Aka Tombo (Red Dragonfly),” [https://www.mint.go.jp/buy-eng/international-eng/coin-sets-eng/eng\\_coin\\_international\\_coinset\\_page42.html](https://www.mint.go.jp/buy-eng/international-eng/coin-sets-eng/eng_coin_international_coinset_page42.html) (last accessed March 8, 2019); In 2007, the song Aka-tombo (Red Dragonfly) was selected as one of the Top 100 Japanese songs (日本の歌百選), which were all collected and published as a public school songbook with a CD. The selection was sponsored by the Agency for Cultural Affairs and Parent-Teacher Association, which tends to protect Japanese cultural heritage. <https://web.archive.org/web/20080702025826/http://www.bunka.go.jp/uta100sen/> (last accessed March 8, 2019).

In 1988, it started the operation of the Regional Disaster Prevention System (Multi Channel Access System) to connect local communities, such as cities, towns, and villages, with organizations which are closely related to the residents' daily life.<sup>17</sup> Nowadays, it has become a siren to remind people, like students and commuters, that it is time to return home. As such, Japanese audiences today will have a different relationship to the song in the film.

On the one hand, this is a famous film officially distributed in Chinese, Japanese, English and Thai, which speaks to multinational audiences in East Asia. Audience members who are aware of the cultural and historical background of the song, and understand the cultural and historical background of Taiwan and Japan, will experience this scene with that in mind. On the other hand, the pleasant memory of Japan recalled by the Japanese Shizuko cues the past relationship between the colonizer Japan and the colonized Taiwan from a Japanese angle. When Shizuko sings the song, she not only says goodbye to her friends Hinomi and Hinoe. It is also a siren announcing the coming termination of colonization, an unequal relationship between Japan and Taiwan, telling both of them: it is time to go "home."

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<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, "Administrative Radio System for Disaster Use," <http://www.tele.soumu.go.jp/e/adm/system/trunk/disaster/> (last accessed November 6, 2018).

## CHAPTER 4: ALONG THE RHINE: “LORELEI”<sup>1</sup>

The scene of “Lorelei” contrasts significantly with the “Songhua River” scene, in which most of the male characters join in the singing. Here, only Hinomi and Lin Wen-ching turn their attention to the musical dimension, while they were outside of the intellectuals’ unison singing of the Mandarin song, “Along the Songhua River.”

In this chapter, unlike Su Yen-ying’s concentration on silence by considering the concept of *liubai* (“Void, emptiness, blankness”<sup>2</sup>), I am focusing on the dimension of sound and music. More specifically, I discuss where the song “Lorelei” comes from, what the meaning of the song is, why the song is played, and who plays it. In particular, when the song “Lorelei” is presented on a recording, it is an instrumental rendition only. However, protagonists Lin Wen-ching and Hinomi are not only discussing the lyrics of the song but also further extend their conversation to a past memory about a local *zidi/luantan* opera,<sup>3</sup> Hence, by considering such contrast constituted by the musical dimension in this scene, I argue that the director demonstrates the conflicts of two different cultures, which hints at a subtle relationship in Taiwan between the traditions (such as local *zidi/luantan* opera, traditional instruments and local culture shown in the

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<sup>1</sup> Film timecode 0:38:20 - 0:47:25.

<sup>2</sup> Su Yen-ying, “*Music and Sound in Post-1989 Taiwan Cinema*” (PhD. diss., Royal Holloway, 2012), 97.

<sup>3</sup> *Zidi* opera, the theatre of *beiguan* music, “also called *luantan* when performed by professionals. [It] includes three genres: *banxian*, ancient style (*guluxi*) and new style (*xinluxi*). The greater part of the sung melodies of the *banxian* dramatic repertory originated from the ‘northern songs’ of *Kunqu*...” “...*beiguan* music in religious celebrations and Daoist ritual was popular on the island not later than the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century... The influence of *nanguan* and *beiguan* on the vocal and instrumental music of other genres respectively is profound.” Tsang-Houei, Hsu, Lu Yu-Hsiu, Lü Chuikuan, Han Kuo-Huang, and Joanna C. Lee. 2001 “Taiwan,” in Grove Music Online. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000049502> (last accessed April 3, 2019).



flashback) and modernity (such as the vinyl record, gramophone and discussion of foreign culture before the flashback).

The scene in which “Lorelei” is heard describes the crucial February 28 Incident and contains echoes of the dialogue in the scene that features “Along the Songhua River.” A comparison of the scene of “Along the Songhua River” with the scene that features the music of “Lorelei” shows a progression in the conflicts amongst Japan, Mainland China, and Taiwan. Unlike the more positive conversation in the earlier scene, in the later scene, the intellectual Mr. Shie quotes the new KMT government’s position that “Taiwanese people have a slave mentality because of Japanese colonization.” Yet Taiwanese people disagree with this and further argue that since the earlier, governing Qing dynasty did not ask the Taiwanese to approve the decision before it ceded Taiwan to Japan, the later, governing KMT had no ground on which to blame the Taiwanese people for enduring fifty years of Japanese colonization.<sup>4</sup> Such ideas exacerbated cultural and ethnic conflicts between the native Taiwanese and the mainlanders. This conflict is the core of the scene that features “Lorelei.”

The origins of ‘Lorelei’ are far from the conflict of China, Taiwan, and Japan. “Die Lorelei” is a narrative German poem written by Heinrich Heine in 1824. Thirteen years later, Friedrich Silcher set it to music and it became a well-known German folk song. Clara Schumann also composed a lied, “Die Lorelei,” for voice and piano in 1843, which uses Heine’s poem as the lyrics. The lyrics describe a siren as a sort of femme fatale who

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<sup>4</sup> In the scene of “Along the Songhua River”, Mr. Shie answers that “Everything is going great” and “We are finally reunited to our motherland.” Yet in the scene of “Lorelei”, Mr. Shie continually argues the idea of slave mentality that “Slave? Dammit! How we sunk so low as to want to become slaves again?” Later, Hinoe further supports his argument, saying that “When the Qing Dynasty sold us out, who asked us if we wanted to be ceded to Japan?” (Meanwhile, Hinoe calls Wen-Ching to play the record player.)

sits on the cliffs above the Rhine and combs her golden hair, unwittingly distracting sailors with her beauty and song, causing them to crash on the rocks:<sup>5</sup>

**English**

*I know not what should be the reason  
that I am so sad;  
a fairy tale from old times  
comes to me and will not leave my mind.*

*The air is cool and night descends,  
and peacefully flows the Rhine;  
the top of the mountain sparkles  
in the twilight.*

*The fairest young lady sits  
up there wondrously.*

*Her golden jewelry glimmers,  
she combs her golden hair.*

*She combs it with a golden comb  
and sings a song  
that has a wondrously*

**German**

Ich weiß nicht, was sol les bedeuten  
Daß ich so traurig bin;  
Ein Märchen aus alten Zeiten  
Das kommt mir nicht aus dem Sinn.

Die Luft ist kühl und es dunkelt,  
Und ruhig fließt der Rhein;  
Der Gipfel des Berges funkelt  
Im Abendsonnenschein.

