1997

Sexual identity, cultural difference, and film performance

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Sexual Identity, Cultural Difference, and Film Performance

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the

Department of Theatre Arts

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Sherry Bergeson

May 1997

UMI Number: 1384671

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ABSTRACT

SEXUAL IDENTITY, CULTURAL DIFFERENCE, AND FILM PERFORMANCE

by Sherry Bergeson

This thesis explores the tensions between narrative and performance levels of signification in the representation of sexual identity and gender difference, as well as the role of cultural difference in constructing these tensions in the Chinese film *Farewell My Concubine*. Chapter two applies the semiotic model to analyze sexual difference at the narrative level of signification. Chapter three applies the psychoanalytic model as proposed by Judith Butler and the semiotic model as proposed by Karl Toepfer at the performance level of signification. By applying two alternative approaches to analyzing sexual representation in film performance removed from the psychoanalytic models of analysis currently favored by feminist film theorists, this work establishes the significance of tensions between narrative values and performance values; for it is within these tensions that important aspects of representing sexual identity in films remain weakly understood.

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Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank my committee members David Kahn and Wenshu Lee for their helpful comments on drafts.

I owe my greatest intellectual debt to Karl Toepfer who taught me how to think about performance. He has remained the major influence in the shaping of my thesis and has provided much needed corrections, provocations, and encouragement. I thank him for inspiring me.

I feel particularly grateful to my husband Tim whose love, kindness and support made the pursuit of my graduate degree and the completion of my thesis project possible.

Chapter One

Introduction

Feminist theory of sexual difference tends to rely heavily on psychoanalytic models of analysis to explain the construction of sexual identity in representations, especially in films; however, the psychoanalytic model contains within it two serious limitations. First of all, it has been unable to resolve or even acknowledge a fundamental contradiction within itself and that contradiction is the division between Mulvey and Butler's models to explain gender. The difference between the two models is in the theory to which they are attached: Mulvey's model (*Visual*, 1975) is grounded in sex theory which is a biologically determined formation of sexual identity, and Butler's model (*Performative*, 1988) is grounded in gender theory which is a biologically determined social construction of sexual identity. Aside from the ambivalence feminists have in using the models due to the patriarchal assumptions shaping sexual identity, we continue to have uncertainty in the "gaze" in Mulvey's model and in the notion of gender as a "performance" in Butler's model.

The second problem is that both models seem focused on narrative values. They concentrate intensely and exclusively on characters. Bordwell, in *Making Meaning* (1989), has already shown how film scholarship overwhelmingly focuses on interpretation and analysis of narrative values while excluding examinations of performance values. One of the main reasons the psychoanalytic model is so limited is that it focuses on the narrative to explain the representation of gender and the point of using the semiotic model is that we can examine the representation of gender on a more material level imbedded

in the sign rather than the referent. My thesis attempts to resolve these often unacknowledged complications in feminist film scholarship. The semiotic model, from a feminist perspective, may offer hitherto new insights into representations of sexual identity in film.

While the psychoanalytic model may prove helpful in understanding the encoding of sexual identity at a narrative level of signification, it seriously underestimates the performance level of signification to shape or even dominate the spectator's perception of sexual identity. The semiotic focus on signs rather than referents suggests a way in which we can understand, in a more practical sense, Butler's notion of gender as a "performance" rather than a story; while Butler treats gender as a "performance," she rarely analyzes actual "performances" of gender. What I wish to do is establish the significance of tensions between narrative values and performance values. For it is within these tensions that important aspects of representing sexual identity in films remain weakly understood.

The semiotic approach, with its focus on performance values rather than narrative values, achieves its analytical power by examining signifying practices independent of their narrative, historical and cultural contexts. Semiotic models proposed by the Prague Structuralists and Russian Formalists in the decades before W.W.II were controversial because of their decontextualization of performance signifying practices. While they made the most systematic attempts to analyze narrative practice and the codes associated with narratives in different forms, they faced intense hostility and resistance because they focused on the sign rather than the referent, the signifying practice rather than the thing

evoked or referred to by the signifying practice (*Decontextualization*, 1995). In a series of publications and in his forthcoming book, *Empire of Ecstasy* (1997; *Voice*, 1991), Karl Toepfer proposes an application of semiotic analysis of performance values that accounts for cultural and historical differences in performance signifying practices; however, the Prague structuralists, the Russian Formalists and even Toepfer himself have been accused of using some kind of transcendent theory that does not take into account social and cultural contexts and is not focused on a political agenda. These criticisms are continually leveled against the semiotic model. My theses attempts to counter these objections against the model. I wish to examine the relation between masculine identity and cultural difference in film performance by applying both the psychoanalytic model as proposed by Butler and the semiotic model as proposed by Toepfer to analyze the Chinese film, *Farewell My Concubine*.

Farewell My Concubine (dir. Chen Kiage, 1994) is a historical Chinese film. The film's title is identical to that of the ancient Chinese opera (200 BC) which serves as the backdrop for the love triangle between Dieyi (Leslie Cheung), the Beijing opera star who is tortured by his unrequited passion for his costar; Xiaolou (Zhang Fengyi), Dieyi's costar and love interest in the film; and Juxian (Gong Li) Xiaolou's wife and Dieyi's romantic rival. The story spans 50 years of Chinese history (1927-1977): the warlord era, the invasion of imperial Japan, the democratic rebellion, and the cultural revolution. The film has a special cultural identity. In this film we have a presentation of a peculiar type of masculinity, an extreme feminine male, characterized by the role of the Concubine and the role of the character playing the Concubine, Dieyi. With its tragic story of frustrated

homosexual love associated with the feminine/masculine identity on the performance level of signification, we have a tension on the level of female desire in relation to the actor. Leslie Cheung, who plays both of the roles of Dieyi and the Concubine. This film is interesting because of its convolution of masculine identity and inclination to examine the “border” between masculine and feminine identity. At the level of performance, we have the fascinating performance by Cheung as the Concubine, which is more “seductive” than his impersonation of Dieyi. Then the second Concubine appears through the character of the adopted son, Xiao-Si. Here we have a “mask” of femininity which seems to transcend the bodies of those who perform it, especially since we know that women play this role in virtually the same manner as the men who created it. This image of mask is the dominant incarnation of desire and desirability in the film. It is also the most disruptive image: the more artificial femininity becomes, the more desirable it becomes, and this sexual difference depends on techniques of masking and performance *not* on social construction.

Scholars who have commented on *Farewell My Concubine* have failed to write about the film in a way that accounts for its cross-cultural appeal (Cheshire 1992, Tiessier 1993), its construction of a signifying practice which transcends the culture that has produced it (Lau 1994), its construction of sexual identity independent of the psychoanalytic model (Kaplan 1994), and its ability to migrate across contexts (Chen 1994). In addition, they have focused primarily at the narrative level of signification to explain cultural, social and sexual difference and have not accounted for what interests me. While scholars writing about *Farewell My Concubine* have emphatically tied sexual identity to a national cultural identity, in a sense the semiotic model demonstrates that a

greater drama is at stake once the dramatization of sexual difference and maleness/femaleness is detached from the cultural identity. For the pleasure of the performance of the Concubine image, this exotic ambiguous body dominates the performance and is the only performance that migrates cross-culturally because it has an expressive value that is obviously relative to the culture but not dominated by the culture. I will demonstrate that it is the Concubine character that establishes the desirability of the performance and proves to be the one image that migrates beyond the cultural context. It is this image that has a marvelous appeal throughout the world and sustains the spectator's interest, and this image is desirable because of its gender ambiguity regardless of the narrative, cultural, political, social, and historical contexts. I wish to examine the film according to a more rigorous and intense method than the reviews in film journals that have appeared about the film have thus far allowed us to understand. This film is particularly interesting because of its delivery and its forthright way of dealing with sexual identity as well as the fact that it has created this somewhat confused response in the secondary literature.

While the persistent criticism of the semiotic model is that it does not account for social, cultural, or political contexts, the point of the model is not to emphasize how cultural difference shapes identity, but how signs migrate across cultural contexts. I want to establish my relation as a Caucasian woman to a film from a different culture (the Chinese film). The psychoanalytic model, while useful in dealing with the narrative of this film, however, fails to account for other manifestations of sexual representation. The semiotic model does in fact account for cultural, social and political difference, but it

situates the signs and attempts to explain the signs in relation to their power to communicate with other cultures. My thesis demonstrates that when film analysis gets too buried in the context, the culture itself becomes a perpetual source of difference or “otherness” that cannot be transcended or communicated beyond that context. That is a severe weakness of the context based types of ideologies and the semiotic model attempts to explain how cultures communicate with each other by focusing on the sign rather than the content referent. In a sense, my thesis is less about what happens in *Farewell My Concubine* than how we should see the struggle between psychoanalytic and semiotic systems of analysis, between the narrative based thinkers and the performance based thinkers. This film offers an excellent opportunity to explore tensions between narrative and performance levels of signification in the representation of masculine identity, as well as the role of cultural difference in constructing these tensions. For I want a wider notion of feminism’s voice than that offered by psychoanalysis, and the semiotic model promises that greater freedom of perception.

Chapter 2

The Construction of Sexual Identity, Gender Difference, and Sexual Orientation in *Farewell My Concubine*

I. Patriarchal Masculinity The Construction of Gender Difference

In *Farewell My Concubine*, Dieyi's identification with femininity is rooted in a dis-identification with masculinity forced through sadistic patriarchal authority. As a student of traditional Chinese Opera, selected to play female roles, he cannot attain the highest level of his craft unless his gender is convincingly female; thus he must abandon, reject, and deny, his *masculine* gender and in turn perform his *feminine* gender to excess.¹ It is this struggle between life and art, between intellectual knowing and artistic expression that forces him to choose between maleness and femaleness. His training years comprise the first portion of the film in which this inner struggle is manifest and suppressed through paternal punishment.

The arguments presented in the film pivot around the contradiction between a natural biologically based and a sadistically forced construction of gender; and the dialectic between art and life. The issue of gender construction through sadism is visually evident in every scene set in the opera school. The set is a virtual torture chamber complete with the appropriate props of hanging rope, from which to suspend and manipulate the boys' bodies into painful contortions; whipping blocks, on which the students are continually spanked with the Master Teacher's sword; metal restraints used to shackle the boys' arms

and legs, thus restraining movement and body control; and whips, chains, and other various “teaching” tools used to train the boys’ in their craft.

The Teacher selects Dieyi to play the female role, Concubine Yu, hence he must transform into a female--both psychologically and physically (female movements and gestures). Here, art does not merely imitate life, rather art is life, and the distinction for Dieyi becomes increasingly blurred. For, as the creation of his character is constructed through his body, his gender is also constructed. Hence, his female gender construction is man-made through a system of discipline and control. There are four significant scenes leading up to Dieyi’s transformation. Each of these scenes revolves around his inability to correctly say the line, “by nature I am a girl, not a boy.” The extreme close-up shots of his terrified yet resolute face depict his inner-struggle which seems to suggest his refusal to submit to a fate that is sadistically constructed by man, rather than cosmically or biologically ordained.

Highly stylized, heavily side-lit shots of brutal discipline sessions, resulting from his resistance, ensure that we recognize the Teacher’s control and domination over Dieyi’s body. Femaleness then becomes an artificial imposition of woman onto the natural body of man, patriarchally sanctioned and controlled by a teaching method of art historically grounded in tradition. The man-made sadistic construction of gender identity is visually oppressive. The wide shots of the set reveal a system of artistic mastery that elicits a sense of Dieyi’s desire and dread, acceptance and denial: If Dieyi yields his control over his body to the Teacher’s will, he can only become a slave to his feminine role--for to

attain star-quality skill and prestige, his artificial femaleness must be more convincing than the natural femininity of *real* women.

The long takes and slow montage of the discipline scenes force us to focus on Dieyi's *difference* from the other students. Indeed, there is a kind of unique stillness of his image that is quite distinct throughout these scenes. In each, he is slightly apart from the other students, displayed in various ballet-like *poses* of torture. For example, in one of the scenes he stands separate and alone with one leg painfully strapped taut against his torso while the other students are grouped together providing a kind of audience to his disturbing performance of dignified suffering. The lighting choices further serve to visually enhance the emotional aspects of Dieyi's inner-struggle. The shots range from very bright yellow light focused on his body--signifying his position as one of distinction and isolation from the other students; to a deeper shadowy red light--signifying his personal "hell," his doom; for he is trapped, there is no escape. In each brutal scene, there is this silence of his image; for he too is silent in his anguish, which elicits a feeling of internal distance: a sense of *difference*, of *alienation*, of an *altered* existence [Figures 1-3].

