

From East Lynne to Konggu Lan: Transcultural Tour, Trans-Medial Translation

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Whatever our ignorance of the language and the culture of the people where it originated, a myth is still felt as a myth by any reader anywhere in the world. Its substance does not lie in its style, its original music, or its syntax, but in the story which it tells.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth”

In 1862, the University of Oxford’s 47-year-old Professor of Ecclesiastical History, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, accompanied the 20-year-old Edward, Prince of Wales, on a trip to Egypt.¹ The professor, who showed “insatiable appetite for every detail of historical or sacred associations,” was apparently not an enjoyable companion in the young prince’s eyes. Their interests differed tremendously in all but one thing: *East Lynne*, a best-selling novel from 1861. It was such an engrossing read for them both that Professor Stanley even put a question relating to the novel to examine the prince and his friends: “With whom did Lady Isabel dine on the fatal night?”² The story’s transcultural travels and trans-medial translations, the focus of investigation of this essay, would bring it to an equally enthusiastic audience far from its birthplace, Victorian Britain. In February and March 1926, a Chinese-made silent film entitled *Konggu lan* 空谷蘭 (Orchid in the Empty Valley) caused a sensation and showed to full houses for weeks in Shanghai and other cities in China and Southeast Asia.³ The film was an offspring of the novel,

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2 R. E. Prothero and G. G. Bradley, *The Life and Correspondence of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1893), ii. 67-69. Quoted in Elisabeth Jay, “Introduction”, in Ellen Wood, *East Lynne* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), vii.

3 “Zhongyang kaiying *Konggu lan* zhi shengkuang”, *Shenbao* 17 Feb. 1926: benbu zengkan 1; also

though from *East Lynne* to *Konggu lan* the story went through a profound process of global travels, rewritings, translations and transformations. Why did the story manage to retain its appeal to audiences of varied cultural backgrounds? What happened on its trans-national, trans-lingual and trans-medial journey?

This essay traces the trajectory of this tour and demonstrates that the story successfully took forms of different literary, theatrical and cinematic genres from specific times and places, including a fiction genre (“sensation fiction” in 1860s England), two types of drama (melodrama and the Chinese family drama, *jiating xi* 家庭戲), and two film genres (filmic melodrama and the Chinese tragic love film, *aiqing dianying* 哀情電影, as is indicated in the film’s ad). Taken together, I contend that these genres were interlinked and reflected the popular consumption of sensation plus sentiment in different countries from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. John Thompson has suggested that the origins of what we now call “globalization” can be traced at least as far as the mid-nineteenth century with “the gradual expansion of networks of communication and information flow” which has become “increasingly global in scope.”⁴ The Victorian story’s global journey examined in this essay took place exactly against this historical background. To a certain extent, production, translation, and consumption of sentimental stories during the period can be conceived of as a global trend, facilitated by this gradual expansion of networks.

International trends in commodities, fashions, and lifestyles have customarily been considered a recent phenomenon concurrent with the invention of electronic and digital communication technologies. By examining this early example of a popular story’s transcultural flows, this essay attempts to (re)emphasise that being circulated and exchanged trans-locally, if not globally, has long been an inherent trait of what Arjun Appadurai terms “the social life of things,”⁵ and should be taken adequately seriously as a vital lens for understanding human history and culture. Under the conventional academic structure that emphasises disciplinary and national boundaries, the aspect of transculturality and its significance have often been veiled or overlooked. In this case, for example, *East Lynne* and its stage versions in Europe and the USA have been rediscovered recently and studied extensively by scholars

see Fan Yanqiao, “Mingxing yingpian gongsi nianbiao,” *Mingxing banyuekan* 7.1 (Oct. 10, 1936): n.p.

4 John B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), 4.

5 Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

of literature and theatre. It was regarded as, for instance, “a genuine classic of Victorianism,”⁶ an archetypal “woman’s novel” or maternal melodrama.⁷ In contrast, its Japanese and Chinese translations have received much less scholarly attention. Its Chinese version, for example, was treated only briefly as one example of urban popular fiction prospering in the first decades of the twentieth century in China.⁸ Most studies of the book’s original and foreign versions only look at the story within national boundaries and focus primarily on one particular kind of medium. This essay explores the story’s transcultural and trans-medial dimensions.

The first part of this essay focuses on the Victorian story’s journey from Europe to Asia. I will demonstrate that despite its asymmetry between nations, the global development of print capitalism and the cultural industries (such as commercial theatre and film) since the mid-nineteenth century formed what Appadurai calls a “mediascape,” i.e. a “distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations and film studios)” as one layer of its meaning,⁹ and acted as a key agent in the transcultural and transmedial travels of sentimental stories. Appadurai defines the second layer of meaning of the “mediascape” as “the images of the world created by these media.”¹⁰ In other words, mediascapes not only refer to media but also to messages, or “large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ethnoscaapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed.”¹¹ In the second section of

6 Stevie Davies, “Mrs Henry Wood’s *East Lynne*,” introduction to *East Lynne*, by Henry Wood, Everyman’s Library, Dent, 1985, <http://www.steviedavies.com/henrywood.html>. Accessed 25 Oct. 2012.

7 Cf. Elizabeth Ann Kaplan, “The Maternal Melodrama: The Sacrifice Paradigm: Ellen Wood’s *East Lynne* and its Play and Film Versions,” in *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama*, ed. Elizabeth Ann Kaplan (London: Routledge, 1992), 76-106; Ann Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture and Victorian Sensationalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992); and Deborah Wynne, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001).

8 A few exceptions: Perry Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 136-7; Dong Xinyu, *Kan yu bei kan zhijian: dui zhongguo wusheng dianying de wenhua yanjiu* (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2000), 78-84; Iizuka Yo, “Konggu lan’ o megutte: Kuroiwa Ruikō ‘No no hana’ no henyō,” *Chūōdaigaku bungakubu kiyō* 81 (March 1998): 93-115; Liu Siyuan, “The Impact of *Shinpa* on Early Chinese *Huaju*” (Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2006), 167-182.

9 Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” *Public Culture* 2.2 (Spring 1990): 9.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

this article, I shall look at what happened to the story when it was translated into Asian languages and adapted as various media products. I shall argue that sentiment plus sensation made up the key elements that were retained in nearly all variations of the story that were presented in different countries. I will also analyse how these elements were linked up to the historical contexts, spoke to the reading and viewing publics, and generated interconnected mediascapes at a global level.

Travelling across the global mediascapes

In the last years of the nineteenth century, a young Chinaman, whose name was Bao Tianxiao 包天笑 (1876–1973), joined together with several friends and opened a small bookstore in his hometown Suzhou, a city with a long history 100 kilometres west of the treaty port city of Shanghai. The bookstore mainly sold books, magazines, and maps from Japan, where lots of his fellow townsmen were studying and working part-time as importers for small businesses of this kind. This bookstore also published a magazine entitled *Lixue yibian* 勵學譯編 (Journal of Translated Works for Promoting Learning), edited by Bao and his friends. One of Bao's jobs was to translate popular Japanese novels, which could be easily obtained at cheap prices from second-hand bookstores in Shanghai or Suzhou, and to publish these in instalments in their magazine. Most of these novels were loose translations from the English.¹² *Konggu lan* was one of the products from this line of cultural production.¹³ In hindsight, the small bookstore can be seen as a nodal point connecting cultural products far exceeding its immediate field of vision. It encapsulated the ethos of the time when print technologies and markets developed and social mobility and transnational contacts increased. It was against this background that *East Lynne* embarked on its travels across the continents of Europe and Asia.