Die schönste Jungfrau sitzet  
Dort oben wunderbar.

Ihr goldenes Geschmeide blitzet  
Sie kämmt ihr goldenes Haar.

Sie kämmt es mit goldenem Kamme  
Und singt ein Lied dabei  
Das hat eine wundersame

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<sup>5</sup> Ignace Feuerlicht, "Heine's 'Lorelei': Legend, Literature, Life," *The German Quarterly* 54 (1980): 82-94.

*grand melody.*

Gewaltige Melodei.

*The sailor in a small boat*

Den Schiffer im kleinen Schiffe

*is seized with wild longing,*

Ergreift es mit wildem Weh,

*he sees not the rocky shallows,*

Er schaut nicht die Felsenriffe,

*he looks only up into the skies.*

Er schaut nur hinauf in die Höh.

*I believe the waves engulfed him*

Ich glaube, die Wellen verschlingen

*destroying sailor and boat;*

Am Ende Schiffer und Kahn

*and that with her singing,*

Und das hat mit ihrem Singen

*the sorceress triumphed.*

Die Lorelei getan.

Example 4.1: The poem “Lorelei” by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856)<sup>6</sup>

As Jonathan Retzlaff attests, the song shows:

“a symbol of the contrast between beauty (of nature, woman, and art) and every-day drabness, between illusion (imagination, dream, fairy tale) and reality, between the permanence and power of art and the fleetingness and weakness of life, between an upper, mysterious world of greatness, harmony, serenity, vigor, and clarity and a lower, all-too-familiar world of smallness, unrest, uncertainty, pain, helplessness, and death.”<sup>7</sup>

More curiously, the river, the Rhine, also witnessed many political events in the history of Germany, as the Songhua River did in Northeast China. Especially during the

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<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Retzlaff with IPA transcriptions by Cheri Montgomery, *Exploring art song lyrics: translation and pronunciation of the Italian, German and French repertoire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 238-239.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

nineteenth century, the Rhine was normally associated with the concept of national identity. At that time, music such as the song setting of “Die Lorelei,” concerned with the Rhine river, itself a nationalist symbol in Germany,<sup>8</sup> acts as a counterpart to the first song, “Along the Songhua River,” from Northeast China.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the Songhua River not only witnessed Japanese colonization and invasion in Northeast China during the Sino-Japanese War, but also expresses the sense of home and belonging to nation for the local people.

At the beginning of the scene in *A City of Sadness*, when the audience hears offscreen characters’ dialogue over exuberant scenery, rather than the more common combination of onscreen sound and characters, it verifies the association above between the song and musical memory preserved through the landscape. Hence, the first impression of the landscape not only enhances people’s curiosity to immediately engage in the narration, but also reminds audience to comprehend the role of the song “Lorelei” by understanding Wen-ching’s joyful memory about music and performance.

Firstly, the dialogue conveys the key points about the cigarette incident that marks the beginning of *Ereberba*, the historic February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident of 1947. The cigarette incident involved a poor, female, Taiwanese vendor who had to sell black market cigarettes in order to make living yet was arrested by a government officer. Government-sponsored companies were the only official sellers of all kinds of necessities, especially high-profit commodities like cigarettes, rather than private and individual vendors. However, when crowds gathered around the vendor’s arrest, another onlooker was

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<sup>8</sup> See Cecelia Hopkins Porter, *The Rhine as Musical Metaphor: Cultural Identity in German Romantic Music*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996.; John Daverio, “Review of ‘The Rhine as Musical Metaphor: Cultural Identity in German Romantic Music,’” *Music and Letters* 78 (1997): 602-604.

actually killed. In *A City of Sadness*, the intellectuals' discussion of the cigarette incident here refers to the chaos of the Incident and the subsequent riots. The repercussions of the Incident are profound and miserable: riots and cultural conflicts between different ethnic groups eventual, killed thousands of people, and the violence led to a thirty-eight-year period under martial law, starting in May 1949. Since the governmental announcement lifting martial law in July 1987, social circumstances have been gradually loosened, which has allowed public discussion as well as academic research into the February 28<sup>th</sup> Incident. *A City of Sadness* itself is one of these contributions to public discussion.

When the scene then moves to Wen-ching's photographic studio, all the intellectuals who were also gathered in the scene of "Along the Songhua River" are having dinner again. Before the song starts, we realize that there has been a 180-degree change in their attitudes to political issues. Unlike in the scene of "Along the Songhua River," Hinoe is no longer the only person who cares about politics; others also actively start discussing them. More obviously, their lines of dialogue include statements such as: "It is absolutely not a government; it is a private company entirely!" and "Have we sunk so low as to want to become slaves again?" This further reminds the audience that their attitudes have completely shifted because of unfair political decisions. Before "Lorelei" is played, one of the intellectuals even makes a proposal at the end of their conversation, which could also serve as a warning to everyone in the real society: "If we want a bright future, the suffering masses have to resist on their own initiative rather than only waiting uselessly."

The reason why the song "Lorelei" emerges is that Hinomi asks Wen-ching in sign language to fix or help her with the record player. Accordingly, deaf and mute Wen-ching indirectly engages in intellectuals' conversation and the scene as he "performs" the song

on the turntable. Before Hinomi's "invitation," neither of them is involved in the intellectuals' conversation. When the song "Lorelei" fades in, all sounds of dialogue and other noises gradually fade out together. After a time, the scene cuts to a medium close-up of Wen-ching and Hinomi alone beside their dining table, the intellectuals now neither seen nor heard. The lighter hues and soft melody seem to give the impression of a love story for spectators and auditors. At this time, the song "Lorelei" becomes not only catalyst for beginning a deeper communication between Hinomi and Wen-ching, but also a mediation through which he gains a singing/speaking voice/story in the scene.

While Hinomi and Lin Wen-ching are alone unconscious of "Along the Songhua River" in the earlier scene, here they at first have opposite attitudes and interests in the song. It is Hinomi's wish that the turntable be fixed, and she introduces the background of the song in detail to Wen-ching when the record is playing. Wen-ching is the person who not only fixes it, but also selects the record "Lorelei" to play. By contrast, the other intellectuals become unconsciousness of the song "Lorelei," while Lin Wen-ching and Hinomi are willing to pay attention to the song and its backstory. The song is also the moment in which the audience learns that Wen-ching became deaf in his childhood when he injured himself by falling out of a tree and then catching a fever: this is the first and only time that Wen-ching actively explains why he became deaf and mute, as he tells his story to Hinomi in written form. This scene also shows his sweet memory of mimicking an opera singer's dancing and gestures before the accident happened. Hence, the song also plays a key role for developing his character and emphasizing his personality.