In her article, "The Pleasures of Repetition," Judith Butler uses the example of sadomasochism to explore the problem of repetition and its pleasures. She suggests that the performance of sadomasochism expresses a dissatisfaction with the act which seeks to differentiate, contain and ritually control the other. "The repetitive nature of sadism suggests the dissatisfaction at its core. The sadistic act must be repeated because it can

Fig. 1 - Dieyi is set apart from the other students, signifying his “difference” and isolation.

Fig. 2 - Dieyi must yield his control over his body to his Teacher's will.

Fig. 3 - There is a silence to Dieyi's image, for he too is silent in his anguish, which elicits a feeling of internal distance: a sense of *difference, alienation, of an altered* existence.

never accomplish the aim it sets for itself--namely, the literal recovery of radical safety through the immobilization of the Other. As repetitive, the sadistic act seeks time and again to break the veil of the present" (274). It may be true that here the sadism seeks to ritually control the Other; however, I'm not convinced that this results from a "dissatisfaction" with the past, since ideals of femininity materialize as a result of this sadistic expression. Furthermore, patriarchal domination, expressed in sadism, is firmly entrenched in Dieyi and Xiaolou's psyche, and in fact, accomplishes a great deal. As adults they become famous opera stars, eventually have a falling out, and stop performing together. The Teacher (sadistic patriarch) summons the men for a "lesson," (due to the fact they are desecrating the opera by not performing together, thus losing their skill), and it is, in fact, the "repetition of the sadistic act" that proves most effective in binding them once more, to each other and to their craft.

The traditional sadistic teaching method proves successful mainly due to the patriarchal power structure established between the Teacher and the students. The Teacher (dominant father) expects obedience and demands respect and trust in his authority from the students (submissive sons), as well as the complete surrender of their bodies. For upon entering the school, the students are stripped of their personal identity signified by their bald heads, drab tattered prison-like uniforms, constant repetitive exercise formations; and training drills executed in a militaristic style [Figures 4 and 5]. The *performance* of sadism is hierarchal in that the teacher performs his power as a function of his patriarchal status; hence, the "performance" of gender can be seen as the intergenerational training of the older man, initiating the younger boys into a traditional

Fig. 4 - The students are stripped of their personal identity signified by their bald heads and drab uniforms.

Fig. 5 - The Teacher (dominant father) expects obedience and demands respect and trust in his authority from the students (submissive sons), as well as the complete surrender of their bodies.

performance art form, which requires a *separate* definition of male identity, as well as a training separated from society. The visual evidence in the film suggests that the performance of patriarchal domination requires a high degree of trust and respect, for there must be a bonding between the teacher and the students for the training to be successful. It appears then, the “performance” of gender identity can be seen as *sadomasochistically* achieved as well.

Dieyi repeats the traditional sadomasochistic teaching system on his protégé (and adopted son), Xiao-Si; however, it fails due to the Cultural Revolution’s new thought conditioning which denied all forms of tradition, rather than a “dissatisfaction” with the sadistic act, since the revolutionaries themselves were sadistic in their interrogation methods and teaching techniques. Here we have an interesting paradox where tradition is denied in high art and artistic expression, yet adopted as an effective teaching method to control, correct, and enslave the new society. The “repetition of the sadistic act” does *not* seek to “break the veil of the present,” since there seems to be no “dissatisfaction” with the act itself, in the past or the present.

Butler’s thinking seems too abstract in its ability to adequately account for the success or failure inherent within a sadomasochistic structure. An alternative reading of the structure’s failure to work when repeated between Xiao-Si and Dieyi, could be that student and teacher are unable to establish the bond of mutual trust and respect the sadomasochistic teaching method requires; for Xiao-Si cannot submit himself to Dieyi’s authority, though Dieyi is a revered opera star, depicted as attaining his great artistic ability through the discipline and control techniques inherent in the sadomasochistic

teaching method. However, being a great artist does not make one an effective teacher. Perhaps the “dissatisfaction” here is *Dieyi*’s lack of conviction in the teaching method’s ability to *control* the *art* through the “control” of the Other. This would then make him incapable of sufficiently appropriating the sadistic teaching techniques as an effective artistic training tool on his own student. Conversely, a *proven* teaching method does not prove successful with every student, nor can a great teacher consistently produce a great artist. This indeed appears to be the case with Xiao-Si, who eventually replaces Dieyi as the Concubine, without having *benefited* from the same intensive training program.

II. Conventional Masculinity The Construction of Physiognomy Difference

When we look at the categories of masculinity and femininity, we find the signifying practice of the performance of gender is, in fact, unique to the performer’s physiognomy; thus in order to accurately investigate conventional concepts of masculine and feminine ideals, character and actor must be separated.²

Zhang Fengyi’s (Xiaolou’s) physical presence maintains the conventional ideals of masculinity, visually expressed in his muscularity and physical power, hardness of body, large and tall physique, and strength and endurance. In the article, “Looking into Masculinity,” Gay Mason asserts that conventional masculinity is “the preoccupation with control, mastery of the body by the mind, aggression, self-discipline, straining, striving, and sexual potency, and the dominance of women” (31).³ Fengyi’s maleness is defined through traditional concepts of male domination rooted in physical power. Conventional masculine signifiers are visually evident in every frame which consistently depicts Fengyi’s

body as very big--bigger than other men; very self-disciplined--higher pain tolerance and endurance than other men; very sexual--both a man and a woman desire him.

Fengyi's performance of masculinity is tied to his character, Xiaolou, within the narrative. Here, Xiaolou assumes the role of protector to both Dieyi and Juxian from the brutalities of other men. This is visually expressed in several scenes: The brothel scene in which Juxian flings herself over the second story banister, trusting Xiaolou's strong masculine arms to catch her body and save her from a drunken group of would be customers; the scene in the theater in which Xiaolou physically protects Dieyi from an angry violent mob, seeking revenge for Dieyi's treason during the Japanese occupation; and the scenes in which Xiaolou shields Dieyi from patriarchal torture at the opera school. All of these scenes epitomize conventional masculinity, demonstrating Xiaolou's strength and virility through Dieyi and Juxian's vulnerable dependence.

The two male identities are established through the obviousness of their physical *differences*: Xiaolou takes on the ideals of heterosexual conventional masculinity and Dieyi ideals of femininity. The physiognomy of Leslie Cheung (Dieyi) appears "naturally" feminine due to his more delicate physical features and female gender characteristics [Fig. 6]. This visually establishes Dieyi's *feminine-homosexual* male identity. Dieyi's obvious "difference" from other men defines Xiaolou's *masculine-heterosexual* male identity. Their identities on stage parallel their identities off stage, and indeed Xiaolou's masculinity is as much a creation of his character, the King of Chu, as is Dieyi's femininity created through Concubine Yu. In addition, the male and female relations between bodies remain patriarchal--Cheung's (Dieyi's) body, both on and off stage, is *always* subordinate

Fig. 6 - Cheung's (Dieyi's) delicate facial features suggest a "natural" femininity. His "difference" from other men establishes his "feminine" male identity.

to Fengyi's (Xiaolou's) body. This further establishes the "conventional" concepts of sexual difference, appropriate to their gender identities, situating the man in a hierarchal relation to the woman, or as read in this film--the *masculine* male's hierarchal relation to the *feminine* male.

III. Biological Masculinity The Construction of Feminine Difference

Judith Butler asserts in her article, "Performance Acts and Gender Constitution" that "the body is invariably transformed into his body or her body, the body is only known through its gendered appearance...acts, gestures, the visual body, the clothed body...gender is what is put on, invariably, under constraint, daily and incessantly, with anxiety and pleasure"(522, 528).⁴

"Feminine difference" between the *feminine male* performer, Leslie Cheung (Dieyi), and the *masculine female* performer, Gong Li (Juxian), interconnect with each performer's unique signifying practice of femininity, as well as their two very feminine, yet biologically distinct physiognomies. However, *biological* "difference" (Dieyi's penis) appears irrelevant, for both feminine characters exemplify Judith Butler's insight that gender is above all a "performance."

The performance of femininity is tied to the profilmic (filmic: way of seeing/ profilmic: that which is seen) elements of costuming and make-up; for it is here that "gendered appearance" is most visually evident. Let's first examine Cheung's performance of the feminine: As Concubine Yu, Cheung is elegantly costumed and exotically adorned. His feminine body is emphasized by virginally pale costumes with long

skirts veiling his legs and adding mystery, sensuality, and seductiveness to his body as he moves in a smooth romantic dance of love and desire to Zhang Fengyi's King of Chu. Cheung's body exquisitely transforms into a mythological living sculpture: so carefully constructed, so precisely expressed that every delicate gesture seems to reveal his character's, (Dieyi's), soul--the secrecy of his head and heart.

Cheung's female costuming emphasizes the line of the body, rather than flesh, reinforcing the illusion of femininity, adding delicate notes of fragility and eroticism. His body appears distinctly female, conveying grace, regal bearing, and glamour; indeed, he appears an *idealized* vision of female: beautiful, desirable, and vulnerable.

Make-up maximizes this vision of female perfection. The stunning visual effect of Cheung's petite body frame adorned in Concubine Yu's elaborate costuming, with its rich colors and sumptuous fabrics, combined with the superb make-up, perfectly feminizing Cheung's face, proves to be a powerful lure to men within the narrative.

This is visually evident in two delicious scenes: The first is one in which Cheung, as Concubine Yu, performs for the Japanese Officers. In this scene, the men appear enraptured by the male actress' ability to appropriate all signs of femininity; for Cheung is extraordinarily beautiful as the Concubine. Within the performance, Cheung moves his body in a dizzying dance of female sensuality, spinning round and round until he collapses to the floor in ecstatic exhaustion. The Concubine's costuming is exceptional in its ability to enhance Cheung's dance. The skirts consist of many long strips of highly decorated blue fabrics which lift and whirl with Cheung's body, adding to his alluringly provocative image [Figures 7 and 8].

Figs. 7 and 8 - The performance of femininity is tied to the profilmic elements of costuming and make-up. As Concubine Yu, Cheung's "feminine" body is elegantly costumed and exotically adorned which further emphasizes his "naturally" feminine physiognomy.

Fig. 8

In the second scene, he attracts the attention of the wealthy opera patron, Mr. Yuan, who watches the Concubine in stunned fascination, immediately desiring to serve, court, and indeed vanquish this *image* of female perfection; which he manages to do when he chivalrously presents the male actress with a valuable sword - an exchange gift for the feminine body, or as he says, agreeing to be “[his] most intimate friend.”

The visual evidence in each scene suggests that male passionate desires awaken with the male actress’ embodiment of female perfection. At the narrative level, extreme artificial beauty, combined with Cheung’s superb ability to exaggerate all signs of femininity, appear highly desirable to men. This is visually expressed throughout both performances; yet in each scene, *artificial femininity* can be read as desirable for different reasons: In the scene with the officers, the extravagant performance of femininity seems to have a seductive power somewhat removed from the *performing body*. In other words, the men might be read as desiring this exaggerated *image* of femininity while not necessarily desiring the feminine performer. Here, male sensual desires seem to contradict Confucius philosophy as well as Mao’s doctrination of female desirableness, in which understated femininity - attributes of modesty, subtlety, and conformity--are considered most refined and appropriate for honorable women [Fig. 9 - 12]. Yet the men, upon seeing the *artificial woman* theatrically portrayed by a male, appear captivated by this highly extravagant, explosively dramatic, and magically enthralling image of woman. Here, male sensual desires intersect feminine difference. The scene suggests that the feminine male’s *artificial* beauty is more desirable than the *natural* beauty of *real* women,

Figs. 9 and 10 - *Artificial* woman of male actress compared to *natural* “real” woman.

Fig. 10 - Juxian and Xiaolou. Natural image of woman is drab, plain, “respectable” - suggesting “real” woman has no need to hide behind a highly feminine exterior. Juxian’s facial features suggest a dissatisfaction for what will be.

Fig. 9 - Dieyi as Concubine Yu; Xiaolou as King of Chu. Artificial image of femininity is extravagant, glamorous, magnetic. Dieyi’s face is illuminated; his eyes suggest an hypnotic trance-like state of desiring, a yearning for what will be.

Figs. 11 and 12 - *Artificial* woman, theatrically portrayed by a male, is a magically enthralling image of woman. *Artificial* beauty appears more desirable than the *natural* beauty of *real* women, which further suggests that artificial woman is *more* feminine than the femininity of *real* women.