East Lynne was written by Ellen Wood (1814–1887, better known as Mrs Henry Wood) and initially appeared in serial form in a Victorian middle-class family magazine, the *New Monthly Magazine*, from 1860 to 1861. With its mixture of sentiment and sensation, it gained widespread popularity among the newly literate novel readers in the mushrooming industrial cities of the mid-Victorian period. It soon appeared in book form in three volumes in 1861, published by Bentley, and had by 1900 sold over 500,000 copies. Countless reprints appeared over the years that followed.¹⁴ Britain in the

12 Bao Tianxiao, *Chuanying lou huiyi lu* (Hong Kong: Dahua chuban gongsi, 1971), 161-174.

13 Bao Tianxiao, *Chuanying lou huiyi lu xupian* (Hong Kong: Dahua chuban gongsi, 1971), 96-97.

14 For a general survey of the novel's early publishing history, see Andrew Maunder, introduction to

1860s saw an upsurge in the trend of literary sensationalism, accompanying the wave of middle-class family magazines.¹⁵ The emerging genre of so-called “sensation fiction,” as Deborah Wynne defines it, was based on “representations of the disruptive forces of crime and secrets upon genteel domestic life.”¹⁶ *East Lynne*, which is set in a middle-class family and centres on adultery, bigamy and mysterious double identities, epitomizes this genre. The story was soon translated into other European languages. A French translation appeared in 1862, entitled *Lady Isabel*—“*East Lynne*”, translated by North Peat and serialized in the Paris Journal *La Patrie* before later being published as a monograph.¹⁷ Two German-language versions were published in 1862, one by Markgraf in Vienna and another by Voigt u. Günther in Leipzig, translated respectively by A. Scarneo and Heinrich von Hammer.¹⁸

The popularity of the story was not only displayed in the countless reprints and translations, but also through plagiarism, or to speak neutrally, borrowing. A similar plot surrounding bigamy and double identities appeared in *A Woman's Error*, a lesser-known love story written by Charlotte Mary Brame (later known as Bertha M. Clay, 1836–1884), an English female writer of “mushy love stories for the English lower classes.”¹⁹ Though no hard evidence can prove Brame’s plagiarism, the obvious similarity between the two novels’ core plots can hardly be coincidental, and Brame’s work must have been written after 1863.²⁰ Charlotte M. Brame was an extremely

East Lynne (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2000), 17–20. Recent reprints include, to name only a few, a 1993 version by Sutton Press (ed. Fionn O’Toole), a 1994 version by Everyman (eds. Norman Page & Kamal Al-Solaylee), a 2000 version by Broadview Press (ed. Andrew Maunder) and a 2005 version by Oxford University Press.

15 Wynne, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001), 1; John J Richetti, ed., *The Columbia History of the British Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 479–507.

16 Wynne, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine*, 1.

17 Ellen Wood, *Lady Isabel* – “*East Lynne*”, translated by North Peat (Paris: aux bureaux de “*La Patrie*”, 1862).

18 Ellen Wood, *East-Lynne: ein Bild aus dem englischen Familienleben*, translated by A. Scarneo (Wien: Markgraf, 1862); Ellen Wood, *East Lynne*, translated by Heinrich von Hammer (Leipzig, Voigt u. Günther, 1862).

19 Albert Johannsen, *The House of Beadle & Adams* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), 40.

20 The initial publication date of *A Woman's Error* could not be identified so far. No date of publication appears in the version I have. According to Brame’s biography, she was compelled to write to support her family after she married an unsuccessful businessman in 1863. Since *East Lynne* was published in 1861, it was most probable that Brame wrote *A Woman's Error* after the publication of *East Lynne*.

prolific novelist who wrote nearly 130 novels during her lifetime. Her stories appeared chiefly in popular weekly publications such as *Bow Bells*, the *London Reader*, and the *Family Herald*, and were reprinted in book form, and later in romance series and libraries devoted to her, such as the Bertha M. Clay Library.²¹ After 1876, American publisher Street & Smith published a wealth of Brame's work in the USA and therefore her works have been always associated with the genre "dime novel," i.e. the cheap, sensational fiction popular in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century America.²² *A Woman's Error* was one amid the legion of dime novels and was neither outstanding nor influential. Chance picked it out for its voyage to the east when it was chosen by a Japanese translator.

A Woman's Error never had any great impact in Europe. But the appeal of *East Lynne* continued. It was adapted to the stage shortly after the book's publication, first by Clifton W. Tayleure (1831–1887) in 1863 and then by T. A. Palmer in 1874.²³ The play enjoyed extraordinary success for decades on both sides of the Atlantic, becoming part of the "melodramatic repertoire."²⁴ Ned Albert, an American playwright who rewrote the play in 1941, declared it to be "the daddy of all the old-fashioned meller drammers, the most talked of play ever written."²⁵ Melodrama, as scholar of the English theatre Michael Booth put it, "*did* satisfy the taste of the [Victorian] time," and it "remained a dominant form of theatrical entertainment for a hundred years [of the nineteenth century]."²⁶ *East Lynne* emerged as a predominant example of this theatrical trend.

The turn of the twentieth century saw a new member joining the kingdom of popular entertainment: the film. The story's attraction continued to exert its power in the new medium. It was repeatedly adapted to the screen by different film studios. From the early 1900s to the 1930s, more than a dozen film versions of *East Lynne* were produced, most of them in the UK and

21 Gregory Drozd, "Brame, Charlotte Mary (1836–1884)," in H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 7 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 311–312.

22 See "Dime Novel Days: An Introduction and History," in J. Randolph Cox, *The Dime Novel Companion: A Source Book* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2000), xiii–xxv.

23 Winfried Herget, "Villains for Pleasure? The Paradox of Nineteenth-Century (American) Melodrama," in *Melodrama! The Mode of Excess from Early America to Hollywood*, ed. Frank Kelleter et al. (Heidelberg: Universitaetsverlag Winter, 2007), 20.

24 Maunder, introduction to *East Lynne*, 9.

25 Ned Albert, *East Lynne: Mrs. Henry Wood's Celebrated Novel Made into a Spirited and Powerful Mellow Drammer in Three Acts* (New York: Samuel French, 1941).

26 Michael R Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 150–51.

the USA.²⁷ Among them a sound-film version released by the Fox Film Corporation was nominated for the Academy Award for “Outstanding Production” in 1931.²⁸ There is little doubt that melodrama as a film genre has a clear history of development from European literature and theatre. Nineteenth-century literary and stage melodrama provided rich materials for the early American film industry.²⁹ The proliferation of *East Lynne*’s screen adaptations illustrates this phenomenon clearly.

The cultural trajectory of the story was not confined within the geographical boundary of the West. In 1900 it arrived in Japan, arguably the most “Westernized” Asian country at the time. Starting on 10 March 1900, a novel entitled *No no hana* 野の花 (Flowers in a Wild Field) was serialized in the Tokyo tabloid *Yorozu Chōhō* 萬朝報.³⁰ Its “author” was Kuroiwa Ruikō 黒岩淚香 (1862–1920), a prolific writer, journalist, and translator of nearly seventy-five Western novels, including works by Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas père, and many lesser-known writers.³¹ Evidence such as location names clearly revealed that *No no hana* was translated from a foreign novel, but no original title was given, which was common at the time. Many scholars have misidentified the famous novel *East Lynne* as the original of *No no*

27 According to the Internet Movie Database (IMDb, www.imdb.com), there have been fourteen film versions of the novel under the title *East Lynne*, released in: 1902 (dir. Dicky Winslow, UK); 1903 (Vitagraph Company of America, USA); 1908 (Selig Polyscope Company, USA); 1910 (Precision Films, UK); 1912 (dir. Theodore Marston, Thanhouser Film Corporation, USA); 1913 (dir. Bert Haldane, UK); 1913 (dir. Arthur Carrington, Brightonia, UK); 1915 (dir. Travers Vale, Biograph Company, USA); 1916 (dir. Bertram Bracken, Fox Film Corporation, USA); 1921 (dir. Hugo Ballin, Hugo Ballin Productions, USA); 1922 (Master Films, UK); 1922 (dir. Charles Hardy, Australia); 1925 (dir. Emmett J. Flynn, Fox Film Corporation, USA); and 1931 (dir. Frank Lloyd, Fox Film Corporation, USA). Two versions were released under slightly different titles: *East Lynne in Bugville* (1914, dir. Phillips Smalley, Crystal Film Company, USA) and *East Lynne with Variations* (1919, dir. Edward F. Cline, Mack Sennett Comedies, USA). And two recent TV versions were released under the title of *East Lynne*: in 1976 (dir. Barney Colehan, UK) and in 1982 (dir. David Green, BBC, UK).

28 See the awards database of the Academy Awards: http://awardsdatabase.oscars.org/ampas_awards/BasicSearchInput.jsp. Accessed 25 Oct. 2012. A copy of the film is kept in the Instructional Media Lab at the Powell Library at the University of California, Los Angeles.

29 Steven N Lipkin, “Melodrama,” in *Handbook of American Film Genres*, ed. Gehring, Wes D. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 286; Richard Abel, *Silent Film* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 10; Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 189ff.

30 See *Yorozu Chōhō* 10 Mar.-9 Nov. 1900, quoted in Iizuka, “‘Konggu lan’ o megutte,” 93.

31 See Mark Silver, “The Detective Novel’s Novelty: Native and Foreign Narrative Forms in Kuroiwa Ruikō’s *Kettō no hate*,” *Japan Forum* 16.2 (2004): 191.

hana because of the similar core plotline in the two novels.³² However, latest research by Japanese scholars, such as Satoru Saito, has proved that it was translated almost word for word from *A Woman's Error*.³³ In 1909, *No no hana* was published in book form by the Tokyo publishing house Fusōdō 扶桑堂.³⁴

Japanese literature was undergoing an intensive process of modernization during the Meiji period (1868–1912), a period marked by wide-ranging and far-reaching social reforms. Translations of Western novels and the thriving of popular print media were striking features of the literary scene during the period.³⁵ In particular, sentimentalism and melodrama became so popular in fictional creation that scholar Ken Ito has called turn-of-the-century Japan “an age of melodrama.”³⁶ The Japanese translation of *A Woman's Error* should be seen as a cultural product deeply rooted in these trends. Brame's most famous novel, *Dora Thorne*, for instance, was also translated into Japanese by Kikuchi Yūho. This novel, under its Japanese title *Chikyōdai*, was later turned into a *shinpa* play classic.³⁷ Such cases are abundant.

