PROJECTED COMRADES:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF IDEOLOGIES IN CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND MAY ’68 CINEMA

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This thesis compares the ideologies in Chinese films made during the Cultural Revolution and French films contemporaneously influenced by the May '68 milieu. By examining the content and methods of the political messages delivered in ten selected cinematic texts, the study finds that the Chinese films display a tendency to convey more political, more exclusive (to specific real-life political figures and entities), and more consistent messages, with a grander narrative, while the French counterparts tend to be more universal (rather than limited to specific, real-life political figures or entities), inconsistent, and self-reflective. All the texts share discontents with the portrayed status quo to different extents, but with one notable difference: the Chinese films provide the answer, whereas the French films often end in impasse, without proposing any viable solution at all.

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Preface

It was Godard's brilliantly eccentric *La Chinoise* that brought the French side of the 1968 zeitgeist to my attention, and subsequently inspired this wildly interdisciplinary study of cinema, politics, and philosophy — a confluence of my personal interests as well. The ostensible ideological resonance between Chinese films made during the Cultural Revolution and French ones contemporaneously inspired by the social conditions of May '68 seemed uncanny and made me wonder to what extent their shared vocabulary means the same in their respective contexts. This study answers the question, but more importantly, during the attempt of answering it, explores the various types and mechanisms of political messaging at work.

One difficulty of my cross-disciplinary approach is that it becomes ambiguous to which discipline's criterion should the research subscribe. In tackling this crucial problem, I am indebted to my thesis advisor, Dr. Iza Ding, whose meticulous feedback is indispensable for this amorphous thesis to have any rigor, clarity, or coherence at all. The study would also not be possible without inspirations from the political theory course "Myth, Propaganda, and the State," during which Dr. Andrew Lotz took issue with the naïve understanding of propaganda and urged the class to think philosophically on this concept that became an underlying theme of this thesis. I am grateful for his teaching and generous help during and after the class. Finally, I would like to thank my parents for their financial support without which I might not be able to have completed this research during summer breaks.

1.0 Introduction and Overview

When the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai was asked in the early 1970s to comment on the French Revolution, he said, “It’s too soon to tell.” This statement has now become, in the West, a cliché of profound oriental wisdom: the impact of one event cannot be determined in “only” about two centuries; the dust that a revolution blows can take, perhaps, millennia to truly settle.

It could be such a wiseman anecdote if only he were talking about the 1789 revolution. But he was not, and the “revolution” in this question, in fact, refers to what in retrospect was anything but a full-fledged one. That event is nowadays known as the May '68 Movement, or in French, simply “mai 68,” a period of volatile civil unrest in the late 60s France.[1]

It does, however, serve as a proof of this senior communist revolutionary’s fervent care for France, a place where he was exposed to communist theories as a student, and (some) French people’s fight for fundamental social change. Although he died way too soon to see a successful revolution in France, Zhou himself did spend his last days in a “revolution” that he, and probably all Chinese people at that time, had complicated, personal feelings about: The Cultural Revolution.

“The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” has been, since not long after its end, officially declared as a “costly mistake” that caused “the most severe setback and the heaviest losses” by the Chinese Communist Party. What may seem to be an uncanny phenomenon to young generations today, whether in the “West” or “East,” is that at the time, carrying Mao’s portrait in street protests and citing quotes from the *Little Red Book,* did emerge among many unlikely places around the

[1] History Today, “Zhou Enlai's Famous Saying Debunked.”

world. Even some citizens within the "capitalist bloc" such the U.S., Japan, British Hong Kong, Italy, West Germany, and France displayed, depending on one's predisposition, either a collective madness or a tragic resistance in response to the status quo. The only safe assertion about that volatile period is its complexity.

A number of films made at that time reflect this trend. In France, it was the time when the New Wave had just ended with its final glamor, and for some auteurs, even this avant-garde movement no longer seemed radical and revolutionary enough. Meanwhile, in China, the state-owned film industry virtually broke down because of the political and economic turmoil. But still, a handful of films were made to express the official revolutionary ideology of the period. In this regard, the conversation of the two "revolutions" in France and China did not just happen on each country's streets, but on screens, too. In some cases, there is even obvious intertextuality in some of the films, most obviously in the French ones where the Maoist China is referred to as the inevitable "other" in different senses, making them valuable to the understanding of China's ideology through a different perspective. Despite the lack of direct reference of France, the Chinese films made from 1966 to 1976 also provide crucial texts of the ideological orientation that are worthy of close readings and comparative studies without which the analysis of the aforementioned French counterparts would be incomplete.

In this thesis, I compare the Chinese films made during the Cultural Revolution and their French counterparts contemporaneously inspired by the social conditions of May 68. I ask one key question: how much commonality – if at all – is there between the two movements situated in drastically different socioeconomic conditions as reflected in these films? This calls for an inquiry of the content and types of the political messages in the films, as well as the way in which they are

delivered in the medium of cinema. It requires the identification of potential patterns in each group of the films as well as a comparison between the potential patterns.

My selection of the films is based on various factors. For the Chinese films, I select films that are made during the Cultural Revolution since the movement is a distinctive and long period whose "official ideology" is hardly the same throughout its development. Among the candidates, I prioritize household names as they represent the most influential version of the official ideology. But I also balance the genres, directors, and years so that they would be less homogeneous and unrepresentative. The French films are not selected strictly based on the time period of May '68. The reason is, unlike the Cultural Revolution, this movement per se is much shorter, making it unfeasible to select only that month or so. It would also not be desirable, since to limit our scope this way is to miss the potential influence of the movement over time. This is especially true as the movement whose social conditions preceded the most intense period and persisted after that one month and that one year. Also, the film production takes longer time than texts such as media reports, which warrants a more liberal selection of the films. Nevertheless, the stretch should not be excessive to the extent that it goes beyond the Cultural Revolution's period. Otherwise, the validity of our analysis would be undermined. The diversity and representativeness in terms of genres, directors are still important factors in my choice. For our purposes, films that do not make any reference to the social conditions of May '68 are not considered in my selection.

Of course, the selection of those films is still limited in number and inevitably not a perfectly representative picture of all the films. But I believe that the analysis partially reflects the situation and is still worth a close examination for our purposes.

To organize the comparison and better present the arguments on the drastically different groups of works (dominantly differentiated not by genre, nor chronological order, but nationality),

the main body of the thesis is separated into the following parts: First, a basic analysis of the nature as well as the basic features of ideology and their presence in fictional texts. This will serve as the groundwork for the following analysis of the texts. Second, an analysis of five Cultural Revolution films, beginning with an introduction of their cinematic and political contexts and ending with my conclusion of the shared characteristics of those films. For each film, a context analysis is provided, before a synopsis and the analysis of ideology. Third, an analysis of five films made during 1966 to 1976 with clear reference to or notable inspiration from the social conditions of May ’68. The structure of this part is the same as that of the second part. In the end, the study summarizes that, while generally sharing a common negative sentiment with capitalism, the films made during the Cultural Revolution, compared with their French counterparts of the May ’68, deliver political messages that are more consistent rather than inconsistent, exclusive rather than universal. The French films are by comparison more self-reflective and, more often than not, do not point to a solution to the depicted problems and discontents.

2.0 A Theoretical Framework of Ideologies in Fictional Texts

To critically analyze the films' embedded ideologies, it is helpful to set up a framework under which the characteristics of the ideology in various texts can be discerned and made sense of. To compare these films with methodological consistency, it is also reasonable to make sure that all films in this study will be held to the same set of criteria. For these purposes, the meaning and usage of many terms ought to be clarified beforehand.

Many concepts involved in this study can be disputed. In fact, most, if not all of them, have indeed been disputed extensively. For instance, the term "ideology" is sometimes used to describe a belief system that promotes special interest but is presented as rational universal truth. Understood as such, it is contrasted by an ideally rational discourse. Some, however, argue that the two concepts are better understood as supplementing each other, rather than in strict opposition. Ideology, according to Purvis and Hunt's theory, is the conceptualization of power relations (domination/subordination) as maintained by social practice, while discourse emphasizes the use of language, which is a unique form of practice with implications on power relations.[2] Much can also be said — and have indeed been said — about the boundary of the political. A clear conceptual distinction between the economic (or the cultural, the social) and the political has been challenged no later than Marx. Thanks to social philosophers, some the second-wave feminists in particular, nor could "the personal" escape an expansive understanding of the political.[3]

[2] Purvis, Trevor, and Alan Hunt, "Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology," 496-498.

[3] Hanisch, Carol, "The Personal Is Political," 113-116.

Instead of committing myself to any specific position in those conceptual disputes and risk undermining the legitimacy of the whole research that relies on a particular set of theory, I set out to do something more modest.[4] Here I do not aim to define the concepts definitively. I instead simply stipulate and clarify the sense in which I will use them. Those concepts can be understood to have different types, which I take to be very much *a priori*, and form categories in classification of specific cases.[5] These categories constitute the framework of this study. We begin with the term "(political) message."

A "political[6] message" that I refer to is an expressed political proposition — a statement that could be of the "descriptive" (what is the "objective" case without no value judgment broadly

[4] Or at least more intellectually honest. After all, any thesis that relies on what the author insists to be the correct understanding of the concepts may as well be said to predicate her thesis upon those suppositions.

[5] They are *a priori* at least in the sense that they conform to the basic logical rules. For example, a proposition can be either about dogs or not — this is *a priori*. Of course, the additions such as the "nuance" between types are results of further reflections among specific cases, and the choice to include certain typology (such as consistency/inconsistency, exclusivity/universality) and exclusion of others (like whether it is about dogs or not) is based on my perceived relevance for my purposes. This inevitable subjectivity in my choice defines and confines the analytic scope of this study, but hopefully not of much impact on the neutrality within that scope.

[6] Here "political" is merely "related to politics." It could be descriptive or normative. There is certainly nuance. A normative statement about a type of food, for example, may or may not have political implications, depending whether it is associated with, for example, a certain culture or class — which could involve sentiments towards a group of people in a certain context. Another example: When one complains about the weather in Pittsburgh, the sentiment, depending on context, could be extended to imply sentiments on the people, the culture, etc., and becomes political.

construed) type or the "normative" (judging value, including "right" or "wrong," "beautiful" or "ugly," "desirable" vis-à-vis "undesirable," and "pleasant" vis-à-vis "unpleasant") type.

A proposition that is "ideological," in the sense that this study adopts, is a normative political proposition ("sentiments" that may or may not be expressed) from which a potentially infinite set of other self-claimed consistent and even self-claimed "sound" (in the logical sense of the term) normative political propositions are theoretically derived. For example, environmentalism essentially considers the environmental wellbeing valuable, and the advocacy for policies and regulations against industrial pollution is derived from that value judgment. According to the believers of this ideology, this set of normative propositions may probably be held universally to all, or "sound."

Therefore, under this framework, a purely descriptive message (supposing that it is possible), even when related to politics, is not ideological. "The current U.S. President is Donald Trump" as a political message in a context where no value judgment is evoked has no ideological worth. Only a normative message can be ideological. There is, of course, nuance. For instance, the Big Bang theory — perhaps not even a political message in many contexts— in the society where religious people have attached the explanations of the origin of the universe with a value judgment (that is, a religion simultaneously promotes messages like "God creates the universe" and "one should love the creator") does make the otherwise non-ideological message have an aspect of normative statement thus making the message relatively ideological in the particular context.[7]

[7] For our purposes, the messages are read in the text's original context to determine whether they involve value judgment, and if so, what kind of value judgment.

Ideological messages can be further divided into two types with nuance in between: messages that are exclusive, and messages that are universal. "Exclusive" refers to the property of a message that regiment a sentiment towards an individual, a group of people, a specific entity, a particular policy, or an action. For instance, in an election where candidate X and Y are essentially the same in all aspects, an advisement of X's campaign propagandizing that "X is the right choice because X kindly donates to charity") is an exclusive message given that the universalization of its logic to its peer Y, who also donates to charity, would not be consistent with its point. It is different from universal ideological messages in that for the latter, if and when different parties promote the same universal message, there would not be inconsistency for this message. For example, communism is rather universal because it claims to be a solution for the whole humanity, while *Chinese* nationalism is more exclusive, because, were there a hypothetical peer of the Chinese nation, whose other aspects are similar to that of the Chinese nation, the promotors of Chinese nationalism would still, in contrary to logical consistency, not advocate for the *other* nationalism (although they would likely deny the similarity to avoid the double standard, unless they do not seek the pretense of "objectivity" at all). Normative statements can also be phrased in a descriptive form since the believers, as said, may deem them universal, or "sound." Statements like "bearing arms is a God-given right," "one should not lie," "it's immoral to kill," and "everyone has the natural right to life and liberty" merely express sentiments instead of truly attempting to describe what is the case, unless they are truly enforced, in which case they become demands, promises, or warnings, like "if one lies, one would face punishment" or, "right to life and liberty is our constitution's promise to our citizens."

Each ideological (i.e. political *and* normative) message consists of positive or negative sentiments. A (set of) ideological message(s) may have mixed sentiments towards a target, which

makes the set inconsistent. The more inconsistent a (set of) ideological message(s) is, the ideologically weaker it becomes.

The two dimensions of an ideology — exclusivity-universality and consistency-inconsistency — will be measured in this study. **Table 1** outlines the various according types, together with non-ideological political messages.

