

The Blooming Plum Blossom
The Representation of Women and the Film and
Television in Taiwan (1985-2013)

Shin-Yuu Shen

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

School of Art, Media and American Studies

University of East Anglia

August 2015

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Abstract

The status of women in Taiwan has undergone a significant transformation since the feminist movement in the early 1970s, which was founded by ex-vice president of Taiwan Hsiu-Lien Lu. Women in current Taiwanese society have the right to equality in education as well as employment, unlike women in the 1970s. The thesis explores how new feminist culture has influenced the representation of women in Taiwanese film and television drama. It focuses on an examination of gender in relation to the representation of women in Taiwanese film and television drama from 1985 to 2013. The main body of the thesis is taken up with an analysis of the representation of women in selected Taiwanese films and television dramas, for instance *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Pei Hua Wang, 2012) and *The Fierce Wife* (Fun Jun Xu, 2010). The thesis discusses how new feminism has influenced Taiwanese popular culture through films and television dramas, and how these films and television dramas treat the central themes of marriage, love and the role of women. The thesis also discusses female authorship and films directed by women through an examination of Sylvia Chang's films, for instance *20, 30, 40* (2004). The thesis further explores the representation of women in conjunction with a feminist discussion of the power and function of these narrative structures in constructing female identities.

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my supervisors, Professor Yvonne Tasker and Dr. Eylem Atakav from the School of Art, Media and American Studies at the University of East Anglia, for their support and patience during the writing of this thesis. This thesis would not have been accomplished without the support of my supervisors. I would like to express gratefulness to my family who have always encouraged me to pursue my dream. I would not have been able to achieve my goal without their support. The role models of my life are my father, David Shen, and my mother, Angela Lu, who taught me the value of life and to be different. My brother, Vincent Shen, shares lovely photos of his son to brighten my heart. There are numerous friends from the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan and Taiwan, to whom I would like to express my gratitude. I am grateful for their encouragement of my dream and for their sincere friendship. I would like to offer my gratefulness to Eric Fu for his patience and support during my pursuit of a PhD. Special thanks to the dearest friend of my life, Maho Sakoda, for encouraging me to keep moving forward.

Introduction

The status of women in Taiwan has undergone a significant transformation since the feminist movement of the early 1970s. Women in Taiwan may have equality in educational attainment and employment in contemporary society when compared to women in the 1980s. However, I argue that gender equality has not yet been fully achieved in Taiwanese society. This research project interrogates gender inequality and women's social roles through an examination of popular culture, taking case studies from film and television drama. My thesis argues that women in Taiwan are constrained between conventional and contemporary social expectations. The younger generation of women in Taiwan may be influenced by Western feminism, and be aware of the importance of education and financial independence. Nevertheless, family and social expectations towards women in Taiwan in terms of education, employment and marriage still remain significant factors. For example, women are expected to get married before they reach the age of thirty. They are also typically expected to reproduce before the age of thirty-five.¹ Youna Kim states that marriage and motherhood are the conventional social expectations for women and are seen as their responsibility as a woman.² These expectations are reinforced via popular cultural forms such as the case studies examined in this thesis. Take the female protagonists in the television dramas, *Miss Rose* (Xi Sheng Chen, 2012) and *My Queen* (Qing Zhen Lin, 2009), as examples; they are both expected by their families, friends and colleagues to get married in their early thirties, a view that the series themselves seem to endorse.

¹ See for example Youna Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia: The Precarious Self* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 12.

² Ibid., p. 13.

In spite of the fact that the status of women in Taiwan has been ranked as the highest among East Asian countries such as Japan, Korea and mainland China, women in Taiwan are still constrained within traditional gender expectations.³ My own experience of gender inequality and gender stereotyping in studying for a doctoral degree has reinforced my central contention here, namely that traditional forces contend with modernizing impulses in relation to the position of women in Taiwan. This tension of aspiration for female achievement in a context shaped by traditional constraints and patriarchal attitudes informs the cultural texts I analyse here in contradictory ways.

The thesis focuses on the emergence of feminism and new feminism through an examination of several case studies which foreground the representation of women in Taiwanese cinema and current popular idol dramas on television. My original motivation to write the thesis came from an encounter with the film *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Pei Hua Wang, 2012). The film raised my interest in women's issues, particularly in relation to popular representations of marriage and divorce. The film portrays the female protagonist, An-Zhen Xie (Sonia Sui) as a single mother who is financially independent and successful in her career. She is shown to enjoy her current life as a single mother but, through the course of the narrative, begins to wonder if she should marry once more. The central themes of the film are marriage, divorce and remarriage, themes which are evidently informed by feminist discourse circulating in the wider society. The main thrust of the film is to encourage women who have been through broken relationships not only to have courage to be themselves but also to have courage to begin another relationship.⁴ The director of *The Fierce*

³ See for example Hsiu-Lien Lu, *New Feminism* (Taipei: Unitas Publishing, 2008), p. 298. The first edition of *New Feminism* was published in 1974. The thesis refers to the fifth edition of the book, which was published in 2008.

⁴ Pei-Hua Wang, *The Filming Diary of The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Taipei: Kate Publishing, 2012), p. 23.

Wife, Pei-Hua Wang, sets up a scenario in which the female protagonist is involved in a relationship and remarriage. Although the director does not endorse the social expectation that marriage equals happiness for women over the age of thirty, she nonetheless portrays the struggle of the female protagonist as a divorced woman who eventually remarries.⁵

Pei-Hua Wang frames her film in relation to the pressures placed on women by society and family members, specifically the assumption that women over the age of thirty will marry.⁶ Nevertheless, the director questions: 'What about An-Zhen? As a woman and mother over the age of thirty who is divorced. Is marriage what she really wants?'⁷ The director suggests that marriage cannot guarantee happiness, although nonetheless her film depicts a trajectory towards marriage.⁸ It is difficult, the film suggests, for women who have been through broken relationships to have the courage to start new relationships. The main thrust of the film is to encourage women to have courage to pursue their happiness, to have faith in love and to fall in love again. As Pei-Hua Wang remarks, 'You need to have courage to move forward to pursue happiness. You need to have adventures in order to find happiness.'⁹ Pei-Hua Wang's commentary on her film relates to the debates in the broader media context. Her comment provides evidence of cultural assumptions on the expectation of women to get married, assumptions which are framed in terms of self-determination and choice.

Youna Kim argues that mainstream discourse tends to present unmarried women rather than unmarried men as 'socially problematic and pathological.'¹⁰ The media in Taiwan follows the media in Japan in labelling single women over the age of thirty with successful careers 'Defeated Dogs'. In contrast, men over the age of thirty

⁵ Wang, *The Filming Diary of The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right*, p. 17.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁰ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia: The Precarious Self*, p. 13.

with successful careers are crowned as ‘Golden Bachelors’. As Kim argues, ‘The popular expression ‘Defeated Dog’ in Japan is seen as a personal responsibility that must be dealt with individually by women who fail to live up to the society’s exacting standards and expectations, especially in terms of an age-specific hetero-normative biography: getting married by 30 and establishing a normal family.’¹¹ The popular terms used in the mass media indicate gender inequality in contemporary Taiwanese society. This thesis argues that Pei-Hua Wang’s film perpetuates these assumptions as much as it questions them.

Further research revealed that *The Fierce Wife* is no solitary example within Taiwanese cinema and television. In addition, the connections between the themes evident in such popular texts and those addressed by Diane Negra in the context of US post-feminism were particularly striking. In her book *What a Girl Wants? Fantasizing the Reclamation of Self in Postfeminism* (2009)¹² Negra explores the importance of post-feminism in contemporary Anglo-American popular culture. She examines the rhetoric of choice in the context of what she regards as rather limited choices for girls and women of every age in post-feminist popular culture in film, television, advertising and journalism. Scholarly works that theorize issues around marriage and divorce mostly come from Anglo-American sources. Despite the different cultural and social backgrounds of Taiwan and the United States, these Anglo-American sources have proved useful and relevant to my research project because these sources explore related textual patterns and social concerns.

My interest in the issue of marriage and divorce gradually developed through reading literary texts, and watching television dramas and films. I examine the representation of a divorcee in the idol drama *The Fierce Wife* (Fun Jun Xu, 2010) and

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Diane Negra, *What a Girl Wants? Fantasizing the Reclamation of Self in Postfeminism* (London: Routledge, 2009).

the later film based on the idol drama. In spite of the fact that there are a significant number of Taiwanese television dramas centred on the topic of romance and marriage – for instance *Miss Rose – The Fierce Wife* draws its focus on the atypical topics of marriage and divorce. The film, *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right*, further extends the central themes of the idol drama to the current social phenomenon of remarriage. Women in traditional Taiwanese society were subject to patriarchal regulation, without the freedom to marry or divorce. They could only accept marriage arrangements from male members of their families.¹³ Divorce was considered a taboo issue in traditional Taiwanese society. Psychological research on the issues of marriage and divorce in Taiwan foreground a number of concerns.¹⁴ However, there is little research that discusses the issues of marriage and divorce from a film studies perspective. It is important to examine the issues of marriage and divorce in relation to the representation of women in the media. Representations of the divorcee and single woman suggest the development of the status of women in Taiwanese society. For this reason, I chose to approach the topics of marriage and divorce in relation to the representation of women in the media in Taiwan.

The Influence of New Feminism in Taiwan

Kim states that popular media both reflects and constructs meaning: ‘the media are central to the signs of emergent cultures of female individualization producing the alternative social, cultural and symbolic relations women wish to live within and define the kind of self they wish to become.’¹⁵ As mentioned earlier, this thesis argues

¹³ Doris T. Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 24.

¹⁴ See for example Yue-Sui Huang, *What is Marriage?* (Taipei: The Commercial Press, 2014).

¹⁵ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 1.

that the representation of successful career women in the media implies the elevation of the status of women in Taiwan and the increasingly successful careers held by women in society. Television dramas possess a significant influence with respect to Taiwanese society. Among a wide range of television dramas, the most popular genre among the younger generation is idol drama. Idol drama as an industrial term is a genre derived from ‘trendy drama’ in Japan.¹⁶ Typical Taiwanese idol dramas focus on romance, friendship and family.¹⁷ The main characteristic of Taiwanese idol drama is the use of the most popular singers, actors, actresses and models in the entertainment industry in order to attract younger audiences aged from eighteen to those in their mid-thirties.¹⁸

In 2012, the well-known Taiwanese idol drama *The Fierce Wife* was made into the film, *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right*, because of its popularity in Taiwan. Pei-Hua Wang explained that in order to fulfil the anticipation of the audience, she decided to continue the blooming romance between the female protagonist and the young admirer onto the big screen.¹⁹ As mentioned earlier, Pei-Hua Wang states that for women over the age of thirty, ‘to marry a good man’ seems to equal their happiness. Furthermore, marriage seems to be the only ending for them.²⁰ The film suggests the importance of undertaking research on the topics of marriage and divorce in relation to women’s lives. I started questioning why younger women between the ages twenty to thirty would rather enjoy their single life than enter

¹⁶ Koichi Iwabuchi, ed., *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese TV Dramas* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), p. 9.

¹⁷ Yi-Hsiang Chen, “Looking for Taiwan’s Competitive Edge: The Production and Circulation of Taiwanese TV Drama”, in Ying Zhu, Michael Keane and Ruoyun Bai, eds, *TV Drama in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), p. 177.

¹⁸ See for example Yu-Fen Ko, “The Desired Form: Japanese Idol Dramas in Taiwan”, in Iwabuchi, ed., *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese TV Dramas*, p. 108.

¹⁹ The interview with the director of *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Pei Hua Wang, 2012) at the Media Press of Eastern Television in the United States, 25 August 2012, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ROyFloGXjM>>, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ELZnvU-iZo>> [accessed 24 November 2014].

²⁰ Wang, *The Filming Diary of The Fierce Wife*, p. 17.

the marriage realm. Why is the divorce rate in Taiwan higher than in the past decade? What does new feminism mean to women in Taiwan? In order to understand the present process of female individualisation, I began my research into the historical and political background of feminism and the women's movement in Taiwan since the 1970s. I then examine the emergence of new feminism and a wide range of women's representations in Taiwanese cinema and current idol dramas.

In contemporary Taiwanese society, the majority of younger women aged from twenty to thirty are well-educated and financially independent. Marriage is no longer regarded as an obligation for women, nor is it understood to guarantee a happy ending. The self-actualisation of women in Taiwan has arisen because of the influence of feminism and new feminism. Social phenomena such as delayed marriage, non-marriage and a higher divorce rate are more common in the 2000s in comparison to the 1990s in Taiwan. The status of women has progressed significantly in the past decade in Taiwan in various aspects, for instance, equal employment opportunities. Women have a broader career path compared to women in the early 1970s, who were constrained by conventional social expectations to be a housewife after they entered the marriage realm. There are a significant number of successful professional women from different ages, social backgrounds and professions in Taiwan. In particular, Taiwan's ex-vice president and feminist leader, Hsiu-Lien Lu, is an influential role model for successful professional woman. The status of women has undergone a significant progression in part due to the feminist movement led by Hsiu-Lien Lu in the early 1970s.²¹ The policy reformation during her vice presidency from 2000 to 2008 further elevated women's status. Hsiu-Lien Lu's election as Taiwanese vice president twice represents not only the progress of democracy but also an era of

²¹ See for example Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, p. 86.

‘bi-gender politics’ in Taiwan.²² She believes that women can change the world, and it is true that the status of Taiwanese women and their achievements have grown rapidly over the past decade.

In order to have a better understanding of the development of feminism in Taiwan, I commenced my research on the subject through an examination of Hsiu-Lien Lu’s feminist doctrine. In the fifth edition of *New Feminism* (2008), Hsiu-Lien Lu points out the struggling development of women’s status in Taiwan in terms of the complex historical, political and cultural background. In spite of the fact that women in Taiwan had the right to vote in 1947, their participation in politics was very low due to the traditional expectation of women.²³ The development of women’s status in Taiwan was a long process since Taiwan was, according to Hsiu-Lien Lu, greatly influenced by Chinese Confucianism and Japanese ‘male chauvinism’.²⁴ When Hsiu-Lien Lu returned to Taiwan from her studies in the United States in 1971, she found that the whole society of Taiwan was debating how to prevent young women from attending university.²⁵ Taiwanese society argued that valuable social resources were being wasted on women because most of the women chose to abandon their careers and become housewives after marriage. For this reason, Hsiu-Lien Lu was determined to advocate feminism; she explains: ‘I was under such an environment that I began to advocate feminism, criticizing male chauvinism on the one hand and proposing new feminist doctrines on the other.’²⁶ She describes being greatly inspired by Geraldine Ferraro and Simone de Beauvoir, leading her to write articles, make speeches and organise a variety of activities for women to participate in relevance to media.²⁷

Hsiu-Lien Lu published her feminist doctrine to encourage Taiwanese women

²² Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 300.

²³ Ibid., p. 104.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 295.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 296.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 295.

²⁷ Ibid.

to be financially independent, be ambitious about their future and find their new identities. Hsiu-Lien Lu puts the question: 'Is Taiwan more progressive than other countries? Yes and no.'²⁸ She explains that Taiwanese women suffered from the burden of Chinese Confucianism and Japanese 'male chauvinism' because of the historical circumstances of Chinese immigration, followed by Japanese colonial rule, and then the Nationalist regime's martial law.²⁹ Hsiu-Lien Lu acknowledges that Chinese Confucianism subjected women to the traditions of Three Obediences and Four Virtues. These traditions created Three Bondages for women in order to restrict women's intellectual, sexual and physical freedom.³⁰ Hsiu-Lien Lu argues: 'Under Japanese chauvinism, women were taught nothing but to serve and to please men, women always bent their waists, bowed their heads and surrendered to men.'³¹ The doctrine of Chinese Confucianism for women is Three Obediences, which requires women to obey their father, husband and son. By contrast to the Three Obediences in Chinese Confucianism for women, Hsiu-Lien Lu states her 'three selves' feminist doctrine:

In my feminist doctrine, I stress "three selves" [three selves] for women. These are self dependence, self confidence and self contentment. What I mean by this is that to be feminists, we have to be independent physically, intellectually and financially. We have to build up confidence in whatever we think and whatever we do, instead of merely following others.³²

She believes that women need to have courage, confidence and strong determination to achieve their goals and dreams in life. There will be difficulties and criticism but as long as they have determination, they will be able to achieve their goals and be proud

²⁸ Ibid., p. 295.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 296.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

of themselves.³³

Hsiu-Lien Lu's feminist doctrine is central to this research project. As a young woman researcher who is still trying to find her way in academia, I was truly inspired by Hsiu-Lien Lu. She made me believe that I could achieve my goal as long as I have determination. She states that 'Knowledge is power, and failure is a mother to success.'³⁴ She encourages women to be the mistresses of their own destinies. Hsiu-Lien Lu truly believes that women have the power to make things better.³⁵ The status of Taiwanese women has greatly improved since the 1970s in a number of aspects. Women in contemporary Taiwanese society have equality in terms of educational attainment and employment. The provisional state of feminist gains in Taiwanese society is closely related to popular media in Taiwan. I argue in this thesis that social change in women's roles in society has changed the transformation of women's representation in popular media in Taiwan. Furthermore, the representation of career women in popular media suggests the development of women's status in Taiwanese society. This thesis links the political issues raised by feminist scholars around post-feminism with the popular media in Taiwan. In order to understand the social and cultural significance of the figure of women, it is necessary to turn to the popular media that constructs and addresses them.

Overview of the Thesis

The previous section has briefly located this project in the context of my personal journey as a Taiwanese woman researcher. In this section I will explain the overview of the thesis, my research interests, research questions and the methodology used to

³³ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 302.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 303.

³⁵ Ibid.

answer these questions. Gender studies, feminism, post-feminism, new feminism and the representation of women in the Taiwanese media are central points of reference for this research project. The thesis examines the subject of gender from a film studies perspective rather than, for example, sociology. It focuses on an examination of gender in relation to the representation of women in Taiwanese films and television dramas. The aim of the thesis is to ask a number of related questions relevant to these areas: What is the impact of new feminism on the representation of women in the media in Taiwan? What position does feminism have in media culture in Taiwan? How do films and television dramas respond to contemporary debates on women's social role? I will argue that the influence of western post-feminism is an essential element which explains the development of women's status in the country. In elaborating on this argument I ask a further question regarding the impact of western post-feminism on the development of new feminism and media culture in Taiwan. The question of how new feminism influences Taiwanese popular culture through television dramas and films and how these television dramas and films treat marriage, love and the role of women will be discussed in the thesis.

Marriage, divorce and heterosexual relationships are the essential themes of both Taiwanese idol drama and the films which provide the case studies in this thesis. My concern with social phenomena such as delayed marriage, a higher divorce rate and singlehood are closely related to my research questions. My argument is that new feminism has drawn from western feminism, the scholarship on post-feminism as a cultural rather than political phenomenon has useful insights to bring to bear on Taiwanese media. Negra points out the difference between feminism and post-feminism: 'By caricaturing, distorting, and (often willfully) misunderstanding the political and social goals of feminism, postfeminism trades on a notion of feminism as

rigid, serious, anti-sex and romance, difficult and extremist.’³⁶ She further states: ‘In contrast, postfeminism offers the pleasure and comfort of (re)claiming an identity uncomplicated by gender politics, postmodernism, or institutional critique.’³⁷ Negra’s statement here about post-feminism is useful to the thesis but not entirely applicable to popular culture in Taiwan. The thesis argues that feminism still has significant influence within Taiwanese society via popular culture such as television drama and film. The television and film case studies in the thesis indicate the influence of feminism on the media in Taiwan.

Women in contemporary Taiwanese society have become more independent financially when compared to women a decade ago. Educational attainment and financial independence are the major factors that enable Taiwanese women to develop independent thinking. Marriage, divorce and motherhood have become a choice rather than a responsibility for Taiwanese women. I argue in this thesis that social change in Taiwanese society has shifted the typical representation of women in the media in Taiwan. Women’s economic and cultural position in Taiwan has been reflected in the media; representations have increasingly centred on the figure of the successful working woman. On the other hand, the representation of successful career women has reflected the elevation of the status of women in Taiwan and the increasingly successful careers held by women in society; for instance, the representation of a successful career woman in the idol drama *My Queen*. Nonetheless the films and television shows that I analyse portray the difficulties experienced by such women. In relation to my argument, I further explore how representations of women interlink with feminist discussions of the power and function of these narrative structures in constructing female identities.

³⁶ Diane Negra, *What a Girl Wants?*, p. 2.

³⁷ Ibid.

I employ a combined textual analysis of historical, cultural, political and social contexts, authorship, and cinematic characteristics including cinematography and music. In order to examine the development of female status in Taiwan, each chapter moves from a literature review to a series of case studies. The main body of the thesis is taken up with the analysis of the representation of women in selected Taiwanese films and television dramas. The thesis draws on an examination of essential critical sources from the development of feminism in Taiwan to female authorship. I show that the development of feminism and new feminism in Taiwan are closely connected with the history, culture, politics and society of the country. For instance, I outline the persisting historical influence of Chinese Confucianism on the status of women in Taiwan. By way of contrast I point to the impact of Hsiu-Lien Lu's feminist doctrine on policy reformation with regards to gender equality in terms of education and employment attainment in Taiwan. Discourses emerging from both a Confucian tradition and a more recent feminist challenge to patriarchy are evident in the texts I analyse in this thesis.

This thesis contends that an understanding of the political and the social background to the development of feminism and new feminism in Taiwan is required to effectively analyse the visual representation of women in media forms such as the idol dramas and films that form my case studies. As I have mentioned, the development of women's status in Taiwan is closely related to the history, culture, politics and society of the country. The influence of western feminist doctrine occupies an important position in the representation of women in the media of Taiwan. In order to effectively analyse the transformation of the representation of women and the media in Taiwan from 1985 to 2013, I therefore employ textual analysis of historical, cultural, political and social contexts. The narrative structure of the idol drama and film case studies are essential because of their inspiring narration of the story of women; for

instance, the depiction of the life of the female protagonist who chooses to defy gender rules within the patriarchy in the idol drama *My Queen*. The inspiring narrations of the life of women, which interlink with the transformation of the representation of women from housewife to career woman in Taiwanese idol dramas and films, are worthy of further analysis. For this reason, I chose to examine the storytelling structure of selected film and idol drama case studies. Although it would be fascinating to consider the critical reception of idol dramas and films, this methodology is not employed in the thesis, partly for reasons of space but also because I am primarily interested in examining the transformation of women's roles within the texts that I consider, mapping this transformation onto changing social attitudes and cultural norms.

Chapter One provides historical background on the influence of Japanese 'male chauvinism' and Chinese Confucianism on women in Taiwan. My methodology for this chapter involves historical and cultural analysis. The chapter starts with an examination of women's subordination to men within Chinese and Japanese cultures. It then explores the effects of Japanese 'male chauvinism' and Chinese Confucianism on women. It focuses in particular on the doctrines of Confucius that subjected women to the Three Obediences and Four Virtues. The Three Obediences command a woman to obey her father before marriage, obey her husband during marriage and obey her son in widowhood. The Four Virtues are fidelity, physical charm, speech etiquette and needlework skills. These traditions created the custom of Three Bondages for women: Bound Heads, Bound Waists and Bound Feet in order to restrict the intellectual, sexual and physical freedom of women.³⁸

The main critical sources on Taiwanese women's history in this chapter examine the development of the status of women from the late Qing dynasty to the Japanese colonial era, the post-war period and then in contemporary Taiwan. *The Life*

³⁸ Lu, *New Feminism*, p.296.

of *Taiwanese Women during the Qing Dynasty*, written by Yi-Wen Zhuo, provides the background to Taiwanese women's lives during the late Qing dynasty.³⁹ It further examines the development of women's education during the late Qing dynasty. *The Emancipation Movement of Taiwanese Women during the Japanese Colonial Era*, written by Cui Yang, provides an understanding of the life of Taiwanese women during the Japanese colonial era.⁴⁰ It further examines the development of women's status in terms of education and employment during the Japanese colonial era. My research also draws on *The Footpath of Women II: the Cultural Landmark of Taiwanese Women*, edited by Xiu-Hui Chen, which provides an introduction to the lives of several Taiwanese women from the late Qing dynasty to the Japanese colonial era and then in contemporary Taiwan.⁴¹ The work *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, written by Doris T. Chang is significant to the chapter; it provides an introduction on the development of women's movement in Taiwan from the Japanese colonial era to the post-war period and then contemporary Taiwan.⁴² These histories indicate that the emancipation of the foot-binding policy during the Japanese colonial era had a significant impact on the increase in physical freedom and educational attainment of Taiwanese women.