The Asian tour of the story continued after *No no hana's* publication in Japan. The increasingly intensive cultural interactions between China and Japan after the 1895 Sino-Japanese War brought the story to China. As mentioned above, Bao Tianxiao introduced it to Chinese fiction readers. At that time, their small bookstore in Suzhou had closed and he had moved to Shanghai and was working for the *Shibao* 時報 (The Eastern Times), a daily newspaper founded in 1904. A typical metropolitan newspaper of the

32 Teruo Tarumoto, “Bao Tianxiao honyaku genpon o tankyū suru,” *Shinmatsu Shōsetsu Kara* 45 (1 April 1997); Fan Yanqiao, “Minguo jiupai xiaoshuo shilue,” in Wei Shaochang, ed. *Yuanyang hudie pai yanjiu ziliao* (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1984), 229; Dong, *Kan yu bei kan zhijian*, 78.

33 Satoru Saito provided this crucial clue in his talk “Translating the Nation: Kuroiwa Ruikō's Serialized Fictions at the Turn of the 20th Century” presented at the AAS annual conference in Toronto on 15 March 2012. Prior to hearing his talk, I had misidentified the origin of *No no hana* as *East Lynne* following many previous studies. After reading an antiquarian version of *A Woman's Error*, I had no doubt that it is the exact origin of all the Japanese and Chinese versions under discussion.

34 For the novel's digital version see <http://kindai.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/871978> and <http://kindai.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/871979>. Accessed 25 Oct. 2012.

35 Joshua S. Mostow, ed., *The Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 22, 54, 59.

36 Ken Ito, *An Age of Melodrama: Family, Gender, and Social Hierarchy in the Turn-of-the-Century Japanese Novel* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008).

37 Siyuan Liu, “The Impact of Japanese *Shinpa* on Early Chinese *Huaju*”, 170.

day, besides sections for news, editorials and features, the newspaper had columns for serial novels and other miscellaneous literary items. *Konggu lan*, rendered from *No no hana*, initially appeared as a serial in the feuilleton of this newspaper in 1910.³⁸ The Shanghai publishing house Youzheng shuju 有正書局 published it in book form soon after.³⁹ A lot of reprints and rewritten versions emerged in the following decades. For instance, the Shanghai Library holds two versions of the novel: one a 1924 reprint by the Youzheng shuju and the other a version rewritten by an author named Wang Nancun 王南邨 and published by the Shanghai Yuxin shuju 上海育新書局 in 1935.

The novel was associated with two interrelated phenomena which bore much resemblance to the aforementioned Victorian and Meiji literary scenes. Its serial form echoed a wave of instalment fiction that swept the print world in the last two decades of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), a period that also saw burgeoning reform efforts and the introduction of Western knowledge as well as literature.⁴⁰ In addition, the plot of the novel *Konggu lan* with its combination of sensation and sentiment also reflected a trend that Perry Link has termed “bourgeois fiction” or the “sentimental novel” which also arose in the late Qing.⁴¹

A few years later, *Konggu lan* was adapted for the stage by the Shanghai theatre troupe *Xinmin she* 新民主社 (New People Society) managed by Zheng Zhengqiu 鄭正秋 (1889–1935). Zheng Zhengqiu was an active figure in the cultural field throughout the 1910s to the 1930s: a prolific theatre critic and writer, an editor of several newspapers and pictorials, a manager of theatre troupes, and later, a screenwriter and film director.⁴² The *Xinmin* Society staged plays of the New Drama (*Xinju* 新劇) style, a new form of drama absorbing elements of Western and Japanese modern theatre and flourishing in China in the 1910s. After *Konggu lan*'s debut in April 1914, the Chinese stage version of the story became one of the most frequently performed

38 *Konggu lan* was serialized in the *Shibao* starting April 11, 1910. For its popularity, see Bao Tianxiao, *Chuanying lou huiyi lu xupian*, 96.

39 Tarumoto, ed., *Xinbian zengbu qingmo minchu xiaoshuo mulu*, 372.

40 Alexander Des Forges, “Building Shanghai, One Page at a Time: The Aesthetics of Installment Fiction at the Turn of the Century,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62.3 (Aug. 2003): 781, 783. Also cf. Alexander Des Forges, *Mediasphere Shanghai: The Aesthetics of Cultural Production* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).

41 Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, 54.

42 Mu Zi, “Zheng Zhengqiu shengping xinian,” *Dangdai dianying* 1 (1989): 96-103.

plays of its time and a recognized classic of the “New Drama” repertoire.⁴³ Because of its concerns with the institutions of marriage and the family, the play was usually identified as a family drama (*jiating xi*). According to Xu Banmei 徐半梅 (1881–1958) and Ouyang Yuqian 歐陽予倩 (1889–1962), both practitioners of the New Drama at the time, the *Xinmin* Society was the trendsetter which brought the genre family drama into full flower in 1914.⁴⁴

A decade later, as *Konggu lan*'s stage adaptors Zheng Zhengqiu and others turned to the fledgling film industry and founded the *Mingxing* 明星 (Star) Motion Picture Company in 1922, they again thought of the story and put it on screen in 1925. The film turned out to be a gigantic hit and generated the highest box-office revenues in the era of Chinese silent cinema.⁴⁵ Interestingly, when the aforementioned Hollywood film adaptation of *East Lynne* (1931, Fox) was screened in Shanghai in October 1931, its Chinese title was *Konggu lanxin* 空谷蘭馨 (Scent of Orchids in the Empty Valley), only slightly different from *Konggu lan*.⁴⁶ This illustrates the close tie between *East Lynne* and *Konggu lan* in the contemporary mind. This was an interesting juncture where “different”—and related—cultural products met in the real time and space as well as in a virtual mediascape of narratives, images and linguistic symbols. In 1934, *Konggu lan* was refilmed as a sound film by *Mingxing* and enjoyed a spectacular forty-two-day run at the Shanghai first-run theatre Strand (*Xinguang* 新光) in early 1935.⁴⁷ Soon after, it was selected as one of the eight Chinese films to enter the International Film Festival in Moscow.⁴⁸ After that, it travelled “back” to Europe, showing in Berlin, Paris and Milan.⁴⁹ Contemporary theatre publicists labelled *Konggu*

43 Hiroshi Seto, *Xinmin she shangyan yanmu yilan* (http://pub.idisk-just.com/fview/wlQ4QSijxnY-JAVg_fQlZv2HoY4W1og8G_d0LbOI7fVbpfnt2Yu6NFX5mqum3TykKA2hP1QlxqQ/5paw5rCR56S-5LiK5ryU5ryU55uu5LiA6Kan.pdf). Accessed 25 Oct. 2012), 2; Hiroshi Seto, *Minming she shangyan yanmu yilan* (Nagoya: Suishobo, 2003), 3.

44 Xu Banmei, *Huaju chuanguoshi qi huiyi lu* (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1957), 52; Ouyang Yuqian, “Tan Wenming xi,” in *Ouyang Yuqian xiju lunwen ji* (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1984), 194–5.

45 Fan Yanqiao, “Mingxing yingpian gongsi nianbiao,” *Mingxing banyuekan* 7.1 (Oct. 10, 1936): n.p. According to Fan Yanqiao, the film grossed 132,337.17 yuan. Given that the average admission fee for each film was unlikely to exceed 0.5 yuan, we might safely estimate that the film reached more than 260,000 spectators throughout its showing. No copy of the film survives, unfortunately.

46 See theatre advertisement for *East Lynne* in *Xinwen bao* Oct. 20, 1931: 20.

47 See theatre advertisements running in the leading Shanghai newspaper *Xinwen bao* from February 3 to March 16, 1935. The average run of a film at this kind of theatre was usually less than a week.

48 “Zhou Jianyun Hu Die zai Su’e,” *Mingxing banyuekan* 1.4 (June 1, 1935): 11, 14.

49 These were chiefly private showings to Chinese students as well as to selected foreign audiences such as film industry employees, dramatists and so on. For the showing in Berlin see *Mingxing*

lan a “tragic love film” (*aiqing pian* 哀情片),⁵⁰ a film genre stemming from the literary genre “tragic love novel” (*aiqing xiaoshuo* 哀情小說), referring to the genre of sentimental love fiction that was extremely popular in China in the 1910s. This genre was transposed to the silver screen by means of extensive cinematic adaptation.⁵¹ Cinematic versions of *Konggu lan* represented one of the most successful examples of the genre.

