

A Chinese production with Hollywood taste:  
*Love and Duty* (*Lian'ai yu yiwu*), by Bu Wancang, 1931.

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*Love and Duty* (*Lian'ai yu yiwu*, Bu Wancang, 1931) belongs to those films that can make us believe in miracles. Considered lost for more than half a century, it was rediscovered fully intact far away from China, the country where it was produced in 1931 in the belongings of a former high-ranking officer in the Chinese Nationalist Army, who was for many the Republic of China's consul in Uruguay.

The third production of one of the main film company of China, the United Picture Service (U.P.S. or Lianhua yingye gongsi; thereafter U.P.S.), with two of the biggest stars of the early 1930's playing in it, it is both a beautiful film and an important landmark in the history of the company and of Chinese cinema. What makes this film special is also the fact that it is a silent feature that was made the same year that China produced its first speaking films. It represents the climax of an art that Chinese filmmakers were eager to master – the art of silent films as they were made in Hollywood – as well as one of the last demonstrations of that art. Soon, technology, as well as the chaos of Chinese history, will bring new challenges upon Chinese cinema and relegate definitely the first *Love and Duty* in the past<sup>1</sup>. But for a moment, the film could have been considered as an achievement, the achievement of a company that wanted to produce films that could demonstrate worldwide the rise of a new country with its specific culture, ready to dialogue with and challenge the western culture.

### **An important production of United Photoplay Service**

*Love and Duty* is the third production of a young but ambitious Chinese film company. It was shot and produced while this company was put together and when

its managers were eager to communicate about their goals and ambitions. As such, *Love and Duty* is an important production in the history of the company that illustrates its early projects and ideas.

In fact, the history of *Love and Duty* production and early screening follows the very first months of the United Photoplay Service. When the shooting started, in August 30, 1930<sup>ii</sup>, this company did exist only as a name and a project, described in the first page of the *Film Magazine* (*Yingxi zazhi*) that was issued August 1<sup>st</sup><sup>iii</sup>. The text reads as such:

Since the past twelve years, the cinematographic industry has managed to play an important role in the industrial world...These past years, the people in this industry saw painfully how foreign imported films contributed to the cultural and economical invasion of our country while national production was decaying. We had few opportunities to change this situation and all attempts to ameliorate our Chinese film market met a deceiving result. But today, United States, our main provider of featured films, has stopped producing silent films and the speaking films it exports will certainly face difficulties to be screened in China for language reasons. People of our profession had to find a solution to save our theatre from the crisis (caused by the lack of films); they could not ignore the needs of our moviegoers...We understood that time was there to launched the « movement for the renaissance of national cinematographic industry ». We decided to call the national movie world to associate itself with the idea to grow and bring good to our people. Famous film companies from Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Nanjing, Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin, from Liaoning and Harbin were put together: this will be the U.P.S. film company...

Sixty names were added at the bottom of this text, names of major personalities of Chinese cinematographic firms – producer, managers of distribution network, theatre owners – but also of important businessmen, statesmen and artists. In the context of a semi-colonized China, where foreign powers were perceived more and more as economical and cultural invaders, some of the main personalities of the Chinese film industry, together with their colleagues of the Chinese bourgeoisie, were declaring their wish to participate to the battle for a stronger China. Their goals were both to save an industry that was going through an economical crisis

and to be considered by the new Chinese government, settled in Nanjing under the authority of Chiang Kai-shek and the Guomindang since 1927, as a partner in the building of a new nation. Such was the ambition for the new film company.

When the shooting of *Love and Duty* started, U.P.S. was not yet registered. In fact, as late as autumn 1930, the shooting of *Love and Duty*, in Shanghai and Wuxi, was attributed to the China Sun Motion Picture Company (Minxin yingpian gongsi)<sup>iv</sup>, a company established in 1925 in Shanghai by a Cantonese born in Hong Kong, Lai Man-wai: at the same moment the partners that were ready to associate to form U.P.S. were still talking about the project. Lai Man-wai, for the Sun Company, was one of them, together with Luo Mingyou, head of the North China Film Co (Huabei dianying gongsi). Luo Mingyou can be considered as the main instigator of U.P.S. project. This Cantonese, well introduced in the official world as well as in the Chinese Hong Kong bourgeoisie, had started in the cinematographic industry around 1920 as the manager of a theatre in Beijing. From there, he built an important network of movie theatres in northern China and was jumping into production. This is his vision of a national cinema, equal in quality to the American production but different in its content, that guided U.P.S. first steps.

At the autumn, three companies formed the main core of future U.P.S.: beside the China Sun and the North China, another important Shanghai film company, the Great China and Lily Film Co (Dazhonghua baihe yingpian gongsi) had joined. The three partners had to decide how they would join, what they would bring. From official and private records, it seems that the two production companies brought their studios, equipments, and technicians as well as investment capital<sup>v</sup> while Luo Mingyou and North China brought a screening and distribution network. Luo Mingyou was also hoping to raise some important capital from Hong Kong shareholders who could be interested in the project. He took them for instance on a tour to visit shooting of *Love and Duty* in Shanghai<sup>vi</sup>. With this momentum, United Photoplay Service, a share company of limited liability, with a capital of one million

*yuan*, was officially registered in Nanjing at the Ministry of Industry of the Republic of China October 25, 1930<sup>vii</sup>. Soon, it was going to be registered as well in Hong Kong.

One of the particularities of U.P.S. was indeed to be, at least at its beginning, more than a local firm. Even if its main studios were located in Shanghai, it had activities also in Beijing and Hong Kong and the presence of U.P.S. in several cities reflected upon the ambition to give the company a national – or even transnational – identity. Hong Kong and the Guangdong area in large was, in this regard, an important site for U.P.S. Not only was it the birthplace of two of the main partner, Lai Man-wai and Luo Mingyou, but it is in Hong Kong also that the men found their main financial support. So, while the team was working at *Love and Duty* in Shanghai, they also gathered with the producers to celebrate the official birth of the company in elegant restaurants or villas of the British colony, that could easily compete for their luxurious and westernized design with the villa shown in the film<sup>viii</sup>.

*Love and Duty* was indeed a film made in a time of celebration. One month before it was released in Shanghai, the company opened its Shanghai branch, on March 25, 1931. There again, the team of the film participated together with the rest of the company in the festivities that gathered a total of a hundred personalities from Shanghai and abroad. The company main shareholder, the dean of the board of trustees of the company, the well-respected businessman Sir Robert Hotung came especially from Hong Kong for that occasion<sup>ix</sup>. In its chronology, *Love and Duty*, that premiered nationwide on April 5, 1931, in Shanghai at the Guanghua and Beijing Theatre, and, on the same day, in two cinema houses of Nanjing and Beijing (the actual and the old capital of China), is the first official production of a company that was then seen as a hope for the movie industry in China.

As it was well explained in its manifesto quoted above, and in other articles published during the same period, the founders of U.P.S company wanted to

contribute to the strengthening of the Chinese movie industry against the high competition of western, mainly Hollywood, films. To meet this target, they wanted to build a company that will follow the economical model of a Hollywood Major, with the vertical integration of all aspects of film industry from production to distribution and exploitation. Hollywood was going to be more than an economical reference, however: for U.P.S. producer, the artistic and technical quality of the films had to meet Hollywood standard, in order to attract the public of Chinese educated urbanite who were big Hollywood films consumers. But on the other end, in the context of the raise of patriotic feeling among Chinese people, the company advertised itself as a national enterprise ready to lead the way to the production of films good for the Chinese nation. In that regard, Hollywood was both a model and a counter model<sup>x</sup>.