As their written conversation is represented through intertitles in which the words fill the screen, the audience understands that Hinomi and Wen-ching communicate in this

scene through writing and sign language. For Wen-ching, although his hearing impairment interrupted his usual means of communication with people, sign language and writing are still effective for him instead of speaking and hearing. Hinomi therefore explains the story of the song to Wen-ching on paper. As Su Yen-ying argues, in a sound film, the voice-over narration “suggests further narrative and artistic meaning than simply those of clarifying narrative.<sup>10</sup>” Consequently, I further consider that, these intertitles work like a voice-over not only to reflect the messages between Hinomi and Wen-ching, including the introduction of the song and the reason why Wen-ching became deaf, but also show that the director, Hou Hsiao-hsien, aims to communicate to the audience the meaning and function of the song. Both the song and Wen-ching’s memory are represented by these blank screens filled only with words, which is a technical means for directors to emphasize points. In this scene, the intertitles express the content of the song and show that the director wants the audience to understand its meaning and background rather than absorbing it only subliminally as we often do with incidental music in film. Moreover, as Chiao points out, the intertitles do not use subject terms, like I or you, which rhetorically aims to offer the audience “the sense of substitution and empathy.”<sup>11</sup> As such, this not only verifies that “Lorelei” is included purposely and logically, but also shows the significance of the song for constructing personal identity and audience identification in the film.

Following Wen-ching’s “narration” of his loss of hearing, the sound of the song “Lorelei” fades out and the singing of local opera fades in. The visuals correspond: the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>11</sup> Chiao Hsiung-ping, “In Search of Taiwan Identity: The Regional Consciousness of New Taiwan Cinema and Hou Hsiao Hsien’s *A City of Sadness*,” *Journal of Beijing Film Academy* 2 (1990): 22.

film shows the vividness of that joyful experience of stage gestures as the opera singer dances, rather than Wen-ching's tough memory of falling out of a tree, ultimately leading to his deafness. As Wen-ching states, before he lost his hearing, it was a precious period for him during which he was able to enjoy singing and performing these gestures of *zidi/luantan* opera. We see him, as a child in flashback, imitating the singer on stage. This flashback ends the sequence.

In this sequence, Su thinks that the relationship between “the music, the images and music with images” is discontinuous, when “the song and the Beijing opera excerpt traverse between the diegetic and non-diegetic spaces.<sup>12</sup>” Yet, based on Eisenstein's notion of counterpoint, I always content that, in *City of Sadness*, music is not only an essential dimension of the narration, but also always produce new levels of meaning whether the connection or contradiction of images, especially in the multiple-layer narrative construction. As such, I did not interpret the song “Lorelei” is an empathetic or disconnected to the scene. Rather, by considering the contradiction between music and images, I therefore consider that the scene hints at a subtle relationship in Taiwan between the traditions (such as local *zidi/luantan* opera, traditional Chinese instruments and local culture shown in the flashback) and modernity (such as the vinyl record, gramophone and discussion of foreign culture before the flashback). The traditional culture was hindered both during Japanese colonization and under the KMT government. In Taiwan, when Japanese colonizers enforced the progress of modernization and assimilation, they did not want to the public to maintain Chinese traditional culture. On the one hand, the Taiwanese indeed accepted modernity as, in order to survive, they had

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<sup>12</sup> Su Yen-ying, “*Music and Sound in Post-1989 Taiwan Cinema*” (PhD. diss., Royal Holloway, 2012), 108.



to follow the rules that the colonizer established. Yet, on the other hand, the strict rules inspired the spontaneous progress and space of traditional culture as a means of self-protection and self-reflection.<sup>13</sup> To revolt against an autocracy or even the “native” culture, as during the February 28 Incident, is a way of self-reflection and restructuring through which to carve out an identity.

Although one might expect traditional culture to enjoy a rebirth after the end of Japanese colonization, the KMT regime also banned the performances of Taiwanese songs or opera in the theater or at home. They believed that Chinese culture should show official language and mainstream culture mainly from the north mainland rather than local opera sung in dialects. Thus, the KMT government suppressed the public performance of local opera and replaced it with the Peking opera, the main genre of the North.<sup>14</sup> Yet local opera was a very popular type of theatrical art among the native population. The venue of the performance was generally an outside stage in the town square, such as we see in Wen-ching’s flashback. Hence, the singing of local opera, in Wen-ching’s flashback, immediately following the song “Lorelei,” hints at the combination of two kinds of cultures and ideologies. More specifically, if Lin Wen-ching, a deaf man, represents the public during that period, it is implicit that his deafness and muteness further embody a kind of silent rage and disappointment rather than inaction. This is supported by the fact that Wen-ching actively tells Hinomi in sign language about his illness, although he is silent.

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<sup>13</sup> See Chao Hui-hsuan, “*Musical Taiwan under Japanese Colonial Rule: A Historical and Ethnomusicological Interpretation*” (PhD. diss., The University of Michigan, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Ketty W. Chen, “Disciplining Taiwan: The Kuomintang’s Methods of Control During the White Terror Era (1947-1987),” *Taiwan International Studies Quarterly* 4 (2008): 205.

Overall, the song “Lorelei” is a borrowed allegory that was born in a German-speaking community. It not only hints at the relationship between musical memory and identity, but also links to the intellectuals’ death at the end of the film. Although the intellectuals, who have romantic ideal about their society, do not turn their attention to a “siren’s singing,” their “boat” or survival area is “destroyed” in the end, as are the sailors in the lyrics. In particular, while only the instrumental melody of the song plays in the film, the silent lyrics further correspond with Wen-ching’s unspeakable position as a minority member of the society. When the continuous singing of *zidi/luantan* opera fades in to demonstrate Wen-ching’s artistic ability in the past, it not only reminds the audience of the “speaking/singing ability/authority” Taiwan used to possess, but also articulates memory/history by explaining and reviewing the past actively, just like Wen-ching’s explanation of his accident.

## CHAPTER 5: “WAGON SONG”: INVISIBLE SINGING<sup>1</sup>

The second Japanese song, “Wagon Song,” is sung in unison by Wen-ching’s male cellmates.<sup>2</sup> Compared with the first Japanese nursery rhyme, “Red Dragonfly,” the men’s singing in Japanese, the mother language of the former colonist Japan, in the prison cell provides audiences with a more violent perspective of the state apparatus and also offers a masculine narration in the film.

“Wagon Song” was composed in 1932 by Ikeda Fujio<sup>3</sup> with lyrics written by Toshiwo Yamada.<sup>4</sup> The lyrics refer to a man’s remembrance of his friend who has passed away. When he sees a wagon, it immediately reminds him of his friend who left their last meeting in a wagon. The song shows his recollection of that moment, which was a memorable time, and which he did not know would be their last chance to see each other. In the film, the singing of “Wagon Song” in unison accompanies a summons of Wen-ching’s two cellmates, Wu Chin-wen and Tsai Tung-ho, to court to receive the result. Yet only the offscreen sound of two shots later indicates that they have been executed, the final result of their trial. Meanwhile the camera maintains a medium long shot of Wen-ching to emphasize his reflection and farewell to his cellmates. When the song then ends

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<sup>1</sup> Film timecode 1:39:35 – 1:46:20.