Table 1. Categories of Political Messages

	Ideologically Strong Political Messages (Normative, presented in consistency)	Ideologically Weak Political Messages (Normative; presented in inconsistency[8])	Nuance (Descriptive attached with normativity; consistent or not; sound or not)	Non-Ideological Political Messages (Descriptive, consistent or not; sound or not)
Exclusive Messages (on persons, entities, policies, actions, ideas)	E.g., "Trump is the best president in the history;" "The GOP is the enemy of the people;" "The UK should leave the EU;" "America is inherently exceptional."	E.g., "President Trump did good things and bad things;" "The GOP is as good as it is evil;"	E.g., "The crowd in Trump's inauguration ceremony was the biggest ever."	E.g., "President Trump was born in New York;" "The GOP is the ruling party."
Nuance (between exclusive and universal)	E.g., "All Communist Parties in the world are great."	E.g., "Immigrants are good and bad to a developing country."	E.g., "The employment rate in developed countries tends to be higher when the ruling party is left-wing."	E.g., "The reports of neo-Nazi activities in the world have seen a rise in the past five years."

[8] This "inconsistency" is not necessarily a logical inconsistency. It is inconsistent in the sense that the sentiment it evokes is a mixed one.

Universal Messages (on policies, actions, ideas)	E.g., "Every nation should adopt an isolationist policy;" "We humanity should abolish private property;" "Communism is evil."	E.g., "Communism may be heaven for some people and hell for others."	E.g., "Capitalism and democracy are statistically relevant."	E.g., "Communism is a political ideology."

Ideological messages in fictions are usually not given in plain slogans as seen in many street-level propaganda posters; they are delivered by various often inconspicuous techniques. Nevertheless, they are in nature not unlike less sophisticated propaganda slogans in that they all fundamentally rely on associations — linking the intended target in a message with an emotion evoker. For an author of a fictional text, to deliver an ideological message is to direct audiences to experience an emotion (mostly either positive — pleasure, or negative — displeasure) and attribute this emotion to a target (persons, entities, ideas). It is conditioning in its broader sense, but the path can be more convoluted.

There are emotion evokers that are primal, based on psychological conditions and sociohistorical construction, one usually considers being caring, sympathetic, altruistic as desirable, "moral" qualities, and the image of hurting evokes pain. Besides these primal ones, societies (specifics vary) may also attach positive emotions to concepts such as "patriotism," "freedom," "tradition," "communism," "loyal," "revolutionary." When these qualities are attached to targets like a person, an entity, an action, a policy, or an idea, an ideological message that promotes positive sentiment towards such a target is constructed. For instance, in the context where environmentalism is a positive emotion evoker, a company can brand itself as environmental-friendly and harvest positive sentiment in such an association.

In a context where a target already has a well-established association with positive emotion evokers, the target could in turn become a positive emotion evoker itself, like a newly magnetized object that can magnetize others. For example, if Chairman Mao has been well established to be "caring," "patriotic," "revolutionary," a Communist soldier depicted reading Mao's work in a devout way is likely to be a character that has many respected qualities as well, and his property of being a Communist would attach positive emotions to the Communist Party.

In creative expressions, emotion evoker could be more inconspicuous. The image, for example, could be presented in a distorted manner, with effects, filters, etc. The camera would take a certain angle and move in a manipulative way. The distance from camera to characters or other objects makes a difference. The background music and other sound effects can render very subtle emotions. The objects that seemingly appear arbitrarily are likely to be a deliberate design with intended semiotic associations. The time and order of images may be edited to serve a particular purpose. The lighting evokes various emotions as well.

In some occasions, the ideology can be conveyed without the presence of the target (hook) in the text. Instead, it can be in meta-text such as the authorship. A state-sponsored film in which there is no reference of the regime can still link the regime to the emotion evokers (some "morals," or "values" in a cartoon story, for instance) in the text. The negative messages work in a similar way. The only difference is that, of course, the association would adopt negative emotion evokers.

One problem in the analysis is the potential mismatches between the authors' intentions, the texts *per se*, and the viewers' subjective reading of the text. This study is not unconcerned with authors' intentions, but any pursuit of which, especially when relying on authors' own comments, risk undermining the exact effort. Therefore, the analysis would for the most part draw inferences from the texts per se, as the goal is to identify what ideology could be conveyed to the audience

through the text, with only considerations of necessary cinematic and political context. I will try to refrain from making normative statement in the analysis. The epistemological limitations, however, would be inevitable.

Do such stipulations — even though I do not wish to defend (i.e. argue and provide reasons in the theoretical disputes) them — inevitably commit me, at least in this particular study, to some stances on the subject matter of "the political," "the ideology," or "the discourse?" I do not resist this judgment as long as it does not constitute a theoretical critique of the stipulations. I do fully acknowledge that those who understand ideology in a way different from the sense of the word used in this study may be disappointed. I only hope that those stipulations are justified for my purposes: I do not wish to conduct a thorough analysis of a film that is not explicitly political, such as Truffaut's *Stolen Kisses* (1968), not because I reject that it is political. I only do so for the sake of the feasibility of this study — I would not be able to select all the films, or some of the film over another if I do not prioritize the explicitly political ones. I take full responsibility if this prioritization results in limitations or bias in my selection and analyses of the films. Still, it should be noted that in my analyses I do go beyond what is explicitly political, and the interpretation of the dialog in *The Mother and the Whore* is one salient example.

3.0 Chinese Cinema in Cultural Revolution

3.1 Overview of the Political and Cinematic Context

After the Great Leap Forward, whose devastating failure was largely attributed to Mao, and China's split with the Soviet Union, as an escalation of ideological (and geopolitical) dispute over Khrushchev's secret report that denounced aspects of Stalinism, Mao, likely perceiving his own status threatened, began to emphasize the importance of a new round of political purge. With the precursor of his criticism of *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*, a play that he considered an insinuation of his dismissal of Peng Dehuai, the then Minister of National Defense and an open critic of Mao's Great Leap Forward policy, Mao started to give direct guidelines of Cultural Revolution with the "May 16 Notification," in which he declared that "it is necessary […] to criticize and repudiate those representatives of the bourgeoisie who have sneaked into the party, the government, the army, and all spheres of culture, to clear them out or transfer some of them to other positions."[9] In this Politburo conference where the Notification was issued, Mao also selected his own Cultural Revolution Group, replacing Peng Zhen's "Five Man Group" that defended the play's intention. Mao denounced this group's account (known as the February Outline) a sign of Peng Zhen's revisionism.[10] The period from this to the Communist Party's 9th National Congress in 1969 was the first phase in which Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were purged and Mao

[9] Marxists Internet Archive, "Circular of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution."

[10] Roderick MacFarquhar, Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*.

appointed Lin Biao as heir presumptive. The second phase, in which Lin remained second-in-command, ended with the failure of his alleged coup in 1973. From the Party's 10th National Congress (1973) to 1976 when the Cultural Revolution ended, the Gang of Four effectively held power.[11]

The logic of Cultural Revolution may seem contradictory: The mobilized masses were authorized and encouraged by the de facto head of regime to purge the major components of regime, except for that head per se and his trusted ones — be that Lin Biao or Gang of Four. But it *would* be consistent if we summarize the ideology as "Maoism" not in the sense of a universal ideology, but a strict obedience of the authority of Mao only — together with, at best, its extension to his trustees. Also, only in this manner can we make sense of the lack of a genuine left-right (progressive-conservative) dispute in all the causes of the revolution. However, for what could only be understood as optic reasons, disloyalty was not the charge Mao would openly accuse his perceived opponents of. Radical attacks on anything associated with "the past" — from Confucianism to "bourgeois" tendency, or other discontents towards bureaucracy — would serve a logical excuse to give the persecution a facade of progressive politics — one that the masses could be and indeed were mobilized around as enthusiastic participants.

Cultural Revolution was not the first time that Mao emphasized on ideological control of art and cultural affairs. In Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art (May 1942), Mao had already pointed out that, "[t]here is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes, art that is detached from or independent of politics. Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause; they are, as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole

[11] Encyclopædia Britannica, "Cultural Revolution."

revolutionary machine."[12] This essentially explains his sensitivity to arts, which may contain adversarial political messages, and summarizes his policy on art-making — to deliver political messages in accordance with his regime's ideology.

Given that Cultural Revolution is about the authority of Mao (and the opposition of any opposition of such authority), the radical left facade (anti-conservative of any kind, and in favor of efforts towards a communist ideal) and that all forms of art should convey revolutionary messages, it seem to follow that the films ought to be highly consistent and exclusive propaganda. The analysis does not contradict this conclusion, but *how* this is executed is not as simplistic.

3.2 *The Legend of the Red Lantern* ("红灯记," 1970)

Context

With most works previously made forbidden for screening and new ones hardly produced, available films were scarce in the Cultural Revolution, especially in its early stage. Adapted from one of the eight original "model plays," *The Legend of the Red Lantern* (1970), a "collective creation" by the China Peking Opera Troupe and August First Film Studio, became one of the first films that get to be made. As a filmed stage performance, the film calls into question its qualification of being a genuine *cinematic* piece. Although in a technical sense, simply being recorded on such a medium suffices the threshold of a "film" in its broad denotation, the doubt does have its merits in terms of cinematic specificity and genre conventions. It is noteworthy that

[12] Zedong Mao, "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art."

such practice has a long tradition in China's cinematic history. In fact, the first Chinese-made film is usually considered to be *The Battle of Dingjunshan* (1905), a recorded performance of Peking Opera. As a "modern revolutionary Peking opera," *The Legend of the Red Lantern* adopts this traditional theatrical form, with elements such as costumes, scores, stage settings, and character archetypes "reformed." The theme, being "revolutionary," entails a hyper-political nature.

Plot

Set in Japanese-occupied territory of China during the World War II, the film features a revolutionary family of three: The father Li Yuhe (Hao Liang), the daughter Tiemei (Liu Changyu), and Grandma Li (Gao Yuqian). The three characters, all of whom communists or sympathizers of the Communist Party, live under one roof, but are in no way related by blood, only sharing class solidarity and a commitment to the revolutionary cause. Li Yuhe works as a signal lamp ("the Red Lantern") operator, but secretly engages in revolutionary activities for the Party. His mission in the film is to pass a codebook to the Communist guerrilla. However, a traitor has exposed his identity to a Japanese military police officer, Hatoyama ("Jiushan" in Chinese, acted by Yuan Shihai), leading to Li's subsequent arrest and torture. The failure of interrogation prompts Hatoyama to arrest Tiemei and the Grandma. Nevertheless, all three of them refuse to give away the codebook, resulting the execution of Li Yuhe and the Grandma. Tiemei is purposefully released under watch. With the help from her neighbors and an undercover comrade, she successfully passes the codebook to guerrilla that foils the Japanese soldiers' attack.

Ideology

The film makes a simplistic portray of its characters. Every character can be classified into either the protagonist camp or the antagonist camp with absolutely no ambiguity. There is no display of internal struggle within any character, and no heterogeneity within each camp. Structurally, the ideology is of perfect consistency.

The protagonist camp shares the following traits: They are all Chinese. They are all underclass (working class). They are all communists (Party members or sympathizers). They strongly support Chairman Mao. When mentioning the Communist Party, they usually add "Chairman Mao," implying an equal status of the two names (e.g., 63:21). The members of the antagonist camp — only two of which are named — share the following trait: They are all rooted for the Japanese invasion. Notably, the Japanese military official, Hatoyama, admits the Communists' ability in his monologues for multiple times (e.g., 64:50). He is also revealed to be a former doctor (a bourgeois occupation), who is "rich" (55:27).

Those characteristics in each camp are not inherently associated with one another. Altering one or more of them does not always affect the plot's consistency. For instance, the protagonist camp could be supporters of Chiang Kai-shek, his Nationalist Party, and his government. The protagonists could be of upper-middle class, sympathetic to the communists — or not, and support the war against Japanese invaders. Therefore, the combinations and division of camps are deliberately designed in this particular way to regiment sentiments and promote ideologies — ones that are in favor of the protagonist camp's characteristics (i.e., communism, Mao's leadership, anti-imperialism), and are against the antagonist camp's (i.e., imperialist invasion, bourgeois tendency).

The evidence is — and this is ultimately the only possible evidence which will be used as a test applying to all films in this study — that some of the characteristics themselves are emotion-evoking. For instance, the willing to sacrifice oneself for a cause, as opposed to the self-serving motive that Hatoyama openly advocates for (58:00) and the traitor applies, is considered positive by social norm. Also, in the Communist regime, being poor, exploited working class evokes positive sentiments, whereas being rich implies exploitation.

Visual presentations and sound effects are also notable emotion evokers in this film. Protagonists, especially Li Yuhe, are frequently given close-ups, in which they are given chances to express their qualities such as bravery — with the help of forceful sound effects (e.g., 62:35). For characters of the other camp, however, the camera rarely features their facial expressions at all. Instead, the camera usually keeps a certain distance from them, with no sound effect. The posture of the two camps' characters are different, too. For instance, Li Yuhe always stands straight, speaking sonorously while Hatoyama always stands with a stoop, speaking in high pitch with sinister smile or desperate anger.