In the later part of the chapter, I examine Hsiu-Lien Lu's substantial feminist doctrine in the latest edition of her *New Feminism* and its impact on the improvement of female status as well as the transformation of women's representation in the media in Taiwan since the 1980s.⁴³ The final section of the chapter centres on the discussion of foot-binding as violence against women and its effect on women in Taiwan prior to

³⁹ Yi-Wen Zhuo, *The Life of Taiwanese Women during the Qing Dynasty* (Taipei: Independent Newspaper Publication, 1993).

⁴⁰ Cui Yang, *The Emancipation Movement of Taiwanese Women during the Japanese Colonial Era* (Taipei: China Times Publishing, 1993).

⁴¹ Xiu-Hui Chen, ed., *The Footpath of Women II: the Cultural Landmark of Taiwanese Women* (Taipei: Grass Roots Publishing, 2008).

⁴² Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*.

⁴³ Lu, *New Feminism*.

the anti-foot-binding campaign. It then examines the emergence of feminism and new feminism through an examination of political and social contexts from 1970 to the 2000s. The main critical sources on feminism and new feminism are the feminist doctrine of Hsiu-Lien Lu in *New Feminism* and research on the development of feminism in Taiwan: *The History of Taiwanese Women's Emancipation* by Ya-Ge Wang⁴⁴ and *Women's Movement and the Achievement of Feminism in Contemporary Taiwan* by Hui-Tan Chang.⁴⁵ The former scholarly text explores the development of feminism in Taiwan in relation to several women's organisations. The latter scholarly text provides an examination of Hsiu-Lien Lu's feminist doctrine in relation to several women's organisations in Taiwan. The development of new feminism in Taiwan is closely related to feminism and post-feminism in western culture. The feminist leader Hsiu-Lien Lu states in her feminist doctrine that she was truly inspired by Geraldine Ferraro when she watched her campaign TV debate.⁴⁶ In spite of the cultural differences between Taiwan and western countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, it is useful to refer to western post-feminism theory in relation to the development of new feminism in Taiwan.

The thesis examines post-feminist theory through the examination of the significant critical sources in *Interrogating Post-Feminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*, edited by Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra. Tasker and Negra stress that 'postfeminist culture emphasizes educational and professional opportunities for women and girls; freedom of choice with respect to work, domesticity, and parenting; and physical and particularly sexual empowerment.'⁴⁷ This thesis also refers to Suzanne Leonard's analysis of twenty-first century American cinema. Leonard states

⁴⁴ Ya-Ge Wang, *The History of Taiwanese Women's Emancipation* (Taipei: Chu Liu Publishing, 1999).

⁴⁵ Hui-Tan Chang, *Women's Movement and the Achievement of Feminism in Contemporary Taiwan* (Taichung: Press Store, 2006).

⁴⁶ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 295.

⁴⁷ Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, eds, *Interrogating Post-Feminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Cultures* (London: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 2.

that women in the previous generation had to depend on men due to their lack of financial independence.⁴⁸ On the contrary, the modern woman is capable of supporting herself and choosing her partner. She may marry for true love rather than for economic support.⁴⁹ Leonard's analysis of the figure of working women in American cinema is useful to the discussion of the representation of working women in the idol drama *Miss Rose*. As mentioned earlier in this section, the main body of this thesis focuses on an analysis of the representation of women in selected Taiwanese films and television dramas. Chapter one provides an understanding of the development of feminism in Taiwan. The rest of the chapters examine changes in the representation of women in the media as well as changes in Taiwanese cinema through an analysis of women in Taiwanese cinema and popular idol dramas before and after 1980.

Chapter Two provides an analysis of the influence of feminism and new feminism on Taiwanese cinema since the 1980s. It begins with a brief introduction to the New Taiwan Cinema which began in 1982. It then examines the representation of women in three films: *Osmanthus Alley* (Kun Hao Chen, 1988), *Kuei-mei, A Woman* (Yi Chang, 1985), and *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Pei Hua Wang, 2012). I employ textual analysis of narrative structure and character, visual representation, and signifiers in the films. I examine the changes in women's representation by analysing the development of women's role from housewife to career woman in these films ranging from 1985 to 2012. The questions that frame my analysis are: What influence does Japanese 'male chauvinism' and Chinese Confucianism have on the representation of women in Taiwanese cinema since 1980? What is the relation between the women's movement and women's representation in Taiwanese cinema in the 1980s? How has the representation of women changed under the influence of

⁴⁸ Suzanne Leonard, "I Hate My Job, I Hate Everybody Here", in Tasker and Negra, eds, *Interrogating Post-Feminism*, p. 100.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

feminism and new feminism?

The second section examines the representation of women within the patriarchy in conventional Taiwanese society through an analysis of the adaptation *Osmanthus Alley*. It analyses the cultural contexts of foot-binding from a contemporary perspective while discussing its effect on women in Taiwan a century ago. The third section examines the representation of woman in the 1980s through discussion of *Kuei-mei, A Woman*. This section analyses women's conventional role as housewife within the patriarchy through an analysis of the characteristics of the female protagonist. The film presents the female protagonist as a strong woman who endures her husband's adultery, domestic violence and gambling. The last section examines the promotion of female status in contemporary society through an examination of *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right*. It examines the influence of new feminism on women's representation by analysing the process of the female protagonist's self-actualisation. The section then examines the current social phenomena of a higher divorce rate and remarriage. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the wedding as a significant element in the film through an examination of cinematography and music.

The main critical sources used in this chapter centre on the examination of women's representation in Taiwanese cinema. Due to the lack of critical sources on the representation of women in Taiwanese cinema, the thesis refers to critical sources on women in East Asian cinema more broadly. The essential scholarly work of Youna Kim in *Women and the Media in Asia* is useful to the thesis. Kim examines the representation of women in the media in East Asian countries such as Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Singapore. In spite of the fact that women in most East Asian countries have higher education and broader choices in the twenty-first century, Kim argues that they are still constrained by a patriarchal culture. The patriarchal culture continues to influence women's education and work transition, and to create new 'inequality,

insecurity and a precarious self.’⁵⁰ Kim further argues that the representation of women in the media in some East Asian countries has transformed from the traditional image of the ‘good wife and wise mother’ to the ‘career women working and playing for pleasure’.⁵¹ Taiwanese cinema is central to the research project; the chapter draws from the following critical sources on the development of Taiwanese cinema: *Taiwan Cinema: A Contested Nation on Screen* by Guo-Juin Hong⁵² and *New Taiwan Cinema* by Xiong-Ping Jiao.⁵³ These sources provide a thorough analysis of the historiography of Taiwanese cinema. The former source focuses on the development of Taiwanese cinema before the 1980s, while the latter source focuses on the development of New Taiwanese cinema since the 1980s. In spite of the fact that both sources provide thorough examinations of the development of Taiwanese cinema, their focus is on films written and directed by men, rather than by women. The films of female directors have been neglected in Taiwanese cinema history. I therefore stress the importance of female directors and their films in the research project, which is the essence of the final chapter.

Chapter Three examines a diverse range of representations of women in Taiwanese idol dramas through the examination of three popular idol dramas: *Miss Rose* (Xi Sheng Chen, 2012), *The Fierce Wife* (Fun Jun Xu, 2010) and *My Queen* (Qing Zhen Lin, 2009). The chapter begins with an introduction of idol drama in relation to celebrity studies. It then focuses on the examination of above idol dramas. The questions that form my analysis in this chapter are: What is the relation of new feminism to the representation of women in contemporary Taiwanese idol dramas? What are the traditional expectations of women within the patriarchy that affect the

⁵⁰ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, pp. 3-4.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 18.

⁵² Guo-Juin Hong, *Taiwan Cinema: A Contested Nation on Screen* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁵³ Xiong-Ping Jiao, *New Taiwan Cinema* (Taipei: China Times Publishing, 1988).

representation of women in contemporary idol dramas? What are the substantial impacts of Hsiu-Lien Lu's feminist doctrine on society as well as on the representation of women in the media? In Chapter Three, I employ textual analysis, examining the operation of elements of plot, characterisation and narrative structure in the idol dramas that depict different women's lives and issues.

The first section of the chapter explores conflicts between career and marriage for female protagonists in the idol drama in relation to the traditional expectations of women within patriarchy. The chapter further examines the operation of cinematic signifiers as well as elements of plot, characterisation, narrative structure and music in selected idol drama case studies. Despite the cultural differences between Taiwan and western countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, it is useful to refer to critical sources that examine the representation of women in British and American television dramas. The central critical sources on the subject of women and soap opera are the significant work of Tania Modleski in *Loving with a Vengeance*⁵⁴ and the work of Christine Gledhill in *Home Is Where the Heart Is*.⁵⁵ The work *TV China*, edited by Ying Zhu and Chris Berry provides a useful analysis on the idol drama in Taiwan.⁵⁶ The book *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, edited by Su Holmes and Sean Redmond, brings an important discussion in relation to celebrity studies.⁵⁷ The elements of plot and narrative structure are significant in Taiwanese television dramas and films. This chapter examines the subject of women and romance through the essential work of Janice Radway in *Reading the Romance*.⁵⁸ In idol drama

⁵⁴ Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* (New York: Routledge, 1982).

⁵⁵ Christine Gledhill, ed., *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Women's Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1987).

⁵⁶ Ying Zhu and Chris Berry, eds, *TV China: A Reader on New Media* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

⁵⁷ Su Holmes and Sean Redmond, eds, *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader* (California: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2007).

⁵⁸ Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

romance is the road that female protagonists need to walk before they reach the marriage realm. The chapter examines the romance structure in the idol drama *Miss Rose*. The heroine in the idol drama undergoes a transformation process, as in Radway's thirteen logically related functions in romance.⁵⁹ The third section explores the social issue of divorce in relation to the representation of a divorcee in *The Fierce Wife*. It provides divorce statistics as an indication of the current higher divorce rate in Taiwan. The chapter concludes with the representation of a career woman in *My Queen*, exploring the empowerment of the female protagonist who defies traditional expectations of women to get married. The last section of the chapter provides statistics on women's workforce participation and the declining marriage rate in order to indicate current social phenomena: delayed marriage, non-marriage and cohabitation.

Chapter Four provides a discussion of female authorship and films directed by women through an examination of three Sylvia Chang films: *Tonight Nobody Goes Home* (1995), *Siao Yu* (1995) and *20, 30, 40* (2004). The importance of female authorship as a component of changing portrayals of women is the essence of the final chapter. I employ textual analysis on cinematic signifiers and elements of plot, characterisation, and the narrative structure of the films. I further examine cinematic characteristics including cinematography as well as music in the films. The questions that frame my analysis are: Are women represented differently in films made by women? If so, in what ways? To what extent are the feminist discourses explored in previous chapters evident in Chang's films? Does Sylvia Chang, for example, empower female characters in the films? The chapter starts with a discussion of the growing number of female directors in Taiwan between 2000 and 2010. It then examines the diverse representation of women in films directed by women in relation

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.134.

to the process of self-discovery and self-realisation.

The second section concentrates on the discussion of women's self-discovery and growing independence in *Tonight Nobody Goes Home*. The third section examines the link between women and immigration in *Siao Yu*. The last section analyses the diverse representations of women from different nationalities and ages in *20, 30, 40*. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the significant progress of women's cinema and female directors in Taiwan. The central critical sources on female authorship are western feminist auteur theory (*Feminist Auteurs: Reading Women's Films*, Geetha Ramanathan)⁶⁰ and critical analyses of the works of Taiwanese female directors (*The Research of Taiwanese Female Directors, 2000-2010*, Ming-Zhu Chen & Yun-Qi Huang).⁶¹ The former scholarship examines a rich and diverse body of work that has received insufficient attention in both film studies and feminist theory on film. The latter scholarship provides an examination of the development of women's cinema in Taiwan and the works of Taiwanese women filmmakers. *The Filming Diary of The Fierce Wife* written by its director, Pei-Hua Wang, is a useful resource for the thesis. In spite of the fact that this source is not a critical or academic source, it provides contextual understanding of female authorship and women's representation in Taiwanese cinema from the female director's point of view.

In summary, I argue hereafter that the progress of development for feminism and new feminism in Taiwan has been arduous due to the continuing cultural influence of Japanese 'male chauvinism' and Chinese Confucianism. With the determination of numerous feminist activists, however, the status of women in Taiwan has made significant progress over the past decade. The women's movement in the early 1970s was the starting point for the development of women's status in Taiwan. Feminism and

⁶⁰ Geetha Ramanathan, *Feminist Auteurs: Reading Women's Films* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006).

⁶¹ Ming-Zhu Chen and Yun-Qi Huang, eds, *The Research of Taiwanese Female Directors, 2000-2010* (Taipei: Showwe Information, 2010).

post-feminism from western culture further changed the status of women in the country. The development of women's status in society has reflected the transformation of women's representations in the media in Taiwan. Research on women's representation in the media in Taiwan is developing; however, the resources on women's cinema and Taiwanese women directors are limited. There are MA and Doctoral theses as well as scholarly works in Taiwan which examine the representation of women in Taiwanese idol dramas, Taiwanese cinema and the works of Taiwanese female directors. Nevertheless, this research focuses mainly on each individual field rather than combining them together as I seek to do here. The development of female status is significant in the media in Taiwan. Television drama, film and female directors are closely connected with the representation of women in the media of Taiwan, therefore I combine the three fields together in my thesis. I argue that gender equality has not yet been fully achieved in Taiwanese society. This section has provided a general introduction to the research project. It has introduced the outline of the thesis, my research questions and methodologies. The following chapter will introduce women's history and the development of feminism in Taiwan.

Chapter 1

Cultural Policy and National Identity

1.1. Introduction: Women in Taiwanese History

The development of women's status in Taiwan has been an enduring and challenging journey. I argue in this thesis that this journey is shaped by two primary influences relating to Taiwanese history, on one hand the historical legacy of Chinese Confucianism, on the other the values associated with Japanese patriarchal culture. Rosalind Coward says of the term patriarchy:

Sometimes it is used casually, interchangeably with 'sexism', a reminder that there is one sex which dominates, another which is subjected. But patriarchy has also been advanced as a theoretical explanation for the subordination of women. It describes the political and social control of women by men.⁶²

The term patriarchy in this thesis refers to the male domination of women in terms of political and social control. The definitions of the terms traditional and modern women in this thesis refer to the historical and cultural contexts that frame Taiwanese identities and gender roles. The term traditional women in this thesis refers to those Taiwanese women who follow a Confucian ideology. This system of belief does not recognise the importance of education, financial independence, or freedom of marriage choice for women. Traditional women may choose to stay in marriage even though their husbands are unfaithful or uncaring. On the contrary, the term modern women refers to Taiwanese women who have been influenced by elements of western feminism or

⁶² Rosalind Coward, *Patriarchal Precedents: Sexuality and Social Relations* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 7.

Hsiu-Lien Lu's new feminism. Modern women advocate the importance of education, financial independence and freedom of marriage choice for women. They may choose to remain single if they do not want to get married. Furthermore, they may choose to divorce if they wish to end a marriage.

This chapter provides an overview of the historical development of Taiwanese women's status in education, employment, marriage and family under the rule of China and then Japan. The chapter begins with an outline of the historical background of Taiwan under the rule of Chinese and then Japanese authority. The chapter first introduces the constraints on Taiwanese women in the late Qing dynasty, before moving to introduce changes relating to women's lives during the Japanese colonial era. The chapter further examines the impact of Chinese and Japanese culture on women in Taiwan. For instance, it examines the influence of foot-binding as a custom during the Qing dynasty and the anti-foot-binding policy toward Taiwanese women initiated under Japanese rule. The later part of the chapter introduces the feminist doctrine of Hsiu-Lien Lu, and the emergence of feminism and new feminism in Taiwan. It further discusses the impact of Hsiu-Lien Lu's new feminism on society and the establishment of several women's organisations.

Taiwan was under the rule of the Qing dynasty for two hundred and twelve years from 1683 to 1895. Taiwan was ceded to the Japanese Empire by the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895 when China lost the First Sino-Japanese war. The Japanese Empire ruled over Taiwan for fifty years from 1895 to 1945. Over this period of time the status of Taiwanese women in terms of education, employment and marriage gradually developed, responding to social, economic and cultural factors. Taiwanese women were constrained within patriarchal Chinese culture in the late Qing dynasty. Women were unable to receive education due to patriarchal restraints on women's education and mobility. Nevertheless, the status of Taiwanese women gradually

developed after the introduction of the anti-foot-binding policy and the education reformation policy during the Japanese colonial era. More Taiwanese women were able to receive education with the new education requirement policy implemented during this time. The emergence of the earliest Taiwanese women's movement was in the 1920s during the Japanese colonial era. This first phase of the Taiwanese women's movement collapsed in the early 1930s during an authoritarian period, re-emerging in the early 1970s and then continuing in the twentieth century.⁶³ Women's status in Taiwan further developed as a result of the feminist movement in the 1970s. In spite of this thesis' focus on the representation of women and the media in Taiwan from 1985 to 2013, the thesis begins with an overview of the historical background to women's status in the late Qing dynasty and the Japanese colonial era. It is essential for the thesis to provide the historical background on women's status in the late Qing dynasty and the Japanese colonial era, in order to indicate the strong influence of Chinese and Japanese culture on the development of women's status in Taiwan.

1.2. The Influence of Chinese and Japanese Culture in Taiwan

Education for Taiwanese Women during the Qing Dynasty and the Japanese Colonial Era

The status of women in Taiwan was constrained within patriarchal Chinese culture during the late Qing dynasty. Foot-binding was a traditional custom imported from mainland China during the Qing dynasty which restricted the physical freedom of women. The space of women was limited to the domestic arena due to patriarchal

⁶³ Doris T. Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 1.

restraints on women's mobility. Women were unable to attend schools or participate in the same social activities as men did due to a lack of physical freedom. Changing patterns around the position of women in the society stem from a number of factors, for instance, religion. Christian activism had a significant impact on the development of women's education in Taiwan in the late Qing dynasty. Historian Yi-Wen Zhuo points out the significance of Dr. George Leslie Mackay (1844-1901), also known as Reverend Mackay, the first foreign missionary from the Canadian Presbyterian Church in Taiwan in 1871. Mackay believed in the importance of education for women, therefore he established the women's school in Tamsui in 1884 in order to let more Taiwanese women believe in Christianity.⁶⁴

Yi-Wen Zhuo acknowledges that, in spite of the fact that the women's school did not charge tuition fees, and further provided free accommodation and meals with transportation fees for female students, there were only forty-five female students registered when the school opened.⁶⁵ Yi-Wen Zhuo explains that the low registration number of female students was due to traditional expectations of women under the influence of Chinese Confucianism. Parents did not expect to let their daughters receive education during the late Qing dynasty. The women's school changed its age requirement to include women from different ages and backgrounds. The enrolment of female students increased with the new rules. The highest enrolment record of the school was eighty female students in one academic year.⁶⁶ Yi-Wen Zhuo explains that the main courses of the school were reading, writing, singing, Bible studies, Geography and History. In order to teach students Bible studies, one of the reading courses provided Chinese writing and Roman spelling lessons. Female students could

⁶⁴ Yi-Wen Zhuo, *The Life of Taiwanese Women during the Qing Dynasty* (Taipei: Independent Newspaper Publication, 1993), p. 99.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 100.

participate in social activities and speeches organised by the nearby college, Tamsui Oxford College (now Aletheia University).⁶⁷ Yi-Wen Zhuo states that Mackay's motivation lay in training Taiwanese women to undertake missionary work, potentially lowering church expenses, and reducing cultural and language barriers. His establishment of the women's school produced a number of female missionaries in Taiwan. Although the women's school was forced to close after Mackay passed away in 1901, the teachers and missionaries of the school continued his passion to develop women's education and missionary work in Taiwan.⁶⁸

Yi-Wen Zhuo indicates another early example of the impact of religion on the education of Taiwanese women in the late Qing dynasty was a missionary from the Presbyterian Church of England in 1864.⁶⁹ Reverend Hugh Ritchie and his wife began their mission in the southern part of Taiwan. Traditional expectations of Chinese culture believed that a 'Woman without talent is a virtue.' Reverend Ritchie and his wife aimed to transform traditional expectations of women in Taiwan with education (the establishment of women's schools) a priority. Although Ritchie passed away before the opening of the women's school, his wife continued his ambition until her return to the United Kingdom due to ill health. Construction continued with the assistance of two female missionaries, Joan Stuart and Annie E. Bntler. Despite numerous obstacles, the women's school of the English Presbyterian Church was established in 1887.⁷⁰ Yi-Wen Zhuo reports that similar to the women in the north part of Taiwan, women in the south part of Taiwan were confined within the domestic space. It was challenging to invite Taiwanese women to go to school due to traditional expectations of women in society. The only entry requirement for female students was

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 101.

to unbind their feet. The women's school charged low fees for food expenses per year. The school's age requirement was for girls over the age of eight. Despite the above offers, there were only eighteen students enrolled when the school opened.⁷¹ Yi-Wen Zhuo further explains that the main reason for the low enrolment rate in 1887 was because of the school's entry requirement of asking women to unbind their feet.

The women's school designed a wide variety of courses for their students. The main courses of the school included Chinese, Mathematics, Geometry, Geography, Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Household Sanitation, Parenting and Physical Education.⁷² Yi-Wen Zhuo states that the women's school had strict principles for female students; for instance, all female students were required to live in school accommodation, and they could not have conversations with men, including their brothers. All female students in the school were required to do household chores, cooking and learn needlework. Yi-Wen Zhuo argues: 'The above principles indicate that the purpose of the women's school was not only to provide education for female students, but also to train female students to become obedient wives and good mothers.'⁷³

The main educational institutions during the Qing dynasty in Taiwan were *Si Shu* (meaning private school) or *Shu Fang* (meaning study) which were private educational institutions in the city or village. Tutors taught pupils at their homes or in places which were organised by local residents. Yi-Wen Zhuo indicates that there were only sixty-five female students in Taiwan enrolled at the private educational institution *Shu Fang* in 1898. The total enrolment rate of female students was only two percent of the total student enrolment at *Shu Fang* in 1898.⁷⁴ She argues:

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 101.

⁷² Ibid., p. 102.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Zhuo, *The Life of Taiwanese Women during the Qing Dynasty*, pp. 104-105.

The statistic indicates the disrespect of women's education during the Qing dynasty. Furthermore, the female students who were able to receive education at *Shu Fang* were from a higher social class. The education they received at the institution was only basic Chinese reading and writing.⁷⁵

Besides the private educational institutions of *Si Shu* and *Shu Fang*, home education was one of the opportunities for women to receive education. Under the influence of Chinese Confucianism, families in Taiwan, especially families from higher social classes, taught their daughters reading and traditional customs for women, for instance the Three Obediences and Four Virtues.