<sup>2</sup> “The setting of ‘Wagon Song’ in the film is sung by all the cellmates together. It needs spatialized sound. As such, I, Shie Tsai-jiun, Chu Tien-hsin, and Tien-hsin’s mother Liu Mu-Sha (the only person who acknowledges Japanese), recorded together at an empty room in Jinguashi town. We notate all Japanese pronunciation in Zhuyin/Mandarin Phonetic Symbols. 譬如押房难友们唱的《幌马车之歌》，要有空间声，不能在录音室录，所以特别开拨到金瓜石矿区废置的福利站空屋去唱，四个人，我，谢才俊，天心，和唯一会日文的天心的母亲（刘穆沙），日文歌词用注音符号表示发音，这样录成的。” Hou Hsiao-hsien, “Things Were Written Down Documenting Their Existence (凡记下的就存在),” in Lan Bo-zhou, *Huang Ma Che Zhi Ge (Wagon Song)*, (SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2018), Third Preface.

<sup>3</sup> Author’s translation. Japanese name is 池田不二男.

<sup>4</sup> Author’s translation. Japanese name is 山田としを.

with the sound of the cell door locking, the camera moves to the close-up of Wen-ching sitting in front of the window. He seems bemused and worried about their fate – as he has not heard the shots – and his own future. Finally, the jailer comes again to summon Wen-ching to court. Luckily, Wen-ching is released. The audience understands this court decision when they see Wen-ching back at home.

Before the scene of “Wagon Song” in prison, the female narrator, Hinomi, reads at her home the letter from Wen-ching’s family. Her voiceover of the letter informs both her and the audience of Wen-ching’s arrest. Moreover, the content of the letter exposes two opposing attitudes about Wen-ching’s arrest. One is Wen-ching’s father, an elderly man who enjoys a prestigious position in town because he protected local people during the Japanese colonization. When a deaf man, his youngest son Wen-ching, is arrested, he disputes it angrily, asking, “They are even arresting the deaf. Where is the justice of the world?” The other attitude is Hinomi’s. Having suspended her work as a nurse because of the social chaos and her father’s hope for keeping her safe, she has returned home. Her interior monologue tells the audience that her only concern is Wen-ching’s life instead of justice. Accordingly, I believe such a demonstration of their attitudes, on the one hand definitely shows a query about the confusion in the legal environment during this period. On the other hand, it sets up the next scene, which incorporates “Wagon Song,” the lyrics of which relate to the question of survival. Also, such peaceful voiceover of the letter stirs audience to cogitate what is more essential during the social chaos: just to survive, or to pursue ideals such as justice?

*At dusk,  
on the leaf-strewn road,  
I gazed affectionately at your wagon  
until it gradually disappeared from view in the distance.  
I mounted a reminiscent hill,  
Look up into this foreign sky,  
Reminding me of that year gone by a dream,  
I could not hold back my tears.  
The sound of the wagon makes me feel nostalgic,  
Reminding me of seeing you off last year.  
It unexpectedly was our farewell.*

Example 5.1: English translation of “Wagon Song”<sup>5</sup>

When “Wagon song” begins, the camera especially focuses on Wen-ching, a deaf man who would not be able to sing the song. According to the director Hou’s statement,<sup>6</sup> “Wagon Song” alludes to the real life of Zhong Hao-dong, who resisted the KMT during the February 28 Incident. For the audience in Taiwan, it is known for “Keelung Middle School Event(基隆中学事件).” “Wagon Song” was not only Zhong Hao-dong’s favorite song but also the song he sang when he was executed in 1950. Furthermore, it

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<sup>5</sup> Author’s translation based on the Chinese lyrics on Lan Bo-zhou’s book, *Huang Ma Che Zhi Ge*. Lan Bozhou, *Huang Ma Che Zhi Ge (Wagon Song «幌马车之歌»)* (SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2018), 3-4.

<sup>6</sup> “Sixteen or seventeen years ago, when all of us read the magazine *Ren Jian*, we acknowledged Lan Bo-zhou’s ‘Beautiful Century’ and ‘Wagon Song’. His pieces are pioneer. At the same time, I was doing *A City of Sadness*... 十六七年前，我们都在看《人间》杂志的时候，看到了蓝博洲《美好的世纪》和《幌马车之歌》。那两篇东西真的是先驱。也是那个时候，我拍了《悲情城市》。” Hou Hsiao-hsien, “Things Were Written Down Documenting Their Existence (凡记下的就存在),” in Lan Bo-zhou, *Huang Ma Che Zhi Ge (Wagon Song)*, (SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2018), Third Preface.

consequently became a well-known farewell song in prison when people were summoned to court during that period.<sup>78</sup> Based on these real stories behind the song, the song not only gets closer to the incident but also enhances the filmic reliability for the audience. Since the interaction between these real stories and music, offer a fresh way for the audience to involve in the key discussion of the film through “the fusion of history, memory, dramaticism and authenticity.”<sup>99</sup> Also, the constitution of its filmic world indirectly indicates the director’s condemnation of the Incident and sympathy for Zhong.

In Ben Winters’s essay on diegetic and non-diegetic film music, he argues that “whether a source is visible (diegetic) or not (non-diegetic), music occupies the same narrative space as the characters according to different rules and the rules of everyday reality.”<sup>10</sup> First, Winters recognizes the importance of film music for cinematic narration, whether it is diegetic or not. Second, he emphasizes the importance of visible diegetic sources of the music. “Wagon Song” is an exception in *A City of Sadness*: the audience is not able to determine the source of the music, such as where singers are, who they are, or why it occurs. It is not even clear whether it is diegetic or non-diegetic: the sound quality suggests that it is diegetic, but the lack of visual source and the fact that our protagonist, Wen-ching, cannot hear it suggests that it is non-diegetic. Yet it is the only source that

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<sup>7</sup> In Lan’s book, he shows how “Wagon Song” impacted Zhong himself and other prisoners in his cell by interviewing Zhong Hao-dong’s wife, brother and other relatives or survivors as well as collecting related news and historical documents. At the beginning of the book, he illustrates that “In October 14, 1950, 6pm, Zhong Hao-dong, Li Cang-xiang, and Tang Zhi-tang, were summoned to court... Zhong Hao-dong, the president of Keelung Middle School, sung his favorite song ‘Wagon Song’ when he leisurely walked to the court. At the same time, all cellmates gradually joined in the chorus of the song along with the sound of anklet.” Ibid., 3.

<sup>8</sup> “...Wagon Song was a popular Japanese farewell song in Taiwan.” (... 《幌马车之歌》, 这是当时流行于台湾的日文送别歌曲。) Chiao Hsiung-ping, “In Search of Taiwan Identity: The Regional Consciousness of New Taiwan Cinema and Hou Hsiao Hsien’s *A City of Sadness*,” *Journal of Beijing Film Academy* 2 (1990): 24.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>10</sup> Ben Winters, “The Non-Diegetic Fallacy: Film, Music, and Narrative Space,” *Music and Letters* 91 no. 2 (2001): 228-229.

refers to the real history of Zhong Hao-dong’s life during the Incident. Consequently, whether the source of “Wagon Song” is non-diegetic or not, I argue that it leaves more room than other four songs for the audience to reflect on the film and to rethink that history. Since music is a mode of mediation that transmits invisible information, through it the scene constitutes a complicated commentary on history.