In terms of signification, the red lantern (signal lamp), featured in the film's title, is the most notable symbol (see **Figure 1**). A part of Li Yuhe's work, this object serves no substantial function in the plot, except for being an occasional signal for covert mission. An incarnation of the "revolutionary" camp's motive, it provides a rationale for the Li's actions as the Grandma openly attributes the lantern as a guidance for the poor and the workers, and also, an heirloom that bond the family together. In one sense, the embodiment of the Communist Party and Chairman Mao, or more abstractly, a political cause or an ideology, is superior than family bonding since even when given chance (as Hatoyama threatens to execute the whole family), family members are willing to not just sacrifice themselves but other members for this cause.

Also, the power structure of the lamp's function has been altered. Instead of being a tool for its holders to give signals (orders), the lantern in film is, contrarily, giving orders (guidance) to the characters. Despite the absence of the authority per se, the film through this symbol conveys its supreme status. In this regard, and in consistency with the title, the lantern is *the* theme, whereas even the protagonist hero and the McGuffin codebook are rather peripheral.

To sum up without definite categorization, we can conclude that the film delivers strong (consistent) ideological messages on primarily the exclusive level, emphasizing pro-Mao, pro-CCP, pro-working-class, anti-Japanese / anti- "imperialist,"[13] anti-bourgeois ideologies. The text itself, presenting a narrative without the author's stance differentiated from it, does not invite consciousness, or any reflection, of its subjectivity.

[13] The quotation mark is put to note the term's nature as a floating signifier, especially when the term is applied to real life persons, entities, policies, actions, etc., blurring the line between exclusivity and universality.

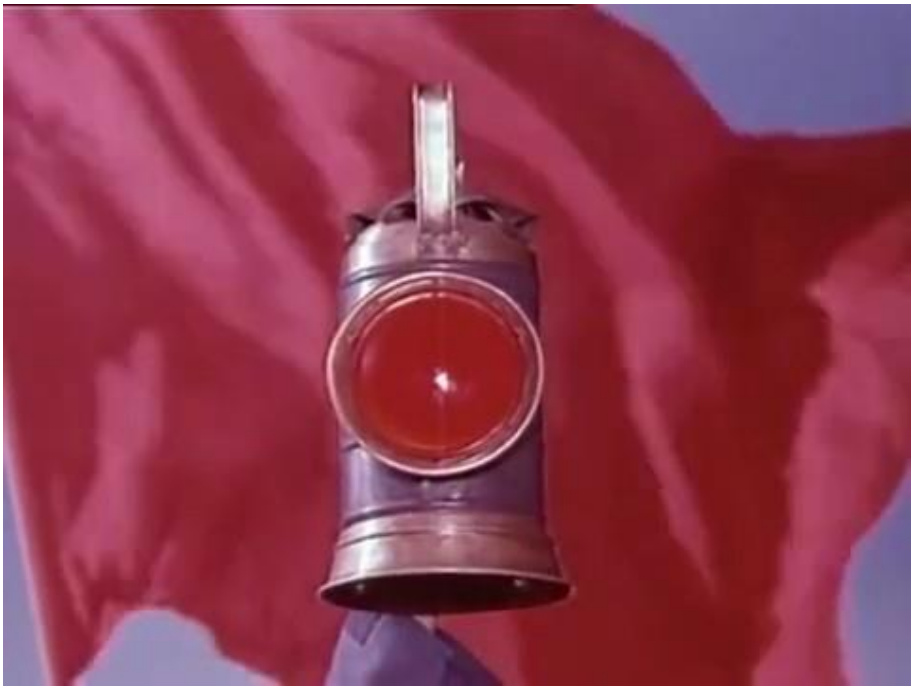

Figure 1. The "red lantern" as a recurring symbol (27:19, 100:59, 112:02, *The Legend of the Red Lantern*)

3.3 *Start an Undertaking* ("创业," 1974)

Context

Directed by Yu Yanfu and produced by Changchun Film Studio, *Start an Undertaking* (1974) survived Jiang Qing and her fellows' harsh criticism to become one of the most influential feature films made during the late Culture Revolution. Its survival was a result of Mao's permission: "The film has no major mistake. Distribution is suggested."[14] It was ten years after the Chinese Communist Party's nine editorials' criticism on Soviet Communist Party (1963 to 1964),

[14] Cited in Zhang Boshu, *From May Fourth to June Fourth: A Critique of 20th Century Chinese Despotism* ("从五四到六四: 20 世纪中国专制主义批判") , 36.

and despite Khrushchev's removal from office, the relation of the two states remained at all-time low, with occasional military conflicts. Facing a common adversary, the United States and the Communist China began to "normalize" relations. The U.S. President Nixon visited China and met Mao in 1972, followed by the release of the Shanghai Communiqué.

Plot

Beginning with scenes from Yuming oilfield, where workers like Zhou Tingshan (Zhang Lianwen), aided by communist agents, have protected the facilities from fleeing enemies' (presumably the Nationalists, and their American consultant — acted by Pang Wanling) desperate destruction, the film tells the story of Daqing, a newfound potential field that would help the nascent People's Republic with its struggling energy supply. The difficult situation, including the limited resources, largely portrayed as a result of (Soviet) revisionists' and capitalist imperialists' blockade, prompts Feng Chao (Liu Guoxiang), the vice head of the project, and Zhang Yizhi (Chen Ying), the chief geologist who back in Yuming has refused to leave with the American consultant, to support a more conservative approach in the prospecting operation. Zhou Tingshan, however, disagrees with such policy. He enthusiastically advocates for a more proactive method for every potential oil well. The head of the project, Hua Cheng (Li Rentang), sides with Zhou, and yet the plan is then jeopardized by a peasant who has been angered by Feng's response to his concern about his farmland. The work resumes after the incident, but during the work, Feng then under-rations food supply for Zhou's team. Upset by Feng's undermining calculations, Zhou purchases potatoes from a peasant, leading to accusations of his capitalist tendency. In a conference, he firmly confronts with Feng and ends up being praised for diligence and altruism. Finally persuaded by Zhou, who, after studying Mao's "On Contradiction," has found a way to carry out the plan, the

geologist Zhang refuses to be swayed again by Feng, who cites political consequences if and when the plan that they have once vehemently opposed turns out to be a success. Meanwhile, the "modern revisionists" completely cuts off the oil supply to China, leaving Feng attempting to scaling down the plan. With Hua's support, Zhou, mobilizing the masses' workforce to produce "home made" gasoline, leads the team to work even harder. In the end, Feng is criticized by people for his dissenting views. He is then arrested after being revealed to be historically anti-revolutionary and secretly obstructing the current project. With people's hard work led by Zhou, the struggle of Daqing ends with a great success upon which the country's almost self-sufficient oil supply is based.

Ideology

The depiction of characters in this film remains stereotypical in its political context, although it *is* more nuanced than many of its peers. The protagonist, Zhou Tingshan, is an exemplary model worker that the Communist Party frequently showcased. In fact, the character is likely to be based on the real story of Wang Jinxi, who also worked from Yumen oilfield to Daqing. He has many qualities that evoke positive emotions. The following are the most notable ones: First, he is caring, kind, and altruistic. It is depicted in several scenes, including the most obvious one, in which he is found to be sharing his corn buns to seemingly everyone in his working group persistently. Second, he is industrious — often working hard overtime voluntarily. He even once escaped from hospital to join the work. Third, he is always empirically correct. Fourth, in many occasions, including the aforementioned ones, his appearance, including many smiling close-up shots, are backed by upbeat background music. Fifth, he is a devout believer of Chairman Mao, Lenin (e.g., 99:20), the Party (e.g., 41:33), and the regime —which as a whole is not just a target,

but also an emotion evoker in the political context. Six, he advocates for Mao's policies, including mass movement, independence (self-sufficiency, e.g., 35:40 to 35:47), and voluntarism.

Hua shares many qualities of Zhou's: being loyal to the Party, sticking to Mao's teaching, caring about the working people (e.g., 66:53 when he covers a napping Zhou with his own coat with pleasant background music), etc. He is also against conservative policies and for voluntarism.

On the contrary, Feng Chao is depicted with mostly negativities. He not only opposes the more radical policy, but also opportunistically shifts his position, concealing his opinions for his own benefits (e.g., 36:10), and keeps making obstacles in the project for his own political and material interests (101:24). He is historically anti-revolutionary. When he talks to Zhang, disturbingly loud thunder can be heard in the background. Lightning creates unsettling effects on his hand as he gives a cigarette to an undecided Zhang.

Zhang Yizhi's depiction is mostly positive but to some extent mixed. He is one of the few characters who in a certain regard has an arc. Zhang refuses to leave China with an arrogant American consultant, a form of patriotism constructed to be a positive sentiment provoker. But he often sides with Feng Chao, putting his expertise, scientific professionalism (e.g. 47:13 to 48:24, in which he asserts his geological survey, leaving Zhou, who — not entirely consistent with his radical approach — proposes a second examination, sighing "the old problem again") and a more cautionary working approach over the mass mobilization policy and Mao's voluntarism, against what is depicted to be the Party's will. But eventually, he abandons his original beliefs, and sincerely supports the praised protagonist Zhou. When he opines his opposition, there is sometimes ominous background music with close-ups of startled, silent meeting attendees.

Character arcs enable possibilities of a different reading of the film's message. When a character is associated with partly negative emotion evokers (a negative bait), one could

understand that the author intends to weaken the message, acknowledging that those who are "wrong" (or simply opposing to the leadership's decision) on one occasion are not necessarily wrong in every regard. But alternatively, one can also interpret that, especially when the context has perpetuated a black-and-white reading of a text, even the seemingly not so negative target is negative enough and should be treated as a villain. The difference between Zhang and Feng seems to reflect, according to the filmmakers, where the fine line is drawn, but the confounding factors — that Zhang's opposition has been proven wrong and that he sincerely acknowledges his mistakes — make one wonder whether such a person is supposed to be tolerated by this ideology were he or she insists his or her dissenting opinion. There might be more political implication in terms of the growing intolerance of dissents in the domestic purge, but this character — a "bad" or "pseudo" communist (see Zhou's hardly veiled accusation at 101:50), may also have to do with an international feud, referring to the Soviets.

Although briefly touching (American) "imperialism," the film has a more frequent and pointed criticism of "revisionism," albeit, curiously, without naming the Soviet Union or its allies. At 42:55, after telling Zhou to beware of international hostility, Hua states that "they" ("enemies," unnamed) sell low quality oil at price twice as much as that of capitalists' market. At 68:45, Hua claims that "in their place, satellites rise to sky, yet the red flag falls onto the ground," and "books of Lenin have been abandoned." He warns that enemies may take advantage of China's difficulties resulting from natural disaster to disrupt the country even under the rhetoric of revolution. At some points, Feng is depicted to echo this "revisionist" logic: at 102:12, the film associates Feng with the revisionists. Feng, after defending his communist identity, claims that "disregarding the international condition, we are in for disadvantage." Previously (75:13), seemingly out of nowhere,

he murmurs, “offending a rich friend…an invitation to trouble!” — a deliberate link to the Soviet dispute.

The film also raises a question of the ownership of the oilfield, putting scientists at odds with workers. At 112:09, Feng asks Zhang, by giving up scientific plan, letting workers to make decisions, “who is the owner of the oilfield?” Feng emphasizes that, it is still scientists who decide and workers who drill accordingly. By this logic, the film implies the equivalence of ownership and decision-making.

A rich peasant, Long Fugui, serves a minor role in the film. He relocates the sign (40:20) on the oilfield for his own interest and is criticized by some cadres. One suggests that his behavior is counterrevolutionary and should be arrested. Feng claims that this is an inherent problem of the rich peasant’s class, and the person should be educated.

The ideological subjectivity is most obvious in an over two minutes clip from 54:30 to 57:07 after a close-up of Zhou raising his head from a book he is reading, saying “[…] our undertaking relies on the two essays; learning a bit is like crossing a mountain”[15] It is a music video with lyrics that praise the industrious workers (displayed in the clip), the Party, “Beijing” (referring to the power center, with Tiananmen shown, see **Figure 2**), Chairman Mao (who “leads us forward”), and the “revolutionary prospect.”

[15] “On Practice,” “On Contradiction,” — both were written by Mao Zedong.

Figure 2. "Looking to Beijing, brimming with deep affection" (55:13, *Start an Undertaking*)

To roughly sum up without definite categorization, we can conclude that the film delivers dominantly strong ideological messages on primarily the exclusive level, emphasizing pro-Mao, pro-Regime / patriotism, anti-Soviet-bloc / anti- "revisionist," anti-American-bloc / anti- "imperialist," voluntarist ideologies.

3.4 *Sparkling Red Star* ("闪闪的红星," 1974)

Context

Adapted from a namesake story published in 1972, directed by Li Jun and Li Ang, produced by August First Film Studio, *Sparkling Red Star* is an extremely rare piece that takes up the genre conventions of a war film, a children's film, and a musical at the same time.

Plot

Set in the civil war between the Nationalist government and the Communist Party during the 1930s, the film features Pan Dongzi (Zhu Xinyun), a pre-adolescent boy living in the countryside where a landlord, Hu Hansan (Liu Jiang), who has been treating the peasants tyrannically, flees before the Communists' takeover. Pan welcomes the Red Army and actively takes military duty, guarding against Kuomintang and Hu's return. However, due to the Party's failed "left-leaning policy" that ousts "Chairman Mao," the Red Army has to retreat. Pan's father (Zhao Ruping), a fearless Communist soldier, leaves the village with the army, and the mother (Li Xuehong), who newly joins the Party, dies in a fire set by Hu's people as she fights against them. Pan Dongzi, raised by peasants and a Communist soldier, helps the rebellion by smuggling salt and collecting intelligence as an undercover child labor in a rice store that supplies the Nationalist military. In the Red Army's surprise attack, he eventually takes the opportunity to set a fire in Hu's house, and singlehandedly kills Hu with a knife. After the victory, a result of restoration of Mao's leadership, Pan is awarded a red star on his military hat, before his father returns home.