The itinerary of the story’s transcultural journey outlined above clearly illustrates how the development of mass media and the cultural industries in different countries enabled the story’s travels and linked the ostensibly different local genres and trends. The British family magazine *New Monthly Magazine* in the 1860s, American story papers in the 1870s, the Japanese tabloid *Yorozu Chōhō* in the 1900s, and the feuilleton of the Shanghai newspaper *Shibao* in the 1910s bore a mutual resemblance, for they were all the product of the modern publishing industries, all featured popular serial novels, anecdotes, and other trifles, and all targeted urban middle-class readerships. The British publisher Bentley, American publisher Street & Smith, the Fusōdō from Japan, and the Chinese Youzheng shuju likewise all exemplified the flourishing publishing industries. These comparable features explain why the Victorian story *East Lynne* found its overseas readers.

This transcultural trend of sensational fiction naturally spread to the areas of theatre and cinema because adaptations of popular novels for the stage and screen, or vice versa, are always commonplace. In China, the majority of popular plays that had been staged repeatedly over the centuries, especially in pre-modern times, were from popular fiction, legend and myths, such as *Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義 (The Investiture of the Gods), one of the major vernacular Chinese epic novels published in book form around the 1550s, *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin), a fourteenth century novel about 108 outlaws, to name but two. Early modern Japanese fiction often borrowed themes, tropes, and narrative elements from the theatre around the turn of the nineteenth century.⁵² Victorian stage melodrama and Hollywood films

banyuekan 1.2 (May 16, 1935): 19; in Paris see *Mingxing banyuekan* 1.6 (July 1, 1935): 10.

50 *Xinwen bao* Feb. 8, 1926: A1.

51 Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, 40–78; A prominent example of film adaptations of tragic love stories is *Yuli hun* 玉梨魂 (Jade Pear Spirit), a phenomenal bestseller of the genre in the 1910s, which was adapted into a film in 1924. Cf. C.T. Hsia, “Hsü Chen-ya’s *Yü-li hun*: An essay in literary history and criticism,” *Renditions* 17&18 (Spring and Autumn 1982): 199–240.

52 Jonathan Zwicker, *Practices of the Sentimental Imagination: Melodrama, the Novel, and the Social Imaginary in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 100.

always came from popular literature. The cultural traffic that had been accelerating at the global level since the nineteenth century connected the genres and sources of popular cultural products. As demonstrated earlier, the European genre of melodrama, the Hollywood cinema, Japanese *shinpa* drama, Chinese New Drama, and the tragic love film were all interlinked and had an overlapping territory of styles and sources. While the audience for printed matter and drama tended at that time to be contained within national boundaries, films could be more easily shown to a global audience thanks to film's universally comprehensible visual languages and its industrial mode of distribution. The silent film was even more international because it did not require knowledge of the standard language on the part of the actors.

The trajectory from *East Lynne*, *A Woman's Error* to *No no hana* and *Konggu lan* showcases the mechanism of transcultural flows for popular cultural products within the increasingly globalised, industrialised and commercialised mediascapes. But what is important in the concept of mediascapes not only concerns the medium itself, but also the contents or, to quote Appadurai, "image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality."⁵³ In the next part, I will analyse the narrative elements of the story's different versions. From a selection of nine versions which I have collected and studied,⁵⁴ my analysis will mainly focus on four key versions: the original novel *East Lynne*, its spin-off *A Woman's Error*, the Japanese novel *No no hana*, and the Chinese sound film *Konggu lan*. These emerged, respectively, in Victorian England, Meiji Japan, and Republican China. Unfortunately, I have not had a chance to view the Hollywood movie of 1931, which is only available at the University of California, Los Angeles in the USA. Otherwise this movie should be taken into account for comparative analyses. Comparative readings of these available four versions will show how the "stories" connected, even though they were consumed separately in each of their cultural contexts and media forms. What are the points of connection?

53 Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture* 2.2 (Spring 1990): 9.

54 The nine versions are: Ellen Wood, *East Lynne* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Charlotte M. Brame, *A Woman's Error* (London: Associated Newspapers, n.d.); Albert, *East Lynne* (New York: Samuel French, 1941); Kuroiwa Ruikō, *No no hana* (Tokyo: Fusōdō, 1909); Bao Tianxiao, *Konggu lan* (Shanghai: Youzheng shuju, 1924); Wang Nancun, *Konggu lan* (Shanghai: Yuxin shuju, 1935); play script "Konggu lan" in Shanghai shi chuantong jumu bianji weiyuan hui, ed., *Chuantong jumu huibian: tongshu huaju*, vol. 6 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1959), 62-107; synopsis and intertitles of the silent film "Konggu lan" in Zheng Peiwei and Liu Guiqing, eds. *Zhongguo wusheng dianying juban* (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1996), 558-580; and the incomplete 1935 sound film (with 47 minutes remaining), which I watched in China Film Archives in Beijing in April 2012 thanks to the help of Prof. Chen Mo and Zhiwei Xiao.

Appealing to the transcultural communities of sentiment

Wood's *East Lynne* features Lady Isabel, a peer's daughter, who marries a middle-class lawyer, Archibald Carlyle, whom the refined lady deeply loves. When she finds out that Archibald has frequently been meeting their neighbour's daughter, Barbara Hare, who has held a long-standing hidden affection towards Archibald, she becomes jealous. In a moment of passion, she allows herself to be seduced by an aristocratic suitor, Sir Francis Levison, and then elopes with him. But she is soon abandoned and unfortunately becomes the victim of a railway accident which leaves her maimed and disfigured. By mistake she is reported dead. Archibald, meanwhile, has secured a divorce and has subsequently married Barbara. When he places an advertisement for the post of governess in his house, Isabel answers under an assumed name because she is sick with longing for her children. In spite of her careful nursing, her son dies without knowing who she really is. After this cruel blow she falls ill and reveals her identity to her husband. In a long deathbed scene she gains his forgiveness.

Brame's *A Woman's Error* features a similar triangle relationship, although its difference from *East Lynne* is no less pronounced. Isabel's parallel figure in *A Woman's Error* is Violante Temple, a country attorney's daughter, whose innocent beauty and timid manner captivates Vivian, Lord Selwyn of Selwyn Castle, at first sight. They soon are married and settle in Castle Selwyn, where Violante constantly feels awkward and ill-at-ease, especially in the company of Vivian's cousin, Beatrice Leigh, who possesses imperial beauty and stately grace. Beatrice, who had hoped to marry Vivian, is bitterly jealous of Violante and constantly taunts and torments her and manoeuvres to persecute her. Driven almost mad, Violante resolves to leave her husband and little son when she spots Vivian and Beatrice together in the garden—in her insane mind a sign of the loss of her husband's love. She goes with her maid who happens to resemble her strongly. The maid is killed in a railway accident and is mistakenly identified as Violante, leaving the true Violante surviving and living in disguise in a small village for many years. Longing to see her son, Violante returns to her husband's place in disguise and teaches in a school built by Beatrice, who has been Vivian's wife for several years. Violante's son falls gravely ill, and not only does she nurse him devotedly, she also saves him from death when Beatrice schemes to kill him. Foiled and baffled, Beatrice dies in a traffic accident. The story ends with Violante's revelation of her identity to her remorseful husband and the reunion of the happy family.