Fig. 11

Fig. 12

which further suggests that artificial femininity (as embodied by the male actress) is *more* feminine than the femininity of *real* women.

Mr. Yuan's desire for artificial femininity is quite different from that of the Japanese. He is depicted as a wealthy effeminate homosexual, who seems to desire the *visual perfection* of the artificial woman in order to raise his passion, yet also desires the male appendage to consummate his sexual desires. Dieyi's remarkable transformation into an exceptionally beautiful image of femininity, combined with his male sexual organ, renders his body a delicious irresistible feast which Yuan actively seeks to consume.

Dormant passions, sexual frustrations, and the process of denial are also essential components of Cheung's female costuming, for though they alluringly give the illusion of woman, they can only do just that, cover and conceal. This is evident in the scene in which his character, Dieyi, is first confronted with the real woman, Juxian (Li), who replaces him as Xiaolou's love interest in life. In comparing the costumes in this scene, Li's costume is congruent with the *natural* woman's more subtle "appropriately" drab attire, whereas Cheung's costuming is extravagantly glamorous and elegant. Indeed Li's female physiognomy pales in comparison to Cheung's embodiment of femaleness, established through Concubine Yu's costuming [Figures 13 and 14]. It is here that the biological difference between Cheung and Li intersects feminine difference. For though Li's gendered appearance is less elegant, less glamorous, less purely, passionately, seductively feminine, she is nevertheless the *real* woman--the one born without a penis.

The marriage scene provides a brief contrast between two images of artificial femininity. This is the only scene in which Li appears in elegant feminine attire and

Fig. 13 - Li's costume is congruent with the natural woman's more subtle "appropriately" drab attire. Her "female" physiognomy pales in comparison to Cheung's embodiment of femaleness.

Fig. 14 - Cheung's Concubine costume is extravagantly glamorous and elegant, emphasizing his "femaleness."

dramatic make-up. The focus of Li's make-up emphasizes her mouth, on which a very bright red lipstick has been applied. This is an interesting comparison to Cheung's make-up which emphasizes his eyes. The enhancement of these two different facial features can be read as signifying Dieyi and Juxian's different approaches to communicating their love: Juxian communicates through words in order to seduce and capture Xiaolou, while Dieyi communicates through his soulful eyes which articulate his devotion, love, and desire for Xiaolou.

IV. Conventional Masculinity The Construction of Sexual Difference

If we compare the feminine difference of Cheung and Li to the conventional masculinity embodied by Fengyi, we find sexual difference intersects the categories of feminine/masculine (performed) and male/female (biological), and demonstrates the instability and inter-dependence of these categories. In the marriage scene Li appears very feminine: she wears a red silk wedding gown which perfectly molds to her petite frame; a matching red veil, threaded with gold embroidery, gently rests upon her up-swept hair; the impeccable make-up gives her a flawless smooth complexion, and the deep red lipstick emphasizes her mouth, giving her thin lips a swollen sensuous quality.

Her *feminine* appearance, however, is in tension with her *female* subject positioning--for her movements and gestures appear more *masculine*: active, large, dominant. This is evident when we see her walk down the aisle toward her beloved; after a few hesitant dainty steps, she looks down at the long red carpet slowly unraveling before

her, and with a great thrust of her leg, she kicks the carpet roll (in high heels), and races down the aisle, aggressively taking her man in her arms and planting a kiss on his mouth.

Juxian's more masculine femininity is an interesting comparison to Dieyi's feminine subject positioning. For Dieyi is completely feminine and female in both his gender and sexual difference to Xiaolou (male hierarchal power position to female). This is evident both on stage and off, as exemplified in the following two consecutive scenes: Dieyi, as Concubine Yu, looks adoringly up into his beloved's eyes as both he and the camera circle around Xiaolou's King of Chu. His worshipful gaze and subordinate feminine body relation to the masculine male body, continues into the next scene set in the dressing room. Here again, Dieyi's body signifies both the female (soft voice, slight build, delicate features) and the feminine (his body movements smooth and dainty, his relation to the male's body passive and subordinate).

In contrasting the scenes between Cheung and Li, the tension between feminine difference and its intersection with sexual difference, is signified by the different physical gestures and movements associated with the performers' bodies, and the camera's relation to each feminine body. Cheung's body is passive, yet the camera films him in an active subject position. In both of his scenes, he circles around Fengyi as the camera circles around the two men, maintaining its focus and frame on Cheung's face. Li's body, on the other hand is active, yet the camera films her in a static object position. In comparing the scenes, Cheung's are full of passion and romance whereas Li's seem to lack sexual tension and eroticism. Visually, the scenes between Fengyi and Cheung are by far more seductive and erotic than those between Fengyi and Li [Figures 15 -17]. Here, the camera's relation

Figs. 15, 16 and 17 - The scenes between Fengyi (Xiaolou) and Cheung (Dieyi) are by far more seductive and erotic than those between Fengyi and Li (Juxian).

Fig. 15

Fig. 16

Fig. 17

to femininity might be read as signifying that *artificial* femininity is again more desirable than the *natural* femininity of the “real” woman.

The instability of the power dynamics, operating through sexual difference, establishes the fluctuation of the sex (biological) category of male and female, and its intersection with the gender category of feminine and masculine. For these categories are interdependent, yet unstable. This is visually evident in the scene in which the four characters: Master Teacher, Xiaolou, Dieyi, and Juxian return to the opera school setting.

Visually, the Master Teacher is old and weak, yet he appears more powerful than the younger stronger men, who are at their patriarchal peak. Juxian, the woman, appears more powerful than the teacher, yet less powerful than the younger men. Each character embodies characteristics that demonstrate a fluctuation between their biological roles and their performing gender roles: Juxian is a female, who oscillates between the categories of feminine/ masculine characteristics, and male/ female patriarchal power positioning; Xiaolou is a male, who oscillates between feminine/ masculine gender characteristics (masculine exterior/ feminine interior - inner qualities); and Dieyi is a feminine male who oscillates between male/ female power relations (feminine *gender* relation to Xiaolou and masculine *biological* relation to Juxian).

V. Eastern Masculinity

The Construction of Cultural Difference

Sato Tadao writes that “Confucianism did not regard romantic love in a positive light, and therefore brave, strong, and moral men were not supposed to be interested in sex and romance...[The romantic heroes] were beautiful, but physically and emotionally

weak men, who were often effeminate” (179).⁵ This conventional portrayal of the romantic hero in Eastern films contradicts the portrayal of men and sex in *Farewell My Concubine*.

The profilmic elements of the film emphasize its Chinese-ness: Set in China with Chinese actors, who speak Chinese, wear Chinese costumes, and portray Chinese characters within a Chinese film narrative, adapted from a popular Chinese novel, written by a Chinese woman, Lilian Lee,⁶ about a traditional Chinese art form which survives through China’s Cultural Revolution; and yet, the Chinese-ness of the film is in tension with the Chinese philosophy of love, as well as the Chinese “way of seeing” love.

The film’s Chinese director, Chen Kiage, makes an interesting choice by introducing homosexual love in a distinctly Western style, by adopting conventional Western signifying practices in the portrayal of male romantic love and sexual desire, rather than adhering to an historical philosophy signifying conventional *Eastern* concepts of portraying male love and desire. I find it ironic that Kiage’s accuracy in depicting an historical traditional art form as the backdrop of male romantic love is in tension with China’s historical traditional philosophy of love.⁷

In his analysis of the romantic approach to Asian Cinema, Tadao contends that “The films delicately portray the psychology of sexual partners and the ways they seek to stimulate one another emotionally. This quality imparts a certain sentiment and artistry to the films, in contrast to much of American and European erotic cinema, which shows mechanical, emotionless sex in an exaggerated manner” (180).

Tadao's observations provide an interesting comparison to this film. For it is visually evident that the love and devotion between Xiaolou and Dieyi, though devoid of sexual intimacy, does indeed demonstrate the psychological "ways [in which] they seek to stimulate one another emotionally." The bond between the two men is much stronger than that between Xiaolou and Juxian. Each man provides emotional support to the other through his ability to fill the inner qualities the other lacks.

Dieyi's physical and mental torture in childhood provides him with an inner strength that Xiaolou lacks. This is depicted in the scene in which the men return to the opera school setting. As the Master resumes his sadomasochistic teaching methods, it is Xiaolou who breaks down, for he cannot bear to see Dieyi physically punished, thus he seeks to alleviate Dieyi's "pain" by begging the master to punish him instead. Dieyi, on the other hand, appears not to "feel" any pain as he stoically remains immobile, his face an emotionless mask as each blow from the sword strikes his back.

Xiaolou, unable to endure Dieyi's "suffering," quickly retrieves a whipping block, positions it in front of Dieyi, lies down on top of it, and then proceeds to yell, "good I deserve it," as the Teacher's sword cracks against his back. Interestingly, Dieyi appears indifferent to Xiaolou's "pain," yet he intensely watches every moment of the brutal punishment, never diverting his eyes away from the scene. This can be read in a couple different ways. The return to the sadomasochistic setting of the opera school leads one to read that Xiaolou is masochistic--desiring the punishment for its pleasure, and that Dieyi is sadistic--finding pleasure in watching physical pain executed on the other [Figures 18 and 19]. However, my understanding of sadomasochism is that the masochist finds "pain"

Fig. 18 - Opera school setting. Xiaolou enthusiastically “shields” Dieyi from punishment; Dieyi watches his own punishment exerted on Xiaolou.

Fig. 19 - This pattern is repeated when they return to the opera school as adults. The relationship dynamics suggest a sadomasochistic *pleasure* in the “pain” and in the “performance” of the punishment.

pleasurable, hence the pain and pleasure become one; thus discipline is not a *forced* punishment, rather a *sought after* pleasure. In contrast, the sadist experiences pleasure by inflicting “pain,” or seeing “pain” inflicted on another body. Both suggest an erotic attraction to discipline/punishment techniques. This certainly can be concluded from this scene; however, most of the film repudiates this reading. Though sadomasochism is a major theme running throughout the film, the “pleasures” of sadomasochism are relative to the *bodies* involved, and neither man is portrayed as *actively* seeking these *physical* pleasures,⁸ nor embedding them into his lifestyle.

I think an alternative reading of this scene, which follows Tadao’s discussion of emotional support between lovers, might be more accurate. Xiaolou embodies the emotional characteristics (compassion, empathy, tenderness) that Dieyi lacks [Fig. 20a, 20b and 21], and Dieyi embodies the emotional characteristics (stoicism, indifference, courage) that Xiaolou lacks; Thus, each man completes the other, each fills the other’s inner emotional void. Indeed, when the men are separated, it is their *lacking* of the other’s *emotional* traits that lead to each man’s demise: it is Xiaolou’s emotionally weak interior that cracks the strong masculine exterior of his body during the interrogation scenes, reducing him to a fragile pathetic body, a weak and broken man. Likewise, it is Dieyi’s emotionally strong interior that allows him to decapitate the weak feminine exterior of his own body, freeing him from his *pain* in love and his *pain* in art, as he dies for *love* and dies for *art*.

Tadao’s contention that the emotional support between lovers adds to the artistry of Eastern Romantic Cinema does indeed apply to the erotic (not sexual), emotionally

Figs. 20a and 20b - Xiaolou as King of Chu. A powerfully imposing "masculine" exterior, yet the soft, caring, and compassionate eyes suggest more feminine inner qualities.

Fig. 20a

Fig. 20b

Fig. 21
Xiaolou seems to “feel” Dieyi’s pain.

technique applied to the lovers, Xiaolou and Juxian, and Yuan and Dieyi, in their respective seduction scenes. In comparing the filming style employed in the sexually intimate scenes between the lovers, to the emotionally intimate scenes between Xiaolou and Dieyi, there is an obvious difference between the film's visual expression of sexual intimacy and emotional intimacy.

The seduction scenes are in soft focus, adding to the dream-like quality of the shots as each set of lovers consume food, wine, and knowing glances. Sexual intimacy is veiled behind diaphanous gauze curtains, gently draping each bed, and barely hinting of the shadowy bodies intertwined within. In contrast, Xiaolou and Dieyi's more "emotionally" intimate scenes are filmed in a style that is sharper, clearer, and more precise in framing the two men, adding to their commitment, trust, and devotion to one another. Here, nothing is veiled, for each is loved for his inner qualities, each seeks to comfort the other, each provides a stable support for the other, and indeed, each suffers when parted, and is happiest together. This is evident in a touching moment in the opera school scene, when the Master forces the two estranged men to move closer to one another. Within seconds, the men are side by side, their eyelids close as each man's forehead touches and rests against the other's, long shaking breaths escape their lips as their bodies meld together, and in that moment, they are once again as they should be [Figures 22 and 23].