Ideology

The characters can once again be clearly divided into two camps: the protagonist camp, consisting of Pan's family, Communist soldiers (the Red Army), and peasants; the antagonist camp, consisting of the landlord Hu Hansan, the rice shop owner, and the Kuomintang military.

The protagonist camp is associated with positive emotion evokers. They are caring, as seen in the depiction of Red Army soldiers caressing the child tenderly (07:00 to 07:24); they are

altruistic and brave, as seen, for instance, in the father's insistence of saving anesthetic for others (16:30) and the mother's sacrifice in the fight.

Besides the primal emotion evokers, they also have the following properties that mostly serve as ideological targets:

First, an unconditional loyalty to the Communist Party, including its armed forces. It is depicted, for example, in the scene where she joins the Party. At that night, the mother says emotionally to Pan Dongzi after her pledge: "I have given myself wholly to the Party. I'll do whatever the Party wants me to do, with all my heart" (35:06). Pan Dongzi replies enthusiastically, before embracing her mother: "Mommy, you belong to the Party, then I'm the son of the Party; I'll also do whatever the Party wants me to do" (35:15). Another telling example is a soldier's remark, "the Party is his [Pan Dongzi's] real parents" (59:50). Also, the peasants depicted all welcome the Red Army and their military victories (e.g., 15:00, 48:30).

Second, a deep reverence toward "Chairman Mao."[16] Characters of the protagonist camp frequently refer to Mao with cheerfulness (e.g., 36:15) Almost whenever the film mentions "the Communist Party," or "the Central Party," "Chairman Mao" comes right after — if not precedes — the name (e.g., 35:55). Being able to see Mao is considered a blessed opportunity by the children (78:12), and they aspire to meet Mao one day (79:48). In a conversation, Pan Dongzi claims Mao to be omniscient (79:27).

[16] Historically, the first time that Mao gained the title of "chairman" was in 1931, when he became that of the "Central Executive Committee" and "People's Committee" of the "Chinese Soviet Republic."

Third, a loyalty to the "Red Regime." On multiple occasions, the adults in the protagonist camp tell Pan Dongzi that their goal is to (wipe out the enemies and) "defend the Red Regime" (09:40).

Fourth, an eagerness and willingness to apply violence on perceived enemies. For instance, Pan Dongzi eagerly asks whether his father is making a lance for him, and the father replies joyfully: "as a member of Children's Corps, you have to be armed," leaving Dongzi dissatisfied for not getting a rifle. Pan Dongzi is also depicted to forcefully throw his lance at Hu (12:46). It is often accompanied with hatred toward enemies, as seen in Pan Dongzi's vow to revenge his father's wound. He claims that, "when I grow up, I will also fight the white[17] dogs; I'll let them bleed, too — bleed a lot" (18:26). The father replies, "[you will] just revenge *me* alone?" — suggesting that it is a revenge of many more people. Pan Dongzi's killing of Hu Hansan is praised by his comrades (94:58).

In the antagonist camp, characters are depicted to be hostile and abusive to poor people. Hu Hansan is said to have caused the death of Pan Dongzi's grandfather (03:23). He also beats Pan Dongzi arbitrarily (05:51) and burns Pan's mother to death. They are also wealthy, greedy, self-interested. The owner of the rice store would not sell the rice as demanded, only to raise the price and supply military afterwards. They loathe the poor people and their alleged Communist tendency (e.g., Hu's comment on peasants found to smuggle salt, "[d]on't you see, those unruly people are Red to their bones" [63:50]).

[17] "White" refers to the Kuomintang. The usage is originated from the Russian "White Army," "white émigré," etc.

A notable expression is in the voiceover — a manifestation of hyper-subjectivity. Through a grown-up Pan Dongzi's mouth, it narrates that the Red Army's withdrawal is a "left opportunist"[18] mistake that has ousted Mao from leadership. This is significant in terms of the Cultural Revolution's narrative since common characterizations often consider the Cultural Revolution to be a "left-wing" political movement. It also raises unintended possible inconsistency when Mao's voluntarism and anti-revisionism are in the rhetoric of the same movement. However, this type of inconsistency would not be acknowledged in such texts, therefore would not change the strength of its ideology.

Sound and visual effects all have ideological implications when they serve as emotion evokers. At night, a close-up of Pan Dongzi's face apparently glows as he talks about Chairman Mao (e.g., 78:15). In terms of signification, a clip of sunrise — an image frequently associated with Mao[19] cut into the dialog right after Pan Dongzi and his mother cheerfully refers to Chairman Mao for 23 seconds (36:16) with the music of "The East is Red" in the background. Throughout the film, the Red Star serves a recurring thematic symbol on multiple occasions (e.g., 07:24, 08:15, 08:39, 72:42). The Star, representing as abstract as a revolutionary cause or as concrete as the Communist military, in some sequence takes over the camera's focus (e.g., 07:24) and in some cases precedes its focus on others (e.g., 07:25, 08:39). The non-diegetic music in the film often comes with blatantly ideological lyrics. When Pan Dongzi is on the bamboo raft, a song chanting

[18] In the original film, the wording is "*zuoqing*," which literally means "left-leaning," but it could also connote "left-deviation," a tendency of premature advance, sometimes come with quotation marks as in "'left' opportunist." In the official dubbed version of the film, the wording is "left opportunist"— it is unknown that whether the "left" is in quotation marks.

[19] In "The East is Red," for example, Mao is compared to a rising sun.

"keep Party's teachings in mind" and "follow the Party like their fathers" (e.g., 71:20) is in the background.

To roughly sum up without definite categorization, we can conclude that the film delivers dominantly strong ideological messages on primarily the exclusive level, emphasizing pro-Mao, pro-Party, pro-Regime, pro-proletarian, anti-Kuomintang, anti- "bourgeois," anti- "feudalist" ideologies. The intertextual inconsistency, very likely to be unintended, hardly affects the ideological strength. The use of voiceover is a vessel of hyper-subjectivity and does not distance itself from the audience.

3.5 *Haixia* ("海霞," 1974)

Context

A rare piece featuring a heroine as the leading character, *Haixia* is an adaption of a novel published in 1966 named "Islander Female Militia" (*Haidao Nüminbin*). Produced by Beijing Film Studio, it is co-directed by Qian Jiang, Chen Huaikai, and Wang Haowei. In the credits, the film acknowledges the assistance from the People's Liberation Army.

The representation of female fighters was not unprecedented, however. Famously, *The Red Detachment of Women* (1970) — a recording of ballet performance adapted from the 1961 namesake directed by Xie Jin is among the eight model dramas in the Cultural Revolution.

Plot

In a fishing village on a small southern Chinese island, Li Bashisi (Yu Wenzhong), chooses to abandon his infant daughter who he can no longer support due to poverty. The girl (Cai Ming),

drifting to the sea, is saved by another villager, Uncle Liu, who names her “Haixia” after the beaming sunglow bathing the shore.

In the village, the local fishing overlord, Chen Zhan’ao is revealed by fishermen, including Li and Liu, to have been taking advantage of them with a rigged scale. Later, Liu and Li are killed by Chen’s people before Liu’s house also being burned down. After Chen’s accountant You Ergou “reclaims” her fishing boat, Haixia’s mother is found dead in her bed. At one time, Kuomintang soldiers trespass Haixia’s home and rudely expropriate their food.

Fighting Kuomintang on the island, Communist soldiers friendly exchange their rice for the grass Haixia eats. Haixia then voluntarily helps these soldiers in the war. The Kuomintang forces are driven out, but Chen and some of his fellows remain at large.

The grownup Haixia (Wu Haiyan) joins the Communist-led militia and guards against the enemies. As a platoon leader, she also helps other women join the militia, and educates men who look down upon female soldiers. One day, a stranger, Liu Atai (Yu Shaokang), claiming to be seeking a lost relative, comes to live on the island. Meanwhile, Haixia loses her post due to an unusual accident during night patrol. In an investigation, Haixia finds that Liu Atai has been conspiring with You Ergou. After communications with enemies are found out, Liu Atai is revealed to be the pirate who used to kill for Chen Zhan’ao. At the night of the plotted attack, Chen, who comes from the sea with Kuomintang soildiers, is killed by Haixia.

Ideology

The characters can once again be divided into two camps. The protagonist is Haixia, and her camp includes fellow villagers and the Communist soldiers, whereas the antagonist’s camp includes the overlord Chen Zhan’ao, the pirate Liu Atai, the Kuomintang soldiers.

Characters in the protagonist camp largely share the following qualities: altruistic (e.g., Uncle Liu saves Haixia; Communist soldiers give their rice to Haixia; Haixia brings boiled water for the soldiers), supporting the Communist Party (e.g., 95:41), supporting the Communist regime (e.g., 95:55), supporting Mao (whose works and demands are frequently referred to, e.g., 40:13, where Haixia reads his book, 81:21, where Haixia cites his "everyone is a soldier" teaching, 95:46, where people directly praise Mao for bringing them the great life), pro-proletarian (e.g., 95:31), anti-feudalist (landlord, represented by Chen Zhan'ao), anti-"capitalist"/ anti-Kuomintang (e.g., 94:45). Notably, Haixia and her female fellows in the film frequently promote gender equality. They refuse to stick to traditional roles of women and reject some stereotypes of women. They are portrayed to be active in the militia, and often compete with men in their training. The protagonist camp, on the contrary, appears to be rude (e.g., Kuomintang soldiers at 23:34 to 24:54), deceitful (e.g., Chen Zhan'ao's rigged scale), and abusive (e.g., taking people's property by force).

The narrative of the plot is highly subjective. The film begins with the frame of a grown-up Haixia's personal account, through a voiceover, of her transformative experience due to "the Liberation." She says:

> In the old society, people like us were soaked in bitter water. At that time, I had eyes yet could not see, had mouth yet could not talk. Nowadays, the Party has sharpened my vigilance. I can now not only see the island, the motherland, but also the world. […] Today, we live in the happy socialist era. But never will we forget the past miseries (0:30).

The film also ends with her voiceover which calls for people to learn the lesson guarding against enemies. The body of the story is therefore completely her personal perspective, and there is not much room for alternative reading in the whole text. By no means can we observe any technique that is used to distance the audience from its narrative, warning the subjectivity of what is told and how it is told.

The sound corresponds with Haixia's narrative. For example, epic music is in the background while Haixia make the aforementioned opening statement. Mao's portraits frequently appear when Haixia is present (e.g., 56:48, 70:04).

To roughly sum up without definite categorization, the film delivers strong ideological message on an exclusive level, emphasizing pro-Mao, pro-Party, pro-Regime, pro-proletarian, pro-gender equality, anti-Kuomintang, anti- "feudalist" ideologies. The use of voiceover is a vessel of hyper-subjectivity and does not distance itself from the audience.

3.6 *Breaking with Old Ideas* ("决裂," 1975)

Context

Breaking with Old Ideas (1975), produced by Beijing Film Studio and directed by Li Wenhua, came one year before the death of Mao and the fall of the Gang of Four, and two years before Hua Guofeng formally declared the "victorious end" of the revolution in the Eleventh Party's Congress.[20]

Previously in 1973, Mao, and then in 1974, *People's Daily*, began to criticize Confucius, who was referred to by Soviet propaganda to contrast the unbenevolent, undemocratic ideology in Mao's China, which was compared to legalism. Especially in the following "Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucian" movement started by Jiang Qing, the target was extended to Lin Biao (died

[20] Hua Guofeng, "十一大上的政治报告" ("Political Report on the Eleventh National Congress of the Communist Party of China").

in a failed coup in 1971), who according to Mao was a supporter of Confucianism — so was the Kuomintang. Lin was deemed far-left and later far-right by Mao.

The school the film is based on, the Jiangxi Communist Labor University, was founded in 1958. In 1962, Mao wrote a letter to the university, praising its practice.[21]

During the Cultural Revolution, higher education in its conventional form was virtually non-existent. Previously, students already had to go through political background check for admission. Since 1966, universities had ceased to admit new students. Starting from 1968, after Mao met and encouraged the Red Guards multiple times in 1966, the intensified "Down to the Countryside Movement" sent school-aged youths ("educated youth") to the countryside en masse for alternative education. In the same year, Mao's comment on a new report of professional training in a factory became "Seven-Twenty-One Instruction," demanding schools to train workers and peasants before putting them back to production. Many "7/21 Universities" were founded consequently at that time.

Plot

The film tells the story of a newly established "communist labor university." Long Guozheng (Guo Zhenqing), the head and a worker of a collective plantation, is summoned by the local vice party secretary, Tang Ning (Wen Xiying), to be the principal and party secretary of this university. Contrary to the proposal of vice principle Cao Zhonghe (Chen Ying) that positions the school close to the city, Long locates it in the countryside. Rejecting the admission policy set by

[21] Mao Zedong, "給江西共產主義勞動大學的一封信" ("A Letter to Jiangxi Communist Labor University").

director Sun Ziqing (Ge Cunzhuang), Long also disregards exam scores and diploma as qualification, judging applicants solely on their political background (e.g., class label), political participation, labor skills, and work experience.