Ruikō's *No no hana* is directly based on *A Woman's Error*, and Bao's *Konggu lan* is generally faithful to *No no hana*. Developing principally

along the plotline of *A Woman's Error*, the Japanese and Chinese stories are not completely faithful to the original, however. Both Ruikō and Bao took considerable liberties by adding local colour to their re-creations. For example, character names are all localized. Vivian, Violante, and Beatrice are named respectively Kiyoshi Semizu 瀨水冽, Sumiko Suemura 陶村澄子, and Shinako Aoyagi 青柳品子 in *No no hana*, and Lansun 蘭蓀, Taocun Renzhu 陶村紉珠, and Qingliu Rouyun 青柳柔雲 in *Konggu lan*. The renaming was based either on pronunciation or on the meaning. For example, while the pronunciation of “Semizu” is close to “Selwyn”, Violante’s Japanese name “sumi” means clarity and Beatrice’s Japanese name “shina” means dignity, thus capturing each character’s temperament.⁵⁵

Vivian’s Chinese name “Lansun” comes from the pronunciation of his Japanese name’s *kanji* (Chinese characters) “瀨水” (which is pronounced “laishui” in Chinese) and carries cultural symbolism from the Chinese tradition. “Lan”, the orchid, which features both in his name and the novel’s title, is deemed an emblem of femininity, serenity and exquisite beauty in China and is fondly admired by the traditional Chinese literati. The imagery of “the orchid in the empty valley” was taken from the famous poems such as “Gu lan sheng you yuan 孤蘭生幽園” (Lonely orchids grow in a wild garden.) and “Lan sheng you gu wu ren shi 蘭生幽谷無人識” (No one knows the orchid growing in the deep valley.)⁵⁶ The “empty valley” (*konggu*) and the “pearl” (*zhu* 珠) in the heroine’s name are also reminiscent of two sentences in the poem by Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), *Jiaren* 佳人 (The Beauty): “Jue dai you jia ren, you ju zai kong gu 绝代有佳人，幽居在空谷” (Who is lovelier than she? Yet she lives alone in an empty valley), “Shi bi mai zhu hui 侍婢卖珠回” (Her maid is back from selling pearls).⁵⁷ By contrast, the English title “A Woman’s Error” does not evoke profound cultural memories or symbolic meanings in Chinese readers. The Chinese title picks up the theme of the flower from the Japanese title “Flowers in a Wild Field” (*No no hana*), but the latter lacks cultural sophistication for the Chinese. In Japanese “no 野” means an uncultivated barren plain. The metaphor “no no hana” seems to refer to the protagonist Sumiko Suemura who captures the cultivated hero with her uncultivated beauty. This title expresses the modern nostalgia for an idyllic pre-modern life. But in Chinese, the image of wild

55 Cf Siyuan Liu, “The Impact of *Shinpa* on Early Chinese *Huaju*,” 173-174.

56 See Li Bai, “Gu feng, qi san shi ba”, in Li Bai, *Li Taibai quanji*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 136; Su Zhe, “Zhong lan”, in *Su Zhe, Su Zhe ji*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 340.

57 Du Fu, “Jia Ren”, in Fu Donghua, ed., *Du Fu shi* (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan, 1968), 90.

flowers sometimes implies licentious females. This may be the reason why the Chinese author avoided a literal translation of the Japanese title.

Minor changes in the plot, style, and characterization to cater to local tastes abound in *No no hana* and *Konggu lan*. But the original story's English settings are retained in both versions. For example, Leicestershire, the place where Violante and her father live, is named in *Konggu lan* “lan shi te jia cun 蘭士特迦村”, a complete phonetic translation.⁵⁸ The illustrations that accompany each instalment of *Konggu lan* in the *Shibao* all feature Western scenes (fig. 1). All these make for an odd—and rather fascinating—combination of British, Japanese, and Chinese elements in the hybrid cultural texts derived from the Victorian story.



Fig. 1a: Illustration to *Konggu lan* (*Shibao* 25 Apr. 1910: 1)

⁵⁸ Bao, *Konggu lan*, 10.



Fig. 1b: Illustration to Konggu lan (Shibao 27 Apr. 1910: 1)

No matter how many specific details differ between each version, my comparative readings of the nine versions show that the core of the story remains unchanged: The happy life of the couple A (Archibald, Vivian, Kiyoshi, Lansun) and B (Isabel, Violante, Sumiko, Renzhu) is ruined by the intrusion of C (Barbara, Beatrice, Shinako, Rouyun). The jealous wife B leaves her husband and child and is mistakenly reported dead. A and C then get married. Several years later, B returns to her husband's house in disguise, attends to her ill child, and finally reveals her true identity. This storyline includes ingredients such as rivalry, jealousy, scheming, misunderstanding, a fatal accident, a double identity, disguise, maternal love, deathbed, bigamy, retribution, and revelation, which cannot be described more aptly than as sensational and sentimental. In the following I will analyse how different versions treat the story's three critical moments with the highest level of sensation and sentiment: the fatal night when Isabel/Violante/Sumiko/Renzhu leaves her family, the railway accident, and the heroine's return in disguise. I shall argue that different media each applied their own specific devices and techniques to reinforce these dramatic elements of sensation and sentiment.

That Fatal Night



Fig. 2a: 1881 poster of *East Lynne* (source: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/var1994001797/PP/>. Accessed 30 Oct. 2012. Courtesy of Library of Congress, USA)

Fig. 2b: Book cover of 1935 *Konggu lan* (Courtesy of Shanghai Library, China)

The first apex of the story's plotline, in all its numerous variations, is that "fatal night", to cite the Oxford professor who devoured *East Lynne* with great interest in 1862. An 1881 poster for a stage play of *East Lynne* features that night with a depiction of Isabel in agony on finding Archibald and Barbara together in the moonlight (Fig. 2a left). The book cover of *Konggu lan*'s rewritten version published by the Yuxin shuju in 1935 also features the night with Lansun and Rouyun cuddling under the full moon (Fig. 2b right). This cover picture invited readers to look from the point of view of the jealous heroine and to sympathize with her feelings. In the 1935 film, the scene opens with a long take with the camera panning slowly across a moonlit garden following Renzhu's movements to a Western-style pavilion where Lansun and Rouyun are seated in two chairs. The camera tracks back to Renzhu, who hides herself in the shadow of a tree and peeps. This shot is followed by a

close-up of Renzhu, whose facial expression tells us of her shock. The next is a medium shot in which Rouyuan, proud and radiant, and Lansun, half drunk, converse intimately. Cutting back to Renzhu's close-up, and back again to the medium shot, we hear that Lansun repents at not having married Rouyun. In the next close-up, we see Renzhu weeping in despair. The last shot of the scene resembles the first long take, featuring the garden and Renzhu walking hastily back while the sound of the music from the banquet hall can be heard in the background.

The *mise-en-scene*, cutting, cinematography and sound are not artistically sophisticated, but all adhere to the principles of Hollywood's classical narrative cinema and convey the feeling from Renzhu's point of view as she peeps and lifts the secret. Rouyun's triumphant smile bathing in the bright moonlight is in stark contrast to Renzhu's desperate face in the dark tree shadow, and the gay music from the banquet hall reinforces the gloom surrounding the heartbroken wife. The next scene is set in Renzhu's boudoir, where she is writing a farewell letter to her husband and takes leave of her infant son. The scene includes a key clue for her mistaken death later, i.e. the resemblance of Renzhu and her maid, Cui'er. In one shot at the beginning of the scene, Renzhu appears in a white dress to the left, calling Cui'er, played by the same actress wearing a dark dress, who enters from the background on the right. In the next shot they stand face to face.

The cinematographic technique of "double exposure" was applied here to create this effect and it is vital to the development of the plot. This technique had already been used in the silent Chinese version in 1925. Mingxing's filmmakers and publicists were keenly aware of advantage of film in this respect and boasted in the ads for the silent version: "The film was shot with the latest cinematographic technique in America."⁵⁹ Spectators were thrilled by the trick effect. As one reviewer wrote, "Zhang Zhiyun plays two roles in this film. The two characters appear in one shot with different facial expressions. Viewers can hardly detect that they are [depicted by one and] the same person."⁶⁰ This trick had an ongoing appeal for film-goers at the time. For example *Zimei hua* 姊妹花 (Twin sisters, 1934), the most successful film at box office at the time, features a pair of twin sisters both played by Hu Die 胡蝶, the same actress who played Renzhu and Cui'er in 1935 *Konggu lan*.

Cinema's capacity to produce the sensational effect of *total* resemblance was unrivalled. There is no such character as the maid in the novel *East Lynne*. But

⁵⁹ *Xinwen bao* 8 Mar. 1926: A1.

⁶⁰ Yi Hua, "Guochan dianying qucai xiaoshuo zhi xiansheng," *Liangyou* 15 Feb. 1926, 16.

A Woman's Error features such a one, Theresa Bowden, whose resemblance with "her lady" is introduced in Beatrice's words: "Do you not see how much she is like you? Her hair is of the same shade, she is of the same height, the same complexion. It is a grave mistake to have engaged such a person. Only imagine what remarks people may make!"⁶¹ In *No no hana*, Ruikō described the maid's chance resemblance to Sumiko from the perspective of Sumiko herself.⁶² The 1935 Chinese novel introduces Cui'er by saying: "Her figure and complexion has a sixty to seventy percent resemblance to Renzhu."⁶³ But words certainly cannot generate the sensational feeling as effectively as the technical method of double exposure did. In *Konggu lan's* 1914 stage play, there was no mention even of the resemblance; Cui'er is only mistaken for Renzhu because she had taken Renzhu's handbag.⁶⁴ A stage play does not allow one actor to play two roles simultaneously in one scene. The film medium amplified the Victorian novel's sensational elements. And the fatal night comprises the first crucial development of the story in its various versions. That fatal night is followed by a more sensational event: a train accident.

A Collision!