The tensions between the bodies of Xiaolou - Juxian - Dieyi within the romantic love triangle represent how homosexual love, carried out by a *heterosexual* male,

Figs. 22 and 23 - Xiaolou and Dieyi are “emotionally” intimate, though their love is never consummated.

Fig. 22

Fig. 23

destabilizes heterosexual separateness. For it is in the fluctuation of homosexual and feminine desires that form an integral part of the heterosexual masculine identity, and heterosexual difference within the film. In addition, Juxian comes between the men and through her *difference* to both men, the stability of heterosexual masculinity and male homosexuality becomes less stable. Through her we see the men embody tensions and contradictions that destabilize conventional concepts of masculine desire, “natural heterosexuality,” and masculine gender characteristics.

VI. Western Masculinity

The Construction of Homosexual Difference

Western scholars conceptualize love and intimacy between men from a distinctly different perspective than that of Tadao’s description of romantic Eastern Cinema. Jill Dolan contends that the heterosexual framework restricts performance representations of gays by adhering to a lifestyle and identity that mirrors those of heterosexual couples. She argues that the focus on representations of explicit sex (pornography) between gay couples is more accurate since homosexuality is about sex not love.¹⁰

Dolan’s concept of homosexuality seems limited when applied to *Farewell My Concubine*. Homosexuality in this film is about *love* not sex. The heterosexual framework certainly applies to their respective gender roles (Dieyi-female/Xiaolou-male); however, it is the *love* between the men that is the homosexual element in the film. It seems then, it is this *emotional intimacy* between men that disrupts the difference between heterosexuality and homosexuality--despite the fact that the construction of masculinity

and sexual orientation in both males remains differently embedded in experiences of gender and sexual practice.¹¹

Dolan's argument that "the explicitness of [homosexual] pornography seems the most constructive choice for practicing cultural disruptions" (272) certainly does not apply to this film, since it was banned from China because of its homosexual elements which China recognized as emotional *love* between the men, despite the fact that the film clearly depicts that the emotional love is never physically consummated between the two male characters. This film provides an interesting contradiction to Dolan's argument which depicts that it is actually *love* between men *not* explicit homosexual sex that "seems to be most constructive choice for practicing cultural disruptions." The inconsistency on the part of China is that here is a film that accurately portrays China's long tradition of artistic mastery through the private and precise training of its boy players which succeeded due to its negotiation of the social gender system, yet the Chinese Censor Bureau determined this system to be too disturbing for general public viewing. A rather ironic contradiction in that it is a praising of the artistic product, but a denouncement of its production - a love of the art, but a condemnation of the artist.

VII. Romantic Masculinity

The Construction of the Tragic Narrative

Dieyi's feminine subject position constructs his homosexual identity through his bonding with Xiaolou. Within the narrative, he becomes a lovesick female who believes that only Xiaolou (the right man) can make him happy and complete. It is, however, a

passionate romance that transpires exclusively in Dieyi's mind. He lives reality in the fantasy of his role (the concubine) since only on stage is he truly the erotic love object of Xiaolou (the king); hence this fantasy becomes very real to him. This blurring of fantasy and reality, stage and life, artistic dedication and hopeless dreaming operate at the narrative level, yet is exquisitely articulated through the dynamic expression of Cheung's physiology. Throughout the film Cheung projects a rather ambiguous mask of pain. For he exudes an evocative mixture of glamorous suffering and tragic sensuality which defines his sexuality as one of despair and desire. In addition, much of the erotic dimension of the film is imbedded in the seductive power of fantasy which relies on its elusive power--the ironic intersection between a sensual surrender to the fantasy and its destruction by bringing it to life.

Dieyi's sexual obsession is a devotion to the impossible; for he actively anticipates something that can never be since a loving sexual relationship between a homosexual man and a heterosexual man is in itself impossible. Yet, even in knowing this, he continues to sexually desire a man who is incapable of returning his romantic feelings. This brings up an interesting paradox: for part of the passion of desiring is in feeling desired and though Concubine Yu is most certainly desirable to the King of Chu, Dieyi is depicted as sexually *undesirable* to Xiaolou. Yet Xiaolou remains the romantic hero and Dieyi the tragic heroine. This seems an unusual twist to the romantic-tragic love story. For it revolves around the issue of unrequited *passion* rather than unrequited *love*.

Sexual desire between two people in love is an important element in the tragic narrative. Desiring and feeling desirable builds sexual tension between lovers and adds to

the passionate love scenes in films in which the lovers finally acknowledge their ardor, conquer their self-doubt and fear, and consummate their sensual desires regardless of the consequences. The *tragic* element in romantic love stories between doomed lovers nearly always occurs *after* consummation. For the uniting of perfect love and passion does not always mean a uniting in life, since the relationship dynamics between lovers is not always healthy, happy or content. The “pain” in love or desire is in passion that remains unfulfilled or unreturned. It seems then, *unrequited passion* is rarely a narrative theme in films, since it leaves the spectators dissatisfied, due to the unresolved sexual conflicts within the film story.

Dieyi develops a poverty of spirit due to his inability to escape the torment of his aching desire for Xiaolou, thus he finds only pain in love; for he cannot separate love and sex. Hence loving Xiaolou means sexually desiring Xiaolou. The love alone is never enough. Indeed his self-preservation is lost through his relentless desire for a lover who will not consummate; Thus, he hides from it through drugs, runs from it through separation, but never escapes from it because he cannot recognize his obsessive passion as self-destructive. Indeed, he almost seems to revel in his tortured loneliness, for he continually torments himself by refusing to re-define the relationship in his mind.

His resistance to acknowledging the distinction between reality and fantasy provides an interesting contradiction within his character. He appears, in fact, to have a blinding clarity to the truth; and yet, we cannot say he *prefers* bitter truth to comfortable delusion, yet he *knows* the truth and *chooses* delusion. It seems then, he wants control over his own fate, yet his conscious choices never bring him any happiness.

The relationship dynamic between Dieyi and Xiaolou is one that deserves an alternative reading which I'd like to explore in this section. Xiaolou is not necessarily free from his own responsibility for Dieyi's condition, for there is a kind of mental torture that he inflicts on Dieyi through his own ambiguity. It seems to me that this can be attributed to Fengyi's acting style. Fengyi has the unique ability to visually depict a contradiction between his body and his embodiment of the character. For example, his physical movements, gestures, and facial features say *yes*, his words (film lines) say *no*; his pained tearful facial expressions say he's sorry, his behavior (film blocking) remains the same; his concerned gentle eyes say he cares, his silence (script instructions) rejects. There are indeed a variety of intense mixed messages projected through his body: sexually seductive/ sexually rejective; very intimate/very distant; very tender/ very withdrawn; very provocative/ very withholding--hot/cold, yes/no, stage/life [Fig. 24].

Now let's look at the power dynamics of the relationship. The narrative depicts Dieyi as the *star* in the relationship, for without his fantastic concubine, Xiaolou would have no job. This suggests a power relation where Xiaolou is subordinate, for he must remain careful, sensitive, and compassionate to Dieyi's emotional state of mind if he wishes to make the theatre his life's work. However, if we look at the relationship dynamics established through Fengyi's physiognomy, we find the power dynamics completely shift. Now Xiaolou appears to hold power over Dieyi, since he controls the dynamics of the relationship by setting the boundaries. He never lets their relationship develop beyond a certain point. It can never grow or develop in a passionate direction since he appears unwilling or unable to let it. Now it is Xiaolou who creates the conflict

Fig. 24 - Dieyi applies make-up to Xiaolou. The brush stroke is gentle, loving, tender. His eyes completely focused on his beloved. Xiaolou appears ambiguous in his relation to Dieyi: he invites physical closeness by requesting Dieyi to apply his make-up (looks rather intimate), while at the same time emotionally removed (setting-up boundaries) expressed through his distant eyes and indifferent facial expression. Mixed messages: Invitation/Rejection, Intimate/Withdrawn, Close/Distant, Hot/Cold.

within the relationship because he is so highly elusive and ambivalent, which leaves Dieyi confused, frustrated, and extraordinarily hurt.

Fengyi is physically rather indistinct, yet he is so brilliantly ambiguous in every action that his character develops a depth that leaves the spectator conflicted about *his* character, Xiaolou's, sexual identity and inner struggles. Fengyi may appear subtle in his style, but he is very sophisticated in his technique. He somehow undermines Cheung's character.

Fengyi's approach to portraying Xiaolou's conflicting emotions dramatically enhances the love relationship between the men within the film story, which is by far more intriguing than the one depicted in Lee's novel. The focus of the film may be on Cheung's captivating and visually magnetic concubine, however I think it is Fengyi's acting style that is responsible for Cheung's brilliance: Fengyi's ability to physically project mixed messages provides Cheung with a variety of emotional responses from which to choose. This definitely helps to propel the narrative forward since the sexual conflicts within the narrative are never resolved, thus the emotional choices between the two actors could have easily remained static, banal, and dull.

VIII. Conclusion

This film most certainly maintains that gender construction constructs sexual orientation. However, perhaps the crucial question is not only how sexual identity is *constructed*, but how sexual identity is *displayed*. The men themselves somehow transcend their sexual identities by allowing their *different* biological traits, gender

characteristics, sexual orientations to *unite* them rather than *divide* them; for they continually come together through the very struggle that divides and differentiates them.

From a theoretical perspective, when we apply the film images to feminist theory, the film appears to give an illusion of “enlightened” sexuality, but then merely reinforce the notions of sexual difference which are tediously conventional: sexual identity anchored to an imposed patriarchal “institutional” framework which restricts male erotic desires by favoring a biological “genital” orientated male sexuality, maintaining that male genitals complement female genitals, rather than recognizing male sensual desire for male. Hence, the film’s image of the construction of sexual identity supports psychoanalytic theory.¹² However if we *separate* the film images of sex, gender and sexual orientation and look at each image of sexual identity, independent of a psychoanalytic perspective, we find the film expresses male characters as dominated by desires not their own. This contradicts current feminist theory.

On the narrative level, the men in this film love deeply, yet their constructed genders and sexual orientations are barriers to their happiness. Indeed all three characters in the film live a life full of external restraints imposed upon their bodies. Yet, ironically, it is the male actress’ feminized body that restrains his masculinized mind with sexual desires seen as the determinant factor for these powers of restraint; for it expresses the *power* of an *alienated* sexuality. This undermines current feminist theory, suggesting the power of sensual desires, which cannot be contained within an imposed “institutionalized” framework.

Chapter 3

Unnatural Acts: The Performance of Gender, Desire and Cultural Difference in *Farewell My Concubine*

I. Introduction

Farewell My Concubine (dir. Chen Kiage, 1994) is a homosexual Chinese film that has a special cultural identity. In this film we have a presentation of a peculiar type of masculinity, an extreme feminine male, characterized by the role of the Concubine and the role of the effeminate male playing the Concubine, Dieyi. With its tragic story of frustrated homosexual love associated with the feminine/masculine identity on the performance level of signification, we have a tension on the level of female desire in relation to the actor, Leslie Cheung, who plays both of the roles of Dieyi and the Concubine. This film is interesting because of its convolution of masculinity and inclination to examine the “border” between masculine and feminine identity.

In determining the pleasure values located in Cheung’s “performance” of gender, it is the tension between his two *unnatural* “acts” as embodied by his culturally peculiar roles that makes Cheung’s complicated performance in the film compelling, absorbing and indeed, even illuminating. His gendered identity is difficult to locate, for he possesses two fractured sub-identities, both of which are quite incompatible. When specific characteristics from his two sub-identities fuse, however, this altered space, the interstitial relation between male and female, constructs a dynamic unique third character (Dieyi in Concubine clothing) that is highly seductive and strikingly expressive. In this chapter I

will examine this ambiguous space between two peculiar bodies, between the extreme feminine male and the effeminate male in order to determine why Leslie Cheung's hopelessly entangled "performance" of gender is in itself a pleasurable performance.

Gender as a "performance" was originally introduced by Judith Butler (*Performative*, 1988); however, there is an inherent contradiction within her approach to film analysis which remains a problem in that, while she has written extensively on the "performance" of gender, she rarely analyzes actual "performances" of gender. In addition, the majority of film feminists considering Butler's approach to analyzing gender/sexual difference in film seem to concentrate exclusively at the narrative level of signification in their film analysis. I plan to resolve these issues by *applying* Butler's theoretical perspective at the *performance* level of signification through a semiotic approach to film performance as proposed by Karl Toepfer.