Following the admission, Long also works with students in mountains to build classrooms, opposes a teaching outline that is beyond students' capability, and stands with a student who openly calls for less "unpractical" lectures on locally uncommon horses. Adopting ideas proposed by a peasant representative (Zhang Zheng), Long is determined to merge work and learning to one in this university. Unconvinced, Cao and an official (Bao Lie) see an arranged visit to more "formal" universities as an opportunity for Long to change his mind. However, the students he observes — inconsiderate toward peasants' work, loathing countryside homes — further convince him of his own ideas.

Meanwhile, at school, after finding a massive insect attack, students volunteer to help in the fields. As a result, some of them fail to finish the exam and are consequently expelled by Cao. Back to university, Long is angered by this incident. He revokes Cao's decision, and confronted Cao on his "feudal-bourgeois" ideology. After several other incidents, including a self-interested student (Yu Fagen [Wang Binglin]) that he misjudges, Sun Ziqing realizes his past mistakes. Cao, however, continues to suppress students' appeal against a land privatization policy, and takes part in a criticism and denunciation meeting against a student, Li Jinfeng (Wang Suya). In this meeting, Long reversely praises students like Li and denounces the leaders who hold the meeting as "taking a capitalist path."

Long is subsequently threatened by Zhao to be dismissed from office. Zhao even proposes to terminate this school. But soon, the university receives a letter from Chairman Mao, who praises the path the university has taken. People cheer, crying out loud "long live Chairman Mao," and

the films ends in Long's call for continued struggle and breaking away with old ownership model and other traditional ideas.

Ideology

This film shares more similarities with *Start an Undertaking* than others in terms of the characters given that, in both cases, the dramatic conflicts are party infightings. Still, the characters in *Breaking with Old Ideas* can be divided into two categories, with the exception of Sun Ziqing's subtler case. Long is undoubtedly the protagonist, and Cao antagonist. The peasants and students (except for Yu Fageng, who later repents, and his father) are aligned with Long, and vice versa. Cao, Zhao, together with Sun (before changing his mind), are antagonists.

Long, the peasants, and students are associated with an educational policy that prioritizes the "proletarian" — the agrarian in particular — political identity over academic professionalism, whereas the antagonists deny this idea and dismiss the formers' accusation of representing "bourgeois." In a conversation, after being accused of bourgeois tendency by Long, Cao responds with a telling line (59:38):

> Oh, "it is of bourgeoise!" Then "two plus two equals four" — what class is that of? And what class nature does "x plus y" have?... As long as we can cultivate talents with high scientific and cultural knowledge, isn't it serving socialism anyway!

In fact, this is essentially the only "ideological" difference between the two camps. In no other significant way are Long and Cao associated differently. Long and Cao are equally humble (see 06:45, 41:15). They both yell at people when trying to make their point (see 87:55, 88:50). If anything, they are from different class background — while Cao grows up in an intellectual family

(89:10), Long is from a humbler origin (90:00). Long cites Mao more (e.g., 35:26, 90:10, 95:29) while the antagonists do not.

In many ways, the core conflict is a dispute on orthodoxy. The status of Party, the regime, and "socialism" are established, unquestioned, underlying norm. The questions are: what do those ideas mean? What is the correct interpretation? Long, threatened to be expelled from the Party, remarks (116:43):

> Utilizing the power that the Party and the people bestow on you, you are able to do that. But that does not make you correct, doesn't make you reasonable. Truth is not held by you. […] That the enemies hate and vilify us is nothing strange, since they are enemies. It is you who are strange: singing the same tunes with the enemies!

The film, with its high subjectivity, achieved by and evident in the cinematography, the use of music, sound effects, etc., takes the stance the protagonist's interpretation: the proletarian politics is above everything else. However, the ultimate judgment is realized by simply a letter from Mao, which, by this logic, becomes the de facto court of appeal, the source of supreme authority.

The most subjective part in which the protagonist is featured to call for "breaking with old ideas" (see **Figure 3**) without audience in the film is notable in that, although this is a clear moment when the character delivers ideologically-laden messages directly to the viewer, he still would not look at the camera. By not even breaking the fourth wall, the film does not disclose its subjectivity, seeking no distance from its viewers.

To sum up without definite categorization, we can conclude that the film delivers primarily exclusive pro-Mao, pro-Party, pro-Regime, and a "proletarian" educational policy political messages in a consistent manner. The film is highly subjective yet does not seek to distance the audience.

Figure 3. Speaking directly to the viewer without breaking the fourth wall (121:42, *Breaking with Old Ideas*)

3.7 Summary

Judging on the selected films, cinema in the Cultural Revolution are made to appear consistent — within each text as well as among the texts. In every film, there is a usually clear division of camps, and the filmmakers' subjective stance is always clear: audience can hardly be confused about the filmmakers' message and everyone is expected to read the messages in the same way. A viewer who holds a particular type of political belief — one that the filmmakers intend to shape one towards — can hardly find herself being challenged in a Cultural Revolution film. Intertextually, a viewer who is not challenged by one of the films is also very unlikely to be challenged by another one of the them.

Being consistent, or more accurately, rhetorically consistent, does not mean that they are indeed consistent. In *Sparkling Red Star*, the policy ousting Mao is narrated as "left-leaning"

mistake, whereas in *Start an Undertaking*, being radical is the Mao's way and being conservative is an antagonist's characteristic.

That raises the question: *what is the criterion-setting supreme message*? In other words, which are derivative, and which is the parent message, if there is such a distinction? The options are likely to be a version of extreme "left-wing" ideology, the Party-State's ruling, or the authority of Mao. It is unknown, since rarely are they put against each other — there is no way to find out what one is supposed to do, for instance, when Mao no longer endorses the same version "left-wing" ideology he signatures, or the Party-State he effectively controls. Even when Long in *Breaking with the Old Idea* ostensibly challenge the Party's establishment, this protagonist is not challenging the ultimate establishment — Mao.

But the fact that Mao is always depicted as embodiment of the "correct" doctrine is utterly dubious especially given that the ubiquitous reference of Mao would not be necessary were Mao to be revered because of what he stands for, instead of, because Mao defines correctness. In this regard, the message is more likely to be on the exclusive level.

Also, being highly subjective does not mean that the films seek to leave room for the viewer to be aware of its subjectivity. Instead, in all those direct address to viewer, the characters never break the fourth wall. To be fair, breaking the fourth wall is not necessarily an act of distancing — it could be considering the viewer's part of the theater. But not breaking the fourth wall would make any reminder of the artifact nature of the filmic text impossible when there is no other forms of self-reference at all.

To sum up without definite categorization, judging from the five analyzed texts, we can conclude that films in the Cultural Revolution tend to collectively reflect a consistent — that is, ideologically strong — political message, on primarily the exclusive level, emphasizing positive

sentiments of Mao personally, from whom the positive sentiments of a version of “radical left” ideology and the political apparatus (the Party, the military, the state) derive.

4.0 French Cinema "in" May '68[22]

4.1 Overview of the Political and Cinematic Context

The year 1968 marked a decade of de Gaulle's rule. Ten years before, the General's resumption of presidency was in many regards not a result of genuine popular demand, but rather, a desperate fallback in a time of deep uncertainty. The growingly violent Algerian War caused a political and potentially military turmoil in France proper, where responding policies were gridlocked by the Fourth Republic's parliamentary feud. Public opinion also saw more reflection on the country's oppressive colonialism, especially in light of France's own fate in the World War II.

Ostensibly, the President de Gaulle had been successful. His rhetoric and tactics alleviated the tension in Algeria. His vision for a more "presidential" constitution was approved in a referendum. He managed to explore a more independent foreign policy that refrained from leaning too much on either bloc. However, his governing style in the following ten years was characterized by many as dictatorial.[23]

In terms of socioeconomic aspects, it was also a period of rapid modernization for the country. France was experiencing a drastic transition, known as "thirty glorious years," from a

[22] As mentioned, the "May '68 films" selected here are not necessarily made during the movement, but rather contemporaneously inspired by its social conditions.

[23] Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s*

heavily agricultural economy to one that featured increased number of middle-class professionals. The consumerist society in many ways became more "open," if superficial, but the social apparatus often remained conservative. Responding to the society's expanding need for trained professionals, universities during that period admitted 36,000 more students before awkwardly downsizing the number due to unmatched employment prospects for graduates.[24]

The ten years, from 1958 to 1968, was also a significant moment in the history of cinema. Inspired by various theories discussed in the magazine *Cahiers du cinema*, directors began to experiment with new techniques to express personal ideas. In this "New Wave," directors such as François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard considered themselves (and *were* considered to be) "auteurs" of their works.

The core events of May '68 were started by protesting students (who on the surface were initially dissatisfied with conservative dormitory policies) with workers joining later. The tension between demonstrators and the authorities escalated quickly with different political forces seeking to tilt the cluster of ideologies in this movement to their favored direction. Sympathizers from various fields also expressed their solidarity with the protesters, including the academic intellectuals, celebrities, and artists. The 21st Cannes Film Festival, held in that month, was significantly affected by the incidents. Some filmmakers, including Godard and Truffaut, called for reform or even complete shutdown of the film festival. As a result of the turmoil, the festival was ended five days earlier than scheduled, with no award given for that year.[25]

[24] Ibid, 51.

[25] Tobias Grey, "Flashback: Cannes 1968."

4.2 La Chinoise (1967)

Context

In 1967, the United States was fighting in Vietnam — a former French colony — against Communists supported by China and the USSR. In France, having learned to be strategically moderate in previous electoral disappointments, the French Communist Party, an important political force of opposition, was still ideologically aligned with the post-Stalin Soviet Union. Yet the influence of Maoism began to pick up among the left, leading some to mark the year "Chinese."[26]

By this year, Jean-Luc Godard had already gained fame for critically claimed works including *Breathless* (1960) and *Band of Outsiders* (1964). His previous films frequently touched ideology-laden subjects but were not as explicitly political as his *La Chinoise* in 1967. His political ideas — in filmmaking as well as (other forms of) activism — became more notable since this film in this year before May '68.

The script of *La Chinoise* to some extent parallels Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* — a political satire as well as tragedy depicting the nihilism of various young radicals in a Russian town.

Plot

[26] Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s*, 113.

The body of the film, or at least parts of which, is presented as "a film in the making." In 1967, in a borrowed apartment that is decorated with communist slogans and posters, a few young people are gathered to discuss Marxism-Leninism and Maoism. In front of the camera, the characters give interviews in turn. Citing an example of Chinese students protesting in Moscow, Guillaume (Jean-Pierre Léaud) talks about the nature of theater, explaining why a sincere acting is nothing deceptive. Yvonne (Juliet Berto) talks about her early life experience in a village, and her hardships of finding jobs in the city, where she sometimes prostitutes herself for a living or to buy things. Admitting the contradictions in her life, she then expresses distrust of the Russians for antagonizing the Maoist China. A guest speaker, Omar (Omar Diop)[27] then gives a talk on Stalin's intellectual dogmatism, the future of Marxist philosophy, and class struggle — which, according to him, would not end even under socialism. In the speech, he quotes Lenin to criticize the "lies" of Brezhnev (21:53). Véronique (Anne Wiazemsky) says that in the suburb outside Nanterre, with some Algerian kids and factory workers, she found the "three basic inequalities of capitalism"[28] especially those of the "Gaullist regime." She also expresses her wish to dynamite Sorbonne, the Louvre, and the Comédie-Française. Growing up in a family of bankers, she is ashamed for profiting from the economic system. She then cites a book claiming that exams are also unfair because they are created for full-time students, and that they cause anxiety as well as "sexual frustration." But she says that books should not be banned, because, in that case, they would not have the opportunity to be criticized.

[27] Omar Blondin Diop (1946-1973) was a Senegalese intellectual and activist who attended university in France before being expelled from the country. An important figure in the post-1968 rebellion, he was an active member of Young Marxist-Leninist Movement of Senegal. In 1973, he died in a Senegalese prison.

[28] The inequality between "intellectual and manual work," "town and country," "farming and industry."

Guillaume then discusses news media and current events. He proposes a different understanding of reality and fiction, stating that, contrary to popular belief, the filmmaker Méliès, who made fictional works, were in fact documenting current events "like Brecht," because of the importance of "conscientious" analysis. He then reenacts and comments on different states' roles in the Vietnam War with sunglasses of different flags: Americans are cruel and immoral, the Russians cowardly and hypocritical, the Chinese progressive and brave. Britain and France are among the "onlookers." Citing President Johnson's different treatment of "Communists" in Europe and in Asia, he says that there are "two kinds of communisms:" the real one that is still "dangerous" (to "imperialist" America), and one ("the Russians and their friends") that has become "revisionists." The situation, as he sees it, is that the revisionists and imperialists are allied against China. He further claims that he is for the just wars, against the unjust ones.

Véronique in the interview continues to criticize the French Communist Party for being close to Russia. She also says that intellectuals like Sartre are hiding in their studies. That was followed by the talk of Kirilov (Lex de Bruijin), who addresses the problem of obscure language and socialist art which was "knifed at back" by the likes of Trotsky.

After a speech considered by fellows as "revisionist," Henri (Michel Semeniako), who had been allegedly beaten by members of Sorbonne Marxist-Leninist group previously, votes against his majority fellows' plan to build a terrorist group. In an interview following his exclusion, Henri, in favor of "peaceful coexistence," further dismisses the Maoists as fanatics detached from reality.