幌馬車の唄

山田としを——作詞  
原野為二——作曲  
ミス・コロムビア／桜井健二——唄

(演奏)

© by Zen-On Music Co., Ltd.

三、(偽)唄の音は、ちかちかと、  
葉水の響きを、はたはた、  
馬の響きを、水鏡して、  
風が路方に、消え行く

二、(明)想い、出なき、丘の上、  
薄く、けしき、の、空、  
平、原、の、空、  
心、無、き、に、澄、み、  
く、

一、(偽)少く、遠く、水、の、響、き、  
君、の、馬、車、見、守、り、し、  
去、の、路、程、が、と、し、よ

幌馬車の唄  
原野為二作詞  
山田とし作曲  
ミス・コロムビア唄

Example 5.2: Musical score of “Wagon Song” with Japanese lyrics<sup>11</sup>

Because of its ambiguity, the music has to be understood as both diegetic and non-diegetic. On the one hand, insofar as the song is non-diegetic, it contributes an extra musical connection between real space and the filmic content. The backstory of the song

<sup>11</sup> Lan Bo-zhou, *Huang Ma Che Zhi Ge (Wagon Song «幌马车之歌»)*(SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2018), 4.

is a musical reference to the everyday reality of the past for the audience, especially those who are familiar with the song and its history. Hence, the scene of “Wagon Song” in the prison is a musical mediation, which invites the audience to revisit the real experience of the Incident throughout the film. On the other hand, it could be understood as Wen-ching’s internal singing and monologue, although he cannot sing onscreen and aloud. It means that music not only tells the audience about Wen-ching’s feelings when he says goodbye to his two cellmates; it also hints at the result of their trial before they go to the court. As the last paragraph of the lyrics states, “*The sound of the wagon makes me feel nostalgic. Reminding me of seeing you off last year. It unexpectedly was our farewell.*” Ultimately, the lyrics will come true: this is their last farewell.

Consequently, I believe that the purpose of “Wagon Song” is not only to honor the memory of Zhong Hao-dong as well as others whether they died or luckily survived in the Incident or White Terror period, but also to constitute a musical space between the cinematic world and everyday life for the audience to acknowledge such history and people. It induces a spiritual response to this tragic history for people who have experienced colonization and political struggle. Importantly, the singers’ voices are heard when the two prisoners are summoned to the court. It prompts the audience to continually receive violence and silence through such incompatible comparison. Thus, “Wagon Song” here shoulders the narrator’s responsibility by musically illustrating their silenced but vital thoughts about themselves and the Incident, especially because the song plays without accompaniment. The recording voice not only reflects the silent thoughts of Wen-ching and his cellmates, but also responds to the imperative, in the given social



circumstances, to “be silent.” This is underlined by the fact that the deaf man, Wen-ching, lost the ability to speak and hear when an “incident” happened in his life.

Complicating the music’s connotations in Taiwan is the fact that, in 1930s Japan, the song was used as militaristic propaganda. For the Japanese government, “Wagon Song” aimed to encourage its people to devote themselves to military attacks on China. Japanese militarism was escalating substantially in the 1930s, which ultimately led to the Pacific World War (1941-1945).<sup>12</sup> The war started with Japanese invasion and occupation of other Asian countries, including China. The Japanese government justified this militarism by arguing that the war’s purpose was to help other countries to gain independence from Western colonial powers. More specifically, the Japanese government aimed to constitute an “Assembly of Greater East-Asiatic Nations and the Nations of Asia” based on the precepts of Japanese militarism.<sup>13</sup> In 1931, one year before “Wagon Song” was composed, the September 18 Incident broke out in Northeast China, in which Japan invaded the city of Mukden (now Shenyang), Manchuria. In 1932, the same year that the song was produced, Manchuria was established as a puppet state of the Empire of Japan. Although it did not receive international recognition, Northeast China experienced fifteen years of Japanese colonization until Imperial Japan surrendered at the end of Second World War in September 8, 1945. As I mentioned in relation to the first song, “Along the Songhua River,” for Chinese, the date September 18<sup>th</sup> is the miserable anniversary of the Japanese invasion, which also represents the beginning of the nation’s decay during the twentieth century.

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<sup>12</sup> See Stephen Large, Emperor Hirohito and Showa, *Japan: A Political Biography* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Ako Inuzuka, “Remembering Japanese Militarism Through the Fusosha Textbook: The Collective Memory of the Asian-Pacific War in Japan,” *Communication Quarterly* 61 (2013): 138-139.

Besides, unlike “Red Dragonfly,” a nursery rhyme played and sung by the Japanese woman, Shizuko, “Wagon Song” concerns adults, specifically adult males, who may also constitute the main body of the armed forces. In 1930s Japan, this song had an overtly political and educational function through the WWII period.<sup>14</sup> It especially evokes Japanese people’s emotional bond to Japanese militarism and nationalism, encouraging them to devote themselves to the war. In the scene, all the actors, whether prisoners or soldiers, are male. Yet the scene does not show where the singer is, unlike “Red Dragonfly,” which showed the female singer Shizuko and the feminized instrument piano.

Compared with another Japanese song “Red Dragonfly,” “Wagon Song” is more realistic, masculine and critical. As Hou Hsiao-hsien wrote in the third preface of the book *Wagon Song*, “*City of Sadness* was the first film that used the technology of synchronous sound recording. Yet some parts of the film still needed to be recorded or dubbed at studio, such as the song of ‘Wagon Song.’”<sup>15</sup> Thus it was chosen after consideration and discussion, that “Wagon Song” is the most suitable one to correspond a realistic narration in this scene based on Zhong Hao-dong’s life.

Furthermore, the song is placed in prison, an institution of punishment and part of the state apparatus. Unlike the lyrics of “Red Dragonfly,” which reflect a private or personal space of domestic life or education, the location of “Wagon Song” in the film removes it from this space and, instead, indicates the darkness of the state apparatus, the prison and

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<sup>14</sup> See Tamurashizue (田村志津枝), *People in A City of Sadness: The Songs of Taiwan and Japan* (悲情城市の人びと・台湾と日本のうた), Japan: Shobunsha publication (晶文社), 1992.

<sup>15</sup> “...就电影技术上的突破而言，是台湾第一部采取“同步录音”的电影，但某些部分仍得事后补录或配音，譬如押房难友们唱的〈幌马车之歌〉...” Hou Hsiao-hsien, “Things Were Written Down Documenting Their Existence (凡记下的就存在),” in Lan Bo-zhou, *Huang Ma Che Zhi Ge (Wagon Song)* (SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2018), Third Preface.

execution. Such a setting of the song further emphasizes its critical narration of the scene. By posing the question of justice before the song begins, the film positions “Wagon Song,” sung by a group of people, as not only a collective memory about the Incident but also a critical answer of the question of justice, or a critical rethinking about the Incident through musical and historical background.