In a series of publications and in his forthcoming book, *Empire of Ecstasy* (1997), Toepfer proposes an application of semiotic analysis of performance values that accounts for cultural and historical differences in performance signifying practices. With its focus on performance values rather than narrative values, Toepfer's approach achieves its analytical power by examining signifying practices independent of their contexts as a means of investigating the physiognomy of performers at the filmic and profilmic levels of signification. Hence, we can read the *performing* body in and of itself, thus locate pleasure values at the performance level rather than narrative level of signification. One of the main objectives I wish to establish in my thesis is the significance of tensions between

narrative values and performance values. For it is within these tensions that important aspects of representing sexual identity in films remain weakly understood.

I explored the inner conflict between Cheung's two opposing characterizations at the narrative level of signification in chapter 2. In this chapter, I will focus at the performance level of signification in order to explore the incongruity between Cheung's two sub-identities within the film and define the aesthetic pleasure values located at the convoluted "border" between the masculine and the feminine.

With its focus on signs rather than referents, Toepfer's semiotic approach in exploring the significance of cultural and sexual difference in film performance offers a way in which we can understand, in a more practical sense, Butler's notion of gender as a "performance" rather than a story. For it is here, at the performance level of signification, Toepfer's semiotic model, from a feminist perspective, might offer new insights into representations of sexual identity in film.

II. Body Drama: The "Performance" of Gender

In this film we have two "unnatural" gender performances embodied by Leslie Cheung: an extreme feminine male (Concubine) and an effeminate male (Dieyi) both of which I'd like to now explore through Judith Butler's theoretical perspective. Butler originally introduced her theory of gender as a "performance" in her article *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* (1988) in which she contends that "gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactment of various kinds constitute the illusion

of an abiding gendered self...to be a woman is to have *become* a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of 'woman,' to induce the body to become a cultural sign...the body is only known through its gendered appearance...the transvestite's gender is as fully real as anyone whose performance complies with social expectations" (527).

In applying Butler's theory to Cheung's gendered performance of the Concubine, we then ask: Is Cheung's Concubine "act" a cultural sign of femaleness? Does Cheung's performance of extreme femininity conform to a historical idea of woman? Is his "performance" of gender simply a *body* performance: a stylization of the body through costume, gestures, movements? Is the Concubine to some extent just a costume: a gendered appearance which complies with social expectations? The evidence in the film suggests that Butler's theory does in fact apply to the gendered role of the Concubine - the "act" of Cheung's body serving as both a cultural and an historical "sign" of gender difference. Indeed, Butler elaborates, "The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, the act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and produced as reality once again" (526).

Butler's assertion here is in fact one of the central narrative themes of the film: that of Cheung's Dieyi practicing, rehearsing and finally embodying the female role of the Concubine. In addition, this "performance" of femaleness is historically grounded in a traditional art form, thus it is "an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (519) which according to Butler's perspective, would serve as a cultural "sign" of

“woman.” Butler continues: “Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines already existing directives” (526).

This is certainly the case with the female roles (performed by men) in traditional Chinese Opera. The most famous “female” Beijing Opera star, Mei Lan-Fang (1894-1961) [Figures 1 and 2],¹ on whose life *Concubine* is based, dominated female performance in Chinese Opera due to his supreme ability to perfect the artistically rigid gendered performance signs within a very restrictive cultural performance art form.

In Jenny Lau’s cultural reading of *Concubine*, she asserts that “Although Dieyi’s total identification with his female role is the major cause of the drama in the film, in general, the transvestite role in Beijing Opera does not copy the woman but signifies her. In this sense, Mei believes it is possible for an impersonator to be more “feminine” than a female. For femininity in Beijing Opera is a translation, not necessarily a transgression. Mei was known for his obsession with perfecting even minor details of this system of signification, such as his famous *lanjua shou* (orchid’s hand), a hand gesture that expresses the nuanced differences of the delicate emotions of a female” (*Farewell*, 23).² Thus gender is performative to the extent that the performance can be interpreted as expressing a gender identity. “These acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in some way” (Butler 527).

In terms of the performance of the *Concubine*, however, the film seems to suggest that the body can, in a sense, be *passively* scripted with a gendered cultural code. This

Fig. 1 - Mei Lan-Fang

**Fig. 2 - Mei Lan-Fang performing his famous
Concubine role.**

is evidenced when we are introduced to the second Concubine who appears through the character of the adopted son, Xiao-Si [Figures 3 - 5]. Here we have a “mask” of femininity which seems to transcend the bodies of those who perform it; that is, the powerful *image* (make-up, costume) of the Concubine overpowers the performing *body*: the actor need only possess the *correct* body shape (slight build), despite the actor’s performance of “correct” gestures and movements, in order to successfully “perform” this expressive image of Chinese femininity. The film offers a rather disruptive notion here, for it is in direct opposition to its own intent in that this scene suggests that *any* “body” can “perform” the female role simply by scripting the body with the costume and make-up, thus proposing that the Concubine is indeed just a costume, a rather tragically ironic moment in the film since the first hour and a half focused solely on the brutal training the male actress (Dieyi) endured in order to artistically achieve the precise stylized performance of extreme femininity (Concubine).

Though we know that historically men created and performed the female roles in Chinese Opera, once women performed the “act,” they too proved to be equally successful in achieving the precise “performance” of gender associated with the Concubine role in Chinese Opera. In a sense, the female actress has appropriated the “signs” of femininity produced by the *male* actress and has in fact “performed” the female role in virtually the same manner as the men who originally created it. In comparing Cheung’s Concubine [Figures 5 and 8], Xiao-Si’s Concubine [Figure 4 and 5], a female actress and male actress in female roles [Figure 6], two women in female roles [Figure 7], and a female actress playing the Concubine role [Figure 9] *all* prove to

Fig. 3 - Dieyi and Xiao-Si in masculine costuming.

Fig. 4 - Cheung (Dieyi) and Xiao-Si in feminine costuming performing different female roles.

**Fig. 5 - Cheung (Concubine) and Xiao-Si
in same female costuming for Concubine role.**

**Fig. 6 - Chu Kuei-Fang (female actress) and
Mei Lan-Fang (male actress) performing female roles.**

Fig. 7 - Two women playing female roles.

Fig. 8 - Leslie Cheung in full Concubine costuming. The gorgeous headdress, jewelry and ornamentation add intensely to the desirability of the image of femininity: the more “artificial,” the more desirable.

Fig. 9 - An anonymous female actress playing Concubine role.

be equally desirable and potent images of extreme femininity; this further proposes the power of the image (make-up, costume) to dominate the body, regardless of the sexed body of the actor.

In terms of the film images, costume is the major way of distinguishing between Leslie Cheung's two performances of gender. The director, Kiage, introduces Cheung's highly stylized Concubine in full make-up and dress "performing" his female role, within the film, on the opera stage. This female image definitely achieves its potent femininity through the exotic and stunning make-up mask and costume. In contrast, now let's consider Cheung's gendered performance of the effeminate male, Dieyi. Is Dieyi just a costume? While Cheung's performance of Dieyi is not nearly as dependent on costume and make-up as is his performance of the Concubine, his performance does, however, appear as stylized in movements and gestures. This gendered image is "unnatural" in that Cheung's "performance" of masculinity, from a cultural perspective, does not fully "comply with social expectations" (Butler 527). That is, his performance of the "effeminate" male is *not* a distinct cultural sign of man whereas his performance of the Concubine *is* a distinct sign of woman. Furthermore, Dieyi's gender is not identified through costume nor is he defined through an historically repetitive "act." In a sense, Cheung's "performance" of masculinity is an unstable identity that cannot be so easily defined as a specific gender performance.

Interestingly, Butler concludes her article with her concern that "sexual difference [does] not become a reification which unwittingly preserves a binary restriction on gender identity and an implicitly heterosexual framework for the description of gender, gender

identity, and sexuality” (531). Though her article is focused on de-stabilizing the gendered “performance” of female, it is rather ironic how perfectly Cheung’s gendered performance of the effeminate male illustrates her perspective. The performance level of signification proves effective in demonstrating her point regarding the need to disrupt the restrictive heterosexual framework associated with gendered identity and sexuality. Again, in the scene where Xiao-Si successfully performs the Concubine role, we find the film’s notion of sexuality associated with gender identity and the performance of gender and sexuality is loaded with contradiction in that Xiao-Si is depicted as a heterosexual masculine male (the gender “act” here *does* “comply with social expectations” of male) who successfully performs extreme femininity as embodied by his gendered body “performance” of the Concubine. The main narrative theme of the film, however, revolves around the frustrated homosexual relationship between Cheung’s Dieyi and his beloved, Xiaolou (Zhang Fengyi). Thus this scene suggests that Dieyi’s sexual orientation (homosexual) is congruent with his gendered identity (female) maintaining the heterosexual framework; whereas, Xiao-Si’s sexual orientation (heterosexual) is *not* congruent with his gendered identity (female), thus disrupting the heterosexual framework.³

Now let’s approach the Concubine “act” from a different perspective and consider Cheung’s “performance” of gender not from an artistic point of view, but rather from a cultural point of view. For certainly Butler’s theory applies to Cheung’s performance of the Concubine, but what about the Concubine’s performance of female in relation to the Chinese woman’s performance of female? When we compare Cheung’s image of female

to Gong Li's image of female, at the performance level of signification, we find Cheung's image of "artificial" woman [Figure 10] is by far more desirable than Gong-Li's image of "natural" woman [Figure 11a] and her one image of extreme femininity [Figure 11b] as evidenced through the faces of both performers. In comparing these different "masks" of femininity we find the intent of the film once again contradicts the visual impact of the film images; at the narrative level, Kiage obviously intends Gong-Li to serve as the dominant sign of female desirability in the film, yet at the performance level of signification she pales in comparison to Cheung's exquisite "mask" of femininity; for the image of Cheung's mask is without a doubt the dominant incarnation of desire in the film.

III. Mask Drama: The Performance of Desire

In this section I wish to "unmask" the figure of the male actress through Karl Toepfer's semiotic approach to performance analysis in order to demonstrate his more systematic approach to understanding gender signification in performance by examining the feminine identity (Concubine) as represented by Leslie Cheung. Toepfer introduced his theoretical application of performance signifying practices in his article "Decontextualization and Performance Analysis" (1995) in which he asserts that "the vast majority of discourse purporting to be about performance insists on situating performance choices within specific historical, cultural, or narrative contexts... a significant problem with this approach is that it conveys the impression that the context of the performance determines the signifying practices defining the performance... it is necessary to consider

Fig. 10 - Cheung's mask of extreme femininity.

Fig. 11a - Gong Li's image of "natural" femininity.

Fig. 11b - Gong Li's only image of extreme femininity. This marriage scene is the only one in which she wears make-up and jewelry. Cheung's image still dominates our perception.

more seriously the role of codes in defining the object of performance analysis...that complex of signs which migrates across performances and even across cultural contexts because their communicative power functions on a cognitive rather than cultural level" (152,154). In applying Toepfer's theoretical perspective to Cheung's gendered performance of the Concubine at the performance level of signification we then ask: What are the features of this extreme artificialization of the female identity? What is desirable about this image? What do we see in the mask and what is signified by our perception?

In order to understand the signification of this desirable expression of the Chinese male's femininity, we need to understand the qualities of the mask of femininity which are not peculiar to Cheung; for he is merely a body type that fits this mask. In looking at the "mask" of extreme femininity adopted by a variety of Chinese opera performers [Figures 12-19] we can locate some common elements to the "artificial" look: first of all, it is *obviously* a mask; however it is not an attempt to conceal the real face of the performer so much as to expose a kind of painted on feature of Chinese Opera.⁴ The face is heavily powdered with extremely light foundation, the eyes and upper cheeks are heavily rouged with reddish-orange hues, the eyes are greatly magnified through excessive black liquid eyeliner and mascara. There is an upward almond ovoid quality to both the face and the eyes. The whole notion of desirability seems to be built into this slant-eyed uniquely Asian way of accentuating the eyes through shadow. Flesh is covered over by all this intense color of whiteness, orangeness, redness, blueness and blackness in a sense creating another skin for the female identity. The mask is both an unnatural and a supernatural image of femininity. The look is "super" natural--a way of codifying

Fig. 12 - Cheung's "mask" of femininity

Figs. 13 through 19 - Various images of the “mask” of femininity in Chinese opera.