Only a minority of women from the higher social classes had access to education during the Qing dynasty in Taiwan; furthermore, the purpose of their education was to train them to become obedient wives and good mothers. The majority of Taiwanese women during the Qing dynasty were illiterate, and lacked physical freedom and financial independence. Opportunities for Taiwanese women from lower class families to receive education were lower than for women from the higher classes. Even though they had the opportunity to receive education, they would need to discontinue their studies at the age of twelve or thirteen in order to assist their families in household chores.⁷⁶ The establishment of the women's school from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan in the late Qing dynasty was a milestone for women's education. Yi-Wen Zhuo acknowledges: 'The establishment of the women's school elevated the social status of minority Taiwanese women, which was significant in conventional society in the late Qing dynasty.'⁷⁷ In spite of the attempts by the Presbyterian Church and Presbyterian scholars at the women's schools to transform traditional customs

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 104.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 102-104.

toward women and to develop women's education in Taiwan, the development of female status in Taiwan in the late Qing dynasty was limited. It was difficult for the Presbyterian Church and Presbyterian scholars to transform Taiwanese society, which was under the strong influence of Chinese Confucianism. The influence of Confucianism, the lack of physical freedom for women and the demands for female labour in the domestic space are the major reasons that explain the limited development of female status in the late Qing dynasty.

The development of women's education progressed more rapidly during the Japanese colonial era. As I have shown above, the role of Taiwanese women was constrained by patriarchy during the Qing dynasty. The traditional custom of foot-binding serves as an example of the physical repression of women during the Qing dynasty. The Empire of Japan ruled over Taiwan from 1895 to 1945, a period in which the status of Taiwanese women underwent a significant transformation. Reform of the educational system in Taiwan was central to this transformation, with Taiwanese women from different ages and backgrounds encouraged to accept education in order to contribute their skills to their families and to wider society. Similar to the Presbyterian schools mentioned earlier, one of the school entry requirements established by the Japanese government for Taiwanese women was to unbind their feet. The historical record from the Institute of Taiwan History in Academia Sinica indicates that the traditional custom of foot-binding was considered as an 'abuse' and a 'disability' caused by human beings from the point of view of the Japanese government. The Governor-General of Taiwan wanted to establish a new status for women in Taiwan. For this reason, the Governor-General of Taiwan arranged for Taiwanese gentry to visit Japan from 1896 onwards, in order to introduce a different impression of

women to them.⁷⁸

The historical work indicates that Taiwanese gentry were impressed to see the achievements of Japanese women in the workplace and their ability to assist their husbands in business.⁷⁹ From the perspective of the Taiwanese gentry, foot-binding as a custom was the key obstacle to the advancement of Taiwanese women. Foot-binding restricted the physical freedom and the opportunity to receive education for Taiwanese women.⁸⁰ As a result, the Taiwanese gentry started reforming the status of Taiwanese women, for instance, opposing foot-binding and supporting educational attainment for women. According to the historical record one member of the Taiwanese gentry, Chun-Sheng Lee, encouraged the female members of his family to unbind their feet, and he also sent his granddaughter to school.⁸¹ Chun-Sheng Lee was not the only member of the Taiwanese gentry who started advocating the transformation of Taiwanese women during the Japanese colonial era. In 1900 an 'Anti-Foot-Binding' campaign was established by Dr. Yu-Jie Huang from Dadaocheng in Taipei. He organised anti-foot-binding activities and speeches to the middle and higher social classes of Taiwanese society. The Japanese government officially established an anti-foot-binding policy under the requirement of the Taiwanese gentry in April 1915.⁸² According to official statistics, the percentage of women with foot-binding had decreased to 17.36%, while the percentage of girls with foot-binding decreased to 0.30% in 1915.⁸³ Doris T. Chang states that the anti-foot-binding campaign, along with the government's efforts to abolish foot-binding and encourage Taiwanese parents to send their daughters to school, demonstrated that the Japanese administrators in

⁷⁸ Xue-Ji Xu, ed., *Her History in Taiwan* (Taipei: Institution of Taiwan History Academia Sinica, 2011), p.8.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

colonial Taiwan were in many ways more progressive than the Taiwanese population.⁸⁴ In addition to the anti-foot-binding policy, Japanese Laws also granted Taiwanese women the right to divorce and remarry.⁸⁵ The anti-foot-binding policy signified the emancipation of physical freedom for Taiwanese women. The younger generations of Taiwanese women were able to attend school to receive education without physical restriction.

The Governor-General of Taiwan stressed the importance of women's education for both family and society. Official policy was to require women to accept education. A number of obstacles were encountered in reforming education policy for women in Taiwan along these lines. For instance, the lack of financial support and resources, and traditional expectations toward women from society and family were the obstacles that lowered the educational attainment rate of women in Taiwan. Furthermore, daughters were required to assist with household chores and therefore their opportunities to receive school education were limited. The Governor-General of Taiwan organised activities, exhibitions, interviews and increased the number of female teachers, in order to advocate the importance of women's education to the Taiwanese. Traditional views of women's education were gradually transformed in Taiwan. The historical record from Academia Sinica indicates that the educational attainment rate of Taiwanese girls from 1919 to 1943 increased from 7.36% to 60.85%.⁸⁶ As with the history of missionary education mentioned above, education during the Japanese colonial era was closely linked to colonialism. The education of Taiwanese women under Japanese rule focused on Japanese language learning, virtue, and the development of Japanese characteristics. The education of Taiwanese women essentially focused on household management in order to train the Taiwanese woman

⁸⁴ Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, p. 25.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Xu, ed., *Her History in Taiwan*, p. 10.

to become an elegant, gentle and frugal ‘good wife and wise mother’.⁸⁷ As Doris T. Chang points out, ‘The goal of colonial education was to provide Taiwanese girls with basic skills and knowledge to be competent workers in labor-intensive industries and to socialize them to be good wives and wise mothers capable of educating the young’.⁸⁸ In 1919, several women’s schools were established and the education available for women extended from elementary to junior and high schools.

The education of Taiwanese women further developed in 1922 when teachers’ colleges and vocational schools for women were established. The programmes offered by the vocational schools were Agriculture, Business, and Family and Consumer Science. Taiwanese women with strong ambitions from the higher social classes could also study in Japan. Religion and personal interest were the main incentives for Taiwanese women to study abroad. Tailor school, music school and English school were the most popular choices for Taiwanese female students. Academia Sinica’s historical record indicates that Xiao Wu was encouraged by her father and the church when she decided to study abroad. Xiao Wu was a pioneer Taiwanese female student who studied abroad at Meiji Women’s School in Japan in 1898.⁸⁹ Higher education was available for Taiwanese women; Medicine, Family and Consumer Science, Music, and Arts were the most popular subjects for Taiwanese women. As a result of increased educational attainment, Taiwanese women during the Japanese colonial era became more independent. They were different from the previous generation of Taiwanese women in the Qing dynasty. The Japanese government stressed the importance of women’s education in Taiwan in order to encourage Taiwanese women to contribute their skills and participate in employment. The following section turns to the issue of women in the workplace and the developing patterns of female employment.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

⁸⁸ Chang, *Women’s Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, p. 30.

⁸⁹ Xu, ed., *Her History in Taiwan*, p. 11.

Employment for Taiwanese Women during the Qing Dynasty and the Japanese Colonial Era

As discussed in the previous section, Taiwanese women were restricted to the domestic space during the Qing dynasty largely as result of traditional expectations that a woman's chief responsibility was to be an obedient wife and a good mother. In spite of the limited physical freedom available to Taiwanese women within the patriarchy, some women nonetheless had the opportunity to participate in either social activities, such as the Dragon Boat Festival celebration, or paid work. Yi-Wen Zhou reports that the most common job available for Taiwanese women during the Qing dynasty was needlework.⁹⁰ As we have seen, skills in needlework formed one of the virtues for women under the influence of Chinese Confucianism. Dorothy Ko states:

“Work diligently with your hands” is the charge that Confucian ethics issued to all women, be they young or old, rich or poor. The ideal woman was known not for her beauty or appearance but for her “womanly work” (*nügong*), which could mean mending a sock, sewing a garment, spinning thread, weaving cotton cloth, feeding silk worms, reeling cocoons, embroidering, and shoe-making.⁹¹

Taiwanese women worked at home doing needlework in order to earn some money to support their families. One of the case studies in this thesis concerns the representation of women in the late Qing dynasty (Chapter Two). Here the female protagonist of *Osmanthus Alley* (Kun Hao Chen, 1988), Ti-Home Gao (Xiao-Fen Lu), is portrayed as a working woman who undertakes needlework for a wealthy family. The lady from the wealthy family is impressed by Ti-Home's needlework skill and introduces her to her

⁹⁰ Zhuo, *The Life of Taiwanese Women during the Qing Dynasty*, p. 83.

⁹¹ Dorothy Ko, *Every Step A Lotus Shoes for Bound Feet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 79.

grandson. Ti-Home marries the wealthy lady's grandson later in the film. Ti-Home's needlework skill enables her to marry into a higher social class.

Needlework also signified a woman's value, as Dorothy Ko stresses: 'Textile work, in all shapes and colors, signaled a woman's moral and economic worth. This is especially true for the lotus shoes she made and wore. "Men plough; women weave" describes the division of labor in an ideal Confucian society.'⁹² Besides needlework, another major industry for Taiwanese women in the late Qing dynasty and under Japanese colonial rule was the tea industry. The northern part of Taiwan has been well-known for its tea industry since the late Qing dynasty, and the industry provided employment opportunities for Taiwanese women. Hui-Wen Chen states: 'From a gender perspective, the tea industry was the earliest and most influential industry which a significant number of Taiwanese women had participated in.'⁹³ The early tea industry required a significant number of workers to select tea leaves in order to produce tea. Hui-Wen Chen states: 'To select fine stalks of tea leaves was a time consuming job which required clear vision and patience. This time consuming job was considered to be suitable for women.'⁹⁴ For this reason, a significant number of Taiwanese women between the ages of fourteen and eighteen who lived in suburban areas of Taipei moved to Dadaocheng (spelled Twatutia before Japanese rule) in Taipei where most of the tea shops were located. The peak season to produce tea in Taiwan was from early March to the end of October. Hui-Wen Chen describes the female workers as migrant birds who moved to Dadaocheng during the tea producing season then returned to their hometowns in winter.⁹⁵

Taiwanese women at the tea factory had to migrate in order to work. The tea

⁹² Ibid., p. 79.

⁹³ Hui-Wen Chen, "The Aroma of Women in Formosa Tea", in Xiu-Hui Chen, ed., *The Footpath of Women II: The Cultural Landmark of Taiwanese Women* (Taipei: Grass Roots Publishing Co, 2008), p. 20.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 27.

industry of Taiwan during the late Qing dynasty and during Japanese colonial rule not only provided working opportunities for Taiwanese women, it enabled women to experience independence and physical freedom. Hui-Wen Chen acknowledges that women in traditional Taiwanese society had low status, as they did not have the inheritance of family fortune or property. Families would allow their daughters to work if they encountered financial difficulty. With the development of industry and the need for female labour, the tea industry had become the first industry in which women could experience the freedom of migration and work.⁹⁶ The tea industry was an influential industry for some Taiwanese women to gain their financial independence and physical freedom within the patriarchal society because they were able to move away from home to live independently. Hui-Wen Chen points out the appearance of female workers at the tea factory signified the development of women's financial independence. Women left the repressive patriarchal family to live in the city, where they could experience freedom and independence.⁹⁷ The employment opportunities available to Taiwanese women further increased during the Japanese colonial era. As these examples show, the changing economic situation significantly impacted on the opportunities for women to engage in paid work.

The status of Taiwanese women gradually developed after the anti-foot-binding policy and increased educational attainment during the Japanese colonial era. The Academia Sinica's historical record indicates that the roles of Taiwanese women became more diverse after 1920 when a modern infrastructure was constructed by the Japanese government. The Japanese government encouraged Taiwanese women to participate in the workforce at the beginning of their rule. There were various jobs available for women after the construction of this modern infrastructure and the

⁹⁶ Chen, "The Aroma of Women in Formosa Tea", in Chen, ed., *The Footpath of Women II*, p. 28.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 29.

development of industry in Taiwan: for instance, conductor, telephone operator, public servant, school teacher and nurse.⁹⁸ Furthermore, Taiwanese women who studied abroad were influenced by feminist doctrine and started advocating feminism after their return to Taiwan. They stressed the importance of financial independence for women and encouraged Taiwanese women to participate in the workplace. Doris T. Chang points out that most of these intellectuals acquired knowledge about Western liberal feminism from their educational experiences in universities and colleges in urban Japan.⁹⁹ She stresses: 'In the 1920s, the advocacy of autonomous women's movements for women's economic independence was derived from the dual influence of Western liberal feminism and Marxism-Leninism's emphasis on women's financial self-reliance as the main determinant of their emancipation'.¹⁰⁰ Professional training courses at schools were available for women during the Japanese colonial era, for instance, medicine, education, music, and arts.¹⁰¹

In the early 1930s, urban women from both Japanese and Taiwanese backgrounds were employed in a variety of occupations mentioned earlier, such as bus conductor, telephone operator, waitress, office worker, and factory worker.¹⁰² Many women were additionally recruited to work in plants that produced power, metals, coal, alcohol, cigarettes, medicine, and canned foods, due to labour shortages. In the early 1940s, more than 40 percent of factory workers were women.¹⁰³ Thus with the development of industry and a modern infrastructure in the country, Taiwanese women during Japanese rule had improved opportunities to be employed in comparison to Taiwanese women under the Qing dynasty. Nevertheless, problems for women in the workplace occurred with the development of industry in Taiwan. Cui Yang points out

⁹⁸ Xu, ed., *Her History in Taiwan*, p. 12.

⁹⁹ Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁰¹ Xu, ed., *Her History in Taiwan*, p. 12.

¹⁰² Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, p. 33.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

that many women did not understand the function of capitalism in society, and were uncertain about their circumstances within society when they first entered the workforce. Furthermore, financial independence and individuality were not the main purposes for these women when entering employment. For this reason, problems for women in the workplace began to occur.¹⁰⁴ Cui Yang further points out the issue of working women in Taipei in the article ‘Comments on Working Women in Taipei’ in the seventy-fifth issue of *Taiwan Minpao*, which was released on the 18th of October in 1925. She claims that the article pointed out that working women in Taipei had become ‘corrupted’.¹⁰⁵

Consumerism was one of the reasons for working women in Taipei to spend a great amount of their monthly salary on clothing and make-up. They spent more than they earned because they did not know how to manage their finances. Some working women started to work as prostitutes in order to have more income to spend. Furthermore, heterosexual relationships were another problem for working women. Taiwanese women did not have freedom of marriage during the Qing dynasty.¹⁰⁶ Women had more freedom of marriage during Japanese rule. Nevertheless, Taiwanese women had not been taught how to socialise with men when they entered the workforce. Problems of sexual immorality, sexual harassment and gender discrimination occurred when Taiwanese women participated in employment.¹⁰⁷ Cui Yang states that the article mentioned above stressed the need for working women to transform themselves in order to reform society. The article provided five solutions in order to solve the problems encountered by working women in Taiwanese society during the Japanese colonial era. First, modern women with self-awareness should

¹⁰⁴ Cui Yang, *The Emancipation Movement of Taiwanese Women during the Japanese Colonial Era: An Analysis of the Taiwan Minpao (1920-1932)* (Taipei: China Times Publishing Company, 1993), p. 212.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

make speeches to re-educate career women. Second, parents should be responsible for the supervision of their children. Third, supervisors or managers at workplaces should not allow their female colleagues to compare material items with each other. Fourth, colleagues should provide guidance to each other. Finally, society should condemn the corruption and immorality of both men and women.¹⁰⁸ This is only one of many newspaper articles which discussed issues relating to working women. There were other newspaper articles at this time that discussed issues in relation to working women, for instance, the article ‘Women and Financial Independence’ in the one hundred and twenty-ninth issue of *Taiwan Minpao*. The article was released on the 31st of October in 1926, and it stressed the importance of education and financial independence for women.¹⁰⁹ Widespread inequality in the treatment of men and women is apparent. While solutions to the problems of working women are offered, the indication seems to be that only women needed to be educated and transformed.

Women may not have been taught how to socialise with men when they entered the workplace, however the problems of sexual immorality, sexual harassment and gender discrimination were not solely the responsibility of women. Society needed to educate men to learn how to treat women with respect in the workplace. Not only women but also men needed to transform themselves and learn how to work with each other with respect. Society has the responsibility to educate both men and women in order to solve the problems encountered by working women. Changes in education and employment under Japanese rule led to changes in personal life and expectations around marriage. Taiwanese women with their new financial independence started advocating the freedom to choose their partners and their choice of marriage. The following section turns to the issues of marriage for Taiwanese women in the late Qing

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 211.

dynasty and the Japanese colonial era.

Marriage for Taiwanese Women during the Qing Dynasty and the Japanese Colonial Era

Women in traditional Taiwanese society were restricted by the conventional custom of Confucianism to obey men. Taiwanese women during the Qing dynasty had no right to choose their partners. They could only accept marriage arrangements from their parents or senior male members of the family. The Institute of Taiwanese History in Academia Sinica indicates that during the early Qing dynasty the gender rate in Taiwan was unbalanced. Men were required to pay a bride price in order to get married. The bride price was a common custom during the Qing dynasty. Parents of the bride were required to prepare a dowry for their daughters when they got married. It was a tremendous pressure for families with financial difficulties to provide a dowry for their daughters.¹¹⁰ Traditional Taiwanese society considered the daughter as a member of her husband's family, therefore to have a daughter was considered as a waste of fortune. The term *pei qian huo* (money-losing proposition) was used to address women in the Qing dynasty. Furthermore, women were considered to be worthless to the family. When families encountered financial difficulties, they would sell their daughters as a commodity to another family in exchange for money. Daughters who were sold by their families could become adopted daughters, adopted daughters-in law, servants, prostitutes or geisha during both the Qing dynasty and the Japanese colonial era.¹¹¹

Yi-Wen Zhuo explains that reproduction was the primary purpose of marriage during the Qing dynasty. The essential responsibility for women was to give birth to a

¹¹⁰ Xu, ed., *Her History in Taiwan*, p. 3.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

male heir for the family.¹¹² In the patriarchal society of the Qing dynasty, women were not recorded on the family tree. For this reason, the only way for women to gain social status was through marriage. Women would be recorded as the wife of their husbands on the family tree. Nevertheless, only their surname would be recorded.¹¹³ Yi-Wen Zhuo points out the difficult circumstances for Taiwanese women within this patriarchal society: 'Woman seems to have had no other choices. Marriage was the only way for her to gain social status. Marriage was essential to the life of woman.'¹¹⁴ The average marriage age for Taiwanese women during the Qing dynasty was between sixteen and twenty.¹¹⁵ Family was an essential part of life for Taiwanese women in the Qing dynasty. Women did not have financial independence therefore they could only depend on men for economic support. Women did not have freedom of marriage therefore they could only accept the arrangements of their family.

It was considered appropriate to marry into a family from the same or higher social class. Yi-Wen Zhuo explains the requirements of marriage arrangements during the Qing dynasty: 'The first priority was family reputation. The second was the family fortune.'¹¹⁶ Requirements of the bride centrally focused on her appearance, which differed from the requirements of the groom. Yi-Wen Zhuo states the three essential requirements for bride were: 'Appearance, foot-binding and her family health history.'¹¹⁷ Foot-binding was considered both as a fashion and a symbol of beauty during the Qing dynasty. Since foot-binding was considered one of the requirements for the bride, women had to endure the physical pain of foot-binding in order to get married or marry to a higher social class when they were very young. The standard for the bride essentially focused on her appearance while, on the contrary, the standard for

¹¹² Zhuo, *The Life of Taiwanese Women during the Qing Dynasty*, p. 10.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

the groom focused on his health and personality. Grooms were required to pay the bride price to the bride's family in order to get married. The bride price signified the value of a woman and the reputation of her family. The amount of the bride price varied according to the appearance and social class of the bride. Higher class families could afford to pay the bride price or receive a better bride price while, on the contrary, families with financial difficulties could not even afford to pay the bride price in order to get married.¹¹⁸

The bride price had become a problem in society in the late Qing dynasty. The importance of social class and wealth were essential in terms of marriage arrangements. Men from lower class families could not afford to marry women from higher class families. The traditional custom of the bride price signified disrespect of women during the Qing dynasty. Yi-Wen Zhuo argues: 'The bride price had deformed the meaning of marriage for women to a business.'¹¹⁹ Women were valued by their bride price and dowry. Without the inheritance of a family fortune, the dowry was considered as a financial security for women. The original meaning of bestowing a dowry on the bride was considered a blessing from the parents. The dowry provided economic security for women without financial independence during the Qing dynasty.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, the meaning of the dowry had transformed to a representation of the family's fortune. As Yi-Wen Zhuo states, 'The bride price also signified the social class of the family.'¹²¹ Families from a higher social class would prepare expensive dowries for their daughters in order to present their wealth to the society. On the contrary, families from the commonwealth had to save money or borrow money to buy dowries for their daughters. As mentioned earlier, the term *pei qian huo* (money-losing proposition) was

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 22.

used to address women in the Qing dynasty because the family had to spend a great fortune when their daughters got married. Both the bride price and the dowry signified disrespect for women. Women were valued as commodities rather than as human beings. The meaning of marriage had been transformed because of the traditional customs of the bride price and dowry. Nevertheless, some traditional customs during the Qing dynasty such as foot-binding were challenged and abolished under Japanese rule.

Women during the Japanese colonial era had better opportunities to participate in the workforce. The opportunity to work bestowed on women financial independence, and the workplace enabled women to have the opportunity to meet men. Both men and women started advocating the freedom of partner choice and marriage during the Japanese colonial era. Doris T. Chang stresses that the influence of Western liberal feminism on Taiwanese men and women can be seen in their advocacy of free-choice marriage.¹²² The historical record from the National Museum of Taiwanese History indicates that Taiwan was under the influence of western culture on the issue of marriage during the Japanese colonial era.¹²³ The issues of partner choice and freedom of marriage have been the subject of comment in Taiwanese newspapers since at least 1918. A romantic heterosexual relationship was considered to be the essence of a successful marriage. Debates and articles on marriage choice could be seen in two well-known newspapers in Taiwan, *Taiwan Ri Ri Xin Bao* and *Taiwan Minpao*.¹²⁴ In October 1925 well-known Taiwanese author Wo-Jun Chang declared his point of view on the issue of love in an article entitled 'To the Highest Moral-Love' in *Taiwan Minpao*. Wo-Jun Chang wrote: 'Love is noble. Only a person with a pure heart can

¹²² Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, p. 26.

¹²³ Wei-Ying Liu and Jing-Kuan Chen, *Taiwan Women's Extra-Ordinary Life* (Tainan: National Museum of Taiwan History, 2012), p. 21.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

have love. The heart of a human being becomes pure and elevated when they are in love.’¹²⁵ Wo-Jun Chang argued that love is sacred, and that the freedom to fall in love should be accepted in society.¹²⁶ Cui Yang summarizes his statement: ‘He thought the essence of life is to explore love. It is natural to find a partner in order to complete a fulfilled life.’¹²⁷ Cui Yang further summarizes: ‘Love is sacred. True love affection is like a blooming flower in the heart of a human being. Love purifies the heart of a human being. Love is holy and noble, it enables human beings to sacrifice themselves.’¹²⁸ Such newspaper coverage demonstrates the extent to which both men and women had begun to advocate freedom of marriage choice, although the authority of the family to insist on an arranged marriage would remain a feature of Taiwanese society.