On a train, Véronique exchanges opinions about her terrorist plan with Francis Jeanson (Francis Jeanson)[29] who tries to talk her out of it. Following Kirilov's suicide after signing a confession claiming the responsibility, Véronique attempts to assassinate the Soviet Minister of Culture who is visiting France, but mistakenly shoots a different person.

As an actor, Guillaume goes on to explore socialist theater, to work as apprentice, and to disseminate copies of the Little Red Book. Eventually, the landlords come back and are displeased by the chaos in the apartment. In the final scene, Véronique closes the door and, in the voiceover, says that this is merely the first step in a long march.

Ideology

The main characters in this film share the identity of Marxist-Leninist. Except for Henri, who identifies with communists and does sell *Garde Rouge* (14:25) but is nevertheless ousted for being "revisionist," this group of people have ideas that are very much indeed consistent with the radical left-wing doctrines that Maoists promote, while vehemently opposing the Soviets mostly for their compromise to "the imperialists." While often quoting Mao as their theoretical basis, they, however, do not zealously revere Mao *personally* judging from their expressions.[30] In this sense, they are a fairly decentralized group, as they show no loyalty for any established political entity in France — albeit they are attempting to form one themselves. They do show support for the

[29] Francis Jeanson (1922-2009), a philosopher, journalist, and activist, was deeply involved in the FLN (the National Liberation Front) in the Algerian War. Used to work closely with intellectuals including Sartre, he also taught Wiazemsky in university, according to Colin MacCabe's *Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at Seventy*

[30] The characters only mention "Mao" twice. Guillaume says that "Mao's ideas can help me" (08:17), and Véronique refers to "the Chinese who apply Mao's ideas" (34:23).

Communist regime of China, often accompanied with anti-imperialist critique on the US and its likes. All of them, including Henri, share deep dissatisfaction with the political and economic status quo — inequality, above all — of French society.

There are not many conventional, norm-based emotion evokers attached to those characters. They are not portrayed as particularly altruistic nor selfish. They do express sympathy for people, but since the scope is limited to certain classes, it is not a "categorical" emotional evoker. In other words, it is qualified and depends very much on the audiences' own constructed associations instead of the primal ones. Likewise, they are not very tolerant with internal dissents — a quality that could be considered either uncompromising by some or authoritarian by others. They also have a terroristic violent tendency — which might be accepted by some if they recognize the cause.

This film is a particularly complicated case in terms of subjectivity. To begin with, we can hardly fit the text into one single cinematic genre. It has features of mockumentary, which is under the category of comedy, but if that were the case, it would have a too unusually serious tone as well as subject matter compared with its peers in this genre. In fact, the violence discussed and applied distinguishes the film from an ordinary political satire. Yet, the comical elements, including the comic strips used, parodic reenactment of various countries' involvement in the Vietnam War, cartoonish human silhouette shooting target, the accompanied clips of pop song ("Mao Mao"), and the affectionate interactions, superpose a lighthearted mood that distinguishes the "story" from a typical tragedy.

Also, the technique of meta-film adds an additional complexity. Apparently drawing ideas from Brecht's theory of "distancing effect" (*Verfremdungseffekt*) — which was supposedly

inspired by Peking Opera, Godard deliberately includes the appearances of clapperboards, camera, personnel and the formality of documentary-style interview.

Figure 4. The moments of distancing effect (*La Chinoise*, 9:02, 10:26)

The original purpose of distancing effect is to prevent the viewer from being too emotionally immersed in the fiction, sympathizing with characters as presented, forgetting to intellectually judge the text on their own. On one hand, it does indeed partly cancel the subjectivity of authorship, or at least, it puts a reminder between the text and the viewer as a voluntary disclosure of the author's inevitable and inherent subjectivity, as opposed to, in traditional practice, authors present their personal perspective, trying to convince the viewer of the author's case while implying that they see the presented world on their own. On the other hand, however, this practice may lead to a false impression that the subjectivity solely exists in the displayed part. The fact is, the subjectivity is ubiquitous in cinematic piece or other forms of art — creative expression. Pointing to camera (and in the case of *La Chinoise*, with probably a different camera, see 9:02) as a disclaimer may be deceptive on a higher level when what it is filming is also staged, and even more so when it is supposed to invite independent thinking while virtually everything this thinking could possibly be based on is the text *per se*.

In *La Chinoise*, it is even more complicated as it frequently takes the form of documentary-style interviews. The interviewees-actors interact with the filming personnel *in character*, which blurs the boundary of fiction and non-fiction, suggesting that the actors' lines are not staged but rather they *are* the rebels named Guillaume, Véronique, etc., having an interview with a group of outsider[31] documentary-makers.[32]

[31] Judging from Henri's interview, in which the interviewer — supposedly with the filming crew — at that time does not even seem to know the name of Guillaume and other basic facts of the interviewees' identity.

[32] The complexity (or inconsistency), however, is furthered by the ambiguous moment in which Henri seems to be acting according to a script (10:26).

Another notable aspect is the use of illustrative images interweaved throughout the film. They are hardly neutral, and clearly represent the points that the characters make.

Figure 5. A flashed picture of Stalin, with eyes painted red, when Omar claims that his death enables freedom of speech, and a cartoon illustration as Véronique kills the wrong person, with sound of gunshots (*La Chinoise*, 18:59, 87:25)

The extent to which these illustrations are "endorsed" by the author in this film is up to debate. They could be understood as purely illustrative, describing the sentiments of the characters. We may say this about the red-eyed Stalin (18:59, see **Figure 5**), and the reenactment of Americans' killing of Vietnamese — accompanied by violent American comic superhero coming toward the camera (35:36, see **Figure 5**) as well as intense sounds of gunshots. However, even in this sense it still involves subjectivity of the author. And we also see such images used in the non-interview part like the narration of Véronique's assassination (87:25), in which case the violence is depicted in a lighter tone and creates an irony given the format of American comic strip, as well as an angle that puts the camera (viewer' eyes) at that of the shooters' perspective. Similarly, intertitles are used both to mark different sections of the film and to display ideological messages, most notably a quote from Mao (64:47, see **Figure 6**).

Two pieces of music also stand out in this film, one being an often-repeated excerpt from Vivaldi's "Concerto for 2 Violins," which is very upbeat, the other being "Mao Mao," an upbeat pop song by Claude Channes that praises Mao's ideas (e.g., anti-imperialism, mass line) — the exaggerative tone of the song, however, arguably cancels its seriousness as an otherwise undoubtable propagandist piece — very much an epitome of the whole film's ideology. Besides, at the end of the film, Véronique's voiceover also adds to a significant ambiguity of subjectivity.

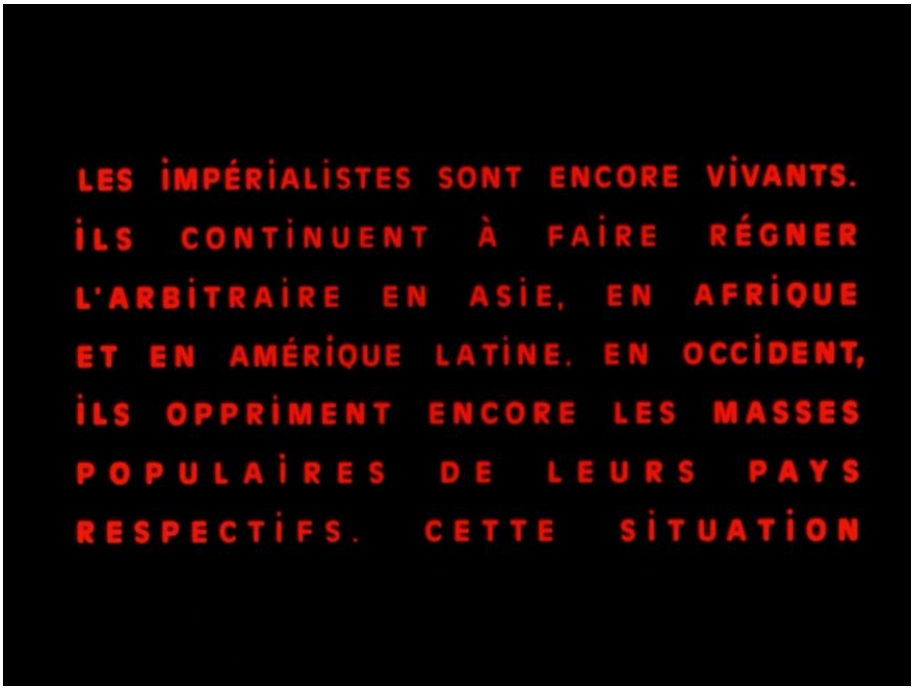

Figure 6. The similar forms of intertitles that are used to functionally indicate a film sequence ("Dialogue 4: Henri after his exclusion from the Aden-Arabie Cell") as well as display ideological remarks ("The imperialists are still alive […]") (*La Chinoise*, 58)

Based on the various aspects, *La Chinoise* is a fairly "pure" piece in terms of ideology. Within the text *per se*, there is no provided epistemological benchmark that can be used to judge whether their ideas are incorrigibly absurd, or nobly idealistic, thus generating a set of particular sentiments. In fact, any of the cited basis of the characters' sentiments, be that the cruelty of American military action in Vietnam, or the problem with PCF (the French Communist Party), comes from the same characters themselves, from whom the author of the film keeps an ambiguous distance. The film makes minimum universal association, refraining from suggesting the inherent favorability or unfavourability of this set of ideology to most audience, hence judgments are more of a reflection of the audience's own associations. To put it in plain words, the message of the film is perhaps, "this is some of the self-claimed Maoists and their beliefs."

The complexity and ambiguity of the film defy a summary.

4.3 *Weekend* ("Week-end," 1967)

Context

In the same year (1967), Godard made two more feature films, one of which being *Weekend*. This French-Italian co-production was said to be inspired by the idea of Julio Cortázar's short story named "The Southern Thruway."

Plot

The film is essentially a series of fragmented sequences, connected mostly by a storyline of an urban middle/upperclass couple's road trip to the countryside. Both waiting for a right time to run away with each's own secret lover, Roland (Jean Yanne) and Corinne (Mireille Darc) are unhappily married but still maintain the apparent relationship. They do, however, conspire to secure their inheritance of Corinne's dying father's wealth. On their way to Oinville, the village where Corinne's parents live, they encounter prolonged traffic jams, bloody car accidents, a hijacker claiming to be Joseph Balsamo (Daniel Pommereulle), Emily Brontë (Blandine Jeanson), Saint-Just (Jean-Pierre Léaud), Tom Thumb (Yves Afonso), a pianist (Paul Gégauff), and anti-imperialist revolutionaries. The couple kills Corinne's mother after she refuses to split her husband's legacy with them. In the end, Corinne joins a group of eccentric guerilla fighters who cannibalizes Roland.

Ideology

The ideology in the film is expressed as much scattered as the plot and the depiction of the characters are. One thing is, however, recurring and consistent, and that is the selfishness and dishonesty of this bourgeois couple. They have absolutely no concern of others' feelings, and act

only for self-interests, without moral concern about the means they take. It is evident, for example, when they would kill for the inheritance. They are obsessed with material interests and superficial pleasure, a sign of consumerism — we can see this when they make wishes of luxury cars and hair color in front of Joseph Balsamo, crying for Hermès handbag as people are dying in a car accident (37:41), ripping clothes off the corpses (51:58). They are further associated with pro-U.S., pro-Israel political opinions. At one time (64:59), when Roland asks for hitchhike, an old lady passing by asks him whether he would like to be "screwed" by Mao or Johnson. When he replies that, "Johnson, of course," the lady asks the driver to drive on, and dismisses Roland as "Fascist." Later, in another conversation (66:10), Corinne is asked whether Israel or Egypt struck first (in the Six-Day War of 1967). When Corinne answers, "the bloody Egyptians," the driver calls her "pathetic ignoramus" and leaves.

There are other notable opinions expressed through various characters, who may not have much character arc but are nevertheless worth examination as they have real-life allusions. For example, when the couple set Emily Brontë on fire, Tom Thumb watches the flame and remarks:

> I said to myself: What's the good of talking to them? If they buy knowledge, it's only to resell it. They want knowledge to sell at a profit. They want nothing which would stand in the way of their victory. They don't want to be oppressed, they want to oppress. They don't want progress, they want to be first. They'll submit to anyone who promises they can make laws. I wondered what I could say of them. I decided it was that.

This is essentially a progressive intellectual's disillusionment of the bourgeoisie.

Similarly, there are lengthy manifesto-esque monologues by radical revolutionaries (69:12). In their remarks, they incite armed rebellion against the West's imperialist oppression in Africa and the Middle East. They also make satirical critique on the U.S. foreign aid on Congo

(68:13), big oil companies' practice in Algeria (68:57). With unsettling music, the camera cuts to, among clips of previous sequences, the indifferent, impatient look of the couple.

Among others, the depiction of the so-called "FLSO" (Front de Libération de Seine-et-Oise), perhaps a parody of many guerillas named "Liberation Front," is filled with a pre-modern primitivity and violence (cannibalism, for instance). Roland also refers to Jesus as a communist (e.g., 29:28).