Fig. 13
Foreign Princess

Fig. 14
Foreign Princess

Fig. 15
Female Warrior

Fig. 16
A Goddess

Fig. 17
Fisherman's Daughter

Fig. 18 - A lady

Fig. 19 - A young warrior

sexuality as a supernatural (magical) force rather than a “natural” force: a *supernatural* femininity that results from this artificialization and extravagant coloring of the face, expressing an unnatural relation to femininity through a supernatural power in beauty.

The make-up is extravagant, it is fascinating, it is haunting, and it is an intensely desirable image of femininity that is *not* expected of women in the society which has created it - it is only seen in the theatre. This painting of the lips, eyes, cheeks, skin and putting these contrasting colors into it, which renders the performer’s identity artificial, is the foundation of the pleasure values associated with the performance of the Chinese male’s feminine identity. At the performance level of signification, this mask has autonomous expressive value that is captivating, alluring and extremely satisfying regardless of the social, cultural, historical, or narrative contexts.

Toepfer contends that “The most powerful element in the performer code of actors is physiognomy (his emphasis)... the body of the actor dominates perception of all sign production and therefore constitutes a central objective of analysis in relation to the actor performer code. Even an actor who delights in masks and disguises which completely conceal a truthful image of his body has made physiognomy central to the construction of his performer code. In this respect, the performer code, like the performance code, remains aligned to cognitive rather than cultural controls over perception” (156).

The male actor in traditional Chinese Opera is assigned a gender specific role based on three criteria which Leslie Cheung successfully fulfills: 1) Physiognomy: height, facial shape, physique, voice, personality, beauty. 2) Socio-cultural: the male actress must physically reinforce socially prescribed and culturally inscribed behavioral differences

ascribed to men and women; that is, the “female” must be smaller than the male--shorter, narrower hips, smaller boned, finer more delicate facial features. 3) Image-adaptability: the ability to physically express gendered difference through cosmetic exaggeration and body conformity which achieves the precise image, yet is perceived as residing “naturally” in the body. The obvious irony here is that Leslie Cheung’s “natural” ability to successfully achieve the precise image of extreme femininity through the three criteria may be perceived as “natural” *female* difference yet is *unnaturally* located in the *male* body.

Cheung has the physiognomy to accommodate the mask which establishes his desirability, desirable meaning that the Concubine image is favored by *perception*, not by the narrative, over the Gong Li image. This is where the energy of the spectator shifts or centers contrary to the intentions of the narrative and the filmmaker. Figure 20 is a perfect example of the complexities of femininity coming out of performance. Here we have the male between two images of femininity that are strongly contrasted: Gong Li represents “natural” femininity [Figure 21] and Leslie Cheung represents “artificial” femininity [Figure 22]. The filmmaker, Kiage, sets up feminine difference through the framing of the two images which physically dramatizes the conflict that drives the story: Which femininity should pull the man? Which femininity is more desirable? The woman is excessively plain, the male is excessively made-up. There is some uncertainty by the male between them about which femininity captures desire. Kiage, however, underestimates the authority of artificiality in shaping desire.

Toepfer continues “I do not mean to say that either the performance code or the performer code has no connection at all with distinct cultural or historical contexts.

Fig. 20 - Male between two contrasting images of femininity.

**Fig. 21 - Gong Li represents
“natural” femininity.**

**Figure 22 - Leslie Cheung represents
“artificial” femininity.**

Performance codes plainly do emerge out of specific cultural contexts... But while the *production* or ‘discovery’ of performance devices and codes is unique to cultural and historical contexts, the capacity to read (or ‘consume’) signs and ascribe a transcendent value to them is not... The controlling idea here is that performance consists of devices which migrate across performances and narrative contexts and establish the object of performance analysis as the analysis of performance devices” (156).

Like Butler, the narrative suggests that sexual identity is performed or socially constructed but that some social constructions are better than others: Gong Li is the representation of the “natural” woman and Kiage obviously selects this image of natural femininity to represent the dominant incarnation of desire in the film. This image is opposed to the socially constructed femininity that is “artificial,” represented by Cheung as the Concubine. Ironically, it is this extremely artificial image of the Concubine that proves most visually satisfying in the film. As previously mentioned, this is *not* the intention of the film, yet the “mask” of artificiality is nevertheless the driving force of desire which transcends the narrative and migrates across social contexts. What does this mean? What is this potent “mask” of femininity saying? One message is that regardless of the “oppressive” society that created the mask, it is still an extremely potent image of femininity; indeed, the more “artificial” the image, the more desirable. Hence, at the performance level of signification, the Concubine image refutes the filmmaker and Butler: there is but one identity for femininity that is basically desirable and that is the image of woman we never see in real life--the theatrical Chinese image, with its extravagant

exaggerated style, on man or woman that dominates perception and proves unconquerable in its power over desire. This is the insight of Chinese culture, what it is bringing to the discourse on sexual identity through the theatrical traditions that it has developed. For the mask is not “natural” to woman either, which is made clear in the movie and in the performance history of China, so we’re looking at something signified through the mask that is considered part of woman but not readily visible except in a Chinese theatrical context.

In determining the pleasure values located in the artificial mask of femininity, we find the performance dimension subverts the narrative dimension. One major problem at the narrative level of signification is associating male appropriation of the mask with homosexuality and then later contradicting itself through the performance of Xiao-Si which immediately creates a tension between the narrative and performance levels of signification. The film story implicates the mask with both homosexuality and with some kind of oppressive social environment or social conditioning which sets up tensions between the sexes, within people and between them in a pathological way that’s tragic, leading to unhappy consequences, unfulfilled desire, wasted love--that’s what the narrative is telling us; hence there is a morai message involved throughout the whole film: the mask is a symptom of a pathological social, cultural, and historical environment. But on the performance level of signification, the Concubine image is liberating, it is not a pathology, a “sickness” to be overcome. It is extremely intriguing to watch female identity performed in this way. It is beautiful, gratifying and one cannot help but appreciate the culture that has created it. It is an image of femininity that transcends the political issues in the film, a

point which is ironically reinforced at the narrative level which depicts the Japanese officers, during the occupation, obviously appreciative of this peculiar construction of sexual difference. In addition, the mask has survived over several historical eras and women have now adopted it in performance since we no longer have the male impersonation in the performance, as well as the popularity of the film itself, which has reached an international audience because of its themes of sexual identity and gender ambiguity. Hence, regardless of the performer, the narrative, social, political or historical issues surrounding the film, the mask migrates across all contexts and proves to be a powerful force shaping female desirability in the film.

IV. Dance Drama: The Performance of Body

The Chinese male's "feminine" identity is constructed through two categories: physiognomy (body, voice, face, movements) and image (costume, "mask," camera, lighting). These categories are both fluctuating and static; for the role of the Concubine and the role of Dieyi are each constructed through specific elements static to each character within each category. The third character (Dieyi as Concubine), however, is not dependent on a stable image nor a stable physicality; For the body of Cheung is both, and so the expressive power of his third character is both. The pleasure values associated with Cheung's third character are located in his physical possession of both bodily expressivity and emotional expressivity, a blending of characteristics the other two roles do not possess.

The dance between Cheung's three characters is one articulated in three different modes of movement: theatrical (Concubine), realism (Dieyi), and dramatic (Dieyi in "mask"). The difference in bodily expressivity between each character's expressive style is evident in Cheung's movements and gestures and are expressed through his upper body - articulated through torso, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, head. Each mode of bodily expressivity is driven by an emotional, if not quite a logical, contradiction. For the body is emotion, and yet it is not emotion. At the very moment Cheung's body separates into "stable" movement: the precise studied *theatrical* movement of the Concubine enforced by the "rules" of *feminine* difference within the opera culture, his mode of physical expression directly opposes the precise studied *realistic* movement of Dieyi enforced by the "rules" of *masculine* difference within the Chinese culture. By the same token, however, the "articulated" torso expresses a *lack* of emotion. For example, the Concubine movements are fluid, yielding, soft and flowing, a beautiful dance to watch, yet the body of the dancer remains indifferent to the "meaning" of the dance. For the Concubine's dance is a dance of love, yet the rules of theatrical movement that govern the dance appear to restrain the body in a rather rigid language of physical and emotional expression. Hence, Cheung's embodiment of the Concubine is a magnification of the historically, culturally, and artistically "correct" body articulation of female, yet devoid of feminine passion. As the Concubine he is restrained in bodily movement and facial expression due to the theatrical conventions of the opera performance. Kiage dramatizes this restraint further through camera close-ups which tightly frame and further inhibit Cheung's physical gestures [Figure 23] while at the same time magnifying the Concubine mask. Ironically, the

Fig. 23 - Cheung's concubine is tightly framed, further restricting his movements and gestures while at the same time shifting our focus to the "mask" of femininity, rather than the "dance" of femininity.

expressive qualities of Cheung's mask have been designed for the camera, yet the performance of the mask further conceals Cheung's emotional expression.

Cheung's embodiment of the character Dieyi also reveals an equivalently rigid language of physical and emotional expression. His movements are "realistic" insofar as they are intended to appear "natural," yet they appear so precise and practiced that they in fact look as artificial as the movements and gestures attached to the Concubine. Here too, Cheung's physical expression of Dieyi lacks passion. For example, as Dieyi there is a kind of stillness to his body that doesn't indicate any intense desires on his part or interest in the world about him. This is evidenced in the choices made by Leslie Cheung when he "performs" *masculinity*. In the scene between Dieyi and Mr. Yuan [Figure 24], for example, there is an intensely controlled movement of the body which remains very restrained and withheld. How then is "masculinity" being performed? As Dieyi, Cheung's costume is drab, he does not wear the brilliant colors seen in other moments in the film when he plays the Concubine. He looks excessively groomed: his hair is carefully manicured, his clothing starched, his face scrubbed clean of all make-up. Cheung's movements and gestures are rigid, exact, compact, and resistant; his arms and hands remaining close to his body. He does not look at the person to whom he's talking. He is reluctant to speak. He is *always* looking away, with eyes half closed, appearing uninterested in his environment and those around him [Figures 25 - 27]. As the Dieyi character he is representing a masculinity that appears *drained* of "masculinity." Indeed, both sexualities are stifled or repressed in both the Dieyi mode and the Concubine mode.

Figures 24 through 27- Cheung's "masculine" image lacks both emotional and physical expressivity. As Dieyi his hair is perfectly groomed, he wears drab costuming, his eyes are half closed, he does not look or engage with the person to whom he's talking.

Fig. 24

Fig. 25

Fig. 26

Fig. 27

This is in contrast to his third character in which his eyes are wide open, emphasized by the make-up, and fully engaged with the people to whom he is talking [Figures 28 - 30]. Cheung's emotional expression is possible only when Cheung has appropriated femininity through the mask, yet retains his "masculine" identity in the Dieyi character. As Dieyi, in the "mask" of femininity, he is emotionally and physically expressive. There is a greater ambiguity in his gender identity as the third character. In a sense, the pleasure of Cheung's "gendered" identity is located in a *lack* of identity. Here he's between male and female. In looking at the physiognomic category, both of Cheung's "unnatural" performances of Dieyi and the Concubine are a peculiar notion of gender identity which Cheung obviously means to physically express as eloquently as possible, yet in his relentless pursuit of dramatizing two separate unique characters through the "correct" dance of each gender, he merely succeeds in reinforcing the "veil," the interstitial between the two, which simultaneously renders each role as a somewhat stifled notion of gender difference.

Cheung's bodily expressivity, his expressive power is fully realized in his third character, that of Dieyi in the Concubine "mask." Here his movements and gestures are dramatic. His body *is* emotion. The intensity of his movements speak louder than his dialogue. For his emotional expressivity is dynamically expressed through his physiognomy. For example, in the scene in which Fengyi's Xiaolou leaves Dieyi (still in Concubine costume) for another woman, Cheung's "correct" feminine gestures of the Concubine and his rigid stoic physical expression of Dieyi collide and collapse along with

Figures 28 through 30 - Cheung's physical and emotional expressivity is fully realized in his third character (Dieyi in Concubine "mask"). He emotionally engages with the person to whom he's talking. He physically expresses himself (pleading, pain, fear) through his facial expressions.

Fig. 28

Fig. 29

Fig. 30

his body in a dramatic cry of despair. For who is he to be? This scene is fascinating because all three of Cheung's characters are physically expressed simultaneously and the tension articulated *within* Cheung's body is also articulated *through* Cheung's body so we can see the contradictions within movement between three modes of physical expression and three modes of character embodiment within the one performing body.