Financially independent women had greater opportunity to choose their partners. Cui Yang explains the importance of financial independence for Taiwanese women in general and particularly for marriage choice:

Women with financial independence could pursue their goals in life. The majority of Taiwanese feminist activists were from the middle-class, for instance doctors and lawyers. Women who had the freedom to choose their partners were working women, such as mid-wives, nurses and teachers. From this perspective, financial independence is essential for women’s emancipation.¹²⁹

In spite of the fact that both men and women in society had started advocating freedom of marriage choice and the participation of women in employment, it was challenging for Taiwanese women to be fully liberated from the influence of Chinese Confucianism.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Yang, *The Emancipation Movement of Taiwanese Women during the Japanese Colonial Era*, p. 190.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 191.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 209.

Taiwanese women may have had better opportunities in terms of educational attainment and employment during the Japanese colonial era. Nevertheless, only women from the middle or upper classes of society could receive higher education either in Taiwan or abroad. With educational attainment, Taiwanese women were encouraged to participate in the workforce during the Japanese colonial era. Financial independence bestowed on modern career women confidence and a capacity for individual thought in the pursuit of true love, affection and marriage. Although only a minority of Taiwanese women could have freedom in terms of marriage choice, female status had further developed during the Japanese colonial era. This thesis has provided an overview of the historical background of Taiwanese women's status in terms of education, employment, family and marriage during the Qing dynasty and the Japanese colonial era. I will now turn in the following section to the emergence of new feminism since the 1970s and Hsiu-Lien Lu's feminist doctrine.

1.3. The Feminist Doctrine of Hsiu-Lien Lu

Having explained in detail the development of women's status in Taiwan during the Chinese and Japanese colonial eras, I now turn to the development of feminism and new feminism in Taiwan. I do this through a focus on Hsiu-Lien Lu and her feminist philosophy, which she calls new feminism. She serves as a key figure for my thesis because her feminist doctrine has impacted the development of women's status in Taiwan since the 1970s. Hsiu-Lien Lu was born in Taoyuan County, the north part of Taiwan on the 7th of June 1944. She describes her life as 'a cruel joke'.¹³⁰ Being a woman, she had experienced the gender inequality of patriarchal society from a young age. Her parents intended to sell her to a richer family when she was little in the hope

¹³⁰ Hsiu-Lien Lu, *New Feminism* (Taipei: Unitas Publishing, 2008), p. 294.

that she could have a better life. Fortunately, her brother hid her in their aunt's house. Her parents found out and decided to keep her and educate her equally with her brother.¹³¹

When she won the presidential election in 2000, the first thing she did was to visit her family temple and worship her parents. She murmured to her parents: 'Dad and Mum, did you ever dream that your little girl would become the vice president of Taiwan?'¹³² Hsiu-Lien Lu had an outstanding academic performance; she graduated from the best high school in Taiwan, Taipei First Girl's High School. She went on to pursue a higher degree at the Law School of Taiwan National University, graduating in 1969. She went to the United States to pursue her master's degree at the Law School of the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign in 1969 and received her master's degree in 1971.¹³³ She started advocating new feminism after her return to Taiwan in 1971. The government noticed her advocacy of new feminism and was concerned her new feminism would bring negative influence to the women in Taiwan. She then decided to leave the country for the United States to pursue another master's degree in 1977.

Hsiu-Lien Lu received her second master's degree at Harvard Law School in 1978. She abandoned her postgraduate fellowship at Harvard Law School and returned to Taiwan to run in the national assembly election in 1978.¹³⁴ On the 10th of December 1979 Hsiu-Lien Lu participated in the International Human Rights Day event which was organised by the Democratic Progressive Party. The event was observed by the government closely; police and soldiers were ordered to release tear gas into the crowd. The event should have been a peaceful event, however gangsters were organised to

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 234.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 299.

attack the police in an attempt to implicate opposition leaders. The well-known incident was later known as the Kaohsiung incident.¹³⁵ Hsiu-Lien Lu was furious when she saw the chaos that resulted; she stood on the top of a truck and delivered a provocative and emotional twenty-minute speech criticising the government. Three days later, Hsiu-Lien Lu along with one hundred and fifty participants were arrested.

Hsiu-Lien Lu along with seven leaders of the Democratic Progressive Party were given court martials and sentenced to twelve years in prison. She was in prison for five and a half years before being released in 1985 in response to international pressure.¹³⁶ Hsiu-Lien Lu writes of these events: 'Our loss was the nation's gain, however, as this was a significant watershed for Taiwan's democracy. At the next elections held while we were still behind bars, many wives of imprisoned activists were elected to congress, inspiring in the whole nation a desire for democracy.'¹³⁷ Hsiu-Lien Lu continued her career as a politician after her release from prison and was elected to the Legislative Yuan in 1993;¹³⁸ in 1997 she won the election to be the magistrate of Taoyuan.¹³⁹ She was invited by Shui-Bian Chen to be the vice presidential candidate for the presidential election in 2000. Hsiu-Lien Lu was elected as Taiwan's first female vice president twice, in 2000 and 2004.¹⁴⁰ Hsiu-Lien Lu has had numerous achievements during her vice presidency between 2000 and 2008. The most significant achievement during her career as a politician was her advocacy of new feminism in Taiwan which has significantly impacted on women's status in the country.

When Hsiu-Lien Lu returned to Taiwan from her studies in the United States in 1971, she found that the whole of Taiwanese society was debating how to prevent

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 300.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

young women from attending university. Taiwanese society argued that valuable social resources were being wasted on women because most of the women chose to abandon their careers and become housewives after they got married.¹⁴¹ Hsiu-Lien Lu was determined to advocate feminism; she explains: 'I was under such an environment that I began to advocate feminism, criticizing male chauvinism on the one hand and proposing new feminist doctrines on the other.'¹⁴² She wrote articles, made speeches, and organised a variety of activities for women to participate in civil society. Hsiu-Lien Lu states that her focus was education; at the time when she first initiated the feminist movement, around one-quarter of Taiwanese women could not read, but today fewer than five percent of adult women have not been to school. Furthermore, over the same period, the number of women gaining college or higher degrees has risen greatly.¹⁴³

Hsiu-Lien Lu was inspired by Geraldine Ferraro when she watched her campaign TV debate on a small television set in a Taiwanese prison cell. After her release, she visited Geraldine Ferraro in Washington, D.C. When she later became Taiwan's first female vice president, Ferraro wrote to her to express her envy that Taiwan was more progressive than the United States. In this context Hsiu-Lien Lu poses a question: 'Is Taiwan more progressive than other countries? Yes and no.'¹⁴⁴ The feminist leader points out the difficult situation of women's status in Taiwan: 'Due to the historical circumstance of Chinese immigration, followed by five decades of colonial rule by Japan, and then another forty years of the Nationalist regime's martial law, Taiwan's women traditionally suffered from the double burden of Chinese Confucianism and Japanese male chauvinism.'¹⁴⁵

Hsiu-Lien Lu places emphasis on culture as a determinant of women's

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 296.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 295.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

oppression in her feminist doctrine. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Hsiu-Lien Lu argues that Chinese Confucianism subjected women to the so-called Three Obediences and Four Virtues: 'Together, these traditions actually created Three Bondages for women: Bound heads, Bound Waists and Bound Feet to restrict women's intellectual, sexual and physical freedoms.' She further argues that women were taught nothing but to serve and to please men; women always bent their waists, bowed their heads and surrendered to men under Japanese chauvinism.¹⁴⁶ In contrast to the Three Obediences in Chinese Confucianism for women, Hsiu-Lien Lu states her 'three selves' feminist doctrine:

In my feminist doctrine, I stress "three selves" [three selves] for women. These are self dependence, self confidence and self contentment. What I mean by this is that to be feminists, we have to be independent physically, intellectually and financially. We have to build up confidence in whatever we think and whatever we do, instead of merely following others.¹⁴⁷

Hsiu-Lien Lu believes that women need to have courage, confidence and strong determination to achieve their goals and dreams in life. There will be difficulties and criticism but as long as they have determination, they will be able to achieve their goals and be proud of themselves.¹⁴⁸ She stresses in her feminist doctrine: 'On this path to success we need vision and wisdom, determination and devotion. The path is long and filled with obstacles, we walk with sweat and tears, with determination and expectation we do not rely on others, we are on our own, and thus we make ourselves the mistresses of our own destinies.'¹⁴⁹ Hsiu-Lien Lu believes that 'Knowledge is power, and failure is a mother to success.' Therefore she encourages women to be the

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 296.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 302.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 303.

mistresses of their own destinies: 'women should be empowered to make things better and higher.'¹⁵⁰ Hsiu-Lien Lu once posed a question in her speech; 'if Simone de Beauvoir thought that European women were the Second Sex, what would she have made of women in Asia?'¹⁵¹ The educational attainment of women in Taiwan has greatly improved through the years with Hsiu-Lien Lu's advocacy of new feminism.

Hsiu-Lien Lu started advocating feminism following her return from the United States in 1971. She defines new feminism as 'An Ideology, A Belief and Force'.¹⁵² She explains: 'New feminism is an Ideology which is essential to contemporary Taiwanese society. It is a Belief which advocates equality between men and women in order to lead society toward prosperity. It is a Force which will eliminate traditional prejudice toward women in order to rebuild an ideal concept of value for society.'¹⁵³ She stresses the purpose of new feminism is to rebuild the individual thoughts and the independence of women in order to achieve gender equality in Taiwan.¹⁵⁴ Hsiu-Lien Lu firmly believes that Taiwan needs new feminism in order to lead the society to a prosperous future. She explains the ideology of new feminism in terms of law, politics, economy and education. She acknowledges that the law of Taiwan needs to be reformed with an objective point of view in order to achieve gender equality. As for politics, society needs to encourage more women to participate in politics and political activities. In spite of the fact that women in Taiwan had the right to vote in 1947, their participation in politics was low in the early 1970s. In this context Hsiu-Lien Lu urged more women to run for elections and become lawmakers.¹⁵⁵ It is essential to abolish the law which secures places for women in politics and employment in order to

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 296.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 169.

¹⁵³ Ibid., pp. 169-170.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁵⁵ Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, pp. 105-106.

achieve true democracy and gender equality.¹⁵⁶ Hsiu-Lien Lu stresses the necessity of reforming the economy in Taiwan. She acknowledges that social benefits and wages for working women must be improved. Society needs to increase training opportunities and the educational standard for working women, and extend their opportunities for employment and promotion. Furthermore, housewives need to be encouraged to return to employment.¹⁵⁷

Hsiu-Lien Lu stresses the importance of reforming education. She acknowledges that society needs to re-examine the different social roles of men and women in order to thoroughly analyse how women could contribute their intelligence to society.¹⁵⁸ As mentioned earlier, Hsiu-Lien Lu states that new feminism is a belief which advocates gender equality. She believes that new feminism could bring peace and prosperity to Taiwan.¹⁵⁹ Hsiu-Lien Lu explains some of the obstacles to advocating new feminism in Taiwan since 1971. She states: 'Not only men but also women worked against new feminism. I advocated changing the patriarchal society in order to transform the male-dominated society. They thought what I meant was to build a female-dominated society.'¹⁶⁰ Hsiu-Lien Lu acknowledges the misconception of new feminism held by both men and women in Taiwan. She argues that new feminism is not selfish egoism of women. Although it advocates ending the male-dominated society, it does not mean to transform the country into a female-dominated society. New feminism disagrees with the phenomenon of men dominating the employment sector, however, it does not encourage women to abandon housekeeping or cooking.¹⁶¹

The main goal of new feminism is to achieve gender equality. Hsiu-Lien Lu advocates transforming male-dominated society into a democratic and equal society

¹⁵⁶ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 170.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 171.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 172.

which could bring peace and prosperity to the country. New feminism is a force which sets itself in opposition to prejudice against women. New feminism reconstructs the value of women in contemporary society. It rebuilds the independence and dignity of women in order to promote true gender equality.¹⁶² Women in contemporary Taiwanese society have equality in educational attainment. They have better opportunities and freedom compared to women a decade ago. Hsiu-Lien Lu states: 'Current education has provided women the golden key toward knowledge and prosperity. Women should be independent and confident. They should appreciate their opportunities in terms of educational attainment and contribute their skills to society. Men should respect women without prejudice.'¹⁶³ In general, new feminism is significant to contemporary Taiwanese society, because it advocates gender equality. It stresses that a woman is a human being who deserves to receive equal rights and the opportunities as a man does. Hsiu-Lien Lu was greatly inspired by the feminist theory of Simone de Beauvoir. The central ideology of Hsiu-Lien Lu's new feminism is 'Be a human being first then learn how to be a man or woman'.¹⁶⁴ The traditional concept for the past thousand years considered men as human beings and women as women.¹⁶⁵ Traditional concepts valued women as a second class, lower than men. Hsiu-Lien Lu points out the problem of the English phrase 'Men are created equal.'¹⁶⁶ She argues that the phrase implies only 'men' are 'human beings'. They should use 'human beings' rather than 'men' if women are to be considered as human beings as well.

Hsiu-Lien Lu argues that publications from the past thousand years in mainland China were written by men and only for men. Confucianism, for instance, educated men about how to manage the country while, on the contrary, it educated women on

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 174.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

how to obey men. Hsiu-Lien Lu further argues that women have been considered as the second class of society. The above examples indicate that women are always women; their value is lower than that of men.¹⁶⁷ She stresses: 'The central ideology of new feminism is to educate people from different backgrounds to learn how to be a human being first, then learn how to be a man or woman.'¹⁶⁸ She explains that to be a human being means everyone in society has equal rights, opportunities, and obligations as a citizen. Women should learn the obligations and laws for citizens before they learn household skills. Society should treat both men and women without prejudice. Parents should be delighted to have either a son or a daughter, and should educate their children with equality. Parents do not need to intentionally educate their son to be masculine or daughter to be feminine.¹⁶⁹ Once a person has learned how to be a human being, the person then learns how to be a man or woman.

The second central ideology of new feminism is 'Be what you are!'¹⁷⁰ Hsiu-Lien Lu explains the obligations of different social roles. For instance, a student should study hard, a teacher should focus on teaching, and a politician should speak for the citizen. The responsibility of cooking, household chores and childcare are not only for women. Both husband and wife should share the responsibility of household chores and childcare together.¹⁷¹ Hsiu-Lien Lu states that contemporary society demonstrates the ideology that 'the office is no longer a space only for men, the kitchen is no longer a space only for women.'¹⁷² The third central ideology of new feminism is 'Contribute to society.'¹⁷³ Hsiu-Lien Lu stresses that society should develop the intelligence of women in order to lead Taiwan towards a prosperous future. The government should

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 175.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 176.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 177.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 179.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

provide wider and more various career opportunities for women. Companies should provide promotion opportunities for talented female employees. In general, new feminism stresses three essential ideologies: 'Be a human being first then learn how to be a man or woman', 'Be what you are!' and 'Contribute to society.' New feminism is a human rights movement which stresses that a woman is a human being who deserves to have equal rights with and the same opportunities as a man. New feminism is not only for women but also for men. Hsiu-Lien Lu concludes: 'History cannot be rewritten. However, the future human history will no longer be His-story, it will be Human-Story.'¹⁷⁴ New feminism encourages women to participate in employment and contribute their intelligence to society. The ideology encourages a new generation of men to respect women and to cooperate with them in order to create a new society.

Hsiu-Lien Lu defines the significant characteristics of the new feminist in her feminist doctrine. She states: 'New feminist means the woman who is confident and independent. She is proud of her role as a woman. She is able to maintain a benevolent relationship between men and women. She can manage to have a successful career and a romantic relationship at the same time.'¹⁷⁵ Hsiu-Lien Lu believes that the new feminist is much happier compared to the traditional woman because she is the mistress of her own life. The new feminist is wiser compared to the traditional mother because she possesses knowledge of contemporary society. She is more charming compared to the traditional wife because she has vision and ambition. Hsiu-Lien Lu further stresses: 'Most importantly, the new feminist is brighter than the traditional woman because she is not only a policy follower, but also a decision maker. She is not only the beneficiary of scientific inventions, but also the research inventor. She is no longer the shadow of history but the creator of history!'¹⁷⁶ The essential goal of new

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 182.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

feminism is to transform patriarchal society into a society with gender equality.

In her feminist doctrine Hsiu-Lien Lu condemns the traditional expectations toward women in terms of marriage. She argues: 'Marriage used to be considered as an obligation and the only way to enrich a person's life. For this reason, everyone should get married, especially women. Marriage used to be considered as an achievement and the only option for women.'¹⁷⁷ Hsiu-Lien Lu disagrees with the traditional value of marriage. She argues that there are various ways to enrich the lives of modern men and women. Marriage is only one of many options rather than the only option. On the contrary, marriage restricts the freedoms of men and women. She further argues that well-educated women in contemporary society have financial independence. Marriage is no longer the only way for women to gain financial security. Hsiu-Lien Lu may bring an unconventional perspective on marriage, but her arguments were not universally accepted within Taiwanese society or among Taiwanese women. Not every man or woman would think marriage restricts their freedoms. Furthermore, women with good educational background may have greater opportunity to be financially independent, it is not necessarily the case that every well-educated woman in contemporary society has financial independence. Women used to depend on men to receive social status. On the contrary, modern women are independent therefore they no longer need to gain social status through marriage. Hsiu-Lien Lu states: 'Marriage is no longer the only option for women!'¹⁷⁸ She stresses that marriage is a right rather than an obligation. Both the choices of 'singlehood' and 'delayed marriage' are rights that should be respected.¹⁷⁹

In her feminist doctrine Hsiu-Lien Lu points out that traditional concepts consider family as the life and the whole world for women. Taiwanese society has

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 187.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 187-188.

developed during the past decade. The man used to be considered the bread-winner and the head of the family in traditional Taiwanese society. However, most of the women in contemporary Taiwanese society are well-educated and financially independent. Women can also have successful careers as men do. Family is no longer the only world for modern Taiwanese women. For this reason, Hsiu-Lien Lu provides some advice for men and women in terms of household management. She points out that the traditional concept of household management should be reformed. She states: 'Both husband and wife are the head of the family.'¹⁸⁰ Husband and wife should respect and cooperate with each other in terms of household management. Hsiu-Lien Lu describes household chores as a repeated and tiresome job that should not be the sole responsibility of women. Both men and women should share responsibility for cooking and household chores. In contemporary society, women need to work for financial support, therefore it is reasonable for men to cook. She states: 'society should have the belief that to do household chores is an honorable job.'¹⁸¹ It is an ordinary and reasonable behaviour for the husband to do household chores for his wife. It is unnecessary to praise the husband who shares the responsibility with his wife. After all, the family belongs to both husband and wife, therefore they should share the responsibility for childcare, cooking and household chores.

This thesis has already discussed traditional customs of the bride price and dowry during the Qing dynasty. Traditional Taiwanese society valued women as the property of men and the family. There is a Taiwanese phrase which describes the value of married daughter: 'a married daughter is like a splash of water.' Once the daughter is married, she no longer belongs to her family because she belongs to the family of her husband. The family of the groom needs to pay the bride price for the family of the

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 191.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 192.

bride before their wedding. The meaning of the bride price is a way for the groom to express his gratitude to future parents-in law. The amount of the bride price also signifies how much the groom values the bride. The family receives the bride price as their payment for childcare. Hsiu-Lien Lu disagrees with the belief that a married daughter belongs to the family of her husband. She thinks that the connection between a daughter and her parents is inseparable. Parents should not consider their married daughter as a member of her husband's family. On the contrary, parents should consider both their married daughter and son-in law as family members.¹⁸²

Hsiu-Lien Lu stresses that in contemporary Taiwanese society both men and women should have equality and powers of independent thought. The meaning of marriage is to unite the couple rather than to separate the family.¹⁸³ She condemns the traditional custom of the bride price which still exists in some families in Taiwan: 'a daughter should not be valued by money!'¹⁸⁴ She points out the problem of the dowry. In traditional Taiwanese society, women without financial independence had to depend on men for financial support. Parents prepared a dowry for their daughter as a way to provide financial security for her future. The dowry signified the status of women and the end of her relationship with her family. Once the daughter got married, she belonged to her husband's family. Even if she encountered financial difficulties during the marriage, she could not seek help from her family. Most of the women have financial independence in contemporary society. Hsiu-Lien Lu states that current Taiwanese Civil Law has been reformed; that now a daughter has an equal right to a son to receive the inheritance of family property or fortune.¹⁸⁵ The meaning of the dowry has changed; it is now simply a blessing for parents to their daughters in current

¹⁸² Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 196.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

Taiwanese society. As Hsiu-Lien Lu declares, in new feminism, women are also human beings, and should not be valued by money. Women with financial independence do not need a dowry as economic security. A woman's real dowry, as Hsiu-Lien Lu states, is her 'talent, intelligence, elegance and skill.'¹⁸⁶ These make up the most valuable dowry for a woman, and one that cannot be taken away.

The feminist doctrine of Hsiu-Lien Lu has made a significant contribution to the development of feminism in Taiwan since the 1970s. The main objective of her feminist doctrine was to challenge patriarchal society and promote gender equality. She argues that the development of female status was slow due to the influence of Chinese Confucianism on Taiwanese society.¹⁸⁷ She criticises the gender stereotyping in Chinese Confucianism in her feminist doctrine. Doris T. Chang argues that although Hsiu-Lien Lu was inspired by Simone de Beauvoir, her conceptualization of individual freedom never went as far as de Beauvoir, due to the influence of Confucianism on her concept of familial obligation.¹⁸⁸ Chang claims that Hsiu-Lien Lu synthesises Confucian concepts, such as women's gender-specific obligations in familial relationships, with liberal individualist feminism in her new feminism.¹⁸⁹ For Chang, Lu's attempt to incorporate aspects of Confucian family-centred ideology with Western individualism strengthens working women's double burden.¹⁹⁰ Hsiu-Lien Lu suggests love before marriage and sexual activity only within the marital context.¹⁹¹ Doris T. Chang stresses that Lu's perspective on sexual morality had a strong puritan influence.¹⁹² This thesis argues that, in spite of the fact that Lu's feminist doctrine had significant impact on the development of feminism in Taiwan, her perspective on

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 295.

¹⁸⁸ Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, p. 92.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 186.

¹⁹² Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, p. 95.

sexual morality is outdated and incompatible with contemporary society.¹⁹³ Nonetheless, her emphasis on gender equality has had far-reaching consequences within Taiwan, including within the media texts analysed in this thesis. This section has provided an overview of Hsiu-Lien Lu's feminist doctrine; the following section is relevant to my analysis of culture in Taiwan. The next section turns to the emergence of feminism and new feminism, and the impact of Hsiu-Lien Lu's feminist doctrine on the establishment of women's organisations in Taiwan.

1.4. The Emergence of Feminism and New Feminism in Taiwan

The earliest feminist movement in Taiwan dates back to the Japanese colonial era, as seen for example in campaigns against foot-binding and in favour of women's education. As mentioned earlier, women in Taiwan gained the right to vote in 1947. Since women already had the right to vote in post-war Taiwan, Hsiu-Lien Lu urged women to run for elections and become lawmakers.¹⁹⁴ The changing economic context played an important part in the development of women's education and employment in Taiwan. The feminist movement advocated by Hsiu-Lien Lu in the early 1970s was already well-established. This thesis has introduced the central ideology of her new feminism, which is to be a human being first and then learn how to be a man or woman. This section focuses on the impact of Hsiu-Lien Lu's new feminism and the establishment of several women's organisations in Taiwan, for instance the Awakening Foundation. It is relevant to introduce these organisations because their establishments signify the development of new feminism in Taiwan. These women's organisations brought the ideology of new feminism into action through various activities, such as

¹⁹³ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 186.

¹⁹⁴ Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, pp. 105-106.

film festivals, for both men and women across the cities of Taiwan. The section will further introduce the emergence of new feminism and its impact within the country in terms of policy reformation and the establishment of women's organisations.