Another issue was related to that first one: the arrival of sound movie. In 1930-1931, when the company was founded, the question of the new sound technology was debated in many newspapers and magazines. China was not in a good position regarding the sound technology as the industry lacked the money to buy expensive imported material to shoot and screen sound feature or to invest into the invention of a national sound technology. Film companies adopted different strategies<sup>xi</sup>. The Star Film Co (Mingxing yingpian gongsi) and the Unique Film Co (Tianyi yingpian gongsi), invested heavily to buy imported material and both companies produced in 1931 their first sound films. In fact, the first Chinese speaking film, *Songstress Red Peony* (*Genü hong mudan*, Zhang Shichuan), a sound-on-disc film made with Pathé technology, was released in Shanghai on March 15, 1931, one month before *Love and Duty*. Less than three months later, two small Chinese companies produced the first Chinese optical sound film, made with Japanese technology<sup>xii</sup> and in October 1931 the Unique released *Pleasures of the Dance Hall* (*Ge chang chun se*, Li Pingqian) using the movie-tone technology with the help of American engineers.

How can we explain, in such a context, that the new U.P.S company, a company

that had the ambition to be recognized as a major film company in China and abroad, decided to produce at the same time other Chinese companies were moving into sound technology a totally silent film such as *Love and Duty*?

The answer is found in the texts written by the company founders and producers and published between June 1930 and October 1931 in the *Film Magazine*. Their position about the sound technology is twofold. On one hand, the producers believed that China was not ready for that technology. On the other end, they knew they had to follow this unavailable trend and were already thinking about how to adapt the technology to the Chinese ground.

According to the company founders, China was not ready for the sound technology for many reasons. First, came the technical and economical reasons. China did not have yet the infrastructure to produce and, even more important, to screen sound films and the cost of transition to sound was too high for a weak and young industry. Then, on a deeper level, they believed that China was not *culturally* ready. First, there was the thorny question of the language. In 1930's China, even if the nationalist government pushed toward the use of a common language in media and at school, most people only spoke local dialects. What common language could then speak the actors while some of them only master Cantonese, or Shanghainese, for instance? And what common language could understand the moviegoers, in a city like Shanghai that was a melting pot of several local communities coming from all parts of China and speaking all sorts of dialects? A Chinese film should at least be made in three languages.<sup>xiii</sup>

Second cultural issue: China was lacking a culture of spoken theatre that was, according to some founders of the company, the necessary provider of stories and scripts for speaking films. Local tradition like Chinese opera could not provide the same type of material<sup>xiv</sup>. The risk was that Chinese-speaking films would be based on foreign stories while the company wanted to produce indigenous films for the Chinese nation. A third cultural argument came also: there was the feeling that “while speaking film arrived in the United State when silent film had reach its

climax, in China, silent film was far from being perfect. By adopting this new technology in China, the risk was high to destroy the young sprout of revival<sup>xv</sup>.

Arguments against the adoption of sound technology were numerous and seemed reasonable. In addition, there was the hope that Chinese audience would reject foreign speaking films they could not understand, creating then a comfortable space for national production. But the new company's founders could not ignore the trends toward sound, as it was a sign of modernity. Some of them even manifested a real interest in the sound technology: such was the case of the famous opera actor Mei Lanfang, who was dreaming about using sound films to propagate his art into the most remote place of China and reach a wider audience<sup>xvi</sup>. Mei Lanfang was among the co-founders of U.P.S. and performed in its first movie.

The company's founders recognized that "according to the public, nowadays, silent film is like the corporal envelope while sound is like the veins and spirit of the film. Relying only on the corporal envelope, to promote cinema, is an act of the past"<sup>xvii</sup>. But they wanted to preserve the cultural identity of Chinese cinema. Therefore, U.P.S. strategy was to delay as much as possible the production of speaking films in order to become stronger economically and to propose cultural alternatives to American productions. Their idea was to produce two types of films: first, silent films screened with live music or recorded sounds-on-disk; second, musical and dancing films based on the art of Chinese opera<sup>xviii</sup>. In both cases, music and sounds, rather than language, were favoured. In order to answer the second goal, the company acquired in March 1931 a singing and dancing troop under the supervision of the musician Li Jinhui, a musician known for its skilful adaptation of western music to Chinese culture. In July 1931, the troop participated to the making of the first sound and dancing film of the company made according to these ideas, *Two stars of the Milky Way* (*Yin han shuang xing*, Shi Dongshan)<sup>xix</sup>.

Produced after the first sound-on-disk film made by the company, and before its first singing and dancing film, *Love and Duty* therefore represents the company's

effort to show how a Chinese team had the full mastery of the art of silent film. It was also the demonstration that silent films were still a viable, durable option for Chinese national production. Far from being an anomaly in the Chinese production landscape, it was considered as a landmark in the history of a company that continued to produce silent features until 1935.

### **From Novel to Film**

*Love and Duty* was first presented to the press at the very beginning of its shooting, in the issue of August 1930 of *The Film Magazine*. A full page with six photos, including two of the shooting stage, announced this coproduction of U.P.S Film Company and China Sun Film Company in few words: “This film is based on the English novel of the Northern China author Miss Luo Chen and was made with her full cooperation. It describes the situation of the women of our country, encountering love, duty, ideology and oppression...”<sup>xx</sup>. The main ingredients of the film are already fully there: the film is the description of a contemporary Chinese social complex problem (the question of Chinese women status), viewed from a western eye. As such, it tried to answer U.P.S. founders’ target: to produce films as good in their quality as western films but adapted to the Chinese audience.

As it is exposed in later issues of *The Film Magazine*, *Love and Duty* was first a novel written around 1921 and published in 1923 by S. Horose (Hua Luo Chen in Chinese), the Polish spouse of a Chinese man<sup>xxi</sup>. She had met her future husband while they were student in France<sup>xxii</sup>. There, as she explained in the French edition of the novel, “at the Sorbonne and in other courses, we learnt what Justice was. With this big word in our heart and spirit, we went to these countries where, unfortunately, injustice reigns and misunderstandings flourish”<sup>xxiii</sup>. S. Horose and her husband went back to China around 1911, just after the end of Qing Dynasty<sup>xxiv</sup>. She considered China as her second country and wrote several novels in French or English that were translated into Chinese, to describe the situation of



the country<sup>xxv</sup>.

*Love and Duty* had been a success in China: published in June 1924 at the Commercial Press, a fifth reprint was in preparation in 1931<sup>xxvi</sup>. In 1932, a French edition of the novel was published at Paris. In the early 1920's, the question of Chinese woman status was in debate in Chinese society, and the novel attracted the attention of cultivated elite of Northern China, included the eminent educator, then president of Peking University, Cai Yuanpei who promoted the book. Luo Mingyou explains in his article how he had then thought about adapting on screen the story; Li Minwei, on the other hand, had the same idea, but did not find a scriptwriter. It took the two men several years to fulfil their wish, which was also, according to the same article, S. Horose's one. When she gave them the rights to adapt the story into a film, they asked Zhu Shilin, who was then working at Luo Mingyou's North China Film company as the head of the translation department<sup>xxvii</sup>, and was soon to join U.P.S. to become an important filmmaker, to adapt the story<sup>xxviii</sup>. This is how *Love and Duty* became the third production of U.P.S.