V. Conclusion

The film subscribes to Butler's approach which demonstrates how all the complex social forces constrict gendered identities and shape sexual identities and sexual difference. The narrative revolves around tragic elements which suggests these are "bad" aspects of society - when it has the power to shape sexual identity. Butler's objective is to expand the roles of sexual identities people can assume, "As a corporeal field of cultural play, gender is a basically innovative affair, although it is quite clear that there are strict punishments for contesting the script by performing out of turn or through unwarranted improvisations...we need to think a world in which acts, gestures, the visual body, the clothed body, the various physical attributes usually associated with gender, *express nothing*" (531). Therefore, one must choose one's own role rather than let society/culture dictate one's role. The film narrative defines the roles too carefully which leads to unhappiness. Hence the body needs to be free from social control (oppressive imperialists, communism, even theatrical tradition). However, the Concubine image, though created and performed within an oppressive cultural context, is an extremely beautiful, intriguing, and undeniably enjoyable image of sexual identity which transcends the oppressive

and performed within an oppressive cultural context, is an extremely beautiful, intriguing, and undeniably enjoyable image of sexual identity which transcends the oppressive political social cultural circumstances that produced it. Though we may not like the oppressive context in which this image was created nor the message inherent in the image, that of glorifying unnatural femininity (artificial woman) over natural femininity (real woman), we cannot help but admire the culture that produced this dynamic theatrical image which has intrigued spectators for centuries.

While Butler's theory proves useful as a general framework from which to analyze the "performance" of gender and its significance in relation to a social context, Toepfer's theory offers a more systematic approach to understanding the signification of the *performance* itself which proves useful in widening our perception of gender *through* performance rather than gender simply *as* performance--a point of difference that allows a greater understanding of the meanings derived from gender in performance.

Chapter 4 Conclusion

I. Introduction

In my thesis I demonstrated two alternative theoretical approaches to analyzing sexual identity and gender difference in film performance removed from the psychoanalytic model currently favored by feminist film theorists. In Chapter 2 I applied the semiotic model to analyze sexual difference at the narrative level of signification. In Chapter 3 I applied both the psychoanalytic model as proposed by Butler and the semiotic model as proposed by Toepfer to analyze the performance of gender and cultural difference at the performance level of signification. My thesis sought to demonstrate the usefulness of the semiotic model in offering feminists a wider perception of sexual difference in film performance.

II. Pschoanalytic Model (Butler) vs. Semiotic Model (Toepfer)

Feminist film theorists tie the analysis of sexual identity into a political goal. The performance of gender in *Farewell my Concubine* is a good example of how performance can be used to reinforce a political agenda. Butler's psychoanalytic perspective indicates that sexual identity is dependent on forces external to the performance: the performance of gender functions as a feature of cultural or social signifying practice--you have gender as a cultural practice. The evidence in Chapter 3 suggests that from a feminist perspective (Judith Butler) the performance operates to reinforce the patriarchal framework and that a

change in audience perception is initiated by leveling off difference in order to re-define a group identity by implanting an old message in consciousness in order to create new meanings. Hence we have a concentrated effort to analyze the world external to the performance rather than the performance itself. To what extent does the “performance” of gender, from Butler’s perspective, shape the perceptions of the spectator? Is the psychoanalytic model significant in getting people to change their views about the relations between the sexes and about the world in which they live? My thesis demonstrates a fundamental problem with the psychoanalytic model which asserts that performance functions to reinforce patriarchal patterns of power and once we identify institutional structures within performance, through the psychoanalytic model, our awareness will create a new social structure. In contrast, the semiotic perspective (Karl Toepfer) analyzes the performance itself and as evidenced in both Chapters 2 and 3, the performance of gender in this film does not, in fact, reinforce patriarchal patterns of power. Toepfer’s model functions to uncover expressive value most often not intended by the filmmaker, the narrative, or the cultural social structure and as Toepfer asserts, this is only possible when performance is detached from its contexts. This is the most significant difference between the two models. For Toepfer’s perspective frees the analysis of representations from narrative biases. As discussed in Chapter 3, Butler contends that “society” writes the “script” which determines the sexual “roles” everyone plays. But the tensions between society and sexual identity are actually played out in the tension between narrative and performance, a point Butler underestimates. For desire operates independently of the script imposed upon it. Toepfer’s focus on performance makes it

clear that these constraints on and pleasures of sexuality owe more to cognitive variables than social construction. For example, at the level of performance, we have the fascinating performance by Cheung as the Concubine, which is more “seductive” than his impersonation of Dieyi. Then the second Concubine appears through the character of the adopted son, Xiao-Si. Here we have a “mask” of femininity which seems to transcend the bodies of those who perform it, especially since we know that women play this role in virtually the same manner as the men who created it. This image of mask is the dominant incarnation of desire and desirability in the film. It is also the most disruptive image: the more artificial femininity becomes, the more desirable it becomes, and this sexual difference depends on techniques of masking and performance *not* on social construction.

III. The Narrative Level of Signification vs. The Performance Level of Signification.

The Concubine role has a special cultural identity, yet the communication through the Chinese Opera role refers more to sexual identity than cultural identity and this is where the narrative gets tangled up. For it is about relations between the sexes rather than relations between cultures, though the film narrative revolves around historical and cultural issues and remains driven by cultural difference; it is however *visually* dominated by sexual difference. As the narrative points out, there are complex influences controlling sexual identity through the cultural context: the oppressive artistic control over the body in the training school, the Japanese imperialists oppressive control over the performance while enthusiastically supporting the performance, the communist liberation of the body from the oppressive training schools and their incorporation of politically correct (not

gender correct) bodies into the performance. So, while the narrative ties sexual identity to a cultural context, the semiotic model offers a way in which we can read sexual identity at a completely different level in the film, thus once we detach the performance from the narrative and cultural contexts, we can ironically understand sexual identity in Chinese culture to a greater extent.

In the case of the Concubine, one cannot underestimate the importance of the body type in performance because the Concubine mask or look is the chief source of value. Only certain bodies can perform the role; however, the performance of the role is greatly dependent on the make-up and costume. If the body were removed from the context of the costume, the performance would be reduced to discreet body gestures and ambiguous poses which may be beautiful to watch, but are nevertheless dependent on a physical context to give them value, because in themselves they do not signify anything other than "Chinese Opera" movements and whatever one associates with that term--gracefulness, virtuosity, physical dexterity. Hence, the message is reduced and easily reproduced as long as some "body" can learn the appropriate gestures. However, the Concubine "look" has a powerful expressive value that migrates across contexts, yet remains equally dependent on the correct body type to achieve the image. This is an interesting notion in relation to the performance of gender since the performer's gender is irrelevant to the *obvious* performance of gender; for meaning is tied to the "look" and the look is easily achieved when applied to the correct body structure.

By applying Toepfer's semiotic perspective we find the Concubine image has a powerful cross-cultural communicative value, a *major* point that is underestimated by a

narrative driven analysis. For the mask has survived all these cultural and performative mutations (oppressive communism, Japanese imperialists, inclusion of female performers in Chinese Opera, etc.), yet the stability of the mask remains central to understanding the performance of a precise gender (extreme femininity) peculiar to the Chinese Culture. Gender identity constructed through the Concubine then becomes an extraordinarily expressive image which has the special quality of exciting the viewer which in turn liberates the mask from the external constraints imposed upon it in the historical/cultural/social contexts.

Analyzing the performance of gender located in the Concubine image at the narrative level of signification requires the performer to release the body from the message of the “mask” which theatrical tradition and social conditioning have nevertheless inserted into it. While powerful cross-cultural communication operates through this particular type of bodily expressivity, Cheung’s body adopts signifying practices which have this complex communication. So, what is being communicated through the mask when attached to the narrative context? As evidenced in Chapter 2, there seem to be a lot of double messages, contradictory messages, and themes interwoven that are related to traditions or cultural values that are specific to the origins of Chinese Opera or specific to the Chinese culture regardless of female performer’s appropriation of the performance signifying practice. As a result, it is not altogether clear what *the* message of the Concubine mask is, even though the “mask” itself communicates layers of messages when it is performed, yet the pleasure values are located in this ambiguity within the mask which makes it fascinating, alluring, and intriguing because it is communicating one message (female, femininity, artificiality)

while communicating the opposite message (male, masculinity, supernatural) at the same time. Does the mask of artificiality have a supernatural power over the male spectator because it is an unnatural and unattainable image within the social culture? Is the male performer performing “female” actions which seduce the male spectator? Is it the “natural” *male* performing the “unnatural” *act* which captivates and seduces the male spectator? It’s not altogether clear although it is dramatic. It’s a dramatic performance. It seems to suggest that even if we’re not sure whether the natural woman (Juxian) or the artificial woman (Concubine) is the seducer, it is clear that the man (Xiaolou) is in control or guiding the seductive qualities of the female image, and if that is the case, is his seduction by the women achieved by somehow reversing the power positions, as evidenced in Chapter 2? With all these deviations from the performance itself, how then do we “read” the mask at the narrative level of signification? What is being signified? The narrative suggests this is about male sexual identity not about female sexual identity, it is about heterosexual sex and homosexual love, it is about warriorism (machoism) not about feminism, yet the women dominate the film. Gong Li and Cheung play female roles that are more concealed in their cultural (patriarchal power) positioning. Most significant is this convoluted message in the Concubine image which leads to interesting speculation about the way in which sexual identity is performed and how a performance of gender, peculiar to a culture, cross cultural boundaries and communicates outside of what it is intended to communicate in the narrative context.

Sexual identity pivots around the theme of the exotic ambiguous body manifested through Cheung’s performance of gender. The Chinese Opera performance results in this

effort to show how a mode of performance destabilizes sexual identity which serves as a metaphor for the destabilization of the culture. While most scholars writing about *Farewell My Concubine* have emphatically tied sexual identity to a national cultural identity, in a sense the semiotic model demonstrates that a greater drama is at stake once the dramatization of sexual difference and maleness/femaleness is detached from the cultural identity. For the pleasure of the performance of Chinese Opera is a result of the Concubine image, this exotic ambiguous body dominates the performance and is the only performance that migrates cross-culturally because it has an expressive value that is obviously relative to the culture but not dominated by the culture; for as evidenced in Chapter 3, it is the Concubine character that establishes the desirability of the performance and proves to be the one image that migrates beyond the cultural context. It is this image that has a marvelous appeal throughout the world and sustains the spectator's interest, and this image is desirable because of its gender ambiguity regardless of the narrative/ cultural contexts.

Farewell My Concubine is a film which appears to give the illusion of an "enlightened" sexuality and then merely reinforces notions of sexual difference which are tediously conventional. The costume and mask drive the feminine identity which is a rather conventional way of understanding feminine identity as a "mask" or masquerade. However, once we release ourselves from the narrative constraints of sexual difference, we find the mask migrates across cultural contexts, different historical eras, and in relation to different social status.

Toepfer concludes his article, “Performance devices are much more ‘visible’ when they appear ‘out of context’ that is, when one watches the performance rather than the story...from one narrative, historical, or cultural context to another in the effort to identify performance devices and codes which migrate across performances and therefore indicate pleasurable conditions and magnitudes of freedom associated with performance semiotics or at least with the power to identify performance devices [hence] the urge toward freedom is not inherent to the analytical technology; it is inherent to the codes charted by cognitive mechanisms or systems for assigning meaning and identity” (157).

Here, Toepfer’s perspective parallels my objective as a feminist film analyst; that is, to free female identity from the constraints imposed upon it through current feminist discourse focusing on gender in performance, which tend to rely heavily on psychoanalytic models of analysis to explain the construction of sexual identity in representations, especially in films; for, the psychoanalytic model contains within it two serious limitations. First of all, it has been unable to resolve or even acknowledge a fundamental contradiction within itself and that contradiction is the division between Mulvey and Butler’s models to explain gender. The difference between the two models is in the theory to which they are attached: Mulvey’s model (*Visual*, 1975) is grounded in sex theory, which is a biologically determined formation of sexual identity, and Butler’s model which is grounded in gender theory, which is a biologically determined social construction of sexual identity. Aside from the ambivalence feminists have in using these models due to the patriarchal assumptions shaping sexual identity, we continue to feel uncertainty about

the “gaze” in Mulvey’s model and in the notion of gender as a “performance” in Butler’s model.

The second problem, which I addressed in Chapter 3, is that the psychoanalytic models seem focused on narrative values. They concentrate intensely and exclusively on characters. Bordwell, in *Making Meaning* (1989), has already shown how film scholarship overwhelmingly focuses on interpretation and analysis of narrative values while excluding examinations of performance values. More recently, however, many feminists (Silverman, 1992; Dolan, 1992) have moved away from orthodox feminists in an effort to accommodate greater uncertainty regarding feminine and masculine difference, and have moved toward the relation between female desire and masculinity, and how the image of the male in film performance can help us understand the dynamics of desire within the female spectator.