Hsiu-Lien Lu's new feminism aims at achieving gender equality in society. In order to advocate her feminist doctrine, Hsiu-Lien Lu wrote articles and made speeches across the cities of Taiwan. She has organised various activities since 1971 in order to advocate new feminism in the country. She first published a newspaper article titled 'The Traditional Social Roles of Man and Woman' on the 23rd of October 1971.¹⁹⁵ She was invited by the Law School of Taiwan National University to make a speech titled *New Feminism* on the 8th of March, 1972. The article, in which she discussed the traditional social roles of man and woman was the beginning of her feminist doctrine. The speech she presented at Taiwan National University was a milestone of new feminism.

The Pioneer Family was established by Hsiu-Lien Lu on the 9th of October in 1972.¹⁹⁶ It was located near the Law School of Taiwan National University. The organisation had a meeting room and restaurant which provided social spaces for women from different ages and backgrounds to discuss issues related to women. The women who went to Pioneer Family were university students, career women and housewives, who supported the ideology of new feminism. Unfortunately, the Pioneer Family was forced to close within a year due to lack of management and financial difficulty. Nevertheless, the Pioneer Family had provided the opportunity for Taiwanese women to share their own life experiences and have discussions on issues related to women.

¹⁹⁵ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 258.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 248. The Pioneer Family was the first women's organisation established by Hsiu-Lien Lu in 1972. It was an organisation which advocated new feminism and gender equality. The members of the organisation were university students, career women and housewives. The organisation had a restaurant which provided working opportunities for women.

Hsiu-Lien Lu published the first edition of *New Feminism* in June 1974.¹⁹⁷ The Pioneer Publisher was established by Hsiu-Lien Lu in 1976 in order to provide more opportunities for women to speak out and publish articles in relation to women's issues. Pioneer published fifteen books and two brochures within a year of its establishment. It is worth mentioning that all the staff in Pioneer Publisher were women. Hsiu-Lien Lu believes that women can make significant achievements if they work together. She stressed the purpose of the publisher was to show the intelligence of women. The women who worked at the publisher proved that they had the intelligence and ability to do the job as men do. Their achievement signifies female power.¹⁹⁸

Besides advocating new feminism through articles and speeches, Hsiu-Lien Lu also organised social activities and invited both men and women to participate. In order to celebrate Women's Day and challenge the traditional social role of women, she organised two social activities for both men and women with the assistance of the Pioneer Foundation on the 8th of March 1976.¹⁹⁹ The activities were titled 'Cooking Competition for Gentlemen' and 'The Talk outside the Kitchen'. Over sixty men joined the cooking competition and about three hundred participants participated in the discussion. Thirteen successful career women were invited to share their life experiences outside the domestic space with the female participants during the talk. Hsiu-Lien Lu stresses: 'The cooking competition indicates that cooking is not a job only for women. The talk challenges the traditional expectation of Confucianism for woman which is that a woman without talents is a virtue.'²⁰⁰ The event raised awareness among the media and the patriarchal society more widely. Research and resources on women's studies were limited in Taiwan in the early 1970s, therefore the

¹⁹⁷ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 259.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 254.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

Pioneer Publisher founded an archive for women's studies in Taipei.

Another achievement of Hsiu-Lien Lu that is worth mentioning is the establishment of the Protect You telephone line on the 10th of February 1976.²⁰¹ The Protect You telephone line provides counselling services, offering legal or medical advice for women who have been abandoned or raped. The counsellors are female doctors, lawyers, police officers, and psychologists. Women encountering problems in marriage or sexual harassment did not know who could provide them with professional support. The Protect You telephone line is able to provide women who need it with professional advice. Their counselling service had solved nine hundred and sixty one cases within seven months after it was established. The majority of cases they manage are problems in relation to relationships and marriage. Common cases that they receive involve affairs and abandonment. Other counselling services on employment, medical treatment, rape and sexual harassment are provided by the Protect You telephone line. Hsiu-Lien Lu and the members of the counselling service realised the major problems suffered by Taiwanese women in the 1970s were to do with relationships and marriage. They organised various speeches for women: for instance speeches titled 'Love, Marriage, and Sexual Relationship'; 'Affairs, Abandonment and Divorce'; 'Singlehood, Marriage, Widowhood and Remarriage'; 'Family and Career'; and 'The Rights of Consumers'.²⁰² Protect You provides information and educates women about relationships, marriage and the law through the speeches. The topics of these speeches are relevant to the current social phenomenon of singlehood and the higher divorce rate, which are central to the discussions in the following chapters.

Hsiu-Lien Lu as the pioneer feminist activist in Taiwan has inspired numerous women to advocate feminism and new feminism via articles, speeches, activities and

²⁰¹ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 255.

²⁰² Ibid., p. 256.

films across the country. Another influential woman who has made a significant contribution to the women's movement in Taiwan is Yuan-Zhen Lee, who is one of the supporters of new feminism. Yuan-Zhen Lee assisted Hsiu-Lien Lu to advocate new feminism when the feminist leader was arrested and jailed in prison for political reasons for five years and three months in 1979.²⁰³ Doris T. Chang points out that although Taiwan is a democratic country, the problem of gender inequality persists. It was the unequal treatment and the lack of respect for women that convinced Yuan-Zhen Lee of the importance of promoting women's rights and status. Furthermore, her personal experiences in the democracy movement, in her marriage and in her petition for custody of her child, all contributed to her commitment to advocating gender equality in the early 1980s.²⁰⁴ Yuan-Zhen Lee founded the Awakening Foundation on the 1st of February 1982.²⁰⁵ The purpose of the Awakening Foundation was to help women to get involved in society, especially encouraging housewives to participate in social activities. The Awakening Foundation organised various types of social activity, from environmental protection and consumer rights, to issues related to women such as abortion, sexual harassment, employment and divorce. The Awakening Foundation established its own publisher in 1982 in order to publish articles in relation to gender studies, social issues and marriage problems for women. Yuan-Zhen Lee states that in spite of the fact that there were about forty women's magazines in Taiwan during the 1980s, most of the magazines lacked an educational purpose.²⁰⁶ Lee explains that Taiwan was developing; women felt helpless when they encountered social transformation. Women could not adjust to these social changes without proper education. For this reason, she wanted to provide useful knowledge and

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 258.

²⁰⁴ Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, p. 108.

²⁰⁵ Hui-Tan Chang, *Women's Movement and the Achievement of Feminism in Contemporary Taiwan* (Taichung: Press Store, 2006), p. 289.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 82.

information for Taiwanese women through a magazine.²⁰⁷

Awakening magazine provides useful information and knowledge on gender studies, family, marriage and social issues for women. It aims to help women to adjust to the transformation from traditional to modern society through its articles. *Awakening* stresses the importance of self-consciousness for women, which is the starting point of the women's movement. Yuan-Zhen Lee stresses that the modern woman should be aware of social change. She argues that the only way to adjust to modern society is to become an independent woman who possesses the ability to solve her own problems and contribute her skills to society.²⁰⁸ *Awakening* magazine started organising social activities for women to participate in from 1983 onwards. They organised a five-day event called Eight Three Three Eight Women's Week on the 8th of March 1983.²⁰⁹ The theme of the event was 'Women's Potential and Development'. It included activities such as exhibitions, speeches, a study group, a conference, and film screenings. The topics of the event included various issues related to women, for instance women and careers, women and divorce, women and family, and consumer rights. It is worth mentioning that the event included screenings of western feminist films. The Awakening Foundation assisted the Population Studies Center of Taiwan National University in establishing its Women's Research Program (the research centre was renamed the Taiwan National University Population and Gender Studies Center in July 1999) in September 1985.

The Awakening Foundation and *Awakening* magazine have been essential to the women's movement in Taiwan since the 1980s.²¹⁰ Yuan-Zhen Lee continued to advocate Hsiu-Lien Lu's new feminism through the foundation and its magazine. The

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, p. 83.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

foundation advocates its ideology through articles, speeches, social activities and screenings. The Awakening Foundation has cooperated with the Taiwan Women's Film Association (formerly known as the Taipei Women Film and Video Association) in organising the annual Taiwan International Women Make Waves Film Festival since 1993. This thesis will provide further introduction on the foundation in relation to the first women's film organisation, Women Make Waves in Taiwan, in chapter four. The Awakening Foundation aims to encourage women to participate in social activities, especially housewives. The foundation further demonstrates the ideology of new feminism through various social activities. Doris T. Chang argues that the sociopolitical space changed in the post-martial law era in the 1980s, and that more feminists were able to express their views compared to the feminists in the early 1970s.²¹¹ Yuan-Zhen Lee condemned Taiwan's authoritarian educational system as a major hindrance to children's critical thinking and freedom of expression in 1988. She criticised the textbooks that depicted men and women as conforming to traditional gender roles.²¹² Women were depicted as good mothers and wives who managed all the household responsibilities. Lee advocated that the textbook's contents should be changed to include professional women's contributions to various occupations.²¹³ The Awakening Foundation cooperated with educational reformers to propose the Gender Equality Education Act, which went into effect in 2004.²¹⁴ The Awakening Foundation started advocating self-consciousness for women in 1982 and continues to do so today. The Awakening Foundation shares the ideology of new feminism and attempts to achieve the goals of new feminism. The Awakening Foundation opened a new chapter of the women's movement in Taiwan in the 1980s and its impact on the women's

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 123.

²¹² Ibid., p. 124.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 125.

movement in the country remains today.

Hsiu-Lien Lu stresses the importance of women's education. She has long encouraged women in Taiwan to pursue a higher degree of education and to contribute their skills to the society. The economy in Taiwan was developing in the early 1970s, therefore women's labour was needed in the country.²¹⁵ Doris T. Chang states: 'From 1966 to 1973, women's participation in the labor force rose from 32.6 to 41.5 percent. As Taiwan emerged as a newly industrializing economy in the mid-1970s, 30 percent of all unskilled and semi-skilled workers in Taiwan's labor-intensive industries were female'.²¹⁶ Hsiu-Lien Lu stressed that women need to have self-awareness, to realise the importance of new feminism in relation to social change in contemporary society and their future.²¹⁷ As a result of her work, women with a higher level of educational attainment and financial independence are no longer contained within the traditional role of housewife.²¹⁸ The transformation of society enables women to show their skills and potential, as Hsiu-Lien Lu states: 'Who am I? Nothing; What shall I be? Anything.'²¹⁹ She further stresses that women should love and be proud of themselves, and that women should have individual thoughts, talents and financial independence.²²⁰ The feminist leader believes in the importance of female power. She stresses that women should share their hardships together, that women share the same destiny, therefore they should cooperate with each other in order to reach victory.²²¹ Hsiu-Lien Lu states: 'We should be our own mistress. Be responsible to our talents.'²²² Thereby, she argues that women should be aware of their roles and choose where they would like to be. Hsiu-Lien Lu proposes the following principle for women: 'To be in the

²¹⁵ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 211.

²¹⁶ Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, p. 63.

²¹⁷ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 211.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 214.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 213.

²²² Ibid., p. 216.

place where you are needed and do the thing that you need to do.’²²³ Lu suggests that women should be a full-time mother if they are needed, and that they should participate in the workforce when the time is suitable.²²⁴

Hsiu-Lien Lu has examined the development of female status in the country during the prime time of new feminism between 1974 and 1984. She examines the elevation of female status in terms of educational attainment, employment, marriage and divorce within these ten years. The most significant transformation between 1974 and 1984 was in the area of educational attainment for Taiwanese women. Hsiu-Lien Lu refers to sources from the Department of Statistics at the Ministry of the Interior. She points out that enrolment numbers of female students had increased significantly since the Japanese colonial era. The number of female students from elementary to higher education had increased significantly compared to male students. She compares the growing number of female students and male students within the thirty years between 1950 and 1980. The number of female students for elementary school was three times higher and two times higher for male students. The number of female students at junior school was twenty times higher and nine times higher for male students. The number of female students at high school was sixty-seven times higher and twelve times higher for male students. The number of female students at college was one hundred and ninety-two times higher and only thirty-four times higher for male students.²²⁵ The percentage of high school enrolment for female students had increased seven percent and five percent for male students. The statistics indicate that the growing number of female students and the developments in women’s education in the country since the Japanese colonial era.²²⁶

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 262.

²²⁶ Ibid.

Taiwanese women in contemporary society have better opportunities and stronger ambitions in terms of educational attainment compared to women in the Qing dynasty. In spite of the growing number of female students in different levels of education, the development of women's education still requires further progress. Hsiu-Lien Lu refers to sources from the Department of Statistics at the Ministry of Interior and points out that the percentage of men in higher education was higher than women in 1984. The percentage of male student enrolment at high school was sixty-one percent and thirty-nine percent for female students. The percentage of male student enrolment for higher education was 65.3 % and 34.7% for female students. These statistics indicate that further progress is needed for women's higher education.²²⁷ Hsiu-Lien Lu further points out there are gender stereotypes within higher education. For instance, the subjects of law, mathematics, science, engineering and architecture are considered subjects for men, whereas the arts, literature, language and education are considered subjects for women. Hsiu-Lien Lu compares the difference between various subjects at college for both male and female students in 1984. The number of female students in the humanities was three times higher than the number of male students, two times higher in business and management, and double the number of male students in education and media. She argues that these differences suggest that gender stereotypes still exist for men and women.²²⁸

The above examples suggest that further progress is needed in terms of educational attainment and gender equality. As Hsiu-Lien Lu points out, 'the above statistics indicate the condemnation of the traditional expectation: "A woman without talents is a virtue." More and more women are moving forward in the stream of knowledge.'²²⁹ Nevertheless, Hsiu-Lien Lu argues that gender stereotypes still remain

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 262.

²²⁹ Ibid.

within society; women who would like to pursue higher education can often only choose those subjects seen as suitable for women.²³⁰ Further progress is required in order to achieve gender equality. The feminist leader expects that more courageous women will challenge traditional social roles.²³¹ Education bestows upon women knowledge, as well as the ambition to pursue a career and have financial independence. Hsiu-Lien Lu indicates that the employment rate for women aged between twenty and twenty-four increased from 21.23% to 30.91% between 1974 and 1984. The increasing employment rate indicates that women still remained in employment after they get married.²³²

In spite of the fact that there were greater opportunities available to women in the 1980s to participate in employment when compared to women in the 1970s, the jobs available for women were gender stereotyped; for instance, tailor, retail worker, secretary, school teacher and nurse.²³³ Nevertheless the professions available to women became more numerous after 1984. Hsiu-Lien Lu indicates that there were one thousand female architects and engineers, one thousand female scientists, forty-five thousand female doctors and dentists, five thousand mathematicians, analysts, economists and lawyers, one thousand female politicians, and five thousand female managers among the public and private sectors in Taiwan in 1984. Despite the gender stereotypes that remained in employment in the early 1980s, the potential for women in various professions and their success soon became apparent.²³⁴

Hsiu-Lien Lu's ambition in the 1980s has been achieved in current Taiwanese society. The Gender Equality in Employment Act went into effect during her vice

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid., p. 263.

²³³ Ibid., p. 265.

²³⁴ Ibid.

presidency on International Women's Day in 2002.²³⁵ There are a significant number of successful Taiwanese women from various professions who contribute their talents and skills to current society. Ing-Wen Tsai is the current chairperson of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) for the fourth time. She is an influential female politician who was the first female presidential candidate in Taiwan in 2012. Although she did not win the presidential election, she did not give up her quest to be the president of Taiwan. Ing-Wen Tsai ran for the presidential election again in 2015 and was elected as the first female president in Taiwan. Her achievement in winning the second presidential election has opened a new chapter in the history of women in Taiwan. Cher Wang (Xue-Hong Wang) is a significant example of a successful businesswoman; she is co-founder and chairperson of the HTC Corporation. She was listed as the fifty-fourth most powerful woman in the world by Forbes in 2014.²³⁶ Diana Chen (Min-Xun Chen) is another example of a successful businesswoman; she is the chairperson of Taipei 101. Nita Ing (Qi Ing) is the president of the Continental Engineering Cooperation and the former chairperson of Taiwan High Speed Rail.

The above four women are examples of successful women in politics and business who contribute to the democracy and economy of Taiwan. The following four women are examples of successful women in the media. Their representations as confident and independent women who are either single or married are ideal examples of the new feminist. Ching-Ying Tao is a singer and top television hostess who has hosted various Taiwanese television programmes, for instance *Women's Talk* (Ren Xiong Zhan, 2011-2013). The programme discussed issues related to women, such as marriage, divorce, parenting, and women's health and well-being. Yu-Ting Xu is a well-known scriptwriter who wrote the award-winning Taiwanese television drama *In*

²³⁵ Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, p. 149.

²³⁶ "The World's 100 Most Powerful Women", Forbes, 28 May 2014, <<http://www.forbes.com/power-women/list/#tab:overall>> [accessed 20 July 2014].

Time with You (You Ning Qu, 2011), which won Best Television Series at the 47th Golden Bell Awards in Taiwan in 2013. Pei-Hua Wang is the well-known producer of the popular Taiwanese television drama *The Fierce Wife* (Fu Jun Xu, 2010) and the director of the film *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (2012). Both the television drama and the film discuss the life of women in marriage and after divorce. This thesis will examine both the television drama and the film in chapters Two and Three. Sylvia Chang is an influential actress and director whose films have been distributed internationally to the United Kingdom and the United States. The most significant film by Sylvia Chang is *20, 30, 40* (2004) which is about the life of three women from different ages, backgrounds and nations and their self-searching journey in life. The thesis will discuss the films of Sylvia Chang in Chapter Four. The above women are only a small number of examples of influential and successful Taiwanese women who have contributed their intelligence and skills to various industries, and their influence remains in Taiwanese society. Their achievements prove the development of female status in Taiwan.

Women in contemporary Taiwanese society with higher degrees and financial independence consider marriage as an option rather than obligation. Hsiu-Lien Lu examines the transformation of marriage in Taiwan between 1974 and 1984 based on sources from the Department of Statistics at the Ministry of the Interior. The phenomenon of early marriage for women has decreased; on the contrary, late marriage for women has increased. The marriage rate for women aged between twenty and twenty-four was 12.75 % in 1974; it decreased to 9.31% in 1984. The divorce rate for women in the country also increased in ten years. The divorce rate for women increased from 0.35% to 1.34%.²³⁷ Hsiu-Lien Lu states that the marriage transformation in Taiwan within these ten years indicates a greater degree of marriage

²³⁷ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 261.

choice for modern women. The phenomena of late marriage and the higher divorce rate signify a broader choice for men and women in contemporary society. Modern men and women choose to get married at a later age, when they are ready to enter the marriage realm. Modern men and women also deny the principle of one marriage in a lifetime.²³⁸

Since Hsiu-Lien Lu started advocating new feminism in 1970, her achievements and the way she has inspired the country have been significant. Numerous feminists and founders of women's organisations were inspired by her feminist doctrine and participated in the women's movement in Taiwan. Hsiu-Lien Lu as the feminist pioneer of Taiwan has contributed and inspired various women in the country. Yuan-Zhen Lee is one of the supporters of new feminism who has continued the ideology of new feminism and founded the Awakening Foundation to further establish the women's movement in Taiwan. Her contribution to the development of women's movement since the 1980s is also influential. The Awakening Foundation cooperates with the Taiwan Women's Film Association to organise the annual Women Make Waves Film Festival. Yuan-Zhen Lee further demonstrates the ideology of new feminism through the Awakening Foundation and its magazine. She stresses the importance of self-consciousness for women in Taiwan. Yuan-Zhen Lee shares the same beliefs as Hsiu-Lien Lu with regards to their commitments to promote gender equality. Lee may support the ideology of new feminism with Hsiu-Lien Lu, but her conception of motherhood is different from Lu's. Lu suggests the conception of motherhood only within the context of marriage. On the contrary, Lee suggests that single women who choose motherhood could consider adoption or artificial insemination as long as they are physically and financially independent.²³⁹ The

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*, p.115.

foundation Yuan-Zhen Lee established continues organising various activities about women and for women today. Hsiu-Lien Lu believes that women can change the world, and there are a significant number of successful women that as mentioned earlier contribute their intelligence and skills to society. Hsiu-Lien Lu firmly believes that women can make a difference, they can do anything: ‘Women should be empowered to make things better and higher.’²⁴⁰

This chapter has provided an overview of the development of women’s status in terms of education, employment and marriage during the Qing dynasty and then the Japanese colonial era. The chapter has introduced the feminist doctrine of Hsiu-Lien Lu, and the emergence of feminism and new feminism. It further discussed the impact of Hsiu-Lien Lu’s new feminism on society and the establishment of several women’s organisations. As mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, my argument is that social change in Taiwanese society has changed the representation of women in the media. Furthermore, the representation of women in the media has reflected the development of women’s status in the country. The following chapter will discuss the development of Taiwanese cinema since the 1980s. It will examine the representation of women in three films: *Osmanthus Alley* (Kun Hao Chen, 1988), *Kuei-mei, A Woman* (Yi Chang, 1985), and *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Pei Hua Wang, 2012). The film case studies provide an examination of the role of women in marriage from traditional to modern society. These films further present the transformation of the female protagonists from women who depend on men financially to women with financial independence.

²⁴⁰ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 303.

Chapter 2

From Feminism to New Feminism in Taiwanese Cinema

2.1. Introduction: Women and Film

This chapter provides an analysis of the transition from feminism to new feminism in Taiwanese cinema since the 1980s. It begins with a brief introduction of the New Taiwan Cinema which commenced in 1982. The New Taiwan Cinema is an important movement for the development of the representation of women in Taiwanese cinema. This chapter then examines the representation of women in three films: *Osmanthus Alley* (Kun Hao Chen, 1988), *Kuei-mei, A Woman* (Yi Chang, 1985), and *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Pei Hua Wang, 2012). These case studies provide examples of feminist films that stress the self-actualisation of their female protagonists. The first two films are positioned in terms of the New Taiwan Cinema. I employ textual analysis of narrative and character structure, and visual representation and signifiers in the films. I examine the changes in the representation of women by analysing the development of the role of women from housewife to career woman in these films. Although the chapter does not cover the representation of women in the films of the 1990s, this period will be addressed in chapter four through analysis of Sylvia Chang's films. The central questions framing my analysis are: What influence do Japanese 'male chauvinism' and Chinese Confucianism have on the representation of women in Taiwanese cinema since 1980? What is the relation between the women's movement and women's representation in Taiwanese cinema in the 1980s? How has the representation of women changed under the influence of feminism and new feminism?

The second section of the chapter examines the representation of women within patriarchy in traditional Taiwanese society through an analysis of the adaptation *Osmanthus Alley*. This section analyses the cultural context of foot-binding while discussing the representation of a past practice for the audience of this film from the 1980s. The female protagonist in *Osmanthus Alley* is an example of the representation of women in patriarchal culture. Under the influence of Chinese Confucianism, she is subjected to the customs for women which are the Three Obediences and Four Virtues. The tradition of Three Bondages for women constrained women's intellectual, sexual and physical freedom. This thesis argues that the film condemns the practice of foot-binding through its portrayal of the female protagonist. The female protagonist in the film is a significant example of a woman who suffers from foot-binding within the patriarchal culture of Taiwan.