According to the French edition of the novel<sup>xxix</sup>, *Love and Duty* is the story of Yang Neifan and Li Tsoju<sup>xxx</sup>, two high school students living in Beijing. One day, Tsoju meets Neifan on the way to school and falls in love with her. Later, the both get acquainted when Neifan is bitten by a dog and that Tsoju comes to save her. However, we are in China, and the two young people do not dare talking to each other; worst, the day Neifan's father decides it is time for her to get married with the man she had been fiancée to through family agreement since she is a little girl, she cannot refuse despite her despair. Tsoju and Neifan are parted away. Neifan's husband, Hwang Tajen, is a well-educated man, quite modern in his attitude; but the two, united only by the family's decision, do not love each other and are not happy together. Tajen spends more and more time outside, playing poker and having affairs with women while Neifan's only joy is to take care of her two

children. One day while she is reading in a park, her boy fell in the water. He is saved by Tsoju, who happened to be there. This is how Neifan and Tsoju meet again and their feelings for each other increase. Tsoju asks Neifan to leave her house, to abandon her children and come to live with him. The poor mother has to choose between Love and Duty. She chooses love, but her heart is broken. The two lovers became a scandalous couple and must face the difficulties of life, in a country still conservative where free choice is not yet permitted. Tsoju can't find a good job; his father disowned him and then dies without giving him his forgiveness. Devastated by this death that makes of him a son impious, Tsoju becomes sick and dies too. Neifan is left alone with a girl baby, poor, without family. She brings up her girl, Pingel, giving her a modern education while working hard as a seamstress.

Meanwhile, Tajen had decided to reform himself. He became a model father and an enlightened spirit, publishing a newspaper, *China's future*, where he defends modern ideas such as the equality of men and women. Neifan is an eager reader of his newspaper and this is how she learns that her now grown up children are going to perform for a charity show. She also discovers Tajen new address and tries to see her children again. One day, Tajen comes to the shop where she works to buy artificial flowers to be delivered for his daughter's wedding. He recognizes Neifan and discovers about her miserable life. The adultery mother will embroider the flowers of her abandoned daughter and will be paid by her previous husband: "such is the price of her humiliation"<sup>xxxix</sup>.

But Neifan will have to face a last sacrifice. When her daughter is rejected by her fiancé's family, because they learnt about the scandalous life of her mother, Neifan decides it is time for her to die. After having written a letter to Tajen, asking him to take care of Pingel, she swallows foreign sleeping pills. Freed from the bad reputation of her mother, united with her half brother and half sister, Pingel will marry the man she loves.

With *Love and Duty*, S. Horose wrote a story that dealt with important question of the time in China. As Zhu Shilin puts it: « she says things that most people do not dare to say ...because she loves China as a second homeland but also understands its weaknesses and sees things we cannot see about our own country »<sup>xxxii</sup>. The questions raised by the novel, are, according to the scriptwriter, complex, they turn around the “battle between desire and reason”: how can be judged a person who follows his desire rather than his consciousness? Who knows he is not doing the right thing but still does it? Shall we scorn him or pity him? The question is the one of an individual free choice, and this is, in China a very new question<sup>xxxiii</sup>. The book examines this question in a complex story, where all the main protagonists have their flaws and qualities.

The novel is also complex in the question it raises about marriage in China. It certainly questions the traditional habit of arranged marriage, the lack of freedom of women in society, the gap between the institution of marriage and the question of love. But the novel also criticized the modern dreams of Tsoju, who believes he can behave like a hero from a western novel without having a clear idea of the consequences of its actions: “this film is a direct critic of bad old customs as much as it is a criticism of the romantic mores of today society”<sup>xxxiv</sup>.

These questions were important in 1920's China, when, just after the May Fourth 1920 Movement many young Chinese people calling for modernization and enlightenment took western culture as a model and criticized the Chinese traditions. In 1931 though, the wind had turned and the issues of the time were more about the reinforcement of a specific Chineseness. This may explain, among other reasons, the importance of the western reference in the cinematographic adaptation of the novel.

### **A successful symbiosis**

The cinematographic adaptation follows very closely the novel in its complexity. It even adds a level of complexity as the main actress, Ruan Lingyu, is performing

two characters: Yang Neifan and her grown-up abandoned daughter, Huang Koon Ying: one person for two women from two different generations and educational background. If the general outline is similar, some changes in the plot are however noticeable. For instance, once the two lovers had left Neifan's house, nothing about their escape is described in the movie, while the novel tells how they went into another city and had to register in a hotel as husband and wife. Later in the novel Tsoju finds a job as a clerk in a western department store (Rogers and Co), and S. Horose describes at length the relationship between the westerners of the shop and their Chinese "boys". In the film, the only job that Tsu Yi finds is as a copywriter in a Chinese office. There is no mention of the relation between Tsoju/Tsu Yi and his father: in the film, Tsu Yi dies of exhaustion and poor health. The film also does not show a meeting between the older Neifan and Tajen. Instead, a very touching scene shows the old mother, hired by her previous husband to come in his villa to take measure of the now grown up children to cut costumes for their show. This scene is a climax of the movie and reunites in the same image the two Ruan Lingyu, as an old Neifan and as Koon Ying. But neither Tajen nor the two children recognize the old woman who does everything to hide herself while crying to be so closed to her beloved ones. The film in general spends less time describing the husband Tajen's evolution toward an enlightened humanism.

Beside this scene where the old mother is reunited with her children without them knowing it, the film adds another interesting details: the temptation of suicide by Neifan when Tsu Yi dies. Once he is buried, Neifan, left alone with her baby, considers all her option: staying alone and poor, returning to her father's or to Tajen's house. She imagines how badly they will reject her and is tempted to commit suicide. Only the thought of her baby girl stops her from jumping into the river. Suicide seems a usual option for a lost woman in China and this is not surprising that Zhu Shilin added that to the script<sup>xxxv</sup>. The same is true about the scene with the two children: the Chinese film examines more the development of

Neifan as a mother than as a spouse. Her true tragedy, for a Chinese audience, relies in the definite loss of her children who will not even recognize her: as Zhu Shilin exposed it, Neifan encounters as a mother a double contradiction while she abandons twice her daughters: the first time as she is not obliged to, when she leaves with her lover; the second time as she has no other choice, in order to save her daughter's "face" and happiness<sup>xxxvi</sup>.

A third interesting change is in the description of Neifan and Tajen's married life. If both the novel and the film insist on the fact that they do not love each other and even can't communicate well, the book describes a common and parallel drift away. Neifan plays mah-jong, does not get up or dress up anymore. Only the birth of her children gives her a new reason to live but she is still described lost in her books and dreams. Her husband on the other hand frequents courtesans and plays poker. The film on the contrary is one sided, showing Tajen in night clubs with a woman who is clearly described as his mistress. For Zhu Shilin, beside the question of arranged marriage, there is that of the husband attitude and responsibility in the family's happiness: "when a husband becomes cold to his wife, bringing therefore unhappiness into his family, is it the husband or the wife who is responsible for that unhappiness?"<sup>xxxvii</sup>.

The very last scene of the film gives the answer to that question. In a tear jacking moment, Tajen presents to his two children Ping'Er "This is your own sister. Love her as you would love your mother", says the caption. Then he invites all three children to pay their respect to their mother, whose photography is hanging on the wall, like that of a deceased person. The children call for their mother, kneel in front of her portrait. The last image shows their father, Tajen, nodding to approve, in tears. The family is reunited, the sacrifice of a mother recognized. How different this is from S. Horose conclusion, her story ending up with the happy news of Pingel's wedding.