Unlike the previous songs, which connect to the past or serve as a musical mediation to remind the audience of the past, “Wagon Song” breaks up the boundary between the musical and filmic world. Wen-ching can no longer escape reality or share his joyful past with Hinomi. He has to face the current situation directly. He has to witness his cellmates’ being sent to court and the sad and frightening fact of their ultimate execution. Also, he is summoned to court later, and thus potentially faces a similar death. Additionally, the song’s importance to Zhong Hao-dong connects directly to real events and people during the February 28 Incident. Accordingly, Wen-ching in this scene directly engages in narration through music rather than being told the story, as Hinomi narrates in the scene of “Lorelei,” or being the bystander, as he and Hinomi are in the scene with “Along Songhua River.” And in the next scene, which features the song “Spring Flower,” Wen-ching’s reflection after he is released further verifies how he has changed his position and attitude during the Incident. Also, the next song prepares the audience for Wen-ching’s fate and sets the final stage of the film itself.

## CHAPTER 6: “SPRING FLOWER”: FEMALE SPACE<sup>1</sup>

The song “Spring Flower” is heard after Wen-ching is first released from prison. As the only song sung in Hokkien/ Minnanyu, accompanied by Erhu, a traditional Chinese instrument, the women singer illustrates Taiwan’s situation during that period by borrowing the story behind the song. The sound is quieter when the camera’s concentration shifts between different female characters/spokespersons of the scene, including the singer and also Ah-shue (the daughter of Lin Wen-xiong), the wife of Lin Wen-xiong, and Hinomi. Accompanied by “Spring Flower,” all the women who are close to (Hinomi) or belong to (Ah-shue and the wife) the Lin family are not only able to speak their thoughts but also to query the situation of Lin brothers. Here, female space is constituted for the diegesis of the film.

This last diegetic song is a Taiyu geyao (folksong/ballade), written and first performed in 1952 by a street singer, performer and composer named Jiang Zhong-qing.<sup>2</sup> Taiyu/Minnan yu/Hokkien is the main dialect of the Minnan group (Min Chinese), representing the iconic culture, spirit, custom and lifestyle of the largest ethnic group of Taiwan and southern Fujian Province. The Taiyu geyao, one main genre of Taiwanese ballade, hereby became one of the most popular genre of music in people’s everyday life, especially in the Min ethnic community.<sup>3</sup> The song “Spring Flower” enjoys great popularity, and it also had a profound impact on Taiyu geyao history. On the one hand,

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<sup>1</sup> Film timecode 1:47:57 - 1:51:56

<sup>2</sup> Zhang Zi-wen, Guo Qi-chuan, and Lin Wie-zhou, *Biography of Taiwan Historical Figures - From Ming Dynasty to Japanese Taiwan* (Taiwan: National Central Library, 2006), 106.

<sup>3</sup> Jaung Young-ming, “The Brief History of Taiyu geyao and Discussion of Popular Music in Taiwan under Japanese Colonization,” *Tatung Journal of General Education* 7 (2011): 1-21.

the song received public recognition<sup>4</sup> through the composer's own street performance. Yet the common way to disseminate musical products and albums is through recording. Thus, the popularity of the song affirms its closer relationship with normal people's daily life. On the other, it was produced in 1950s Taiwan, which experienced economic difficulty after the Second World War.<sup>5</sup> For people, music might become a way not only to relax but also to express their feelings about the society and their living conditions. Taiyu geyao, including this song, consequently have a vital role for Min Chinese. As an alternative but popular song, "Spring Flower" comes closer to the real atmosphere than previous songs in the film. Thus, it would constitute a closer bond with an audience who would acknowledge either the Taiyu ballade or the filmic background.

The lyrics illustrate a wife longing for her husband to come back home as she yearns for a family reunion:

#### **Chinese lyrics**

今夜风微微，窗外月当圆。

#### **English translation**

It is a breezy night,  
outside of the window, I see a full moon.

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<sup>4</sup> As the song was initially introduced to the public by street performance instead of recording, it is hard to verify its popularity and recognition through specific music charts, awards or album sales. Yet the song was covered and re-recorded by Feng Fei-fei and Jiang Hui (Jody Jiang), who are two of the most famous and popular Taiyu singers in Taiwan. For example, Jiang Hui did 25 Goodbye Stage Concerts during two months in 2015, which made a total of 10 billion NTD (New Taiwan Dollar) at the box office. Feng Fei-fei's "Applause" (掌声响起), her best-known work, is even a household song for the whole Chinese-speaking community. As such, through the sales of the album or concerts, their recognition of the song, and singers' popularity among the market, they indirectly show how far the public is aware of the song "Spring Flower." See Feng Fei-fei, *Taiwan Folksong Album 2: The Song of Feng Fei-fei*. Taiwan Kolin Denon Entertainment Inc. ©1977. Jiang Hui, *Remembering Classics 3*, Country Records Co. Ltd. ©1991.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Burdekin and Whited Hsin-Hui, "Multiple Regime Shifts and Multiple Ends of the Taiwanese Hyperinflation, 1945-1953," *Southern Economic Journal* 68 (2001): 77-91; Chiang Min-Hua, "The U.S. Aid and Taiwan's Post-War Economic Development, 1951-1965," *African and Asian Studies* 13 (2014): 100-120.

双人相爱要相见，思君在床边。 A couple (like us) needs to meet,  
I miss you so much when I sit on the bed.  
未见君，亲像野鸟啼， Yet I can't meet you,  
my crying sounds like a homeless bird.  
暖喙，引阮心伤悲，害阮等归暝。 Oh, dear, you broke my heart,  
but I will still wait for you to come back.

明夜月光光，照在纱窗门。 It is the next night with bright moonlight,  
that shimmers on the screen door.  
空思梦想归暝恨，未得倒落床。 I'm pining for you every day and night,  
and can't even fall asleep.  
未见君，亲像割心肠， Yet I can't meet you,  
My heart feels broken.  
暖喙，引阮心头酸，面肉带青黄 Oh, dear, you made my life pale,  
made my complexion always sallow.

深夜白茫茫，冷风吹入窗。 In a white midnight,  
A cold breeze is blowing through the window.  
思思念念君一人，孤单守空房。 I languish for you only  
and still live alone in our house.  
未见君，怨叹目眶红， Yet I can't meet you,  
My eyes are raw with bitter tears.  
暖喙，引阮病这重，情意害死人。 Oh, dear, you make me gravely ill:

My affection for you will kill me eventually.

Example 6.1: Chinese lyrics of “Spring Flower”<sup>6</sup> and English translation<sup>7</sup>

During that period, this situation faced by the family in the song is representative and common. The hierarchical structure in society expects that women, children and the elderly should stay at home. Men are the son of their parents, the husbands of their wives and the fathers of their children; as such, they are expected to shoulder the responsibility of supporting the family. However, in the 1950s, those working in rural areas found it extremely difficult to afford the whole family’s expense because of frequent hyperinflation during that period in Taiwan.<sup>8</sup> Men had to go to a bigger city because it offered more opportunities to earn a higher salary. In this song, the narrator completely understands why her husband has to work far away home, as the last sentence of lyrics indicated “Oh, dear, you broke my heart, but I will still wait for you to come back.” Yet she still feels lonely and sad.