The third section of the chapter examines the representation of women in the 1980s through the discussion of *Kuei-mei, A Woman*. This section analyses women's traditional role as housewives within patriarchy through an analysis of the characteristics of the female protagonist. The film presents the female protagonist as a strong woman who endures her husband's adultery, domestic violence and gambling. Women had equality of educational attainment and employment in the 1980s. The development of women's roles in the 1980s influences the representation of women in Taiwanese cinema at this time. The female protagonist in *Kui-mei, A Woman* is a significant example of a woman defined via independent thought and actions. She supports her family after her husband becomes unemployed, possessing clear goals and being determined to achieve them. She stresses the importance of education to her children, especially to her daughters who are portrayed in the film as well educated women with successful careers. As such the thesis argues that the film presents the female protagonist as a feminist and her daughters as new feminists. Kuei-Mei

(Hui-Shan Yang) thinks that women should endure hardships in order to maintain a marriage. On the contrary, her eldest daughter, Cheng-Fong (Hui-Tiao Luo)²⁴¹ thinks her mother should not forgive her father's adultery so easily. Cheng-Fong questions the inequality of women within marriage in the film. She does not, for example, think women should tolerate and forgive men's adultery. Although both the mother and daughter have different perspectives in terms of marriage, they are both depicted as women capable of independent thought.

The final section examines the promotion of female status in contemporary society through an examination of *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right*. It examines the influence of new feminism on women's representation by analysing the process of the female protagonist's self-realisation. With financial independence, women under the influence of feminism and new feminism – the film seems to suggest – become more independent. They do not depend on men for economic comfort, and furthermore are represented as having freedom to choose whether or not to marry. In contemporary media culture in Taiwan, for women with financial independence at least, marriage is a choice rather than an obligation. Divorce is also an option for women if their husbands are unfaithful or uncaring. Angela McRobbie stresses the importance of choice for female individualization: 'Individuals must now choose the kind of life they want to live.'²⁴² She further stresses: 'Choice is surely, within lifestyle culture, a modality of constraint. The individual is compelled to be the kind of subject who can make the right choices.'²⁴³ This emphasis on choice is a well-established feature of western discourses of post-feminism. Although the thesis

²⁴¹ Due to the lack of accurate information on the cast and crew of *Kuei-mei, A Woman* (Yi Chang, 1985), the name of the actress who played Cheng-Fong is uncertain. There is a list of names of the actors and actresses but there is no further information about who played the role of Cheng-Fong. The name of the actress could be Hui-Tiao Luo or Zhi-Ling Jiang.

²⁴² Angela McRobbie, "Postfeminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime", in Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra eds, *Interrogating Post-Feminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (London: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 35.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 36.

focuses on the impact of new feminism on the representation of women in Taiwanese cinema, it is nonetheless useful to refer to McRobbie's discussion of the significance of choice for female individualization within western popular culture. Indeed, the narrative choice between two men for An-Zhen (Sonia Sui) mirrors that between singlehood and marriage for Bridget (Renée Zellweger) in *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001), the film that McRobbie analyses as exemplary of post-feminist discourse. In both cases, the choice *not* to marry does not feature within the narrative world inhabited by the independent female protagonist.

The female protagonist in *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* is a perfect example of the representation of women under the influence of feminism and new feminism. The film presents her as a single mother with financial independence and a successful career. She enjoys her current life as a single mother but she starts wondering if she should get married again. The section therefore discusses the issue of remarriage as a current social phenomenon in Taiwanese society. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the wedding as a significant element in the film through an examination of the cinematic image, lighting, camera movement and music. The film, as is typical of romantic films, ends with a wedding as its happy ending. In spite of the fact that the director disagrees with the social expectation that marriage equals happiness for women over the age of thirty, she presents the struggle of the female protagonist as a divorced woman who remarries.²⁴⁴ The wedding plot in the film appears to support the institution of marriage.

²⁴⁴ Pei-Hua Wang, *The Filming Diary of The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Taipei: Kate Publishing, 2012), p. 17.

New Taiwan Cinema

Taiwanese cinema has always involved a mixture of diverse cultures and languages from different countries, for instance, Japan, mainland China, the United States, and Europe. According to Ru-Shou Robert Chen, 'From its very beginnings, Taiwan cinema has been a potpourri of diverse cultural, linguistic and other elements. Due to the historically unique circumstances of Taiwan, the history of Taiwan cinema is about films made in Taiwan, whether they have been financed and directed by Japanese, Chinese or Taiwanese.'²⁴⁵ He further points out that a Taiwanese film may use one or several different languages and dialects, for instance, Japanese, Taiwanese or Mandarin, depending on different social and historical circumstances.²⁴⁶ In the early 1980s the Taiwanese film industry faced a major challenge, stemming from the popularity of films made in Hong Kong in Taiwan and the growing video market. In order to compete with Hong Kong cinema, the Central Motion Picture Corporation (CMPC), supported by the government in Taiwan, set up a movement to encourage and support new young directors. The movement was known as the New Wave of the Taiwanese film industry and the films made between 1982 and 1986 became known as New Taiwan Cinema.

Both the film industry and society of Taiwan were developing rapidly at this time. One of the significant features of New Taiwan Cinema is its examination of the transformation of women's roles from traditional to modern society. Xiong-Ping Jiao characterizes this transformation in terms of the material changes and changing system of values that Taiwan has experienced; for instance, the traditional big family has broken down into small family units, the domination of the patriarchy has gradually

²⁴⁵ Ru-Shou Robert Chen, "Taiwan Cinema", in Yingjin Zhang, ed., *Encyclopedia of Chinese Film* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 47.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

disintegrated, and women have left the home in greater numbers to find paid employment. New Taiwan Cinema explores the representation of women's roles in traditional society via the adaptation of Taiwanese literature, for instance *Osmanthus Alley* (1988). The movement further explores the transformation of women's roles and their search for new identity in society, for instance *Kui-mei, A Woman* (1985).²⁴⁷ One of the reasons for New Taiwan Cinema to film adaptations of Taiwanese literature was to present the development of women's roles to audiences through representations of women on screen.²⁴⁸

A significant example of New Taiwan Cinema is *In Our Time* (1982) directed by De-Chen Tao, I-Jheng Ken, Edward Yang and Yi Chang. *In Our Time* stands not only as a significant example of New Taiwan Cinema, it also represents the beginning of the new trend. As Kuei-Fen Chiu claims, '*In Our Time* marked the debut of New Taiwan Cinema. These films were hailed as a breakthrough in the Taiwan film industry not only because of their stylistic innovations but also because of their attempt to bring on screen "realistic images of contemporary Taiwan."'²⁴⁹ The four directors of the film were later known for their role as leading directors of New Taiwan Cinema. This chapter will later analyse the film *Kuei-mei, A Woman* (1985) directed by one of these directors, Yi Chang, as an example of New Taiwan Cinema. Here it is worth underlining the importance to New Taiwan Cinema of a realistic style centred on the portrayal of the everyday life of people in Taiwan.

David Carter states that the New Wave films 'presented stories of people living in both urban and rural areas, and many critics had compared the styles of the films to

²⁴⁷ Xiong-Ping Jiao, *New Taiwan Cinema* (Taipei: China Times Publishing Company, 1988), pp. 357-358.

²⁴⁸ Yu-Shan Huang and Jun-Qi Wang, "Introduction: Taiwanese Female Directors and Their Films After New Taiwan Cinema" in Chen and Huang, eds, *The Research of Taiwanese Female Directors, 2000-2010*, p. 25.

²⁴⁹ Kui-Fen Chiu, "The Vision of Taiwan New Documentary", in Darrell William Davis and Ru-Shou Robert Chen, eds, *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), p. 17.

the phenomenon of Neo-realism in Italy. The films also attempted to reflect more closely the rhythms of real life and avoided creating deliberately dramatic climaxes.²⁵⁰ As Ru-Shou Robert Chen points out, another important feature of New Taiwan Cinema is the representation of women. ‘One group of films from New Taiwan Cinema capture women’s repression and suffering in addition to reflecting the struggles and dilemmas of their search for new identities.’²⁵¹ He further points out that another feature of New Taiwan Cinema is the use of female voice-over: ‘Voice-over, usually female, is another trademark in New Taiwan Cinema. It is sometimes employed as a frame device, appearing at the beginning and the end of the film. In other places it is used to connect missing points in the narrative or to signal the lapse of time, as in *Kuei-mei, A Woman*.’²⁵² The realist style of New Taiwan Cinema enables the distinctive presentation of the life of Taiwanese women and attempts to convey the transformation of their roles from traditional to modern society.

Besides the realist style of New Taiwan Cinema, another significant feature was the use of the Taiwanese dialect, which was the language spoken by the majority of Taiwanese. As Kuei-Fen Chiu states, ‘Many features of New Taiwan Cinema are seen to reflect this realist penchant: the use of nonprofessionals instead of established stars, the abandonment of popular martial law-era genres for realistic portrayals of contemporary Taiwanese society, avoidance of melodramatic scenes, and, most of all, the use of dialogue in Taiwanese – the language used by the majority of the people but suppressed under the Mandarin-only policy in the postwar period.’²⁵³ Consequently, the rise of New Taiwan Cinema may be regarded as an attempt by young directors to present their vision of Taiwan through films. A significant number of the New Wave

²⁵⁰ David Carter, *East Asian Cinema* (Harpenden: Kamera Books, 2007), p. 95.

²⁵¹ Ru-Shou Robert Chen, “Taiwan Cinema”, in Yingjin Zhang, ed, *Encyclopedia of Chinese Film* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 58.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Chiu, “The Vision of Taiwan New Documentary”, in Davis and Chen, eds, *Cinema Taiwan*, p. 18.

films address important social issues, for instance conflict with the government. David Carter claims that many New Wave films ‘dealt with important social issues that were of urgent concern in Taiwan at the time, such as conflicts with authority, the problems of rapid urbanization and the plight of the poor.’²⁵⁴ He points out two significant examples of New Wave films: the first is *A City of Sadness* (Hsiao-Hsien Hou, 1989) which ‘explores the tension between the local Taiwanese population and the incoming Chinese Nationalists after the end of the Japanese occupation’. Another is *Taipei Story* (Edward Yang, 1985) which ‘reflects the conflicts between traditional values and the priorities of a modern materialist society amongst young city-dwellers.’²⁵⁵ Both films are important examples of New Taiwan Cinema that present the life of Taiwanese people under the authority of Chinese Nationalists and the uncertainty of the younger generation in modern Taiwanese society.

Due to its politically engaged culture New Taiwan Cinema not only presents the reality of everyday life in Taiwan but also identifies social problems. Guo-Juin Hong states: ‘New Cinema is said to not only represent reality but also to actively expose the underlying problems in that reality. That is, realism serves as a lens through which more than the positive passes.’²⁵⁶ New Taiwan Cinema was a short-lived movement, one of the reasons for its failure being a lack of support from the government. Guo-Juin Hong argues: ‘No less realistic in style than Healthy Realism was in earlier decades, the content of New Cinema’s “reality” is no doubt not quite as healthy as the government would like to see portrayed.’²⁵⁷ The lack of financial support from the government and the challenge of Hong Kong cinema and Hollywood films forced the movement to end in 1986. A later movement known as the Second

²⁵⁴ Carter, *East Asian Cinema*, p. 95.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Guo-Juin Hong, *Taiwan Cinema: A Contested Nation on Screen* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 117.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

New Wave led the Taiwanese film industry toward transnational forces. The Taiwanese film industry was required to cooperate with international film industries, for instance the Hong Kong film industry. Guo-Juin Hong states: ‘Even though it may seem at first glance that the transnational forces informing the filmic scene in the previous decades have become less visible, it would be a mistake to ignore the stylistic and thematic exploration by the New Cinema in an international context.’²⁵⁸ Guo-Juin Hong continues: ‘This is done in national terms that contend with, on the one hand, the colonial history and subsequent rule of the Nationalist government from the Mainland, and, on the other, the globalizing forces encroaching and imposing upon its cinematic construction of local space.’²⁵⁹ Therefore, despite New Taiwan Cinema being a short-lived movement, it has inspired a new generation of directors to present their vision of Taiwan through films, and later inspired the Second New Wave. David Carter states: ‘There was really only a slow transition from the earnest preoccupations of the New Wave to what some have dubbed the Second New Wave. While continuing to reflect social issues and problems of Taiwanese society, these films are not quite so serious in tone and appeal more to popular taste.’²⁶⁰ He names a number of directors, for instance, Ming-Liang Tsai and Ang Lee as significant examples of the Second New Wave movement and their success in bringing Taiwanese Cinema to the wider world.²⁶¹

The Taiwanese film industry encountered other challenges in the 1990s, such as the rise of cable television and the domination of Hollywood films.²⁶² For this reason the Taiwanese film industry needed to shift its direction in response to the globalization of film culture and markets. Fran Martin explains the category of film as ‘transnational

²⁵⁸ Hong, *Taiwan Cinema*, p. 137.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Carter, *East Asian Cinema*, p. 95.

²⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 95-96.

²⁶² Fran Martin, “Taiwan (Trans) national Cinema: The Far-Flung Adventures of A Taiwanese Tomboy”, in Davis and Chen, eds, *Cinema Taiwan*, p. 132.

Taiwan Cinema': 'This category encompasses films by Taiwan-based filmmakers whose productions, like that of the art films, is grounded in Taiwan while drawing on investment by overseas, independent, mid-sized production companies but which, like the regionally oriented pan-Asian entertainment films, target a broader international and domestic audience beyond hard-core auteurist art-film fans.'²⁶³ She further points out films like the Taiwan/Hong Kong co-production *20, 30, 40* (Sylvia Chang, 2004) and the Taiwan/French co-production *Betelnut Beauty* (Cheng-Sheng Lin, 2001) as examples of 'transnational Taiwan Cinema'.²⁶⁴ This thesis will discuss the films directed by Sylvia Chang and their globalized approach in the final chapter. Despite the fact that the Taiwanese film industry encountered numerous difficulties during its development from the New Taiwan Cinema movement to contemporary Taiwanese Cinema, it inspired a new generation of directors to create diverse forms of Taiwanese films. New Taiwan Cinema further presents the development of women's status from traditional to modern society in Taiwan through its focus on the transformation of women's roles and the representation of women. As mentioned earlier, part of the innovation of New Taiwan Cinema was its exploration of women's role in traditional patriarchal society. The following section will provide an example of how New Taiwanese cinema tackled this theme. It will examine the representation of women within patriarchy in traditional Taiwanese society through an analysis of the film *Osmanthus Alley*.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

2.2. *Osmanthus Alley* (Kun Hao Chen, 1988)

Ti-Home Gao (Xiao-Fen Lu), the female protagonist of *Osmanthus Alley*, has a broken palm line, which was considered an ill omen in traditional Taiwanese society. In the film, a friend of Ti-Home's brother says: 'Superstitious people believe that women with broken palm lines are doomed to bring death to their loved ones'. The film begins with a funeral which presents Ti-Home standing in the rain mourning the death of her mother. A close-up depicts the female protagonist hugging her mother's tomb, crying: 'Mother. Mother.' The opening scene thus begins with the tragic life of the female protagonist who lost her parents when she was a twelve-year-old. Ti-Home and her younger brother are raised by their uncle after the death of their parents. Despite the superstition that women with broken palm lines are doomed to live in loneliness, Ti-Home believes that she can change her fate. Growing up in a poor family, her greatest wish is to become wealthy. The only way for Ti-Home to marry into a wealthy family is to accept the custom of foot-binding.



Figure 1: Ti-Home binds her feet.

Osmanthus Alley points out the repression of women within the patriarchy in traditional Taiwanese society through its female protagonist who chooses foot-binding as a route to advancement in marriage. I argue that *Osmanthus Alley* is a feminist film not only because it presents the difficulties of this choice but because it depicts the transformation of the female protagonist from an obedient woman who obeys men to an independent woman who effectively defies male authority. The film presents Ti-Home as a woman who has been shaped by Chinese Confucianism. The film represents the restrictions of a patriarchal society via her acceptance of obedience and bondage. Ti-Home obeys her uncle before marriage, her husband during marriage and her son during widowhood. She binds her head, waist and feet which restricts her physical freedom and suggests symbolic servitude. For Hsiu-Lien Lu, as discussed in chapter one, Chinese Confucianism subjected women to Three Obediences and Four Virtues: 'Together, these traditions actually created Three Bondages for women: Bound heads, Bound Waists and Bound Feet to restrict women's intellectual, sexual and physical freedoms.'²⁶⁵ The film presents Ti-Home with bound feet which reflects the physical repression of the female protagonist. She is confined within the house, in the kitchen, the living room or her bedroom. Even though there are exterior scenes, the locations are near the house suggesting a proximity to the domestic at all times. There are several scenes in which the female protagonist is shot either from indoors or outdoors through the window in the film. These shots work to visually confine Ti-Home in the small frame just as her life is confined to the house in this patriarchal society.

An early scene depicts Ti-Home standing in the kitchen looking at the man she admires through a small window; the composition illustrates her lack of physical freedom. As an unmarried woman, in this period we are shown that she cannot look at

²⁶⁵ Hsiu-Lien Lu, *New Feminism* (Taipei: Unitas Publishing, 2008), p. 296.

the man she likes directly in the eyes in public, she only looks at him indirectly from within a confined space. Another example that visually represents her lack of physical freedom is a scene in the middle of the film after she becomes a widow. The scene depicts Ti-Home sitting near the window while her unmarried maid does facial threading for her. The scene is shot from outside the window; both women, one widowed and another unmarried, are framed within the window as if their lives are confined in a cage. The scene vividly demonstrates their lack of physical freedom, suggesting the repression of women within patriarchal culture. In her analysis of melodrama, Laura Mulvey argues: ‘The workings of patriarchy, the mould of feminine unconscious it produces, have left women largely without a voice, gagged and deprived of outlets (of a kind supplied, for instance, by male art), in spite of the crucial social and ideological functions women are called on to perform.’²⁶⁶ In spite of the fact that the film is different from melodrama,²⁶⁷ the work of patriarchy is similar.



Figure 2: Ti-Home (right), Xin-Yue (left) and her son mourn the death of her husband.

²⁶⁶ Laura Mulvey, “Notes on Sirk and Melodrama”, in Christine Gledhill, ed., *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman’s Film* (London: BFI Publishing, 1987), p. 75.

²⁶⁷ See for example Wimal Dissanayake, ed., *Melodrama and Asian Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

The female protagonist is portrayed as an obedient wife when her husband and uncle are alive. The film presents her lack of voice and physical freedom under the male authority of her family. She remains silent when her uncle insults her. Her silence indicates the repression of women within the patriarchy because women were taught to obey men in Confucianism. The scene mentioned earlier demonstrates the repression of women's physical freedom in patriarchal culture. This scene contrasts to the later scenes when Ti-Home becomes the decision maker of the family business. As mentioned earlier, the film presents Ti-Home as a woman who has excellent needlework skills. The skill of needlework was one of the virtues for women as understood within Chinese Confucianism. Dorothy Ko writes: ““Work diligently with your hands” is the charge that Confucian ethics issued to all women, be they young or old, rich or poor. The ideal woman was known not for her beauty or appearance but for her “womanly work” (*nügong*).”²⁶⁸ As we have seen, women in traditional Taiwanese society did not have the right to be educated, only needing to learn how to do domestic chores and needlework. In the film, there are several scenes depicting Ti-Home sewing flowers at the shop near her house. While the film may present the talent of needlework as her merit and virtue, it also points out the problems of gender inequality within patriarchal society. The film appeals in this way to both traditional and modern viewers, establishing the female protagonist's moral worth and questioning the very associations on which it draws. The film seems to criticize the traditional concepts such as the one that states that women do not need to accept education, and that the essential task for women is to learn how to be a good wife.²⁶⁹ Needlework also signified a woman's value; as Ko stresses, ‘Textile work, in all shapes and colors, signaled a woman's moral and economic worth. This is especially true for the lotus

²⁶⁸ Dorothy Ko, *Every Step A Lotus Shoes For Bound Feet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 79.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

shoes she made and wore. “Men plough; women weave” describes the division of labor in an ideal Confucian society.²⁷⁰ Ti-Home’s talents in needlework and shoe-making are well-known in the village. Her needlework skills, elegant feet and beautiful hands ultimately enable her to reach a higher social class through marriage. A rich woman in the village admires her talents in needlework and invites her to attend her birthday ceremony. In order to impress the wealthy woman Ti-Home is shown preparing herself via a significant scene which shows her sat in her bedroom binding her feet. A close-up depicts Ti-Home looking pained, biting her lips while she is binding her feet. After Ti-Home finishes binding her feet, she looks down at a pair of lotus shoes and smiles gently. The close-up of the pair of lotus shoes signifies her dream and hope of reaching a higher class.

The wealthy woman receives a great impression of Ti-Home because of her small feet and beautiful hands. She tells Ti-Home that a woman’s destiny is determined by her hands and feet. She says to Ti-Home: ‘The most important parts for us as women are our hands and feet.’ This interaction works in the film to underline the gender inequality of patriarchal society that stresses the appearance of women. The film suggests that women are valued by their physical appearance and needlework skills rather than their intelligence. The wealthy woman likes Ti-Home very much so she offers a marriage to Ti-Home’s family. The film has presented Ti-Home as a woman in traditional Taiwanese society who does not have freedom of marriage choice, so her uncle accepts the marriage offer for Ti-Home. Marriage was the only way for women to gain financial support in traditional Taiwanese society; women often married for financial comfort rather than love and affection. For example, in *Osmanthus Alley*, Ti-Home likes a fisherman in the village but she does not want to live in poverty like her mother. She therefore accepts the arranged marriage even though she does not

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

know her future husband.

As an example of typical woman within traditional society, the only way for Ti-Home to receive an identity is through marriage. As Ko claims, 'Marriage is of paramount importance for the families and individuals concerned. The groom's family gained a productive member and a potential mother; the daughter gained a home and a socially respectable identity – wife.'²⁷¹ Life is full of challenges for Ti-Home; for example, her brother passes away in an accident when he goes fishing in stormy weather. Ti-Home gets married with the rich woman's grandson shortly after the death of her brother. On the wedding day, Ti-Home dresses in a bright red wedding gown with her hair tied up and wearing beautiful make-up. Red is a symbol of good luck in Chinese culture, and brides wear red in traditional Chinese or Taiwanese weddings. A close-up depicts the facial expression of Ti-Home who weeps in the sedan. The scene is ironic; Ti-Home should be joyful on her wedding day; on the contrary, she is sad. The background music plays the sorrowful sound of a flute rather than joyful wedding music. The sound of the flute speaks of the sorrow of the female protagonist who sits in silence mourning the death of her dearest brother.

Ti-Home's wish has come true; she becomes wealthy because her husband is a successful businessman in the village who owns several shops in Osmanthus Alley. Ti-Home has a maid named Xin-Yue (Xiu-Ling Lin) to serve her daily, and their friendship gradually develops through the film. Ti-Home gives birth to a son who brings her respect from the family because her son will be the heir of the family business. Ko states: 'For a woman, the body was her only gateway to a better future. To do textile work and to give birth – to attain value and meaning for herself, she could not do without the body.'²⁷² Ti-Home's giving birth to a son raises her status in the

²⁷¹ Ko, *Every Step A Lotus Shoes For Bound Feet*, p. 52.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 63.

family. Ti-Home feels grateful as a woman who is able to defeat her fate of poverty and loneliness. The film presents the transformation of the female protagonist through her dress and self-awareness. Ti-Home wears a simple and plain cotton dress before she gets married, which demonstrates her poverty and lower social class. After she gets married, she wears pink or red silk dresses which signify her wealth and higher social class. A scene in the middle of the film depicts the female protagonist going to visit her aunt and uncle with her husband and son. Ti-Home dresses elegantly in a red top and black skirt with beautiful make-up. Her red silk dress contrasts to the brown cotton dress she wears before she gets married. Her physical transformation not only demonstrates her elevation to a higher social class but also the development of her independence.