The differences between the novel and the film's script can have several

explanations. One is of course the necessary adaptation into a 155 minutes movie of a 267 pages novel. The other relies on the philosophy of the film. Even if Zhu Shilin and its colleagues shared S. Horose's ideas about modernization and westernization of China or the question of the education for women and the role of parents, their position may have been different as they were, indeed, educated, cosmopolitan Chinese and not a Westerner observing with a lot of sympathy this country. The differences we just described show how if they had interrogations about the Chinese traditional moral values, they were not ready to reject them without questions. They were trying, rather, to reconcile the needs for a more modern way of life and the basic value of Chinese society. Another interesting twist can be seen when one looks at their conception of western modernity, through the film.

### **A film with a Hollywood taste**

If the film is, in its moral content and conclusion, trying to put together the modern value of individual freedom and that of family, its also shows a tension between a fascination and a rejection of the western world, associated with the question of modern life. Visually, like many Chinese films of the late 1920 and early 1930, the film is a mixed of China and of the West. The Hollywood model is very present in the costumes, backgrounds as well as in the acting of the main characters, as some examples will show.

On one hand, one could say that *Love and Duty* is a Chinese film with a Hollywood taste. This differs from the novel, which, in term of background, seems almost more realistic than the movie. For instance, while S. Horose sets the beginning of her story in a Chinese area of Beijing, “not yet touched by Western civilization, with narrow streets and low buildings”<sup>xxxviii</sup>, the film is set in Kiangwan, a small town “remote from the busy quarters of Shanghai...where the rich gather to live a quiet life”. This is obviously a westernized residential area, of large streets with sidewalks and elegant, imposing two storey villas with their private gardens that we

can see behind the fences<sup>xxxix</sup>. Except in the foreign settlements, there was not many such places in China back in 1930, and even in these protected areas, one wonder if sidewalks and streets were that clean and calm. The interiors of the villas of the family of Tsu Yi and Nei Fan, and later that of Tajen, are all decorated with western furniture and articles, from the chair to the teapots, according to the most up-to-date art deco taste. Tajen's villa, in the end of the film, is actually a very luxurious place with its own tennis court. The westernized, modern, and very elegant settings of the film tend to de-realize the story by putting it in a no-man-land – rather, a cinematographic land. If it can appeal to the Chinese bourgeoisie, who was eager to life by Western standards, it was also a way to associate the film, by its visual treatment, with Hollywood and its lavishness, such as it was then described in magazines and films.

Other details shows this effort to create a peculiar world, that was not exactly a reproduction of China, but rather an utopian world governed by the law of Hollywood films seen as guides to a modern, westernized world. For instance, while in the novel a wild dog bites the young Neifan, in the film a car hits her. In both cases, this is the moment where Tsoju/Tsu Yi gets a chance to approach her. But the choice to use a car, a modern, western machine, as the element that will favour the first encounter, is rather meaningful. Later, when Neifan goes to the theatre to see her children playing, S. Horose has her standing up during the entire show to watch the actors closer. In the film instead, there is a burlesque moment when she borrows the binocular of her neighbour – who will never see them again<sup>xl</sup>. There again a modern, western technology is the adjuvant to connect people.

In the film, the western culture is not described as a foreign culture: it is a background, in which some of the characters (the rich ones) live and there is no criticism made against the potential danger of that culture. S. Horose on the contrary questions the consequences of modern ideas on the Chinese life. She describes for instance a young man, Tsoju, who had lost the sense of reality

because of his reading of too many “modern books” (and his viewing of too many films). He takes away Neifan from her children because he wants to act like “heros of a modern book”: but the only consequences is that the couple is suddenly cut from his native ground and has no future.

S. Horose also shows the ambivalent attitude of the Western world toward the Chinese and China: Tsoju’s employer, Mr Rogers, calls all his Chinese employees “boy” while one of his colleague, M. Woodmind, an “Englishman in China”<sup>xli</sup> treats them as slaves. This ambivalence is fully expressed when Neifan kills herself: she takes a western drug, once sold to her by a doctor to help her to go sleep. This is, “a foreign, ... modern drug, ...sweet and terrible”<sup>xlii</sup>.

None of this ambivalence is in the movie. There are no westerners in the film, and if Neifan suicide is not described in details, one can guess western drugs do not play a role in it. She goes back to the tomb of Tsu Yi, in a wild place away from the city. This poor old woman talks to her beloved: “Tsu Yi, I am coming”, explaining him her sacrifice for her daughter. Then she just walks away, disappearing from the screen as much as she is going to disappear in life.

In the end, the film is much less critical than the novel about the western progress and modernity. This choice was not surprising and is quite relevant with the ideas of the producers and founders of U.P.S. As they belong to the westernized bourgeoisie, their goals and models were, indeed, the western films. Their cinematographic culture was entirely western, and mostly, American. They tried to produce films for the Chinese audience but they were convinced that these films needed to compete with their Hollywood counter parts on the same ground.

One scene in the film shows that clearly. To illustrate the idea that we found in the novel about the (bad) influence of modern western literature, the film shows Tsu Yi reading a book (*An Hero* is the English title). Then he starts to dream. He dreams that his beloved one (Neifan) is assailed by a pirate (who of course is played by Tajen) and that he fights the bad man and saves her. The scene is filmed as if we were in some adventure movie with Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford. The



three characters are completely westernized: the young lady is wearing a western dress and a large round hat, her hair is long and curly, while the valiant hero is first shown playing guitar in a sort of bungalow by an exotic seashore. He wears a small moustache, black shirt and trousers that cannot but recall the outfit of Doug in *Black Pirate*. His behaviour recalls also the impetuous Doug when he grabs his sword and slide along a rope to come to rescue the poor girl. The fight between him and the villain is of course a sword duel in the rocks near the beach.

This scene, overtly westernized, is like an interlude in the movie. In a context where American productions were highly popular, it may have pleased an audience who was used to come and watch this type of Hollywood production. It was also a way for U.P.S. producers and filmmakers to reassert their choices: they could have done this type of entertaining films but chose not to. The scene functions like a demonstration that the Chinese had both the technical and artistic capacity of making such movies. But fancy was not on the agenda of U.P.S.; enlightenment was more important than entertainment.

The position of the makers of the film toward modern world and westernization of China differed from the position of S. Horose because they were working with one medium that was, from its origin and in its essence, to them, Western. The visual grammar of this art, in China, as it is well demonstrated in the film, came from Hollywood. It is also, from this standpoint, a film that demonstrates how much the filmmaker (the veteran Bu Wancang, or Richard Boh) was in mastery of his art, how much he could play with the repertoires of styles and genre that he had encountered by watching American films. Some scene are like visual transposition of famous American movie: when 'Tsu Yi follows Neifan in the street on their way to school, the day of the car accident, the camera is put under the same angle as in the famous chase scene of *Seven Chances* (1925) by Buster Keaton, with a long backward travelling showing the young woman and her follower walking behind her, right in the middle of a street. Overall, the film recalls Cecil B. De Mille

“marriage comedy” such as *Don't change your husband* (1919) or *Why change your wife?* (1920)<sup>xliii</sup> except for its dramatic tone. In particular, Bu Wancang borrows to Cecil B. De Mille some of his description of married life, which accentuate even more the difficulties that Tajen and Neifan have to feel real husband and wife: in the first scene showing the two new spouses, one is reading his newspaper, the other is sewing, seating in different chairs, in a living room that, by his settings (one big large room with many elegant furniture opens to a hall accessible through few stairs at the back) is very similar to the one at the Gordon's or at the Porter's. But when the American spouses show signs of familiarity<sup>xliiv</sup>, Bu Wancang films the distance that separate the Chinese couple, with the camera moving from one chair to the other in a distance, as a way to visualize the total lack of communication between the two. Not only does Bu Wancang remember the depiction of the American married life, but he also uses it to contrast it with the sad situation of his two heroes.