The scene in *A City of Sadness* that features “Spring Flower” starts with the sound of a widow crying. Wen-ching visits his former cellmate’s home and brings the cellmate’s last words to his widow and children. More specifically, Wen-ching takes out the note from the lining of a tie. This detail shows that Wen-ching visits not only because he pities the widow and her family, but also because of a promise and pre-communication in the prison before the “Wagon Song” was heard. His visit is also the first step that follows

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<sup>6</sup> Chinese lyrics see Feng Fei-fei, *Taiwan folksong album 2: the song of Feng Fei-fei*, Taiwan Kolin Record Company, ©1977.

<sup>7</sup> Author’s translation.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Burdekin and Whited Hsin-Hui, “Multiple Regime Shifts and Multiple Ends of the Taiwanese Hyperinflation, 1945-1953,” *Southern Economic Journal* 68 (2001): 77-91; Chiang Min-Hua, “The U.S. Aid and Taiwan’s Post-War Economic Development, 1951-1965,” *African and Asian Studies* 13 (2014): 100-120.

from the previous scene, since Wen-ching has to face his comrades' death and then to do something actively in this scene.

Wen-ching's visit to the widow verifies the relation between two continuous scenes of "Spring Flower" and "Wagon Song." As I argued in the fourth chapter, "Wagon Song" is masculine. Here, I further suggest that "Spring Flower" is feminized. Firstly, in the film, the two scenes not only form a kind of continuous commentary on the action, but also offer two kinds of angles. By carefully considering women's roles, situations, dialogue, and behavior (including not only the widow, but also Wen-ching's brother's wife and daughter, the singer of the song, and Hinomi), they shoulder the responsibility of the second narrator, as Hinomi has throughout the film. Hence, the song indeed shows a feminized angle not only to hint another layer of meaning beyond the filmic content, but also to connect the narration of the film, the meaning of the lyrics, its producing background, and the women's perspective together.

The diegetic source comes from a female singer, accompanied by a male erhu player, on the sidelines of a party at Wen-ching's home, which is full of joy because of a card game:



## Spring Flower

Lyrics and composed by Jiang Zhong-qing

今夜风微微，窗外月当圆。双人相爱要相见，  
明月月光，照在纱窗门。空思梦想归，恨，  
深夜白茫茫，冷风吹入窗。思思念念君一人，  
思君在床边。未见君亲像野鸟啼。啾，引阮心伤悲，  
未得倒落床。未见君亲像割心肠。啾，引阮心头酸，  
孤单守空房。未见君怨叹目眶红。啾，引阮病这重  
害阮肉意，等带害，归青死，瞑。黄。人。

Transcribed by Zhang Tangmuyang

### Example 6.2: Musical score of “Spring Flower” with Chinese lyrics

At this point, the song, as a sound bridge, reveals itself to be diegetic, which also helps to connect the two parallel spaces of the widow’s home and Wen-ching’s home. In particular, when the camera shows the content of the executed man’s note written in blood – reading, “face the world without shame, your father is innocent”<sup>9</sup> – the music and crying almost overlap. Then the scene moves to Wen-ching’s home, where his family holds a gambling party together. This arrangement of scenes not only emphasizes the content of the song for the diegesis but also heralds the women’s future in the Lin family, who will meet a similar situation to the lyrics: “Yet I can’t meet you, my crying sounds like a homeless bird.”

The sequence consists of five movements to explain the status of Lin Wen-ching and his family in these closing chapters of the film. After the first shift from the cellmate’s

<sup>9</sup> Film timecode 1:49:15.

home to Wen-ching's home, the scene moves from the party to the kitchen. It focuses on the oldest son's (Lin Wen-xiong) wife and daughter, who are preparing dinner for the family. Next, it moves to the lobby, where the middle brother, Lin Wen-leung, has relapsed into psychosis. His illness can be identified as his niece, the oldest son's daughter, fails to prevent Wen-leung from eating food intended as a tribute to gods and ancestors. Furthermore, when Hinomi sits at the desk beside him, he ignores her and does not respond to her concern. Later, after Hinomi's attempted interaction with Wen-leung, the scene returns to the kitchen. As indicated in the conversation between mother and daughter below, this is first and only way the film acknowledges the Lin family's situation:

Mom: "Where is Wen-ching?"

Daughter: "He went out yesterday and has not come back."

Mom: "And your father?"

Daughter: "No idea. He went out this morning."

Example 6.3: Dialogue between Wen-xiong's wife and daughter

At last, when the camera returns again to the lobby, it focuses on Hinomi for some time, looking thoughtful and worried.

Wen-leung is the only son/man who engaged in the scene in the Lin's house. Yet his behavior and illness show that he is powerless and unable to shoulder the role of narrator, introducing, explaining, and recording the status of his family. However, Hinomi, the female narrator throughout the film, is also silent here. Other than her "communication" with Wen-leung, she keeps silent, wearing a thoughtful, worried, and helpless look. During this time, the camera still focuses on Hinomi and Wen-leung, which shows an

intense visual contrast between an ill man (in the background) and a healthy woman (in the center of the frame). The dialogue and camera position attempt to raise the audience's concern about the situation of the other sons who are away from home. Consequently, when camera moves to the wife and the daughter, they became two new narrators to answer audience's questions about the scene. Through their conversation (see Example 6.3), the audience is not only able to understand the timeline and logic of the scene, but also to reveal those developments from a feminized perspective.

Thus, Wen-ching's appearance at his cellmate's home is revealed to be a flashback, as he went out "yesterday." When the song occurs, it harks back to the present situation at Wen-ching's home, since the father went out this morning. Between two different spaces and times, music functions as a bridge between the past and the present for the audience. And the female singer continues to sing the song, it also illustrates a helpless story of a wife. At this time, the female singer is also one of the narrators, whose situation warns the Lin family. Yet she is not a family member and will always be the "audience," witnessing where the Lin family will go in the future. As such, the song, the lyrics and its musical background are all borrowed in order to show the relationship between the family, the individual and the society. The Lin family is the epitome of the society, and the life experiences of the four sons of Lin Family – who experience imprisonment and illness – are not only personal experiences but also the epitome of people's lives during that period of encounter with the Chinese KMT.

Liao Hsien-Hao examines how two films – *A City of Sadness* and *Chine, ma douleur – question China*.<sup>10</sup> In relation to *A City of Sadness*, he argues that the film is based on a

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<sup>10</sup> Liao Hsien-hao, "The South as Other: Language, Silence and History in 'A City of Sadness' and 'Chine, ma douleur'," *Chung Wai Literary Quarterly* 22 (1994): 59-73.

post-colonial conflict of the subject or speaking position in a multi-ethnic and multicultural society. More specifically, he considers how three aims – including questioning the center, national reconciliation and identity reconstruction – reflect the meaning and function of the film. The feasibility of achieving these aims is based on the politics of speaking. For Liao, “to (be able to) speak or not,” “what (language) one can speak,” and “many different languages spoken all at the same time”<sup>11</sup> represent three different perspectives from which to develop a politics of speaking.<sup>12</sup> Hence, he concludes that the conflict the film does not show one ethnicity combatting another. Instead, it shows a post-colonial resistance from the subordinate group to win the “subject position” or “speaking position.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, the arrangement of male characters, especially Wen-ching, is the representation of “the politics of speaking.” When Wen-ching changes from an “ahistorical being” to a “participant in history”<sup>14</sup> after his first imprisonment, he notices the importance of the ability to speak.