Ti-Home realises poverty and the lack of education are the reasons why her family and relatives chose fishing as a way to make living. Ti-Home gives her aunt some money and tells her the importance of education for children. She does not want her cousins to go through the same life experience as her brother, as a fisherman; she would like her aunt to let her cousins have a proper education. Ti-Home goes to see her old house, she sits in her old bedroom deep in thought, thinking about the past. When they leave, her husband closes the door of the house, signifying the end of poverty and the past. Ti-Home is no longer the poor girl without parents, she is now the wife of a wealthy businessman. Her status has transformed from a poor girl to a wealthy lady, from a woman without social status to a wife and mother. The film also points out the development of her individual thought to the audience. Ti-Home realises the importance of education and how it can change a person's fate. The film depicts Ti-Home teaching her son vocabulary. Her decision to send her son abroad to Japan for study further stresses the importance of education for the female protagonist.

The film presents the difficulty of Ti-Home's life, in which she encounters

various obstacles. Ti-Home becomes a young widow at the age of twenty-three after her husband's death. In the scene which depicts this, it rains heavily at night, the thunder foreshadowing the tragedy that will soon occur. Ti-Home sits next to her husband who has a serious illness; the husband expresses his sorrow that he can no longer be with his wife and educate their son. He reminds Ti-Home to take good care of herself and their son. The room becomes quiet; the curtain of the bed lays down which covers the face of her husband. The camera focuses on Ti-Home who sits quietly on the bed while her son kneels down on the floor and Xin-Yue stands next to him. The camera then moves backward outside the window and focuses on the three of them. The death of the husband signifies the loss of the male figure of the family and, as a result, the financial struggle for Ti-Home. She has to find a way to gain financial support and her greatest enemy in this is her husband's uncle who takes over the family business after her husband's death. The uncle refuses to let Ti-Home manage the family business because of her gender. The uncle even says to her: 'How can I let a woman like you manage the family business.' Her uncle's speech further points out the gender inequality in patriarchal culture. Women only need to care for the domestic chores; family business is not their responsibility so they do not have the authority to inquire. The scene depicts Ti-Home stands in the living room, she is furious while the uncle insults her but she endures his crudity and remains silent. A close-up illustrates Ti-Home glancing downward on the floor in deep thought. Despite the fact that Ti-Home feels depressed after the death of her husband, she is determined to gain control of the family business from her uncle.

The film presents the transformation of the female protagonist through different stages of her life. At the beginning of the film Ti-Home is portrayed as an obedient woman who obeys her uncle before marriage and obeys her husband during marriage. The death of Ti-Home's husband is a turning point in the film. Ti-Home has

transformed from an obedient woman to an independent woman with the courage to challenge the male figure of the patriarchal family. Ti-Home used to endure insults from her uncle silently but now she learns how to defy him with her wisdom. Ti-Home makes decisions without consulting her uncle, for instance sending her son abroad to Japan for study. It is a difficult decision for Ti-Home to send her only son abroad, but for the future of her son she needs to make the sacrifice. Ti-Home describes her feelings when sending her son away: 'To send my son away to Japan is like taking a knife and stabbing my heart.' The uncle is angry about Ti-Home's decision and lack of respect for him but has no choice other than to accept her arrangement. Ti-Home emerges as an intelligent woman who uses her wisdom to gain control of the family business. She knows her uncle is lazy and that he likes to smoke opium. For this reason she decides to manage the family business in case he spends all their fortune. Ti-Home knows her uncle's weak points so she uses various strategies to defeat him, for instance she pretends to be thoughtful and makes decisions about the family business without consulting him. She changes the staff of the shop, employing her cousin, someone she can rely on. With her strong ambition Ti-Home finally becomes the head of the family business at the age of thirty, after the uncle's death. The death of the uncle signifies the fall of patriarchy in the family; Ti-Home now fills the role of the uncle and has full control of the household and family business. Her uncle's death affords Ti-Home the authority and power to act as an independent woman.

An incident in the later part of the film indicates the wisdom of its female protagonist. Being a woman with beauty and wealth in the village, Ti-Home is adored by one of the male servants of the house. She has an intimate relationship with the male servant but she later realises his intention to be with her is because of her fortune. The film presents the view that women in traditional Taiwanese society should follow the custom of chastity during widowhood; they should be loyal to their late husbands.

In order to secure her reputation as a widow, and the reputation of the family, Ti-Home arranges a scheme to send the male servant to prison. She hides her jade bracelet under his bed and reports him to the police. Ti-Home's scheme is successful; the male servant is sent to prison. The incident indicates the intelligence of the female protagonist and how she uses her wisdom to defy male authority. Nevertheless, the affair with the male servant illustrates the repression suffered by women in patriarchal society. The film suggests that the woman is a desiring subject but also shows the consequences of female desire with respect to the risks of social exclusion. It is essential for a widow to retain her chastity and reputation in patriarchal culture.

A significant scene in the film provides an example of women's repression within the patriarchy. The scene depicts Ti-Home sitting on her bed while Xin-Yue is ironing the clothes for her in the bedroom. Ti-Home is placed in the right corner of the frame. On the contrary, the maid is placed on the left near the centre of the frame. Ti-Home dresses in black in contrast to Xin-Yue who dresses in white. The placement of the female characters in the scene and the colours of their outfits signify their different statuses as women. The white outfit signifies the purity and honour of Xin-Yue as an unmarried woman, while the dark dress of Ti-Home signifies her impurity and shame as a widow who fails to retain her chastity. The scene foreshadows Ti-Home's affair with the male servant in the later part of the film. A spotlight focuses on Xin-Yue in the scene, indicating her righteousness as an unmarried woman. Ti-Home sits in the corner of the room in darkness, indicating her shame as a widow. The sharp contrast of the placement and outfits of both female characters in the scene demonstrate the repression of women within patriarchy. Ti-Home has been condemned and punished as a widow who fails to retain her chastity. Her later painful pregnancy in the film is presented as a punishment she needs to endure. She goes to Japan to give birth to her daughter and sends her daughter away for adoption. The film seems to

suggest the social exclusion of the female protagonist by presenting her leaving the country and going to Japan. The separation from her daughter signifies her punishment.

Ti-Home has grave concerns regarding her reputation as a widow because of her pregnancy. Only Xin-Yue knows the truth and decides to keep the secret for her. Xin-Yue helps Ti-Home tighten her waist every morning in order to hide her growing belly. They even keep the secret from her son until he returns from Japan for a holiday. Ti-Home accepts Xin-Yue's advice to tell her son the truth about her pregnancy. The scene depicts Ti-Home revealing her growing belly to her son. The camera shoots from the back of Ti-Home and her son. Ti-Home unwraps the clothes slowly; she turns around to show her belly to her son then turns back quickly. She feels ashamed of herself so she cannot look her son in the eyes. A close-up presents her facial expression to the audience. She is in tears, she looks regretful and ashamed of herself as a mother. In order to avoid the rumours of the servants, Ti-Home accepts her son's invitation to travel to Japan with him. She gives birth to a daughter in Japan then sends her daughter to a Japanese couple for adoption. The separation scene depicts Ti-Home hiding behind the door, listening to the conversation between the Japanese couple and her son. Ti-Home dresses in black; the young Japanese couple and her son dress in bright colours. Ti-Home's dark dress signifies her impurity as a widow. Ti-Home hides behind the door in darkness which contrasts to the couple and her son who sit in a bright room. The contrast of brightness and darkness in the space imply the righteousness and unrighteousness of the characters in the film. The scene presents the Japanese couple and Ti-Home's son as righteous. Ti-Home is depicted as unrighteous because of her failure to obey the expectations of women in patriarchal culture. The film suggests that women should follow Confucian ethics and retain their chastity during widowhood.

Similar to the narrative form of melodrama, the film presents the rewards and punishments of its characters. In her analysis of melodrama, Linda Williams states that 'the aesthetic form of melodrama took on the burden of rewarding the virtue and punishing the vice of undivided and comparatively powerless characters.'²⁷³ Ti-Home has been punished for her affair with the male servant through her painful pregnancy. The film depicts Ti-Home looks in pain when Xin-Yue binds her waist in order to hide her growing belly.

Nevertheless, her behaviour is forgiven after the birth of her daughter, which signifies the rebirth of Ti-Home. Williams stresses that melodrama took on an intense quality of wish-fulfilment: 'The domestic sphere where women and children predominate as protagonists whose only power derives from virtuous suffering thus emerges as an important source of specifically female wish-fulfillment.'²⁷⁴ The film presents Ti-Home giving birth to a daughter rather than a son, and she has to give up her daughter. The action of sending her daughter away suggests that girl is less valuable than boy. As mentioned earlier, family in traditional Taiwanese society tend to send their daughters away when they encounter financial difficulties.²⁷⁵ Although Ti-Home sends her daughter away in order to retain her reputation as a widow, her action indicates the gender inequality in patriarchal society. Ti-Home goes to the temple with her son after she gives birth to her daughter. Ti-Home looks peaceful and content because she had sent her daughter for adoption and her reputation as a widow is secured.

Sisterhood is one of the central themes of the film. The relationship between the two women, Ti-Home and Xin-Yue, is worth discussing. Their sisterhood

²⁷³ Linda Williams, "Something Else Besides a Mother: Stella Dallas and the Maternal Melodrama", in Gledhill, ed., *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, p. 301.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 301.

²⁷⁵ Yi-Wen Zhuo, *The Life of Taiwanese Women during the Qing Dynasty* (Taipei: Independent Newspaper Publication, 1993), p. 10.

strengthens female power in the film. The film depicts the strong sisterhood between these two women through various scenes. Xin-Yue has been with Ti-Home since Ti-Home married into the family; she serves her daily, takes care of her son, and gives her advice when she needs her. Xin-Yue sacrifices her youth to serve Ti-Home; in return her loyalty to and care for the family is deeply appreciated by Ti-Home. An essential event occurs after the death of Ti-Home's husband; Ti-Home is in great sorrow, therefore she punishes her son strictly when she hears him playing the flute at night. Ti-Home beats her son harshly with a bamboo stick; Xin-Yue runs forward to protect him so she gets injured as well. Ti-Home is touched to see Xin-Yue sacrifice herself to protect her son. Another important incident which strengthens their sisterhood is Ti-Home's second pregnancy in the film. Xin-Yue hides the pregnancy from other maids in the household. She ties Ti-Home's waist daily in order to conceal her growing belly from other people in the family. Ti-Home does not want to let her son know about her pregnancy but Xin-Yue advises her to tell him the truth. These events strengthen their trust and friendship. The events further demonstrate the importance of sisterhood in the film. Ti-Home does not consider Xin-Yue her maid, she treats her as her dearest friend and sister because Xin-Yue is the only friend she can trust. Ti-Home knows that Xin-Yue remains single in order to serve her. She is delighted for Xin-Yue when she knows that she has the opportunity to get married in her mid-thirties. She feels lonely without Xin-Yue but she cannot be selfish, she has to accept her fate of loneliness. On the day of separation Ti-Home takes off one of the jade bracelets on her wrist and gives it to Xin-Yue. She says to her: 'a jade bracelet is for a wealthy lady. Do not forget to wear the jade bracelet.' The jade bracelet signifies their sincere friendship and powerful sisterhood that will last forever.

Ti-Home is portrayed as an obedient woman at the beginning of the film. The film presents her transformation from a dependent woman who obeys men to an

independent woman who defies the male authority of the patriarchal family. She successfully gains authority as the head of the family and its business. At the end of the film, Ti-Home is presented sitting in her bedroom remembering the past and her loved ones. One of the flashbacks is an image of a little girl running joyfully towards her and calling out 'mother' in Japanese. The scene then shifts from the flashback of her memories to the female protagonist in the bedroom; Ti-Home has become an old woman; she dresses in black and sits quietly on the chair. The background music is a song about the life of a lonely woman: 'To think about my life is like a line destroyed by the wind. It flows with the wind from one mountain to another. It has no one to depend on.' The background music goes on: 'My fate is like the osmanthus flower. It is heart-breaking to think about the past. Feelings of gratitude and resentment disappear like the smoke. It is destiny. There is no point thinking about the past. Just take it as a dream. Take it as a dream.' The music appears in the film several times but the lyrics appear only in the final scene of the film. Ti-Home sits on the chair silently; the background music speaks for her. The final scene depicts Ti-Home laying down her hands gently as she passes away peacefully at home at the age of seventy-five.

Osmanthus Alley presents Ti-Home as an ordinary woman with an extraordinary life. Ti-Home as a representation of woman in traditional Taiwanese society possesses the characteristics of strong determination and endurance. She endures the death of loved ones, the pain of foot-binding, the threats of her male servant, and gender inequality in the patriarchal family. Ti-Home may follow the tradition of Three Obediences and Four Virtues within a patriarchal society, but she has the capacity for independent thought. Ti-Home knows exactly what she wants and she is determined to achieve her goals. She does not want to live in poverty like her mother so she decides to accept the custom of foot-binding in order to reach a higher social class. Ti-Home uses her wisdom to gain control of the family business, and to defy the

male servant. The film presents the life of a woman in traditional Taiwanese society in order to show the development of women's roles from traditional to modern society to a contemporary audience. Ti-Home does not have the opportunity to get a proper education, nor does she have financial independence. She is an example of a woman constrained by patriarchal culture to accept the custom of the Three Obediences and Four Virtues. Although Ti-Home depends on her husband for financial support, her independent thought, strong determination and courage are significant to the representation of women in Taiwanese cinema. This section has examined the representation of women in a film set in the late Qing dynasty in Taiwan. The following section will examine the representation of women from traditional to modern Taiwanese society in *Kuei-mei, A Woman*. It will further examine the representation of the 'good' mother in the film.

2.3. *Kuei-mei, A Woman* (Yi Chang, 1985)

Kuei-mei, A Woman is another film made during the New Taiwan Cinema movement. As mentioned earlier, Xiong-Ping Jiao states that New Taiwan Cinema often adapts Taiwanese literature and explores the representation of women's roles in traditional patriarchal society, such as in *Osmanthus Alley*. The movement further explores the transformation of the role of women and their search for a new identity in society, as in *Kui-mei, A Woman*.²⁷⁶ The film describes the life story of a woman from her late twenties to her late fifties; the female protagonist of the film is Kuei-Mei Wong (Hui-Shan Yang) who is a refugee from mainland China. Kuei-Mei is engaged but lost contact with her fiancé during the Civil War. Kuei-Mei comes to Taiwan with her cousin after the Civil War and lives with her cousin and her family in Taipei. Kuei-Mei

²⁷⁶ Jiao, *New Taiwan Cinema*, pp. 357-358.

is a beautiful and diligent woman who handles the household chores for her cousin's family. She is in her late twenties so her cousin encourages her to get married soon. A friend of her cousin introduces Kuei-Mei to a widower, Young-Nian Hou (Li-Qun Lee), who has three children. Young-Nian has a good impression of Kuei-Mei so he proposes to her after they have met several times. Kuei-Mei knows that she cannot depend on her cousin's family forever, therefore she accepts his proposal. Kuei-Mei hopes she can try her best to be a 'good' wife and mother.

The film presents Kuei-Mei as a strong woman who is able to endure hardships. She encounters numerous obstacles in her life, for instance domestic violence, financial difficulty, and her husband's unfaithfulness and uncaring attitude. The film depicts Kuei-Mei overcoming various difficulties and becoming the decision maker of the family. The film acknowledges contemporary feminist ideas through this presentation of Kuei-Mei as a businesswoman and matriarch of the family. Kuei-Mei thought Young-Nian was a reliable man but she realises he is a gambler and alcoholic shortly after they get married. The family encounters financial difficulties after her husband's unemployment. In order to support the family, Kuei-Mei makes artificial flowers for a factory at home. She even sells her own jewellery to pay the debts of her husband. Kuei-Mei needs to support her family and care for the children at the same time, but her husband keeps on gambling. Kuei-Mei tries to persuade him to quit gambling but he refuses to listen to her. Although Kuei-Mei marries an irresponsible husband, she endures all the difficulties in the marriage with patience and courage.

The film presents Kuei-Mei as a traditional Taiwanese woman who accepts her fate in a poor marriage. She is an example of a 'good' wife and mother. She cares for her family without complaint, supports her family financially and endures her husband's uncaring attitude. There are several significant scenes in the film that portray Kuei-Mei as a 'good' wife. An early scene towards the beginning of the film depicts

the life of the newly wedded couple. Young-Nian works as a waiter in a hotel so he frequently comes home late. Kuei-Mei waits for her husband at night and prepares late meals for him when he returns home. The scene depicts the couple in the kitchen; Kuei-Mei is preparing a meal for Young-Nian while he is reading the newspaper. A colleague of Young-Nian gives Kuei-Mei some leftovers from the restaurant when she brings him an umbrella at work. Young-Nian would like to have some leftovers to go with the wine but Kuei-Mei tells him that she has thrown them away. Young-Nian scolds her furiously: 'You are so noble. If you are so noble then do not marry a waiter.' Young-Nian then leaves the kitchen and goes to the bedroom. A close-up focuses on Kuei-Mei who sits quietly in the kitchen; she looks deep in thought with concern about the relationship with her husband. The scene then moves to the bedroom, where the couple lie on the bed. Kuei-Mei explains to Young-Nian the reason why she threw the leftovers away. She respects his job as a waiter, she just thinks that they should depend on themselves rather than on others for support. Kuei-Mei also tells him about her ambition to open a restaurant in the future. The room is dark; a close-up centres on the couple, who lie on the bed. Kuei-Mei hugs her husband tightly and says to him: 'I married you for the rest of my life.' Kuei-Mei is determined to be a 'good' wife, and to maintain a good relationship with her husband and children no matter what happens in the marriage. Her speech reflects her perspective on marriage for a woman within a patriarchal society. Kuei-Mei may be presented as a traditional woman under the influence of patriarchy, but the film also presents the development of women's role in society from the 1950s to the 1980s through its female protagonist. Kuei-Mei is portrayed as an obedient woman at the beginning of the film but she gradually becomes a woman with independent thought, and leader of the family.

A later scene further stresses Kuei-Mei's point of view on marriage. At the beginning of their marriage, Kuei-Mei is an obedient woman who remains silent when

her husband scolds her. She goes through a transformation process during her pregnancy. The film presents the transformation of Kuei-Mei from an obedient wife to a strong and independent mother. When Kuei-Mei is heavily pregnant, she borrows money for her unborn twins from a private bank but her husband takes the money away to gamble. Kuei-Mei cannot find her money so she goes to find Young-Nian who is gambling at a friend's house. Kuei-Mei asks him to return the money to her but he pretends he does not know anything about it. Kuei-Mei takes the knife on the table then points to Young-Nian in front of the neighbours. She furiously shouts: 'Give my money back. The money for my babies.' A close-up presents Kuei-Mei's facial expression and her anger to the audience, then the camera moves backward to the couple; Kuei-Mei stands in front of Young-Nian with a knife in her hands. Young-Nian sits at the table, he turns his head around refuses to look at his wife. The scene is significant in the film, as it presents the female protagonist standing in front of her husband who sits at the table (see figure 3). Her standing position signifies her power over her husband, except he is in the foreground and larger in the frame. The knife in her hands further stresses her power, in contrast to her husband who is unarmed. The scene foreshadows the later role transformation of the family, in which the wife will overpower her husband and become the decision maker of the family. Kuei-Mei feels a strong pain in her belly when she holds the knife in her hands, then her water breaks. She gives birth to twins, a boy and a girl, safely in the hospital.

Motherhood increases Kuei-Mei's confidence and courage; she does not remain silent anymore, she speaks for herself and her children. Motherhood has transformed the female protagonist from an obedient wife to a strong mother. Kuei-Mei expresses her feelings as a wife and mother to her cousin when she visits her in the hospital. She says: 'Sometimes I just hate it. I wish I could leave him.' Her cousin points out the difficulty of being a woman: 'Women have a rough life. We have to stay with whoever

we marry. It would be better not to get married.’ She tells Kuei-Mei that a friend of hers has a successful career and lives happily as a single woman. This brief conversation between Kuei-Mei and her cousin reflects the difficulties faced by women without financial independence, and their unwillingness to stay in a marriage if their husbands are uncaring. The film on the one hand praises the sacrifice of women during the marriage, while on the other hand it points out the problem of traditional social roles for women. Women in traditional Taiwanese society were expected to stay in marriage even if their husbands were unfaithful or uncaring. This is the first time in the film that Kuei-Mei reveals her sincere feelings and her struggle as a woman. Although she wants to leave her husband, she stays in the marriage for the sake of her children. The film presents her sacrifice as a woman in the marriage to demonstrate her ability to endure hardships. The thesis argues that although Kuei-Mei has been portrayed as the matriarch of the family in the later part of the film, her ideology of marriage is traditional.



Figure 3: Kuei-Mei (left) threatens Young-Nian (right) with a knife.

Another example in which the film depicts Kuei-Mei's point of view on marriage is a significant scene in the middle of the film when she realises her husband is having an affair. A woman with an infant comes to visit Young-Nian while he is away. She tells Kuei-Mei that her husband promised he would look after her and her daughter. Young-Nian comes back home and is surprised to see the woman in the house. He later explains to Kuei-Mei that he had an intimate relationship with the woman once but he will never see her again. Kuei-Mei refuses to listen to him; she packs her luggage while he explains to her. Then Kuei-Mei says to Young-Nian: 'I want to divorce. I will find a job at the factory. I will come back to pick up the children after I settle down. Five of the children are mine.' Kuei-Mei's speech in this scene is very powerful and significant for the representation of women in Taiwanese cinema in the 1980s.

Although Taiwan had become a developed country with western influences, divorce remained an uncommon and controversial topic for Taiwanese society in the 1980s. This influential film presents the courage of its female protagonist through her decision to seek a divorce. Kuei-Mei leaves home and works at a factory. The house without the mother is chaos. Their eldest daughter leaves home; the second son gets burned when he helps his father in the kitchen. Young-Nian does not know what to do so he takes the twins to visit his wife at the factory. As mentioned earlier in the section, the film presents Kuei-Mei as a tolerant woman who endures numerous obstacles in her life. She chooses to forgive her husband and returns home for the children. In a voice-over Kuei-Mei tells the audience near the end of the film while she is remembering her life: 'It is more difficult for a woman to tolerate if her husband has an affair than gambling. There are only two choices for women, to leave him or to forgive him. I think both choices are not wise but you have to choose one. I chose to forgive him.' Even though Kuei-Mei wants to divorce, she chooses to forgive her husband for

the sake of their children. Kuei-Mei endures her husband's gambling, uncaring attitude and adultery, and sacrifices her happiness in order to provide a complete family for her children.

Kuei-Mei is a significant example of the representation of a woman as a 'good' mother who makes numerous sacrifices for her children. Anthropologist Sheila Kitzinger claims that 'once a woman has produced a child she bonds with it in utter devotion, forgets her own wishes, and sacrifices herself for her baby.'²⁷⁷ The representation of the 'good' mother is a significant aspect of the film. Kuei-Mei is portrayed as a 'good' mother who is patient and kind. In spite of the nationality and cultural differences, the representation of the 'good' mother in Taiwan is similar to the Western representation of the idealised image of the 'good' mother. Fiona Green states that a 'good' mother is a mother who follows the ideology of intensive mothering. She takes sole care of and responsibility for her children's emotional development and intellectual growth. The 'good' mother is devoted to her children and their needs rather than her own, and never has any negative feelings towards them, only unfailing unconditional love.²⁷⁸ Kuei-Mei loves her children and step-children very much, and treats them equally, with care and love.

There are several examples that illustrate her role as a 'good' mother in the film. Kuei-Mei wants to provide a better life for her children, therefore she expresses her idea to open a restaurant to her husband. In order to have a better income, Kuei-Mei accepts the offer of a job as a servant for a wealthy family so she goes to Japan with her husband and two children. It is difficult for Kuei-Mei to separate from her children; she wants to be equal to them but she can only take two children with her to Japan. At

²⁷⁷ Sheila Kitzinger cited in Naomi Wolf, *Misconceptions: Truth, Lies and the Unexpected on the Journey to Motherhood* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2001), p. 50.