Public anxiety over the intensity of sensory input and stimulation was part of the modern experience in turn-of-the-century Western societies. The traffic hazard was one of the sources of this modern stress and pervaded the pages of the newspapers during the period.⁶⁵ This general mental state may explain why the railway accident appears at the centre of the plot in all versions of the story under discussion. In *East Lynne*, the accident happens in the small French town of Cammère: "The train was within a short distance of the station when there came a sudden shock and crash as of the day of doom; and engine, carriages, and passengers lay in one confused mass at the foot of a steep embankment. The gathering darkness added to the awful confusion."⁶⁶ Charlotte Brame had the crash take place near the Italian town of Sedi: "...there came a terrible shock, a terrible noise, a hissing of steam, a crashing as of broken carriages, a rushing, blinding, bewildering shock, as two trains met with deadly force, and one forced the other over the embankment into the vine-wreathed valley

61 Brame, *A Woman's Error*, 53.

62 Ruikō, *No no hana*, vol. 1, 175.

63 Wang, *Konggu lan*, 42.

64 Play script "Konggu lan", 89.

65 Cf. Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 59-100.

66 Wood, *East Lynne*, 320.

below! A collision!”⁶⁷ Ruikō’s description is less sensational, merely saying that the crash causes people to feel that the sky is collapsing and the earth is cracking.⁶⁸ Bao Tianxiao followed Ruikō’s text, but portrayed the scene from Cui’er’s angle: “[she] suddenly heard a great crash like the collapsing of the sky and the sundering of the earth: two trains collided.”⁶⁹

While the writers were at liberty to describe such an accident as freely as they liked, the playwrights were faced with far more practical constraints. In the 1941 stage adaptation of *East Lynne*, audiences only learn of the accident from Isabel’s conversation with her maid: “(Grave) I was in the accident, Joyce, and they mistook another woman for me and buried her in my name.”⁷⁰ No visual representations are provided. The sequence showing the incident in the 1935 film is made up of nine shots:

1. (close-up) Ringing bell at the station.
2. (close-up) Railway signals.
3. (close-up) Rotating train wheels and rails, with a foot stepping on the signal controller in the foreground at the lower left of the frame.
4. (medium shot) Cui’er boarding the train, with back to us.
5. (long shot) Dining table in the banquet hall, Lansun drunk.
6. (extreme long shot) Train A travelling through the dark night from left to right.
7. (long shot) Train B travelling to the left, with its locomotive pumping out clouds of white smoke; roars getting louder.
8. (long shot) Train A entering from the left; collision with train B; explosion.
9. (close-up) Hands typing telegraph; sound of the typing, short and quick, creating a tense atmosphere.

Director Zhang Shichuan 张石川 (1890–1953) effectively employed rhythmic editing and other filmic devices to present the deadly accident. Close-ups of the bell, the railway signals, the train wheels and the foot, which spliced together in a normal pace, portray the ominous silence. This silence sets off the imminent fatal crash and serves as a psychological cue to the audience about what will shortly happen. The sound effect heightens the ominous feeling in

67 Brame, *A Woman’s Error*, 129.

68 Ruikō, *No no hana*, vol. 1, 184.

69 Bao, *Konggu lan*, vol. 1, 110. The original text: “只聽得一聲天崩地覆般響往來兩個火車頭撞了個頭拳兒。”

70 Albert, *East Lynne*, 125.

shot 7 when the roars grow louder and louder. Inserting shot 5 featuring the bright splendid banquet hall makes sharp contrast with the exterior scene of the dark night and reinforces the emotional intensity of the sequence. Without the trains, shots 6 and 7 would have made an idyllic scene like a Chinese traditional-style landscape painting, with a bright full moon hanging over the silhouettes of the mountains against the evening sky. The trains are portrayed as a devastating power that spoils the tranquillity of the countryside, especially in the depiction of the roars, the smoke, and the explosion. This depiction is reminiscent of two films featuring a bandit/warlord hold-up of a train in China: the 1929 Soviet silent film *The Blue Express* (Goluboy ekspres, dir. Ilya Trauberg, Sovkino) and the 1932 Paramount film *Shanghai Express* (dir. Josef von Sternberg). The train seems to have a common feature in these films, all being presented as an avatar of danger.

This 1935 film relies on film techniques to represent sensation and sentiment, rather than the gruesomely realistic method adopted earlier in a film entitled *Zhang Xinsheng* (1923), which caused much controversy at the time. The film about a sensational murder case contained “realistic” scenes of a public autopsy, depicting the corpse being cut open and organs being removed. These scenes were filmed in close-up and “the realistic effect” disgusted everyone in the audience.⁷¹ *Konggu lan* treats the dead differently. As we can see in shot 9, the gravity of the incident is conveyed by the audio-visual depiction of a typing telegraph. Following this are several shots describing Lansun and Renzhu’s father in the morgue mourning over the dead woman under her white cloth. There is one close-up shot of the cloth-covered body, but no direct portrayal of the mangled face, which is only mentioned in speech by a railway employee. By that time Shanghai filmmaking had outgrown its obsession with morbid reality. The film-makers had found new ways to represent sensation with the medium. It is interesting to note that the 1914 stage play includes a glimpse of Rouyun’s “bloody face” falling from her horse-carriage and a similar scene with Cui’er showing her “true” crushed face after the collision.⁷² Charlotte Brame likewise describes the scene in a sensational manner: “They raised the body—it was that of a woman, young and fair—but from those strong men rose a cry of dread, as they saw what once had been a fair face, crushed and mangled, all semblance of humanity marred and deadened.”⁷³ This accident and the misidentification are the prelude to the most dramatic development in the story.

71 Cheng Bugao, *Yingtian yijiu* (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1983), 70-71.

72 Tie Rou, “Xinmin xinju she zhi qian ben *Konggu lan*,” *Juchang yuebao* 1 (Jan. 1914).

73 Brame, *A Woman’s Error*, 130.

The Aching Heart in Disguise

The dramatic turn of that fatal night and the deadly crash leads to the crescendo of the story's sentimental and sensational power, which unfolds in its second half. In a nutshell, this power lies in the dynamics of disguise and revelation. In *East Lynne*, readers observe from a maid's eyes the disguised appearance of Lady Isabel, now Madame Vine, the governess of her former family: "Wilson was thinking she never saw such a mortal fright as the new governess. The blue spectacles capped everything, she decided; and what on earth made her tie up her throat, in that fashion, for? As well wear a man's collar and stock, at once!"⁷⁴ In *A Woman's Error*, Violante becomes Mrs Rivers, the teacher of the charity school established by Beatrice, with her long golden hair now closely cropped and wearing a close widow's cap and coarse black dresses.⁷⁵ Renzhu in the 1925 silent film wears dark spectacles (Fig.3a). The sound film presents Renzhu disguising herself in a more theatrical fashion. Upon deciding to answer the ad for the teacher's post, she takes out a book entitled *Gaizhuang bianrong shu* 改妝變容術 (Methods of Disguise and Changing Appearance), which is shot in close-up. The next close-up is a clock which reads a quarter past one, and then a quarter to three. Taking one and a half hours to change her appearance according to the instructions in the book, Renzhu is now wearing a pair of glasses (not dark spectacles), with her hair held up by a comb, and speaking with a strong accent. When she knocks at the door of her own house and pretends to be a visitor, even the servant and her father fail to recognize her.

Returning to their old homes in disguise, the heroines in the various versions of the story are all thrown into a deep emotional turmoil. They feel jealous when they see their bitter rivals taking their own places beside their beloved husbands. They suffer great torment when they face their own dear children but cannot declare their true identities. Most dramatic is perhaps the moment when each of them faces the photo or portrait of herself as the "deceased" wife and mother. One of the only two illustrations in the 1909 Japanese book *No no hana* depicts this scene (Fig. 3b). In *A Woman's Error*, when Violante's son ushers her in to look at the picture of his "deceased mother", "[h]er heart beat, and her brain burned; but it must be done! Slowly she raised her eyes. Was she ever like that?—so lovely, so bright."⁷⁶ Renzhu's reaction in Bao Tianxiao's novel is: "Her

⁷⁴ Wood, *East Lynne*, 409-10.

⁷⁵ Brame, *A Woman's Error*, 145.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 189.

heart was aching and she wished to rush out of the room immediately.”⁷⁷ In the 1935 film, it is also the son who introduces the disguised teacher to his mother’s photo. It is hanging in the drawing room of the house, flanked on each side by a couplet written in nice calligraphy that read: “Qiu gui **lan** mo ren, lu xie lei cheng **zhu** 秋歸蘭莫弔，露瀉淚成珠” (“The autumn approached, unbearably for the **orchid**. The dew gathered, like tears growing into **pearls**.” Emphases mine.) Composed ingeniously with the inclusion of Renzhu’s and Lansun’s names, the couplet conveys the husband’s feelings of grief, remorse, and love. Standing before the photo, a reaction shot reveals Renzhu’s intense emotion. The silent film features a similar scene and a still was published in a fan magazine in 1926 (Fig. 3b).