Another scene that can remind of *Why change your wife?* is the scene where Neifan and Tsu Yi run away by night. Bu Wancang edits this scene with images showing Tajen enjoying himself with a woman “friend”, who persuades him to stay with her rather than coming back home. He will, as a result, return home too late to stop Neifan from running away. This is a dramatic moment where Neifan is going to collapse out of despair, as she has to leave her children behind. But even if the narrative is quite different again, the style is similar to the moment where when Robert Gordon is trapped at Sally's place while the lonely Beth goes to bed, waiting for him: the same parallel editing is used to show both spouses action and Bu uses it to give this moment all the feeling of tension it deserves.

These few examples showed how for U.P.S. people used their mastery of Hollywood style to create a positive model for Chinese cinema. If Hollywood was the model, it had to be digested and transform and this is what *Love and Duty* was trying to do: as a reflection on the modern culture, it was both an attempt to adopt it and to keep it at a distance.

## **A tragedy of silence and sound**

Tension, is, in the end, maybe the best way to characterize this film. A tension between the traditional Chinese moral and the new way of thinking and living; a tension between the western cultural model, that, specially in the movie world, impacted a lot, and the search for a specific model. And also, a tension between the sound technology and the silent film culture, as *Love and Duty* is a silent film that explores the question of power of sound. Even in a silent film, sound is present, and in *Love and Duty*, its presence – or absence- is remarkable. There are for instance few moments where Bu Wancang describes the direct impact of a sound on the characters, by filming the change on their faces. When Neifan is going to be hit by a car, she is kneeling in the middle of the street, her back turned toward Tsu Yi: she cannot see the car arriving behind her. Then, a close up shows the horn grabbed by the car driver and immediately after the face of Tsu Yi, who had heard the sound and is terrified. Neifan though, does not *hear* anything: as if she was not yet living in a world where sound exists. Later, Tsu Yi is also reacting to the bell of the phone that rings in his room: this is the phone call he has been waiting from Neifan who tells him she agrees to escape with him that night. The same editing is used: a close up on the source of the sound, then a shot on Tsu Yi who reacts immediately, then a shot on Neifan who tells him to come and finally a shot on Tsu Yi's face, listening at her and smiling. From then on, the destiny of the two lovers differs: Tsu Yi is happy, Neifan, silent, starts to cry.

The story of *Love and Duty*, in fact, is also the story of a voiceless woman in a world of sounds and words. It is striking to see how Neifan is unable to speak. This starts when her father tells her he had decided to marry her to Ta Jen: Bu Wancang immediately films the effect of these words on Neifan's face: the smiling girl immediately changes; her lips are shivering, she squeezes her hands, bits her lips: the movement of her mouth and her arms are those of a person who *cannot speak*. Ruan Lingyu will replay this type of body language at many dramatic moment of

the film, every time giving the spectator the feeling that Neifan would like to speak but cannot. For instance, when she runs away with Tsu Yi, the idea of living her children behind is so crushing that she will cry the entire night and collapse, next to them. This is an unconscious Neifan that Tsu Yi takes with him.

Neifan is not only a voiceless person; she also is brutalized by the words of the male in her life. After her father, imposing on her a wedding she does not want, this is Tsu Yi, who pushes her to abandon her husband and children. Neifan tries first to argue with Tsu Yi. But Tsu Yi rises up and is filmed from a low angle – as if seen by Neifan, still seated – high and full of passion. Then, the couple is captured from a wider angle, both standing: he is taller than her and lean toward her, speaking and threateningly pointing his finger toward her; she is all bent, her arm against her body. He will then shake her, requiring a definite answer by the evening. Close ups on the face of Neifan shows her speechless, crying. At that moment, she cannot accept or refuse; only later will she accept by giving him a phone call: tragically, the only moment when Neifan actually speaks is also when she makes a choice she will pay for the rest of her life.

There are many other scenes, in the first part of the movie in particular, that repeat that same configuration. After Tsu Yi's death, Neifan, desperate, examines the options left to her. Returning to her father? Returning to Tajen? In both cases, the film depicts her fears, in a composition similar to the one previously described: she is shown as a small thing bending in front of a tall male who dominates her with their violent words and gestures. Every time she is filmed with the body language and facial expression of a woman who is unable to articulate words, who has not yet learnt how to speak. There is however one sound that differs in the way she reacts: when, at that climax of the film, she hears the cry of her baby girl (with a close up on the baby crying), she decides not to jump into the river, not to abandon her. We are at the middle of the story; Neifan is going to live and bring up her daughter as a free, educated and reasonable woman. The voiceless woman is going to become an invisible one that not even her previous husband will recognize later

and who will have to literally disappear for the good of Pingel.

In its style of filmmaking and acting, *Love and Duty* makes visible the paroxysm of being voiceless in a world of sounds; it describes the violence made by those who can speak on those who cannot; it describes also the power of sound and words. This could be understood at various levels: as a metaphor of a country semi-colonized by the a western world who possessed technologies that made it able to be heard everywhere; as a metaphor of a cinematography feeling weak in front of the superpower of Hollywood industry moving toward the sound technology; or, also, as a metaphor of the status of Chinese women in a still patriarchal society. The richness of the film relies in the way all these meanings converge and are mixed.

### **Reception and fate**

As always with early Chinese films, it is very difficult to have an accurate idea of the movie's success. No box office numbers are available and we are left with incomplete sources from magazine and newspapers. The few articles we have found on the film reveal one very interesting aspect: this film was one of the few Chinese film to make an international career. This confirms the ambition of the producer and filmmaker who wanted to produce a film that could be compared with Hollywood production on an international level.

The movie premiered in two of the big cinema of Shanghai, located in the International Settlement: the Beijing Theatre, with a seat capacity of a thousand, and the Guanghai Theatre, a nine-hundred seats theatre that was screening almost only American films up until 1930. Located in one of the main avenue of the International Settlement (Avenue Edward VII), the theatre was the new propriety of U.P.S. It stayed there until April 8, 1931, with three screenings a day in each cinema: a total of twenty-four screenings for a maximum amount of 1900 viewers

each time. From April 16 to April 22, 1931, it was then screened in two other cinemas, The Pantheon (Baixing da xiyuan) and the Dongnan Theater. Located in the International Settlement, Hongkou district<sup>xlv</sup>, the Pantheon cinema was also among the big venue in Shanghai, screening foreigners as well as Chinese films. This was also the case for the Dongnan Theater, a brand new house built in 1929, with a seat capacity of 963 seats. With three screenings in each theatre every day, *Love and Duty* could have been shown to a maximum of 1800 people daily during five days. Then the film was screened from April 22 to April 27, 1931, in two others cinemas, the Huangjin Theatre, located in the French settlement, not far from the Great World, and at the Eastern Theater (Donghai) located on Muirhead Road. In conclusion, this first month, the film was shown only in important theatres, all located in the international area of Shanghai, and all dedicated to show foreign films rather than Chinese productions.

A little bit more than a month after, the film was back on Shanghai screens at the Guanghua Theater. It was advertised in the *Shun Pao* column as a production that “shook the world” and that was “exported to America and Europe”. It was also written in the ad that the film “broke all record of box office in forty theatre of the country”<sup>xlvi</sup>. The popularity of the film inland is confirmed by some advertisement published in the July issue *The Film Magazine*, where it is said that the film was screened in more than forty theatres, all packed<sup>xlvii</sup>.