While the psychoanalytic model may prove helpful in understanding the encoding of sexual identity at a narrative level of signification, it seriously underestimates the performance level of signification to shape or even dominate the spectator’s perception of sexual identity. This film offered an excellent opportunity to explore tensions between narrative and performance levels of signification in the representation of masculine identity, as well as the role of cultural difference in constructing these tensions. In my thesis I sought to establish the significance of tensions between narrative values and performance values; for, as evidenced in Chapters 2 and 3, it is within these tensions that important aspects of representing sexual identity in films remain weakly understood. My thesis attempted to resolve these often unacknowledged complications in feminist film

scholarship, for I want a wider notion of feminism's voice than that offered by psychoanalysis and the semiotic model promises that greater freedom of perception.

Notes

Chapter 2

1. See Teresa de Lauretis, "Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation," *Theatre Journal* 40 (1988): 155-77 in which she argues that these gender denial desires characterize lesbian fiction.

2. This approach to critical performance analysis has been introduced by Karl Toepfer in his lectures at San Jose State University. He asserts that "the spectator's pleasure results from individual moments within a performance that seem to resist containment by narrative, cultural, economic, political, or technical constraints on signification. But to 'see' how moments give pleasure, it's necessary to separate layers of signification (or 'codes') to show how signs are in tension to produce 'ambiguity' or 'oscillations' from determinant to indeterminant significations." He contends that it is necessary to identify the signifying practices establishing conventional ways of reading the performer's body and its contradiction to the signifying practices unique to the performer or performance, and based on the performer's (actor's) physiognomy.

While I have applied Toepfer's semiotic perspective in order to identify conventional and unique signifying practices associated with the actors' physiognomic differences, I have remained at the *narrative* level of signification as a means to cite evidence for the meanings I've extracted from the performances. I plan to apply his approach to the *performance* level of signification in a later section of chapter 2.

3. See Gay Mason, "Looking into Masculinity: Sport, Media and the Construction of the Male Body Beautiful," *Social Alternatives* 11 (1992): 27-32 in which he discusses gendered images of masculinity and femininity in body building using the feminist model of "the gaze" to construct his argument of sexual difference in terms of body parts culturally defined as male or female.

4. See Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40 (1988): 519-531 who has written extensively on the "performance" of gender. Since then several feminist writers have delved into the issue of gender as socially constructed, and the "performance" of gender both on and off the stage. Key scholars and their most influential and intriguing work in this area of study include: Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism and Theatre*; Lynda Hart, *Making a Spectacle*; Helene Kayssar, *Feminist Theatre*; Jeanie Forte, *Women's Performance Art*; Lorraine Helms, *Playing the Woman's Part*; and Anne Hermann, *Travesty and Transgression*.

5. See Sato Tadao, "Japanese Cinema and the Traditional Arts," *Cinematic Landscapes: Observations on the Visual Arts and Cinema of China and Japan*, Linda C.

Ehrlich and David Desser eds., (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994):165-186 in which he focuses on the philosophical connection between men and sex portrayed in Japanese cinema, and men and sex portrayed in Japanese print and theater. Here, he interprets Japanese performance art through Confucianism. In this section I'm applying Tadao's interpretation of men and sex to the Chinese film, *Farewell*. The Confucious "way of seeing" cuts across both Japanese and Chinese Culture, and still influences performance choices as well as the way a performance is read; and as Tadao contends it "persists in many films" (179).

6. Lilian Lee, *Farewell To My Concubine*, Andrea Lingenfelter trans., (New York: W. Morrow, 1993). In reading Lilian Lee's book, I found it to be not so much the story of romantic love between the three main characters (in fact the character Juxian is hardly mentioned), but rather a story focused on the political cultural aspects of China during the Cultural Revolution when traditional art forms were systematically abandoned and destroyed, as seen through the eyes of the two opera stars.

Interestingly, the focus on cultural difference (from pre-Revolutionary China through post-Revolutionary China) is the focus of nearly every published scholarly article on *Farewell My Concubine*, all of which I found lacking in their *application* of historical analysis to the film. This, I think, is due to the director, Chen Kiage's desire to broaden the cultural theme of Lilian Lee's book, by including a romantic love triangle and focusing on homosexual love. In my opinion, the Chinese portrayal of homosexuality, which caused it to be banned from showing in China, provides an interesting contrast to the scholars' investigation of the Cultural Revolutions political banning of art. I think the inclusion of this aspect of the film needs further investigation and may provide a stronger approach when applying historical cultural difference to this film.

7. I think the portrayal of conventional Western signifying practices portraying male romantic love and sexual eroticism, and its application to a distinctly Eastern film was, in fact, the intent of the director, Kiage. For his films are remarkably successful in the foreign market (*Farewell My Concubine*--nominated for an Academy Award; Other hugely successful films on which he collaborated with his former cinematographer, schoolmate, and equally successful 5th generation filmmaker, Zhang Yimou, are: *Ju Dou*, and *Raise the Red Lantern*) due to their ability to transcend cultural difference. This is most certainly due to Hollywood cinema's immense success in foreign markets and American cinema's influence cross-culturally; hence the "American ways of seeing" are recognized throughout the world.

American cinema has obviously influenced Kiage greatly which is evident when reviewing his background. Though Kiage learned the film-making process at the Beijing Film Academy, he spent many months at New York University Film School, and has had a life-long fascination with American Culture and Cinema. For he himself has said, "I have been outside [China]. I have been in a great country called the United States for three and a half years. I'm different than before. Everything is different for me. I see things with

different eyes." Quoted in Godfrey Cheshire's article, "The Long Way Home," *Film Comment* 28, (1992): 39.

Briefly, I'd like to mention Cheshire's chatty article (part interview, part film reviews), noted above, in which there is a brief discussion revolving around Kiage's early years growing-up in China during the cultural revolution--and the inner conflicts he still cannot resolve due to his public interrogation and denouncement of his own father, who as a successful film-maker himself, was arrested and prosecuted for pursuing his art.

I think this event is important to note due to the fact that it had to have influenced him during the making of this film and must have also contributed to his adaptation of the "American" way of seeing; perhaps in order to get the messages in the film (the message here would be, freedom in artistic expression), out more effectively, since the American (rather than Chinese) way of seeing is more easily recognized and understood by spectator's throughout the world.

Briefly, I'd like to point out an interesting comparison between Kiage and the character Xiao-Si. I think Kiage's own identification with this character could be his motivation for embellishing the role, and indeed Xiao-Si's actions seem to parallel those made by Kiage in his youth. In the film, Xiao-Si sacrifices both of his fathers: he destroys Dieyi's artistic passion (his life) by replacing him as Concubine Yu, and he destroys Xiaolou's honor (his life) by denouncing him in the interrogation scene. He successfully targets each of his father's weakest points and destroys the last shreds of happiness they can know. Kiage's own actions seem very similar in that he not only actively participated in the destruction of his own father's honor and artistic passion, but also targeted (perhaps in youthful ignorance) his own father's weakest spot - a father's love for his son. And as he alludes to in the article, it's a pain from which both father and son have not yet recovered.

8. I want to mention that I'm aware that there are many levels to sadomasochism: the "pleasures" in the power dynamics (discipline/punishment, dominance/submission) can be performed/experienced mentally as well as physically, and in fact, need not involve any *physical* "pain" (for example: bondage, humiliation, psychological power games, etc.); however, in this section of the paper, I am, in fact, defining sadomasochism as a *physical* experience, which is how I applied the term in the first section of the paper.

9. Tadao, *Japanese*, 179. I realize that Tadao's analysis is applied to heterosexual relationships; however, due to the absence of homosexual films in China (*Farewell* being the first), hence the absence of current scholarly articles regarding homosexual relationships, I will apply the concepts of Eastern heterosexuality and heteroeroticism discussed by Tadao to *Farewell's* scenes of homosexuality and homoeroticism. In addition, I will contrast Eastern concepts of heterosexual love to Western concepts of homosexual love.

I think the difference in sexual orientation between lovers is of minor importance due to the powerful emotion of love itself. The emotional qualities of love applies to the individual--whether male or female, gay or straight--and his or her capacity to feel deeply

for another. Love between male lovers is, I believe, as powerful as love between a man and a woman. Since my analysis here remains on a purely emotional level, I think the comparison to Tadao's analysis crosses culture, biological difference, and sexual orientation.

10. Jill Dolan, "Practicing Cultural Disruptions: Gay and Lesbian Representations and Sexuality," *Critical Theory and Performance*, Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach eds., (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992) 263-275.

11. E. Ann Kaplan's, "Farewell My Concubine," *The Psychoanalytic Review* 81 (1994): 323-327. I'd like to mention her very different perspective in regard to the homosexual aspects of this film. In this article she asserts that "One could criticize this film for its heterosexual rendering of the opera stars' relationship despite the Chinese government's critiques for showing homosexuality. The film is more about male masquerade than homosexuality per se" (327).

12. See Kaplan's, *Farewell* for her critique of the film analyzed through the psychoanalytic model. She touches upon Freud's concept of "castration anxiety" by contrasting the cut (castration) of the finger (phallic symbol) at the beginning of the film, with the cut of the throat (a "reclaim[ing] [of] his manhood") with the sword (phallic symbol) at the end of the film. In the rest of her article, she focuses on the prostitute mother and the prostitute wife, and their relation to the character Dieyi and his character, Concubine Yu.

Chapter 3

1. Figures 1, 2, 6, and 7 are reproduced from Cecilia Zung's book, *Secrets of the Chinese Drama*. Figures 9, 13-19 are reproduced from Tao-Ching Hsu book, *The Chinese Conception of the Theatre*. Figure 8 is reproduced from Jenny Lau's article, "Farewell My Concubine," *Film Quarterly* (1995): 20. All other illustrations are photographs from the video.

2. See Jenny Kwok Wah Lau, "Farewell My Concubine: History, Melodrama, and Ideology in Contemporary Pan-Chinese Cinema," *Film quarterly* (1995): 16-27. In this article she argues that "symbolic productions such as film can be viewed as a site of negotiation for different cultural traditions, and that the reading of *Concubine* necessitates a consideration of both Western and Chinese conventions of symbolic production and interpretation" (23). While she does not dissect the text, evaluate artistic quality or reconstruct its cultural/national meaning, she does offer an interpretation of the problems associated with cultural production due to language and high-tech barriers. Here, she applies the Althusserian idea of historical conjuncture (contradictory forces in society are

balanced during the process of social transition: “no single force can play an over-determining role in directing the development of history”(22) to the cultural arena of Chinese cinema.

3. Discussion with David Kahn revealed that “Xiaolou is sexually attracted to the ‘female’ concubine, but not the biological male beneath the role. If Dieyi is homosexual (rather than transexual) then presumably he wants to be desired as a male not a female.”

4. I have yet to locate a book that focuses on the *female* mask and its signification in Chinese Opera. The male mask, however, has been written about extensively. Pe-Chin Chang’s *Chinese opera and painted face* and Steve Lu’s *Face Painting in Chinese Opera* are two excellent books that illustrate the many different mask-like make-up patterns and details the meanings attached to individual colors and specific painted patterns when applied to Chinese Opera characters. For example, in terms of color choice for the painted “masculine” mask: red represents loyalty, yellow - capability, white - cunning, black - straight forwardness, green - fierceness, blue - pride, purple - loyal carefulness, pink - old age loyalty, gold/silver - gods and supernatural characters.

Pe-Chin Chang’s book illustrates many examples of how an individual personality can be expressed through various color combinations. One of his examples in determining the meanings derived from color choice is as follows: “if a character is treacherous with an honest appearance and is hypocritical toward others, his face is painted white. White powdered color covering the whole face signifies that the “whole” real face is concealed; therefore whatever he shows is all falsehood” (52).

In terms of the opera, *Farewell My Concubine*, the character King of Chu wears a painted mask which is specific to him since he was a famous historical figure. The brows, for example, represent the most obvious pattern associated with the King of Chu make-up mask. They are known as “swastika brows,” though the swastika has since been changed to the “long life” symbol. Another painted pattern unique to this character are his “contorted” eye sockets. He is the only character to wear these two markings which serves to make him easily recognizable to audiences. The opera story is based on the life of Hsiang Yu during the Chin Dynasty in the 3rd century B.C.

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