Fig. 3a: Illustration in 1909 *No no hana* (Courtesy of National Diet Library, Japan)

⁷⁷ Bao, *Konggu lan*, vol. 2, 61. The original text is: 覺得陣陣心酸恨不逃出他書房.

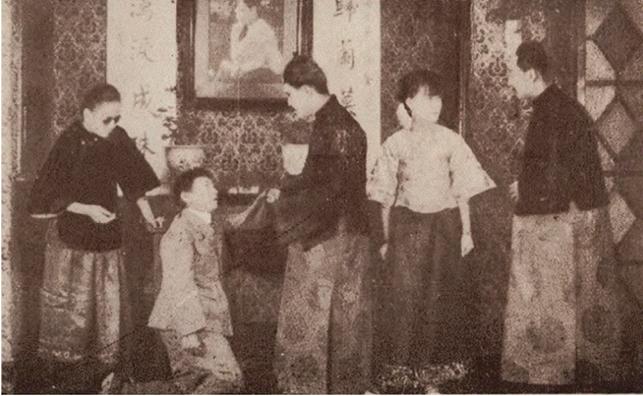


Fig. 3b: Still of 1926 *Konggu lan* (*Xiju dianying 1.2*, 1926)

A similar scenario featuring a person returning to their old home in disguise also appeared in a popular novel of the 1920s and a 1930s Chinese film based on the novel. The novel, *Love and Duty* (title of the Chinese version: *Lian'ai yu yiwu* 戀愛與義務), was written originally in French by S. Horose (Chinese name: 華羅琛, 1883–1970), a Polish woman who married a Chinese engineer and lived in China.⁷⁸ The Commercial Press in Shanghai published the Chinese version in 1924 and the English version in 1926.⁷⁹ It soon became very successful and the Lianhua Film Company in Shanghai produced a silent film based on the novel in 1931, directed by Bu Wancang 卜萬蒼 (1903–1974). The story features an educated woman (played by Ruan Lingyu 阮玲玉) who runs from her arranged marriage to be with her true love and ends up suffering from her lover's death, from poverty and from moral condemnation as a baby girl's unmarried mother. One of the most dramatic moments in the story is a scene in which the protagonist returns as a seamstress to her own house many years later and discovers that her daughter is in love with the son she had with her first husband.⁸⁰ The novel was written after *East Lynne* and its various spin-offs, but we have no evidence to pin down any exact influence between these works. I would suggest that the (un)coincidental similarity in

78 For a detailed study of *Love and Duty*, see Thomas Kampen, "Die chinesische Verfilmung des Romans *Love and Duty* der europäischen Schriftstellerin Horose", In Roswitha Badry, Maria Rohrer, Karin Steiner, eds. *Liebe, Sexualität, Ehe und Partnerschaft - Paradigmen im Wandel* (Freiburg: FWPF, 2009), 197-204.

79 S. Horose (羅琛), *Lian'ai yu yiwu* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1924); S. Horose, *Love and Duty: The Love Story of a Chinese Girl* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1926).

80 I viewed the movie at the Taiwan Film Archives. For an excerpt of the film see <http://catalog.digitalarchives.tw/item/00/36/22/5d.html>. Accessed 25 Oct. 2012.

the plots of *Love and Duty* and *East Lynne/Konggu lan* illustrates the powerful wave of sentiment and sensationalism in the popular mediaspheres around the globe throughout the long period under discussion. It is interesting to note that a French version of Horose's *Love and Duty* was published under the title "La Symphonie des Ombres Chinoises: Idylle" by the Paris publisher Editions de la Madeleine in 1932.⁸¹ The 1931 Chinese film reappeared in Uruguay in the 1990s after being "lost" for half a century. These facts imply that there are lots of unknown global travel stories concerning the narratives, images and plots that carry sentimental and sensational powers, as displayed in *Love and Duty*, *East Lynne*, and their numerous fellow cultural products.

No matter how specific the different versions from *East Lynne* to *Konggu lan* are to their respective cultures and media, the three critical moments injected with a large shot of sensation and sentiment comprise the core of the "stories" and form the key dynamic of their appeal to the local reading and viewing publics. The "stories," seen in each of their specific cultural contexts, have their reasons to be sensational and sentimental. Scandals, crimes, mysteries and accidents were the most savoured themes of both Victorian sensation novels and newspaper reports.⁸² Victorian literary sensationalism has been regarded as a response to an "anxious" age marked by rapid industrialization and urbanization. As Wynne summarizes, modern anxieties came from shifting class identities, financial insecurity, the precarious social position of single women, sexuality, failed and illegal marriages, insanity and mental debilitation, fears of criminality and the perception that modernity itself was undermining domestic life.⁸³ Sensation fiction worked as an articulation of modernity, satisfying the contemporary reading public's desire for an imaginative representation of their feelings. As for the related quality of sentiment, it is not at all surprising that *East Lynne/A Woman's Error* produced such a "sad maternal sob story" that drew generations of sympathetic audiences to shed bitter tears over it.⁸⁴ As is known, the "sentimental novel" was a dominant literary genre in England in the eighteenth century. The most famous works of this genre include Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* (1754),

81 S. Horose, *La Symphonie des Ombres Chinoises: Idylle* (Paris: Editions de la Madeleine, 1932).

82 Graham Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2000), 7.

83 See Wynne, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine*, 2–3.

84 For example, R. K. Narayan, an Indian novelist, wrote about his reading of *East Lynne* in his 1975 memoir, *My Days*: "Reading and rereading it always produced a lump in my throat, and that was the most luxurious sadness you could think of." Quoted in Dinah Birch, "Fear Among the Teacups" (Review of *East Lynne* by Ellen Wood, edited by Andrew Maunder), *London Review of Books* 23.3 (8 Feb. 2001): 22.

Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768) and Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771). Sentimentalism was often viewed as "a technique for reviving the role of emotion in human conduct" in an increasingly secularized world.⁸⁵ *East Lynne* was clearly influenced by this genre of literary creation.

Japanese readers of *No no hana* would likewise shed tears over sad stories. Tears were ubiquitous in what were termed "weeping books" (*nakihon*), which remained a dominant form of popular fiction throughout the nineteenth century. Jonathan Zwicker even argues that the rise of sentimental fiction (*ninjōbon*) to dominance surrounding the turn of the nineteenth century marks a new "aesthetic imaginary" and "social imaginary," and so "the history of tears is also, to a large extent, the history of nineteenth-century Japan."⁸⁶ This literary trend was the cultural product of print and the growth of the domestic literary market. Specifically, this took place at the intersection of several important trends in cultural consumption in Japan around the time: a morphological shift within fiction away from a literature of linguistic play to a literature of plot; the emergence of lending libraries and the centrality of fiction titles in these libraries; and the rising importance of the book in everyday life.⁸⁷ It is worth noting that a significant number of vernacular Chinese novels, including romantic and sentimental fiction of late imperial China such as *Jin ping mei* 金瓶梅 (The Plum in the Golden Vase) and *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (The Dream of the Red Chamber), made their way onto the Japanese book market from the mid-eighteenth century onward.⁸⁸ The Japanese literary field had been connected to the Chinese literary world of sentiment in this presumably pre-modern period. The European novel's arrival in Japan in the Meiji era should be viewed as part of the continuous process of importing fiction, and it was predominantly the "plot and sentiment" of this foreign literature that carried the day. Works like *Crime and Punishment* were appreciated simply as detective stories.⁸⁹ Seen against this cultural background, it is reasonable that *A Woman's Error* landed in Meiji Japan and evoked tears in its Japanese readers.

The warm reception of *Konggu lan* in China was also unsurprising. First of all, there is a long tradition of sentimental-erotic literature in China, a tradition

85 Cf. G. A. Starr, "Sentimental Novel of the Later Eighteenth Century," in *The Columbia History of the British Novel*, eds. Richetti, John, et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 184.