I consider women’s speaking throughout the scene to be related to Liao’s “politics of speaking,” especially when the song “Spring Flower” participates. During this time, the women shoulder the role of narrator of the whole sequence until the song fades out, while the only man of the Lin family in this scene, Wen-leung, is not able to speak due to psychosis. Furthermore, female narrators in this scene include not only the mother and daughter but also the singer. Unlike the hierarchical structure demonstrated in the song, the women’s position here is essential for constructing narrative space. The emphasis on

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>12</sup> More detailed discussion about language in *City of Sadness* including various dialects, translation, and function of language, see Luo Rui-zhi, “Sound aesthetic in *City of Sadness*,” *Chung Wai Literary Quarterly* 20 (1992): 130-144.

<sup>13</sup> Liao, 63.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 66.

the conversation between mother and daughter, as well as Hinomi's reaction, not only explain the plot but also soften real political collisions through a more feminine angle with an aim to achieving national reconciliation, one of the goals that Liao also investigates. Hence, when only women are able to speak of the situation in the home, they not only became the supports of the family and home, but also participants in history and fighters in post-colonial resistance. The song "Spring Flower" and the female singer serve as the reminder and recorder of Lin family at a time when the family is in the hands of women.

On the one hand, the conversation, accompanied by "Spring Flower," is the only explanation that deals directly with the status of the three sons of the Lin Family, since the storytelling of the film is generally very oblique. Through this conversation, the audience is privy to a perspective from inside the Lin family. The questions asked by the mother are also implicitly asked by the director to the audience. It explains the absence of two men in the Lin family and also emphasizes the meaning of Wen-leung's mental disorder. In addition, the role of the women is closer to that of the spectator of the scene, and the consequent feminization of the audience is striking. Accompanied by the singing, the scene starts its shifts from place to place. It tells the audience what the characters are feeling and predicts what the Lin family will suffer in the future. Yet as the actual diegetic singer in the scene does not belong to Lin family, her feeling and singing are still somewhat powerless within the diegesis. However, when the audience notice that only the elderly, children and women remain at home, it is obvious that the status of Lin family almost overlaps with the story of the song.

Based on the song's background in mid-twentieth-century Taiwan, the song serves as an artistic platform not only to indirectly express women's powerlessness during that period, whether at home or in society, but also to correspond to its political background. At that time, women had no idea where the men were, as in the conversation between the mom and the daughter, or where society would go next. The five movements in this sequence connect with four kinds of mental states in the film: sadness, happiness, confusion and worry. The widow was sad about her husband's being away; the relatives feel joyful about the game; Lin Wen-leung becomes psychotic again when he walks into a business trap; and the women of the family – Wen-xiong's wife and daughter as well as Hinomi – have no idea where the sons of the Lin family are. Yet the only delighted feeling is about the game, an illusory world rather than reality. This contrasting status of different people in the same family further reflects the central theme of the film: the relationship between the individual and the society, the family and the nation. The conflict that the Lin Family suffers and the diverse status of the people involved are ways for the director to show his thinking about politics, history and identity. By addressing various kinds of music, the film shows the director's reflection of that history, which further offer an acceptant media for people to cogitate upon on diversifying of their society in the perspectives of culture, history, ethnic groups, and politics.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

*A City of Sadness*, winner of the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, has received great attention from both academia and the public since its release in 1989. As part of Hou Hsiao-hsien's "Taiwan Trilogy,"<sup>1</sup> discussions around the film mainly concern the 228 Incident, a sensitive historical and political event in Taiwan. The extensive attention and discussion it has received over the years verify that the film is very carefully constructed, including its selection of sound and music. As such, it not only offers an impressive reflection on the 228 Incident, but also shows a unique understanding of the film medium.

Through my analysis of five songs, on the one hand, I argue that the film's music is carefully arranged so as to communicate with the target audience efficiently. The audience's personal experiences, memories, and social circumstances will impact the direction and level on which the music communicates with them, especially when these overlap with either the background history of the piece or the content of the film. More specifically, I consider that the aim of the five songs is to resonate with audiences' experiences as much as they can. The selection and placement of music throughout the diegesis also expands the discussion of identity in Taiwan. By stimulating musical experience, such as hardship under Japanese colonization in Northeast China ("Along the Songhua River"), or independence after Japanese colonization ("Red Dragonfly"), it brings audience to rethink Japanese colonization, Chinese culture and identity.

Both as an audience member and a musicologist, my perspective is shaped by my background, experience and understanding of the relevant scholarship, which largely help

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<sup>1</sup> It includes *City of Sadness*, *The Puppet Master*, and *Good Men, Good Women*.

my thinking about narration and the interpretation of music. Film music study is indeed young compared with other areas in the fields of musicology and film studies. Yet film, as a modern medium, offers a chance for diverse attention, discussion and interpretation. It utilizes people's two essential senses, sight and hearing, to mediate the filmic world and reality. Music, whether diegetic or non-diegetic, serves as the mediation between the film and the audience, contributing an auditory sense of film itself to express its deeper content. As Ben Winters writes, music is an agent, which not only "belongs to the diegesis just surely as the characters" but also "responds to them or be shaped by them (in the way that filmind indicates)."<sup>2</sup> Music has its own "highly coded structure and syntax," such as cultural association (as "cultural musical codes"), harmony and counterpoint, which will offer listener access.<sup>3</sup>

More broadly, this thesis supports the importance of film music study in both film studies and musicology. This interdisciplinary field affirms the importance of film music: if sound were not important, why was there such a push (finally successful in the 1920s) to introduce recorded sound to cinema? If film music were not important, why are so many contemporary films framed by songs? As Gorbman explains, music signifies with three kinds of codes in films, including "*pure* musical codes, *cultural* musical codes and *cinematic* musical codes." She explains that *cultural* musical codes mean "any music bears cultural associations." Meanwhile, *cinematic* music codes indicate the essential role music bears in the cinema, which will "be codified by the filmic context itself, and

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<sup>2</sup> Ben Winters, "The Non-Diegetic Fancy: Film, Music, and Narrative Space," *Music & Letters* 91 no. 2 (2010): 234.

<sup>3</sup> Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 3, 7.



assumes meaning by virtue of its placement in the film.”<sup>4</sup> Yet it is an expensive prospect to produce film music: often famous musicians are hired to help publicize the film and to make important contributions to the film. Accordingly, this points to the importance of music in not only helping the audience to understand the context and the diegesis, but also popularizing the film itself to the public.

The selection of the five songs in *A City of Sadness*, a non-commercial film, deserves more exploration to understand an untraditional cooperation between film music and content arrangement, filming aesthetic, narrative style. As such, I would like to contend that film music, especially in Chinese or Sinophone cinema, merits further investigation and recognition in the near future.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 3.

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