The international career of *Love and Duty* is even more difficult to trace back at this point. According to *The Film Magazine* of July 1931, the movie was bought to be shown in France, but also in South America and Canada<sup>xlviii</sup>. In fact, an article by the author, S. Horose, is published in the French movie magazine *Pour Vous*, with three photos. S. Horose presents the foundation of the North China Amusement Co as the evidence of progress in China. She explains how happy she is that her book “that treats of life in China during these periods of transition that are often painful and full of mishaps (a subject that Chinese people like a lot)” was translated

into Chinese<sup>xix</sup>. She also announces that the film will be soon shown in Paris. So far I haven't found any evidence of a screening in Paris after that article. *The Film Magazine* did translate this article in his autumn issue without mentioning if the film had been screened in Paris<sup>l</sup>.

We are left with hypothesis so far about the international reception of the film. And these hypotheses may seem contradictory. In one article of the Shanghai newspaper *Shun Pao (Shenbao)*, a report by the producer and founder of the company Luo Mingyou is quoted saying that *Love and Duty* did not meet success when exported in the South Pacific. South Pacific was a crucial area for Chinese movie business as there was an important Chinese Diaspora there, eager to watch production coming from the Homeland: it was a main source of income, therefore. But, according to this rapport, during the screening of *Love and Duty*, “one could hardly find ten people in the entire theatre”<sup>li</sup>. Another article however, announced that the Ministry of Education had decided to select fifteen films that will be screened at the Chicago International Trade, the “Century of Progress International Exposition” in autumn 1933: among them, *Love and Duty*<sup>lii</sup>: the movie had gained the reputation of being a product that could represent China to the western eyes.

One article, published in the October 1931 issue of *The Film Magazine*, gives some explanation about the reception of the film in China. The journalist makes a comparison between the first three films produced by U.P.S. : *Love and Duty* is the last of them and also, according to him, the most successful. Its success relies on two aspects: the script and the actors' performance. The script answers the requirements of U.P.S. goals: an original story connected with the problems of contemporary China. For the journalist, *Love and Duty* asks the question of the free choice: “the tragedy of Yang Naifan and her lover must be like a warning for parents who keep making choices instead of their children, like in the old society”<sup>liii</sup>.

The appreciation of the story of *Love and Duty* is not new. But if Yi Zhong judges

that the technical quality of the photography is not as good as in the previous U.P.S. production, if he complains of the length of the film<sup>liv</sup> and criticized the construction of the intrigue (not enough action in the first part, too much in the second), he praises without hesitation the actor's performance, in particular the female lead, Ruan Lingyu.

U.P.S. had hired as leading roles two actors that were not very famous when they shot their first film for the company but who were both going to be among the biggest stars of Chinese 1930's movie. But if Jin Yan (1910-1983), nicknamed « the King », encountered a long career, that extended to the early days of the China People Republic, such is not the case with Ruan Lingyu (1910-1925), whose tragic destiny stopped in 1935 before she could appear in a speaking film<sup>lv</sup>. She is, therefore, associated with silent era Chinese cinema, that she dominated from 1930's on.

Ruan Lingyu started her movie career in 1926, but she did not become a star before her first films at U.P.S. If *Love and Duty* is the third film she made with the company, it is the first one that attracted so much the public attention on her performance. One could even say that *Love and Duty* was the film that made her a star. With a story that allows her to display a full range of expressions and behaviours and to perform two different characters, she showed a full mastery of her art. *Love and Duty* seemed also to have been produced in order to demonstrate Ruan Lingyu talents. She first appears as a young, free schoolgirl, walking happily in the street. Then she is a married woman, locked up in her role of a spouse estranged from her husband. She also performs, at one of the climax of the film, a young mother who leaves her children, running away with her lover. But she does it so reluctantly that she faints before she can leave them: this is a motionless body that her lover takes away from her home. In this scene, Ruan Lingyu's performance cannot but recall that of the American actress of the silent era, with a very strong body language. The camera's work helps in this, with many close ups on her moving face in tears<sup>lvi</sup>. In short, as Yi Zhong puts: she is equal to foreign actress.



Ruan Lingyu's performance in *Love and Duty* differs however from the typical American movie actress' role in the sense that she is going to incarnate many different type of personalities in the same film. Not only the young, spirited woman is going to become the tragic figure of a desperate mother, but also she is going to age and become an old and poor woman wearing glasses. As the *Film Magazine* writes: "she performs three stages of a woman's life". To accentuate this, there is a scene in the film that demonstrates both the high level of technical mastery of the production and the art of the performer: when the old mother Neifan (played by Ruan Lingyu) takes the measurements of the daughter she had abandoned long time ago and who is now a young and sparkling girl (equally played by Ruan Lingyu). Two Ruan Lingyu in a same shot, on old woman and a young girl, are facing each other. This was, of course, another climax of the film that retains the attention of the film critic Yi Zhong.

For Yi Zhong, with Ruan Lingyu's performance, *Love and Duty* could be compared to foreign films. However, his general statement about this film and U.P.S two others production is more balanced: "from the point of view of a Chinese films fan, these three films are successful and stands way up above the rest of the production. But from an American films fan point of view, I will be more severe: they barely meet the average and are far away from the top"<sup>lvii</sup>. His conclusion is that these three films are a first step and that the Renaissance of Chinese cinema will be really successful if other productions follow.

## **Conclusion**

Yi Zhong's advice on *Love and Duty* seems quite severe. The film is more than average, even by comparison with some production of the Western cinematography of the time. But its impact at the time was maybe difficult to understand fully. Going through the pages of the Shanghai newspaper *Shun Pao* (*Shenbao*) in April-June 1931, it is clear that *Love and Duty* was shown at the very

moment where sound and silent films were fiercely competing in Shanghai. For instance, *Songstress Red Peony* was still on screen in April and in May, Youlian Co released *The Singing Beauty* (*Yu Meiren*, Chen Kenran) a sound-on-wax disks. At the same time *The Love parade* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1929), was shown again and again. In term of technology, Chinese productions were of course still way behind the then dominant American ones. But they were making real effort to fill the gap.

In this configuration what impact could have *Love and Duty*? Its novelty relied on the care taken into a script that was departing from the usual “good against evil fight”, proposing a complex story to be debated in the society. Its efforts were put not on the use of a new technology but in the art of performance and direction, in the quality of the photography and of the settings. Its novelty relied in this affirmation that silent film was an art in itself; that cinema was not just a foreign technology China had to learn and adopt: it was an artistic medium Chinese society had to appropriate for its own.

In the end, one anecdote about *Love and Duty* tells us something about its importance in Chinese cinema. As it was often the case, a sound remake of the movie, with songs performed by the famous singer Bai Hong, was made during the war, in 1938. Produced by one of the biggest producer of the time, Zhang Shankun at the Xinhua Company, it was still directed by Bu Wancang. Jin Yan played again the leading male role, while the star Yuan Meiyun took the role of Yang Naifan. It was also in this film that a young man named Gu Yelu made his debut. For him, it was fate as, as he recalls in this memoirs, the first Chinese movie he saw when arriving in Shanghai as an apprentice was the 1931 *Love and Duty*: “I came out of the theatre with the names of Bu Wancang, Ruan Lingyu and Jin Yan engraved on my mind. From then on, I had a keen interest in movies”<sup>lviii</sup>. This is how Gu Yelu, who became during and after the war a big star, turned into movie acting. This story, as well as the rediscovery of the film in the belongings of the deceased Chinese consul in Uruguay shows how the silent film *Love and Duty* continued to exist as a special monument of Chinese cinema<sup>lix</sup>.