86 Zwicker, *Practices of the Sentimental Imagination*, 90.

87 Ibid., 72.

88 Ibid., 128-141.

89 Ibid., 165.

that focuses on the articulation of *qing* 情, emotional yearning, through the literary creation of poetry, drama and fiction. This tradition is exemplified by some of the most distinguished Chinese literary works, such as *Xixiang ji* 西廂記 (Romance of the West Chamber), *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 (The Peony Pavilion), *Taohua shan* 桃花扇 (Peach Blossom Fan), and *Changsheng dian* 長生殿 (The Hall of Everlasting Life).⁹⁰ Many of these works, as mentioned above, entered the Japanese literary market before the mid-nineteenth century. But the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a different direction to the cultural flow between China and Japan. Chinese military failure in the Sino-Japanese war in 1895 “awakened” Chinese intellectuals and Japan gradually became a model to follow and a cultural bridge between China and the West. The trend for sentimental fiction that prospered in late nineteenth-century China was a result of the profound interplay between China’s own literary tradition and Western/Japanese influences. According to Perry Link’s study, a majority of late Qing novels, probably two-thirds, were translations of Western stories, most of them English and French, by authors such as Dumas, Dickens, and Haggard. Most Chinese translations were based on Japanese versions of these novels. And “the world of sentiment” was one of the main interests of Chinese translators, such as Lin Shu 林紓 (1852–1924).⁹¹ Sentimental novels also dominated local creations, such as the so-called “Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies” fiction. The appeal of melodramatic sentimentalism to novel readers was naturally shared by theatre-goers and movie viewers, who might constitute overlapping groups. Zhang Shichuan’s wife, for example, summarized her husband’s style as such:⁹²

How much suffering the protagonists had to endure at the beginning of his films! Soft-hearted women audiences were bound to be moved to tears, and soak a couple of handkerchiefs. ... His philosophy was that a film that fails to make ladies cry can hardly please them ...

The emergence of *Konggu lan* was embedded in this cultural setting. Taken together, each version of this story, initially invented in *East Lynne*, fitted perfectly into its own specific social and cultural context. Victorian readers of *East Lynne* would never have imagined the existence of the Japanese novel *No no hana*, which tells a similar story. Most Chinese movie audiences

90 See Hsia, “Hsü Chen-ya’s *Yü-li hun*,” 201.

91 Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, 135–138; also see Leo Ou-Fan Lee, *The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 44–56.

92 He Xiujun, “Zhang Shichuan he Mingxing yingpian gongsi,” in *Wenhua shiliao*, ed. Wenshi ziliao yanjiu wenyuanhui (Beijing: wenshi ziliao chubanshe, 1980), 118–9. The original text is in Chinese. The English translation is mine.

weeping for Renzhu's misery in the darkness would have had no idea of the story's British origins. They were positioned in their own local temporalities. This study of the Victorian story's transcultural tour, however, has presented a picture of which local audiences were totally unaware. In spite of their ignorance of the big picture, they actually read/viewed *the same* story to a certain extent. I would argue that this fact raises an interesting issue: readers and theatre/movie audiences of the different versions of the story indeed shared an emotional or psychological bond and created a *virtual* "community of sentiment" comparable, to a degree, to internet fan clubs of the present day.⁹³ Sandra Annett uses the term "community of sentiment" to discuss the role of global media in the formation of fan communities. Global fan communities of fashions, brands or stars are prevalent today. For example, fans of Japanese manga can create their communities easily via internet, say, on Facebook, Twitter, or blogs. In doing so, they are forming a transnational public and participants are aware of each other's existence and maintain active interactions in the communities.⁹⁴

The early version of "community of sentiment" brought by *East Lynne* and all its spin-offs is certainly different. It can only be called a "community" in an imaginative sense. Consumption of the story/stories was asynchronous, and consumers in different countries had no actual communication with one another. By terming it "community," I am attempting to highlight the connectivity in terms of the sentimental and sensational feelings triggered by the same core elements of the story. In this sense, this story, be it *East Lynne*, *A Woman's Error*, *No no hana*, or *Konggu lan*, differed from its "ancestors" with similar sentimental traits, as for example the aforementioned 1754 English novel *Sir Charles Grandison*, the Chinese novel *Honglou meng* (The Dream of the Red Chamber), etc. The latter novels were only appreciated within certain geographical boundaries. The story of *East Lynne* and its spin-offs, however, generated transcultural interactions between peoples in different countries, even if this was mostly unknown to their actual readership/spectatorship. This was the result of the globalisation process at its early stage. I would like to name the global readership/spectatorship of the story's different versions a "community of sentiment" in this imaginative sense, and I would suggest that this "community" may be seen as the prototype of global mediascapes of the present day in terms of the circulation of stories, information, and images on the global scale.

93 See Sandra Annett, "Imagining Transcultural Fandom: Animation and Global Media Communities", *Transcultural Studies* 2.2 (2011): 171. For the original use of the concept, see Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1996), 8.

94 Annett, "Imagining Transcultural Fandom: Animation and Global Media Communities".

What is the significance about this virtual community of sentiment? Concepts of “community” and “sentiment” have obtained much academic attention in recent decades. Benedict Anderson has argued, in his famous book *Imagined Communities*, that the modern origin of nation and nationalism may lie in the popular imaginary of shared communities facilitated by the development of the print industry and other things.⁹⁵ Sentiment or emotion is one of the bonds that make a community a community, and has been proposed as an important lens to look at the past. Haiyan Lee, for example, has emphasized the centrality of sentiment in modern Chinese literature and culture, and argues that discourses of sentiment are “articulatory practices that participate in (re)defining the social order and (re)producing forms of self and sociality.”⁹⁶ In her study of popular literature in Republican China, the so-called “Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies” school, she argues that “Butterfly sentimentalism helped create an affective community within the literary public sphere... [and] provided the ethical and epistemological basis of self-definition for the urban middle classes.”⁹⁷

Lee’s observations are insightful. But the case study examined in this article has expanded on her argument and suggested that the “affective community” built through sentimentalism was not restricted to the literary public sphere within national boundaries, but had profound interactions with foreign trends and transmedia practices. Global flows of cultural products along with commodities and concepts not only gave shape to imagined communities that were called nations, but also linked people at elusive mental levels across national boundaries. Through the methodological prism of transculturality, fixed categories and classical texts have gained new meanings.

Conclusion

From Lévi-Strauss’s structuralist perspective, it is the *story*—rather than the language, style, music, etc.—that matters for a myth’s *raison d’être*, as shown in the epigram to this article.⁹⁸ In a similar vein, I argue that from *East Lynne*, *A Woman’s Error*, to *No no hana* and *Konggu lan*, it is the *story*

95 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1991).

96 Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* (Stanford University Press, 2007), 8.

97 Haiyan Lee, “All the Feelings That Are Fit to Print: The Community of Sentiment and the Literary Public Sphere in China, 1900-1918,” *Modern China* 27.3 (2001): 321-322.

98 Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 68, no. 270 (Oct. - Dec. 1955): 430.

with its main plot evoking sensation and sentiment that mattered/matters for the historical audience around the globe and for our understanding of the big picture of its transcultural travels. Neither of the different versions of the story was intended to be a myth. It is, as *East Lynne*'s subtitle states, a "story of modern life."⁹⁹ Among the teacups of *East Lynne*, as literary critic Dinah Birch accurately puts it, "socially mobile Victorians, dogged by uncertainty," recognised "a world that expressed their deepest fears."¹⁰⁰ The same may hold true of the Japanese and Chinese who were confronting a chaotic "modern" world in their own ways. "No"/wild field in the Japanese title, and "konggu"/empty valley in the Chinese title, may both indicate the contemporary nostalgia for the more tranquil and uncultivated world of the past. In this sense, the story, in its manifold variations, can be understood as a modern "myth" in a secular age. The myth, in its original usage, addresses human beings' primitive fears, and in this sense we can read the story/stories under discussion as a modern myth mirroring modern people's mental state. And most importantly, this modern myth travelled and went through transcultural and trans-media adaptations, translations, and rewritings. In this way, the story connected people invisibly.

Speaking of the Japanese encounter with the West in the mid-nineteenth century, Jonathan Zwicker raised a thought-provoking view: "For most, the West was not first encountered at the level of ideology or institution, but at the level of the potboiler."¹⁰¹ The case studied in this essay seems to illustrate this. The Victorian "potboiler" introduced people across geographical boundaries to a world of sensation and sentiment, thanks to the flourishing media and entertainment industries and the burgeoning wave of urban popular culture, or, in short, the global trend of modernization since the Industrial Revolution. Although the Oxford professor of history and the 20-year-old Prince of Wales, the fervent readers of *East Lynne*, would never have imagined the existence of the novel's Chinese versions and audiences, and although Kuroiwa Ruikō, Bao Tianxiao, and Zheng Zhengqiu would never have consciously considered themselves as agents of an international trend, all of them were in fact involved in a global phenomenon of popular cultural production, circulation and consumption. In our digital age, the speed of circulation of *East Lynne* and its spin-offs may strike us as laughably slow, but the messages and meanings conveyed by the stories certainly merit our discussions and further reflections.

99 Maunder, introduction to *East Lynne*, 21.

100 Birch, "Fear among the Teacups," 23.

101 Zwicker, *Practices of the Sentimental Imagination*, 153.

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