The use of sound, which is often asynchronous, is as much anarchic as some sequences of images and appearance of intertitles. This feature, together with many self-referential lines (such as, at, 45:57, "What a rotten film! All we meet are crazy people"), does result in a distancing effect that, like in *La Chinoise*, breaks away from traditional cinematic narration. In some regards, it questions the very medium of film *per se*, which may be a sign of humble self-skepticism that could be counterproductively applied to the film's own messages, or simply another radical message that calls for an end of pretense of objectivity in popular culture.

Figure 7. The end; the end of the cinema (*Weekend*, 104:05)

A gesture against tradition and authority, the final images of the film constitute a wordplay: "the end" (*fin*), "the end of cinema," and the permission number for the film (104:05, see **Figure 7**). It is a radical statement against different types of establishment.

Lots of symbols in the film could be interpreted as satirical, exposing the general absurdity, fatigue, and disruption of modernity/capitalism. For example, in the lengthy depiction of a behemoth traffic jam, a Shell oil truck is stuck, so is a sailboat on a truck (see **Figure 8**). The recurring scenes of car crashes also attach disasters and dysfunctionality to modern life in general.

Figure 8. A sailboat stuck in traffic jam (*Weekend*, 22:10)

To summarize the ideology without definite categorization, we can conclude that the film delivers strong ideological messages on a subtly nuanced universal level. Although it contains multiple sentiment evokers — mostly negative ones — toward specific "imperialist" regimes such as the U.S., they merely scratch the surface on those specifics. Through fictional roles whose real-life references are not emphasized, the film focuses on rather general sentiments on a class — without a qualification that specifies "French capitalists." What makes it nuanced is that this one class is specific: the bourgeoisie. It is similar for its anti-imperialist message that targets Western

powers — not limited to a particular power but still very much specified. The film's subjectivity is limited as it does not confine the viewer's perspective to a very specific one — there is hardly someone embodying the author's attitude. This film seeks to distance the viewer, in subtle manners and through its reference to the film's artifact nature, which could be a way to be deliberately inconsistent, or a medium-shattering blunt radicality of its messages.

4.4 Tout va bien (1972)

Context

In the 1972 film, *Tout va bien* ("All's Well" / "Just Great"), "Mai 68" is frequently referenced in past tense. In the middle of his "revolutionary" period, Godard once again collaborated with the radical filmmaker Jean-Pierre Gorin. With him, Godard cofounded the Dziga Vertov Group after their previous film *Le Vent d'est* ("Wind from the East," 1970).

By that time, major changes happened in French politics. Premier Pompidou effectively brought workers' strikes to an end with the Grenelle Agreement (May 27), a result of strategic negotiations with labor unions and employers. In June 1968, de Gaulle's party had a major victory in the legislative election. A year later, however, in a referendum on a constitutional amendment much regarded as de Gaulle's pursuit for a personal mandate, the majority voted against his proposal, leading to the president's subsequent resignation. Pompidou, previously dismissed by de

Gaulle from office, became his successor after all, continuing the Gaullist Party's rule without de Gaulle.[33]

The PCF (the French Communist Party) in May '68 supported the workers' strikes while denouncing the revolutionary students' riots — many of the students were Trotskyists, Maoists, anarchists, and activists of the "New Social Movement," which came into fashion after May '68. The party's relatively new alliance since mid-1960s with moderate leftwing parties had only lackluster results by far in the early 1970s. [34] General Confederation of Labor, or the CGT, is a signatory in the Grenelle Agreement and, in 1970s, a supporter of the Union of the Left — of which the PCF was a member.

Within the French Maoists, the most prominent faction is "Gauche prolétarienne" (GP),[35] a "Mao-Spontex"[36] party, of which *La Cause du peuple* ("The People's Cause") was the press organ. Jean-Paul Sartre directed this paper for a period of time, before co-founding a center left daily, *Libération*, in 1973.

The GP was founded by some former members from The Union of Communist Youth Marxist-Leninist (*Union des jeunesses communistes marxistes-léninistes*), or "UJC(ml)," which was banned by de Gaulle during May '68. UCJ(ml) was founded by ousted members of Union of Communist Students (*Union des étudiants communiste*, "UEC"), a part of Young Communists

[33] Encyclopædia Britannica, "Georges Pompidou."

[34] Encyclopædia Britannica, "French Communist Party."

[35] According to the French journalist and actor, Christophe Bourseiller, cited in Julian Bourg's *From Revolution to Ethics: May 1968 and Contemporary French Thought*.

[36] "Mao-Spontex" (Mao-spontaneity) is a version of Maoism that purportedly rejects authoritarianism, centralized organization, and (Soviet) "revisionism."

Movement of France (*Mouvement Jeunes Communistes de France*, "MJCF," a.k.a. "JC"). These organizations are all independent from the PCF.

In February 1972, Pierre Overney, a Maoist protester and former worker at a Renault factory, was killed by a security guard. In June 1972, a high school student and UJC(ml) militant, Gilles Tautin, drowned while escaping from police.

Plot

The film begins with two voices in the background discussing the idea of making a film. With characters, including their relations, identities, backgrounds, being conceived, a story emerges: An American reporter, Suzanne (Jane Fonda), goes to a sausage factory in France to interview its manager (Vittorio Caprioli), only to find the manager locked up by workers on strike. She and her husband, commercial director Lui (Yves Montand), end up staying with the manager in his locked office. During the lockup, different parties voice their opinions on the situation. The manager dismisses the whole "class struggle" narrative, saying that Marxism has been a failure, and the capitalist system has brought general prosperity. A CGT shop steward, while acknowledging the industrial landscape's growing impact on workers and supporting stoppage and negotiations, condemns this incident as a counterproductive act of irresponsible minority. Other workers, echoing the hardships in working conditions, dismiss the CGT's stance and its criticism.

Then in the later half, the film focuses on Lui's and Suzanne's reflections on their roles in, and after, May '68. In light of his witness of workers' continuing struggle, Lui shows regrets about his own pessimistic decision of shifting career from directing art films to directing commercials after May '68. Suzanne expresses her frustration about her reports that have been rejected repeatedly by the broadcasting company. Their words are often accompanied by scenes from

May ’68, at their respective work. After the two’s silent meeting in a café are the views of desolate streets. Voiceover announces the film’s end.

Ideology

In the factory, there are essentially three camps of characters: the manager, the striking workers, and the CGT members. The manager, an upper/middle class for sure, is a stereotypical “capitalist” who rejects the idea of “class struggle,” and considers it outdated because “the glaring injustices of Marx’ and Engels’ days are over.” That is essentially a classical liberal view, as it considers injustice indeed existed but also deems it only a thing of the past. He defends the capitalist economic system, citing the prosperity it has brought (15:43), while granting inevitable but acceptable imperfections (16:27). He claims that “balance” is needed in dealing with the drawbacks (17:03) — a rather conservative rhetoric. Also, in vague reference, he points to USSR and its likes’ collectivism as a failure of Marxism since such a system, in his account, did not do away with alienation and exploitation. He rejects the idea of “revolution” (15:34) but is somewhat more open to the union’s approach (14:38).

This stereotypical capitalist is said to be inhumane to workers, for example, setting extreme short work breaks (35:08). Besides, the manager is also depicted in a comic light. His exaggerated body language, his spying on the workers, and the plot of looking for toilet, all seem absurd but also may cause some “humanization” — making him more relatable.

All workers depicted share discontents with their treatment. The CGT member holds a self-claimed “rational” strategy but is against the striking workers’ approach. According to a striking worker, they claim to be against “Mao” (28:56). The striking workers, however, are not only against CGT but also sympathetic to Maoism (29:03). The difference they cite to distinguish

themselves from CGT includes that the latter considers the foremen necessary (51:08), and that CGT dismisses strikers' more radical (physical) approach (the lockup).

This couple, one a journalist and the other a director, both are depicted sympathetic to workers — striking ones in particular. But they sometimes seem pessimistic, and occasionally utterly defeatist. The point is, they question themselves about their incapability and inaction. In other words, they are "lost intellectuals" who ideological align with the workers.

In terms of subjectivity, the film takes a subtle stance as it always leaves the couple and the striking workers to make their final case. The distancing effect or the attempt of that is manifested in the frame story of filmmaking, the moments of breaking the fourth wall, and the *mise en scène* of the factory. Those techniques indeed serve a reminder of the artificial nature of the text. Their function, however, is very much limited since the characters' address to the viewer, despite breaking the fourth wall, are always *in character*. But still, it is a fair disclosure.

To sum up without definite categorization, we can conclude that the film contains relatively strong and relatively universal political messages supporting working class and radical political measures. A humbled call for re-revolution, it is, above all, critical of capitalism. The lack of primal emotion evoker, however, makes the conclusion less certain. Also, these messages are delivered without an entirely unequivocal stance in terms of structural subjectivity, and it does attempt to distance the viewer to some extent and disclose its subjectivity.

Figure 9. Breaking the fourth wall without breaking character (72:10, 72:14*, Tout va bien*)

4.5 *The Mother and the Whore* ("La Maman et la Putain," 1973)

Context

May ’68 is characterized by some as a “libidinal” revolution for a reason.[37] The precursor of the unrest was Nanterre students’ discontent toward dormitory policy that forbade male and female students from sleeping together. Protests started in 1967 and continued in the next year. In January 1968, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a student leader, complained to the visiting Minister of Youth and Sports about the policy, only to be dismissed by the official, who suggested that students should calm down in a swimming pool. This student, whose rebellious act earned him a reputation ever since, in return called the response that of a “fascist regime.” This incident, followed by far-left students’ occupation of an administration building (Movement of 22 March), escalated the tension between the students and the authorities, and eventually led to the shutdown of Nanterre campus. Consequently, riots began to take place around Sorbonne, where the harsh response of the police brought the students more sympathizers.

The “post-New Wave” director Jean Eustache’s *The Mother and the Whore* does not have an unprecedent subject matter. Truffaut’s previous piece, *Jules and Jim* (1962) also deals with an open romantic relationship. Nudity on screen by then was already nothing uncommon.

Plot

The film features the love life of an unemployed young man, Alexandre (Jean-Pierre Léaud), who lives with his lover, Marie (Bernadette Lafont), in an apartment in Paris. At first, Alexandre attempts to save his relationship with his ex-girlfriend, Gilberte (Isabelle Weingarten).

[37] Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s*

When turned down by Gilberte, who is marrying another man, Alexandre is attracted by a female stranger on street and asks for her phone number. Despite Marie's jealousy, Alexandre begins to date this younger woman, Veronika, a nurse living in a hospital, and, in her own account, a libertine, happily unattached (she comments on how she likes her state at 54:02: "[v]ery much. I hope it lasts"). While Marie is out on an errand, in that apartment, Alexandre and Veronika begin to sleep together, which irritates Marie when she later finds out. However, Alexandre's relationships with both lovers are not really affected. One morning, Veronika even joins the bed in the apartment with the other two. But this *ménage à trois* does not last long as Marie's invitation of her another lover, Phillipe, angers Alexandre. Veronika attempts to bring the two together, but, under the influence of alcohol, ends up with her own emotional breakdown, recounting her previous loveless sexual experiences, slurring in tears that "no woman is a whore." After a long silence, Alexandre drives Veronika back to her hospital dormitory, where he is pressed to promise Veronika that he will marry her.

Ideology

This film is not overtly political. The most obvious political messages are in Alexandre's words. He is against obedience to authorities and enchantment of wealth, as he moans for women who swoon over the soldiers in uniforms, sports cars, and young businessmen (26:16). He is critical of class as a factor of confinement in romantic relationships (33:31). He also does not like the fact that people are forgetting too soon about the "crisis" when he satirically and somberly says to Gilberte, "[y]ou are rallying like France after May '68, my love." But he and his friend express a certain degree of contempt for Sartre, and dismiss his "Maoism" and his contribution to the Maoist newspaper, "The People's Cause" (*La Cause du peuple*) as drunk talk.

The characters not only embody a "liberated" lifestyle but are very much self-aware and reflective about the social change. Veronika, for example, talks about her sexual experience and asks why women are not allowed to express sexual desire. Their discussion on the "Women's Liberation Movement" also goes further and deeper than revolutionary slogans (starting from 45:14):

> ALEXANDRE. You don't know? "The Women's Liberation Movement." Women tired of serving men breakfast in bed. They've rebelled. The have a slogan: "No more men in our beds!"
> VERONIKA. That's sad…
> ALEXANDRE. Yes, I think they're very sad…
> VERONIKA. I like bringing a man I love breakfast in bed.
> ALEXANDRE. I have a friend who believes, that a woman's function is to bring him breakfast. I heard him say so to a raving women's libber. I thought there'd be a bloodbath. In fact, he seduced her, talking about his grandma, who spent her life doing housework and raising children and grandchildren. Now, she can't live without him!

This particular dialogue and the film's extensive and usually explicit discussion on sexuality overall openly break away from cultural conservativism. However, Veronika's monologue on her torment in her libertine lifestyle and Alexandre's eventual "surrender" to traditional commitment with Veronika add more complexity to the film's message. In this regard, it is best to be interpreted as a "post-sexual-revolution" struggle, where the return to pre-revolution "norm" is not a truly desired outcome, but for the lack of a feasible alternative. It is by no means a pro-conservative lecture. But rather than a call for liberation, it appears to be more of a postmodern tragedy.

There are not many clear primal emotion evoker attached to the characters in the film, however. Structurally, the story is also not told from one character's perspective. There is no attempt to distance the audience whatsoever.