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<sup>i</sup> Several remakes of the film were made during the sound era, including 1938's Bu Wancang *Qing tian xue lei* [*Days of Love, Blood and Tears*].

<sup>ii</sup> According to Li Minwei (Lai Man-wai) in *The Diary of Lai Man-wai*, ed. Lai Shek, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archives, 2003), August 30, 1930 and October 7-11, 1930.

<sup>iii</sup> Huang Yicuo, “Chuangban Lianhua yingye yuanqi [The founding of United Photoplay Service Co Ltd]”, *Yingxi zazhi* (*The Film Magazine*), n° 1.9 (August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1930), 44.

<sup>iv</sup> See *Shun Pao* (*Shenbao*), October 24, 1930.

<sup>v</sup> It seems that the investment capital was brought by the catalogue of films produced by both company rather than by fresh money.

<sup>vi</sup> *Shun Pao* (*Shenbao*), October 24, 1930. The article describes a tour made by the Hong Kong managers of the China Sun to Shanghai. Among other activities, they assisted to the shooting of *Love and Duty* and « expressed their admiration for both the actors and the equipment ».

<sup>vii</sup> According to *Lianhua nianjian* [U.P.S Yearbook] 1933-34, p. 12 and *Lianhua nianjian* [U.P.S Yearbook] 1934-1935, 23

<sup>viii</sup> See *Lu Jie Riji* [Diary of Lu Jie], non published document, courtesy of China Film Archives, January 8, 1931: Lu Jie mentions one celebration banquet for the foundation of the company that happened in Hong Kong on January 8, 1931, in a villa that belong to the famous comprador Sir Robert Hotung's nephew, He Shiguang (Ho Sai Kwong) in Stanley Lodge, a luxurious villa built in 1921, with a private beach that served as a summer mansion for the family.

<sup>ix</sup> *Shun Pao* (*Shenbao*), March 25, 1931.

<sup>x</sup> About this issue, see Anne Kerlan, « Un nouveau cinéma pour une nation en construction : le « mouvement » de renaissance du cinéma chinois au début des années 1930 », in C. Gauthier, A. Kerlan, D. Vezyroglou, dir., *Loin d'Hollywood ? Cinématographies nationales et modèle hollywoodien. France, Allemagne, URSS, Chine. 1925-1935* (Paris: Nouveaux Mondes, 2013), 153-182.

<sup>xi</sup> See Christophe Falin, « Les réponses techniques à la transition du muet au parlant dans le cinéma chinois », in C. Gauthier, A. Kerlan, D. Vezyroglou, dir., *Loin d'Hollywood ? Cinématographies nationales et modèle hollywoodien. France, Allemagne, URSS, Chine. 1925-1935* (Paris: Nouveaux Mondes, 2013), 37-49.

<sup>xii</sup> *Yu guo tian qing* [Peace After Storm] (Xia Chifeng, 1931) produced by Dazhongguo and Jinan film companies. The film was screened in Shanghai on July 1<sup>st</sup>. See Falin « Les réponses techniques », 42.

<sup>xiii</sup> See Huang Yicuo, “Guopian fuxing ying you de bu zouzou [The new direction that must take the Chinese cinema Renaissance]”, *Yingxi zazhi* (*The Film Magazine*), n° 1.9 (August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1930), 30.

<sup>xiv</sup> Huang Yicuo, “Guopian fuxing ying you de bu zouzou”.

<sup>xv</sup> Huang Yicuo, “Guopian fuxing ying you de bu zouzou”.

<sup>xvi</sup> See Mei Lanfang's translation of an interview he gave to Thomas Talbott while touring in the United States, in *Yingxi zazhi* (*The Film Magazine*), n°1.7-8 (June 1930), 23. According to an article published in the *Shun Pao* (*Shenbao*), April 18, 1931, Mei Lanfang was then getting ready to leave for Hong Kong where he was going to shoot a singing film for Lianhua.

<sup>xvii</sup> Xuehua, “Yousheng dianying shi guopian fuxing de xin tujin [Sound film is the road to take for the Renaissance of national cinema]”, *Yingxi zazhi* (*The Film Magazine*), n°1.7-8 (June 1930), 31.

<sup>xviii</sup> See Huang Yicuo, “Guonei xin yingye. Lianhua jihua jinxing zhong de zhiqu [A new national industry: the impact of the development of U.P.S.]”, *Yingxi zazhi* (*The Film Magazine*), n°1.10, October 1930, 30.

<sup>xix</sup> On *Two Stars of the Milky Way*, its production and significance, see Kristine Harris, “*Two Stars* on the Silver Screen: The Metafilm as Chinese Modern”, in *History in Images: Pictures and Public Space in Modern China*, ed. Christian Henriot and Yeh Wen-hsin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 191-244. About the soundtrack of this film and its specificities, see also Andrew F. Jones, *Yellow Music, Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age*, (London, Durham: Duke University, 2001), 97-99.

<sup>xx</sup> Advertisement in *Yingxi zazhi* (*The Film Magazine*), n°1.9 (August 1930), 22.

<sup>xxi</sup> Luo Mingyou, “Shezhi Lian'ai yu yiwu zhi yuanyin [Why did we make the film *Love and Duty*]”, *Yingxi zazhi* (*The Film Magazine*), n°1.11-12 (April 1931), 69. According to Kristine Harris, the novel was written in 1921 and published in 1923 in the magazine *Xiaoshuo shijie* [The Story World]. It was then published in 1924 at the Shanghai Commercial Press as a book. The first English version of the novel was in 1926, at the same publisher. See Kristine Harris, “Ombres chinoises: Split Screens and Parallel Lives in *Love and Duty*”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese cinemas*, ed. Carlos Rojas and Eileen Cheng-Yin Chow (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 39-62. This article,

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that I became aware of only after the completion of my own text, uses many sources similar to mine, which is not surprising as they are the only one existing. The main purpose of the two texts are however different, as Kristine Harris proposes a general analysis of the film that focus mostly on the performance of the two stars, and in particular of Ruan Lingyu. The supposedly granddaughter of S. Horose, said on her blog, that her grandmother did not write Chinese and that all her novel were translated from English or French to Chinese by her Chinese husband. She does not mention the publication of 1923 of *Love and Duty* in *The Story World*. See <http://huaxinmin.blog.163.com/blog/static/11890996420112784345776/>

site visited in July 2013. Kristine Harris's information and sources, p. 43, are much more accurate. Most of the publications give her roman name as S. Horose. Stephanie is given on the blog of her granddaughter.

<sup>xxii</sup> See Kristine Harris, "Ombres chinoises: Split Screens and Parallel Lives in *Love and Duty*", 43 for a short biography of S. Horose.

<sup>xxiii</sup> S. Horose, *La Symphonie des ombres chinoises* (Paris: Editions de la Madeleine, 1932), XIV : « A Paris, dans les amphithéâtres de la Sorbonne ou dans d'autres cours, nous appris la belle science « Justice ». Avec ce grand mot dans nos cœur et dans nos esprits nous sommes allés dans les pays où malheureusement « l'injustice » prime et les malentendus fleurissent. »

<sup>xxiv</sup> In her 1932 preface, S. Horose says she has been living in China for two decades. Luo Mingyou in *The Film Magazine* says that when her novel was presented in China, in 1923, she had been living in the country for already ten years.

<sup>xxv</sup> According to Zhu Shilin, among her publication one finds *Nü boshi* [A PhD woman], *Tongguo xuesheng* [Students form the same country], *Ximwen* [Writings form the heart] ; *Ta yu Ta* [He and She]. See Zhu Shilin, "*Lian'ai yu yinwu* zuozhe Luo Chen nüshi zhi zhushu ji qi baofu [The writings and hopes of the author of *Love and Duty*, Miss Luo Chen]", *Yingxi zazhi* (*The Film Magazine*), n°1.11-12 (April 1931), 69.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Zhu Shilin, "*Lian'ai yu yinwu* zuozhe Luo Chen nüshi zhi zhushu ji qi baofu", 69. This fifth, expanded version was published three years after the movie's release. See Kristin Harris, "Ombres chinoises: Split Screens and Parallel Lives in *Love and Duty*", 56.

<sup>xxvii</sup> The North China Company (Huabei) was managing a chain of theatre in Northern China and as such needed to translate brochure and movie booklets.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Luo Mingyou, "Shezhi *Lian'ai yu yinwu* zhi yuanyin (Why did we make the film *Love and Duty*)" 69.

<sup>xxix</sup> Considering the chronology, this version of the novel must have been elaborated at the same time the script of the film was written.

<sup>xxx</sup> The names are given here as they are in the French edition of the book. In the film, they differ slightly because of transcription: Yang Nei-fan (played by Ruan Lingyu) for Yang Neifan, Li Tsu Yi (played by Jin Yan aka Raymon King) for Li Tsoju; Huang Ta Jen (played by Lay Ying) for Hwang Tajen, Ping'er (played by the Young Chen Yanyan) for Pingel. For simplification, we will here only use Neifan for the girl name, Tajen for her husband. We will use the name of Tsoju or Tsu Yi, Pingel or Ping'Er depending on whether we are talking about the character in the film or in the novel.

<sup>xxxi</sup> S. Horose, *La Symphonie des ombres*, 245.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Zhu Shilin, "*Lian'ai yu yinwu* zuozhe Luo Chen nüshi zhi zhushu ji qi baofu", 69.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Zhu Shilin, "*Lian'ai yu yinwu* [*Love and Duty*]", *Yingxi zazhi* (*The Film Magazine*), n°1.10 (October 30, 1930), 38.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Zhu Shilin, "*Lian'ai yu yinwu* (*Love and Duty*)", 38.

<sup>xxxv</sup> As Kristine Harris noticed, suicide was actually such an option for women in China that the star of the film, Ruan Lingyu, actually committed suicide herself in 1935. See Kristine Harris, "Ombres chinoises: Split Screens and Parallel Lives in *Love and Duty*", 50, 55-56.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Zhu Shilin, "*Lian'ai yu yinwu* (*Love and Duty*)", 38.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Zhu Shilin, "*Lian'ai yu yinwu* (*Love and Duty*)", 38.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> S. Horose, *La symphonie des ombres*, 18.

<sup>xxxix</sup> According to Kristine Harris, "Ombres chinoises: Split Screens and Parallel Lives in *Love and Duty*", 41, the movie was shot in the French Concession in Shanghai.

<sup>xl</sup> The use of the binocular in this scene can have another function, as Kristine Harris analyses it: in that scene we have an older Yang Nei Fan (played by Ruan Lingyu), watching through the lenses at her lost daughter, also played by the same actress : "we are watching the star watching herself ". See "Ombres chinoises: Split Screens and Parallel Lives in *Love and Duty*", p.54.

<sup>xli</sup> S. Horose, *La symphonie des ombres*, 167.

<sup>xlii</sup> « Un remède étranger...moderne...Doux et terrible », S. Horose, *La symphonie des ombres*, 260.

<sup>xliii</sup> I do not know whether Bu Wancang saw or not these movies and I am sure there may be many other American features of that time that could have influenced *Love and Duty*. The thread of De Mille "marriage comedy", with a married couple breaking up to later being back together, seems to have been quite popular in Chinese cinema around 1930 as one can see from other Lianhua production, such as *Aiyu zhi zheng* [Struggle between Love and Desire] (Wang Cilong, 1931), or *Fen hongse zhi meng* [A Pink Dream](Cai Chusheng, 1932). *Don't change your husband* was actually adapted into a Chinese production in 1928 under the Chinese title *Qinghai chong wen* [Kisses again] and with

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the same English title, as it has been studied in an unpublished paper by Zhiwei Xiao, “For the Better or for the Worse, *Don't Change Your Husband!* Remake and Appropriation of American Films in Republican China, 1911-1949”. Many thanks to Zhiwei Xiao for letting me quote his article.

<sup>xliv</sup> In *Why change your wife?* for instance Robert and Beth in their living room, one reading his newspaper, the other sewing, but sitting in two chairs closed to each other and chatting together. *Don't change your husband* opens with a similar scene of the Porter's in their living room.

<sup>xlv</sup> Located at the corner of Range road (Laobazi lu) and Fuhshun road (Fusheng lu), the Pantheon was built in 1926. It is this cinema that in December 1929 were shown the first sound films, with the Lee de Forest technology. The theater was also famous around 1927 because a very popular musician, Li Jinhui played there with his band. This is that same band that the U.P.S. Co bought in 1931.

<sup>xlvi</sup> *Shun Pao (Shenbao)*, June 6, 1931.

<sup>xlvii</sup> *Yingxi zazhi (The Film Magazine)*, n°2.1 (July 1931), 36.

<sup>xlviii</sup> *Yingxi zazhi (The Film Magazine)*, n°2.1 (July 1931), 36.

<sup>xlx</sup> *Pour Vous, L'hebdomadaire du cinéma*, n° 133 (4 Juin 1931), 11, « Progrès du cinéma dans la Chine moderne ». My thanks to Nicolas Schmidt who helped me to find this article.

<sup>l</sup> *Yingxi zazhi (The Film Magazine)*, n°2.2 (October 1931), 36-37.

<sup>li</sup> *Shun Pao (Shenbao)*, December 16, 1932.

<sup>lii</sup> *Shun Pao (Shenbao)*, February 20, 1933.

<sup>liii</sup> Yi Zhong, “Cong *Gudu chunmeng* shuo dao *Yecao xianhua* ji *Lian'ai yu yinwu* [From Spring dream in the Antique Capital to Wild Flowers and Love and Duty]”, *Yingxi zazhi (The Film Magazine)*, n°2.2 (October 1931), 26-33.

<sup>liv</sup> According to him, the dream sequence with Jin Yan fighting against the husband-pirate could have been cut.

<sup>lv</sup> *Ye cao xian hua* [Wild flowers](Sun Yu, 1930) was a film with a sound track kept on wax disk; only some songs performed by Jin Yan and Ruan Lingyu were registered. Unfortunately the movie as well as the disks are lost. Ruan Lingyu's voice will never be heard.

<sup>lvi</sup> Close-ups, soft focus and radiant lighting are, according to Kristine Harris, allows to establish “lavishing attention on the stars “ in this movie. See “Ombres chinoises: Split Screens and Parallel Lives in *Love and Duty*”, 47-48.

<sup>lvii</sup> Yi Zhong, “Cong *Gudu chunmeng* shuo dao *Yecao xianhua* ji *Lian'ai yu yinwu*”.

<sup>lviii</sup> Gu, Yelu, “My Five “Firsts””, in *Friends, Sorrows and Joys on Stage and Screen* (Beijing: China Film Press, 1994), quoted on the Chinese Mirror <http://www.chinesemirror.com/index/2013/03/wide-ranging-influence-of-love-and-duty.html>, page seen on July 3, 2013.

<sup>lix</sup> I would like to thank Emmanuel Soland for his inspiring reflection that he shared with me on *Love and Duty*.