To sum up without definite categorization, we can conclude that this film delivers some ideologically weak messages on a relatively universal level, promoting positive sentiments about social liberty, abandoning cultural conservativism, while doubting the feasibility of such a liberation and reflecting on its desirability.

4.6 *Chinese in Paris* ("Les Chinois à Paris," 1974)

Context

Not all films that refer to the political affairs in that decade are arthouse pieces. The political comedy *Chinese in Paris* (1973) is, for one, by no means a serious cinematic work deemed by academia and critics. The director Jean Yanne was the actor who starred the bourgeois protagonist in Godard's *Weekend* (1967).

Plot

The Liberation Army of Communist China, after conquering vast lands in Europe, finally invades France. The French president (Bernard Blier), after delivering a resistance speech, quickly flees to America. People are left panicking; many are killed when fighting against each other on their escaping route on the highway. But a businessman, Grégoire Montclair, is preoccupied with an affair with his lover, Stéphanie (Nicole Calfan), as the Chinese military occupies Paris.

Welcomed by the French police, the church, and the press, the Chinese military, headed by Pu Yen (Kyōzō Nagatsuka), settles at Galeries Lafayette as headquarters, picks a governor, Mr. Montaubert (Jacques François), and begins to implement revolutionary policies: They order that every European nation only make one type of product, so that France can only make their specialty

— pipes; They confiscate private automobiles so that people will no longer suffer their "suppression;" They encourage people to denounce each other's bad behaviors such as fornication.

While many complain about the Chinese occupants' policies, Régis Forneret (Jean Yanne), a former adult shop owner, seeks to profit from the situation. He succeeds in running a theater that performs revolutionary opera, *Carmeng*, and then, after some French terrorist attacks on the Chinese occupants, suggests the reopening of brothels, strip clubs, and so on, in order to make a case of France as a bad example of incorrigibly degenerate country. Pu Yen, who is in great remorse for his recent fornication with Stéphanie, accepts his advice, and even orders his troops to join such activities as the city quickly sinks back to decadence. Angered by the Chinese betrayal of revolutionary ideals and the state of France, some radicals — including the newly "re-educated" Albert (Daniel Prévost) and Montclair, decide to turn their muzzle to the Chinese, only to find that they have already left.

Things are returning to normal. As the president comes back from exile, Régis' clients extend to the French government. In the end, he travels with Stéphanie to a Chinese-occupied Rome, where the Pope, with Chinese soldiers on his side, greets people from a window.

Ideology

In this fictional satire, no character is not depicted without ridicule. The French government is headed by a cowardly and pretentious president whose primary concern is his own life, with the second being his public image. The French military is incompetent, as they fail to even find the nuclear button. The press, the church, and the bureaucracy are all unprincipled fence-sitters, fawning over whoever holds the power. The Chinese occupants are portrayed to be obsessed with rather absurd policies on collectivism (e.g., passing on things collectively — see **Figure 10**), anti-

modernism (considering cars of "suppression," and hailing rickshaws with semaphores), production (one country, one product), and denunciation (notably *The Televised Pillory,* see **Figure 10**).

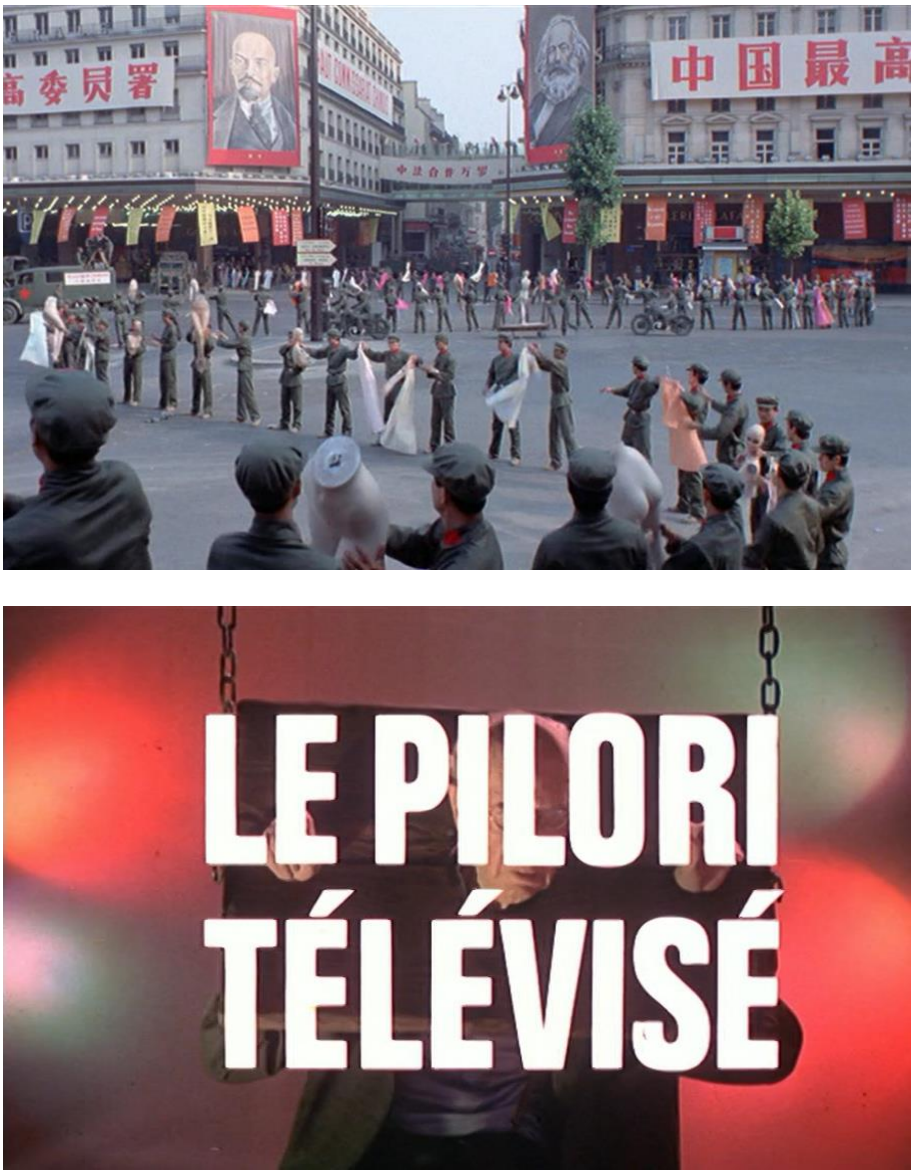

Figure 10. The "collectivism" and The Televised Pillory (14:36, 46:32, *Chinese in Paris*)

The music is always lighthearted, the cinematography cartoonish. The subjectivity is not structurally obvious, but never does it remind the viewer of the film's nature as an artifact. The

satire is on every front and no one is honored. In the film, capitalism has consumed people who are obsessed with consumer goods such as cars — simply tools of transportation, while the "communist" alternative of going backward is depicted just as ridiculous. The economic and political establishment is a fragile system based on self-serving motives and deceptive means, but nor is the ordinary people — those who wait in line, not knowing what for, just because others do, for instance — any more rational or moral. The withdrawal of the Chinese — or the "(de-)liberation" of France, is simultaneously a failed opportunity to evolve from an undesirable status quo, a manifestation of the undesirability of the "revolutionary" ideal, and a pathetically welcomed triumph of the old order.

The only ideology that the whole farce promotes is anti-ideology. It is to some extent more of a nihilist postmodern depthless entertainment than a serious intellectual discussion or a propaganda that preaches a specific narrative.

4.7 Summary

Judging from the analyzed French films, not all of them are overtly political, and those who are do not always convey the same political messages. But there are a few features that are shared among them. First, they rarely deliver exclusive messages. Only *La Chinoise* directly refers to political leaders of France at that time more than once. The emotion evokers are often attached to the whole class in an abstract way — if we understand the depiction of certain people as a representation of their class identity. Second, the strength of ideology varies. In some films, the sentiments are very consistent, while in others, messages can be self-contradictory and even

involve self-negation — such as the return to the traditional norm of marriage in *The Mother and the Whore*.

In terms of content of the ideologies, all of the films share a discontent toward status quo — especially political authoritarianism, cultural conservativism, and capitalism. Hardly can we read a truly conservative message in those films. At best, some are pessimistic to the prospects of social progress. Some, like *Chinese in Paris*, may appear to be more nihilist, with critique all over the ideological spectrum but nothing to advocate for.

Radicals like Godard, with a salient self-consciousness, may deliberately attempt to distance the viewer from the cinematic text. Those who do appear to remind the audience of their subjectivity, however, may risk a hyper-deception since the distancing effects are not done to extremity — rarely, with possible exceptions such as *Weekend*, do the actors break the character or unambiguously refer to the film per se. Structurally, none of those films narrate from a singular perspective according to one supposedly "author-endorsed" character.

5.0 Concluding Remarks

Judging from the analyzed texts, the Chinese films in Cultural Revolution may deserve the label of "hard propaganda:" They all have very explicit subjective stance with extensive primal emotion evokers as well as other emotion evokers. They all deliver stronger ideological messages with any possibility of inconsistency evaded, and do so on mostly the exclusive level, emphasizing sentiments on particular people, organizations, regimes, and policies, although they are also poised to be universal in some cases. These seemingly universal messages are radical egalitarianism with a not just sympathy for but also an approval (or even glorification) of the underprivileged many; the exclusive one evokes positive sentiments to the exceptional leader (Mao), the Party (when endorsed by Mao), and the regime; negative sentiments range from the imperialist foreign invaders, the Kuomintang, the exploiting class, to the revisionist comrades. All the characteristics are consistently shared among their peer texts.

Their French counterparts are different in that they, judging from the studied cases, tend to be ideologically weaker — that is, less consistent — in the messages they deliver. Primal emotion evokers are rare. Some of the films, notably by applying the Brechtian techniques, reduce or attempts to sincerely disclose their subjectivity by actively distancing the filmed scenes from the audience. The messages they deliver are between universality and exclusivity in the sense that, they on the one hand have real-life references to which emotion evokers are attached, and the references are either more abstract or broader than what we see in "hard propaganda." Despite relatively more inconsistency among the texts, the shared messages in them are anti-authoritarianism and anti-capitalism.

The harsh critique of conventional political, economic, and cultural orders in the Chinese films, with notable exception of issues that later became the core demand of New Social Movement in post-68 France, are to different extents shared in those French films. But the unquestioned authority of one leader, Mao the ironically ultimate establishment in this anti-establishment Cultural Revolution, is not well translated to the French films. Mao's ideas are occasionally referred to but much less so is his specific political leadership. In the French films, there is no such an actual counterpart — a central figure that is looked to.

All films raise questions about the society in their own ways. But only Chinese films provide answers — or, more precisely, *an* answer, *the* answer. They have everything figured out for the audience, whereas the French films only end in aporia; or in other words, confusion, self-reflection, and impasse.

Beyond possible disagreements over my stipulated definitions of key concepts in the theoretical and methodological part, there are also the following caveats in my study:

First, all those judgments made about the zeitgeist that are supposedly informed by these films are limited in their validity, since only a few works are selected in this study. The qualitative method that the study adopts has its limitation when any attempt of generalization is to be made. What can be made of the texts for sure — if they were ever certain — are only so for those texts themselves rather than their peers — peers of filmmakers, genres, countries, or time periods. Again, it should be stressed that the term "May 68 cinema" as used in the title should not be understood in a narrow sense, otherwise it would not be an accurate sample, since many are films in this study are made a few years after the relatively ephemeral events of that month in 1968.

Second, the judgments on specific emotion evokers are inevitably based on assumptions that may not be perfectly valid. The emotion evokers' effects may vary depending on interpretive

subjectivity, which for my purposes is based on the target audiences' subjectivity in their historical context. Hence, it is possible that I have misread the context and therefore made wrong inferences about what emotions are conveyed in some cases. It is also possible that a film is not made to target the mainstream subjectivity of its context at all. In the latter case, it is conceivable, for instance, that a hypothetical film is made in the context of Nazi reign but by a German dissident filmmaker whose portrayal of Nazi officials seems to be propaganda for those who read it as a regime propaganda film but appears to be an anti-regime propaganda for the filmmakers' intended fellow dissident audiences. Although this extreme case is probably only limited to films made without primal emotion evokers (unless the film is made within the context in which the filmmaker-audience community defies even primal emotion evokers). The general problem here can be considered as a case of hermeneutic circle in which the determination of textual meaning depends on the interpretation of context, and vice versa, without a definitive, non-inferential criterion that derives unmistakable meaning.

Third, the study, for its purposes, is largely based on an assumption that the depiction of people of a certain label is a depiction of this label *per se* and others to which the label is applied to. That is, depicting a good communist, for example, is presumed to be presenting a positive image to all communists. Whether this assumption is correct or not in every text, and the extent to which this assumption may hold true, are up to further debates.

Finally, on a higher level, my analytic method focuses almost exclusively on political messaging done through association between certain emotion-evoking things (or people) and certain (other) people. While I think this makes most sense in propaganda and fictional texts, and "association" is also quite broad, I do wonder whether this approach would make any rational discourse impossible: a tightly argued, well-written, and "fact-based" thesis, appealing to logos,

would not be distinguished from propaganda, and “reason” is, after all, rhetoric. Further studies may certainly critique — or defend — such reductive implications, if they indeed are implied in my treatment of the texts.

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