²⁷⁸ Fiona Green, "Feminist Mothers: Successfully Negotiating the Tensions between Motherhood as 'Institution' and 'Experience'", in Andrea O'Reilly, ed., *Mother Outlaws: Theories and Practices of Empowered Mothering* (Toronto: Women's Press, 2004), p. 33.

night Kuei-Mei and her husband gather the children together to announce their decision to go to Japan. Young-Nian lacks the courage to announce the distressing news to the children so Kuei-Mei speaks to them. A later scene depicts the sorrow of Kuei-Mei when she has to separate from her beloved children. In darkness, the camera moves slowly from the soundly sleeping children to Kuei-Mei who lies on the bed sobbing; she does not want to disturb her family so she tries to keep her voice down. A close-up focuses on the facial expression of Kuei-Mei. She cannot control her emotion and cries sorrowfully, biting the duvet in order to lower her voice. It is the first scene in which she is seen crying, and she seldom reveals her emotion in the film.

Life in Japan is more challenging for Kuei-Mei and her husband but in order to provide a better life for the family, they have to endure. Kuei-Mei and her husband first work in the wealthy family's house as their servants, then later work at a Chinese restaurant. They finally save enough money to return to Taiwan and reunite with their children. Kuei-Mei and her husband open a restaurant that sells beef rice and curry. Their restaurant is popular among their neighbours so they earn a great fortune. The family finally has a better life because of Kuei-Mei who is determined to open a restaurant in spite of numerous obstacles.

Kuei-Mei is the one who cares for the children, cleans the house, prepares meals and runs the restaurant at the same time. She tries her best to manage the family and the restaurant but her husband shows little gratitude for her hard work. Young-Nian is frequently absent when the children need him so Kuei-Mei has to take full responsibility for caring for the children and the restaurant. Deborah Borisoff argues that in order for mothers to achieve the idealised image of the 'good' mother and the ideology of intensive mothering,²⁷⁹ mothers (and only mothers) are able and

²⁷⁹ See for example, Deborah Borisoff, "Transforming Motherhood: 'We've Come a Long Way', Maybe", *Review of Communication* 5.1 (2005), p. 7. Borisoff explains the ideology of intensive mothering as a series of tasks for mothers to do, for instance, supervising their children's every activity,

expected to perform the following tasks lovingly and willingly: 'a child's every activity must be supervised scrupulously, every toy possess an educational component, every meal lovingly and nutritiously prepared, every school assignment assiduously reviewed, and when expecting, in addition, that one's home meet the approval of Martha Stewart....'²⁸⁰ Kuei-Mei carries sole responsibility for caring for the children and family, while her husband seems to show little concern about them. Young-Nian thinks that caring for the children and family are women's work so he takes the sacrifices of his wife for granted.

Another scene depicts Kuei-Mei as a 'good' mother who protects her children during a typhoon. On a rainy night, Kuei-Mei comes home with some groceries and emergency supplies to make preparation for the coming typhoon. Her husband goes to a friend's house to gamble as usual. At midnight, the wind and rain become stronger, and Kuei-Mei wakes up at night and finds their house is flooding. She wakes up the children and gathers them to her bedroom. All of them sit on the bed for the whole night. A medium-shot depicts the mother holding her children tightly. The children are frightened; she comforts them and says: 'Do not be afraid. Mommy is here.' Her youngest daughter asks: 'Where is daddy?' Kuei-Mei does not reply. The typhoon has gone in the morning, and Kuei-Mei starts cleaning the house and restaurant with her children. Young-Nian comes home while they are cleaning the restaurant, explaining to Kuei-Mei that the typhoon was too strong so he could not come home last night. She refuses to talk to him though he tries to explain. Kuei-Mei is furious but she tries to control her emotions in front of the children. Her husband's excuse for not coming home makes her angry; she takes a brush in her hand then breaks the windows. The sound of the broken glass reflects her anger with the uncaring husband who is absent

buying toys that have educational purposes, preparing nutritious meals, and decorating the house beautifully.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

when they need him. The scene foreshadows the adultery of her husband in the later part of the film. The broken window signifies her broken heart and trust. Kuei-Mei believes her husband will not have an affair with another woman therefore she is very disappointed when she finds out about his adultery. The natural disaster further stresses the importance of Kuei-Mei as a mother to her children and the family. She is the one who provides a better life for her children, the one who protects them when danger occurs.

There are other examples in the film which further stress the role of Kuei-Mei as a 'good' mother and the mother-daughter relationship. A scene in the middle of the film depicts Cheng-Fong leaving home because she is pregnant. While Kuei-Mei is worried about her step-daughter, she receives a call from the family of her step-daughter's boyfriend. The family explains to Kuei-Mei and Young-Nian that Cheng-Fong has told them she is pregnant and that she wants to get married to their son. Both sets of parents agree not to let their children get married because they are still in high school. Kuei-Mei expresses her gratitude toward the mother and says she will have a discussion with her step-daughter. Kuei-Mei and Young-Nian take their daughter home. Young-Nian feels ashamed of his daughter and beats her furiously when they arrive outside their house. Kuei-Mei runs toward Cheng-Fong to protect her and fights with her husband. Kuei-Mei's reaction expresses her love toward her daughter and her care as a mother. Kuei-Mei wants her daughter to continue her education and to have a prosperous future. She decides to take her daughter to have an abortion because she is too young to be a mother. A scene depicts Cheng-Fong lying on the bed in the hospital after the abortion as Kuei-Mei goes into the room to see her. She touches her daughter's head then holds her hands tightly. A medium-shot focuses on the image of the mother and daughter. The mother looks at the daughter, who is sleeping soundly, with deep concern. Then the film presents photos of Cheng-Fong

after she grows up, goes to university and works at a school after she graduates. Kuei-Mei's voice-over tells the story of Cheng-Fong to the audience: 'No one can endure the hardship for Cheng-Fong. Nevertheless, she eventually grows up.' Cheng-Fong's abortion strengthens the mother-daughter relationship in the film. She was rebellious when she was younger but she becomes more mature after the abortion. Cheng-Fong realises Kuei-Mei really loves her and treats her as her own child. She is grateful for her love and care when she grows up.

Kuei-Mei gets cancer in her late fifties. Her husband takes care of her in the hospital and Cheng-Fong manages the restaurant for her mother. Kuei-Mei is delighted that her children are all healthy and have a prosperous future; they go through higher education and have successful careers. She starts discussing the family business with her children because she knows her time is limited. Another scene depicts the mother-daughter relationship at the end of the film. Cheng-Fong goes to the hospital to see her mother; Kuei-Mei says that she would like to go out for a walk so Cheng-Fong accompanies her mother to visit her cousin. As they walk slowly on the street, Kuei-Mei confesses to her daughter that her greatest regret in her life was to leave her children in Taiwan when she went to Japan for work. Cheng-Fong comforts her that she does not hate her for making the decision because she gradually understands the difficulty of being a mother. Cheng-Fong asks her mother: 'Can you really forgive father's adultery?' Kuei-Mei replies: 'It has been so many years. I already forgive him. One side has to tolerate and learn to forgive in a marriage.' Cheng-Fong asks: 'Why it is always the woman who has to tolerate? I think you should not forgive father so easily.' Kuei-Mei laughs: 'It is too late for me to get divorced at this age.' She asks her daughter: 'Is this the reason why you do not want to get married?' Cheng-Fong remains silent and looks deep in thought. The conversation between the mother and daughter on marriage is important in the film. Kuei-Mei represents the traditional

Taiwanese woman who possesses the virtues of tolerance and patience. She believes that a woman should try to maintain her marriage in order to provide a complete family for her children. She forgives her husband for his gambling, his uncaring attitude and adultery because she loves her children. Even though she wants a divorce, she endures her husband for the sake of the children. Kuei-Mei makes tremendous sacrifices to be a 'good' wife and mother without complaint. Young-Nian expresses his regret to the children in the end of the film: 'Your mother had a very difficult life. She worked very hard for us for her whole life but now it is too late for me to repay my gratitude toward her.' The main concerns of Kuei-Mei are her family and the restaurant; she hopes one of her children will take over the restaurant but they all have their own careers.

The ending presents a sunset in Taipei to the audience, which signifies the end of Kuei-Mei's life. The scene then moves to the mother and daughter in the hospital. Cheng-Fong looks at her mother, and tells her that she would like to take over the restaurant but she will manage the business in a different way. Kuei-Mei looks relieved and asks her to take good care of her father and the family. The film ends with a close-up of the mother and daughter. Cheng-Fong sits next to Kuei-Mei who closes her eyes then falls asleep. The restaurant represents the life of Kuei-Mei and her dream. The passing of the restaurant to Cheng-Fong symbolises the continuity of her life and ambition to her daughter. Kuei-Mei says to the audience: 'Many people say that Cheng-Fong looks very similar to me.' Even though Cheng-Fong is Kuei-Mei's step-daughter, she loves her as her own child. Without Kuei-Mei, Cheng-Fong would not have been able to attend higher education. When Cheng-Fong was little, Young-Nian wanted to send her away to a doctor because they were poor. It was Kuei-Mei who disagreed with Young-Nian and insisted on letting Cheng-Fong attend proper education, the same as her brothers. Kuei-Mei works hard for her children because she wants them to receive the education that she could not have. She knows

how important it is for women to be educated so they can have the skills and abilities to be financially independent.



Figure 4: Kuei-Mei and her daughter Cheng-Fong.

Kuei-Mei is a role model for her children: she is diligent and hard-working, and wants her children to live in a good environment. She endures numerous obstacles during the marriage for her children. She sacrifices her time and life to care for the family without complaint. Kuei-Mei is a standard example of the ‘good’ mother image. Susan Chase and Mary Rogers describe the ‘good’ mother as a full-time mother: ‘she is a full-time mother who is always present in the lives of her children, young and old; she remains home to cook for them after school and if she works outside of the home, she organises such responsibilities around the need of her children.’²⁸¹ In spite of the fact that the ‘good’ mother image Chase and Rogers describe here is from western culture, it is useful to refer their analysis to the social expectation of the ‘good’ mother image in Taiwan. Although Kuei-Mei leaves three of her children in Taiwan when she works in Japan, she arranges to let her children stay with her cousin’s family and she

²⁸¹ Susan Chase and Mary Rogers, *Mothers and Children: Feminist Analysis and Personal Narratives* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 30.

tries her best to care for them when she is in Taiwan. She keeps in contact with her children and cousin when she is in Japan by writing them letters. Kuei-Mei loves her children very much and is satisfied with her role as a mother. She never complains about her lack of freedom or friendship; on the contrary, she thinks her children are the most important part of her life. Green argues that the ‘good’ mother finds this intensive maternal role to be natural, satisfying, fulfilling and meaningful. She feels no sense of loss or sacrifice at her own lack of freedom, friendships, financial independence or intellectual stimulation.²⁸² Although the director of the film has explained his purpose in subjecting Kuei-Mei to numerous hardships during her marriage was in order to present her virtue as a Taiwanese woman to the audience,²⁸³ the film seems to suggest that this is how the representation of a ‘good’ mother should be. Thus the film simultaneously represents female subjection and celebrates female sacrifice.

Kuei-Mei stands as an example of forgiveness for her children when she decides to forgive her husband. The film points out the sacrifices of women as mothers and wives through its female protagonist. The director intentionally presents the story of Kuei-Mei in slow motion so the audience can see the life and struggle of the female protagonist in detail. Kuei-Mei undergoes a process of transformation from wife to mother, from an obedient woman without financial independence to a capable businesswoman. The director wanted to present a realistic image of a pregnant woman who later reaches middle age so he required the actress, Hui-Shan Yang, to gain twenty-two kilograms. Hui-Shan Yang stated in the panel of the 2012 Taipei Film Festival that the most challenging part of the role was to gain the weight in just a few months; she had to keep on eating in order to reach the weight the director required. It

²⁸² Green, “Feminist Mothers: Successfully Negotiating the Tensions between Motherhood as ‘Institution’ and ‘Experience’”, in O’Reilly, ed., *Mother Outlaws*, p. 33.

²⁸³ Question and Answer with Hui-Shan Yang and Yi-Chang after the screening of *Kuei-mei, A Woman* (1985) at Taipei Film Festival, 8 July 2012, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-UY9eGP0yY>>[accessed 18 February 2014].

was difficult for her to gain weight because her life schedule as an actress was unorganised. For this reason, the director hired an assistant to accompany her daily to purchase food for her.²⁸⁴ Hui-Shan Yang's devotion as an actress to gain weight for the role and her realistic portrayal of Kuei-Mei are the reasons behind her achievement of winning the best actress at the seventy-fourth Golden Horse Awards in Taiwan in 1985.

The film presents the development of the role of women from the 1950s to the 1980s, from a woman who learns to obey within patriarchal society to a woman capable of independence in modern society. Kuei-Mei transforms from an obedient woman who depends on a man for economic support to a woman who has a business of her own. The role of Kuei-Mei is an idealised image of the 'good' mother created by patriarchal society. According to the argument of Feasey, 'Patriarchal society remains the chief beneficiary of the 'good' mother myth, as the ideology of intensive mothering presents mothers as effective consumers while giving them the sole responsibility of childcare without financial recompense for their labours.'²⁸⁵ Yi Chang as the director and editor of the film arranged numerous obstacles for Kuei-Mei to endure in order to present the virtue of Taiwanese women to the audience. Kuei-Mei lives for her children; she does not regret or complain about her sacrifice for the family. Her sacrifice as a wife and mother has been praised in the film as a virtue of Taiwanese women. The greatest reward for the female protagonist as a mother is the happiness of her family. Kuei-Mei represents a woman under the influence of feminism and her daughter, Cheng-Fong represents a woman within the influence of new feminism and the western culture. The film presents her influence from the western culture through her outfit, for instance, as a teenager she wears mini-skirts. Cheng-Fong has a degree and a

²⁸⁴ Question and Answer with Hui-Shan Yang and Yi-Chang after the screening of *Kuei-mei, A Woman* (1985) at Taipei Film Festival, 8 July 2012, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-UY9eGP0yY>> [accessed 18 February 2014].

²⁸⁵ Rebecca Feasey, *From Happy Homemaker to Desperate Housewives: Motherhood and Popular Television* (London: Anthem, 2012), p. 6.

successful career; she does not need to gain economic comfort through marriage as her mother did because she is financially independent. Although Cheng-Fong is in her late twenties at the end of the film, she does not have the intention to get married. She wants to go abroad to study but she decides to take over the restaurant for her mother. Her decision to take over her mother's restaurant suggests that she will be the matriarch of the family.

Cheng-Fong is an example of modern career woman who is confident and satisfied with her status as a single woman. Cheng-Fong loves and respects her mother, and supports her as a woman. She thinks her mother should not forgive her father's adultery so easily. Kuei-Mei supports Cheng-Fong during her abortion in high school, and the daughter supports her mother when she encounters her husband's adultery and during her cancer. These events further strengthen the mother-daughter relationship and the image of womanhood in the film. The film depicts the similarity between the mother and daughter through their dress and personality. Kuei-Mei and Cheng-Fong are both restrained and calm. They dress similarly with brightly coloured dresses when they go to visit their relatives near the end of the film. Cheng-Fong is like a new example of Kuei-Mei; the difference is that she has more choices as a modern woman. Her mother's restaurant is a modern Western restaurant. Cheng-Fong's decision to take over the restaurant signifies the continuity of her mother's ambition. Both of them share the same goal, to increase the popularity of the restaurant. Cheng-Fong expresses her idea to her mother in the end of the film that she will refurbish the restaurant and manage the business in a new way. Kuei-Mei is the representation of a traditional woman and Cheng-Fong is the representation of a modern woman. The end of the film presents the rise of a new generation of women and the development of women's role in society. In spite of the fact that Kuei-Mei gets cancer in the end, her life will pass on to her daughter through the restaurant. This section has examined the representation of

women from traditional to modern Taiwanese society. The following section will examine the representation of women in contemporary Taiwanese society in *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right*. It will further discuss the issue of remarriage through an examination of the film.

2.4. *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Pei Hua Wang, 2012)

The story of the film *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* is the continuation of the well-known television drama *The Fierce Wife* (2010). The third chapter of this thesis includes a discussion of the television drama. *The Fierce Wife* was very popular in Taiwan when it was broadcast. The ending of the television drama is open so the audience is left with questions about the future of the female protagonist after she becomes a divorced working mother. The editor and director of the film, Pei-Hua Wang, said in the talk show, *SS Xiaoyan's Night*, that she thinks the ending of the television drama is good enough, but the audience was curious to know if the relationship between the female protagonist and her young pursuer would develop further.²⁸⁶ Pei-Hua Wang explains that she and the whole production team were thinking about how to continue the story of the television drama into the film. They wanted to know whether a divorced woman like An-Zhen Xie (Sonia Sui) could have the opportunity to find happiness again and if she will remarry. With high expectations from the audience, Pei-Hua Wang decided to adapt the story of the television drama to

²⁸⁶ Interview with the director and actors of *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Pei Hua Wang, 2012) on *SS Xiaoyan's Night* on Cti TV, 9 August 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=It_mw5HQVpA>, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMABSK2u9Fw>>, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2s2RGPX0g-k>>, [accessed 24 November 2014].

film.²⁸⁷

The television drama focuses on the issue of adultery and how women recover from broken relationships. The film, in contrast, focuses on the issue of remarriage. Pei-Hua Wang explains that its main purpose is to encourage women who have been through broken relationships to not only have courage to be themselves but also to have courage to begin another relationship. She argues that the main difference between the television drama and the film is that 'The television drama describes how to face a broken relationship. The film describes how to have the courage to pursue a new relationship.'²⁸⁸ Pei-Hua Wang says that in reality it is difficult for women who have been through a broken relationship or divorce to have a new relationship in a short period of time.²⁸⁹ For this reason, she arranges the time period in the film to be four years after the divorce of its female protagonist. Pei-Hua Wang explains:

To think realistically, it is difficult for a woman like An-Zhen who has been through a divorce to fall in love again in a short period of time. She needs some time to recover from the previous broken relationship, to forget and forgive what her ex-husband has done to her. She really needs time to move forward to the future.²⁹⁰

Pei-Hua Wang sets up a scenario for the female protagonist to have a relationship and to remarry in the film. In spite of the fact that the director disagrees with the social expectation that marriage equals happiness for women over the age of thirty, she wanted to portray the struggle of the female protagonist as a divorced woman who remarries. Pei-Hua Wang explains:

²⁸⁷ Pei-Hua Wang, *The Filming Diary of The Fierce Wife*, p. 16.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 198.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 15.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

According to social expectations, women over the age of thirty are expected to enter the marriage realm. Under pressure from society and family members, they consider the purpose of having a relationship is to get married. For women over the age of thirty, “to marry a good man” seems to equal their happiness and marriage seems to be the only ending for them.²⁹¹

The director further questions: ‘What about An-Zhen? As a woman and mother over the age of thirty who has been divorced. Is marriage what she really wants?’²⁹² The director states that marriage represents a promise for the couple which includes responsibility. Marriage cannot guarantee happiness. The couple needs to go through various difficulties together during the marriage.²⁹³ Women need to have courage to find happiness. She further claims that it is difficult for women who have been through broken relationships to have the courage to start a new relationship. Pei-Hua Wang writes: ‘You need to have courage to move forward to pursue happiness. You need to have adventures in order to find happiness.’²⁹⁴ The film suggests that modern women in Taiwan have the right to choose if they would like to remain single or get married. The traditional expectation that women sacrifice themselves during an unhappy marriage is outdated. Furthermore, society should respect divorced women who remarry.

The female protagonist of the film, An-Zhen, is a thirty-six-year-old working mother who has been divorced and remained single for four years. An-Zhen says in the television drama: ‘The fierce woman means a woman who knows how to be herself with courage.’ An-Zhen in the film shares the same characteristics as An-Zhen in the television drama; the difference is that she becomes more independent, and capable of individual thought and confidence as a career woman and mother. The film stresses the

²⁹¹ Ibid., p. 17.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 23.

role of An-Zhen as a successful career woman by presenting her as the vice manager of the well-known Grand Hyatt hotel, and as a working mother who tries her best to balance work and family commitments. An early scene of the film presents An-Zhen winning an award for best service because of her outstanding customer service. The award represents her career achievement and devotion as a career woman. The film portrays An-Zhen as a busy working mother who is content with her life.



Figure 5: An-Zhen wins the best service award.

The beginning of the film presents the busy daily life of An-Zhen as a working mother. She gets up early in the morning to make breakfast and take her daughter to school before she goes to work. The beginning of the scene presents An-Zhen dressed in fashionable outfit with light make-up while she makes breakfast for her daughter. A later scene depicts An-Zhen driving her daughter to school. In spite of her daughter asking An-Zhen to drive faster or she will be late for school, An-Zhen looks calm. In the car, the camera shoots from the window; the audience see a close-up of An-Zhen, who looks relaxed and content. In a voice-over when An-Zhen introduces herself and the main characters of the film to the audience:

I am Xie An-Zhen. I have been divorced and remained single for four years. Wen Rui-Fan is my ex-husband and the one who hurt me deeply in my previous relationship. Lan Tian-Wei is the one who has taught me how to be strong after my broken relationship. Li Wen-En is the woman who had an affair with my ex-husband. Rui-Xuan and Kang-De are my best friends and the family who always support me.

Then the scene moves to the locker room at her workplace, the camera shoots from the locker, and the audience first sees An-Zhen in fashionable dress with light make-up, then the door closes. When the door of the locker reopens the audience sees An-Zhen in black suit with her hair tied up. An-Zhen looks professional and confident in the hotel uniform. A close-up depicts An-Zhen looking at a photo of her daughter on the locker door; she smiles gently and closes the locker then goes to work. The montage at the beginning of the film depicts the life of An-Zhen as a working mother. She enjoys her life as a working mother and she loves her job as the deputy manager of a well-known international hotel. For An-Zhen, her daughter is the most important part of her life; she has never considered finding a partner or remarrying. Nevertheless, she will transform gradually throughout the film. Her attitude towards remarriage changes during the film. Her changing attitude on remarriage suggests the changing social expectation of divorced women in Taiwan.

The main message of the film is to encourage women who have been through broken relationships not only to have courage to be themselves but also to have courage to pursue love again.²⁹⁵ The film presents the struggle of An-Zhen to pursue a romantic relationship, and to choose between two men. The first one is her ex-husband, Rui-Fan Wen (Sheng-Hao Wen), and the second one is her close friend, Tian-Wei Lan (You-Sheng Wang), who helps her to rebuild her life after the painful divorce. The two

²⁹⁵ Wang, *The Filming Diary of The Fierce Wife*, p. 23.

male characters represent traditional and contemporary representations of men. Rui-Fan represents a traditional man who still has the expectation that An-Zhen will be a housewife. However, he needs to accept the changes An-Zhen has undergone after four years, and the social change that has occurred in Taiwan. An-Zhen is no longer a housewife; she is now a career woman. The film presents the transformation of Rui-Fan from a patriarchal male figure who considers cooking and childrearing as the responsibility of women to a new man who shares the responsibility of childrearing with An-Zhen. For example, the film presents Rui-Fan cooking a meal for his daughter when An-Zhen works late.

Tian-Wei represents the contemporary man who respects An-Zhen as a divorced mother. He respects An-Zhen's work as a vice manager. He admires her achievements at work and shares his customer service experience with her. Most importantly, he offers to share the childrearing responsibilities with her. For example, the film presents Tian-Wei picking up An-Zhen's daughter after school and taking care of her when An-Zhen works late. The film presents the transformation of both male characters. Their transformation to new men in the film represents the social changes occurring more widely in Taiwan. The representation of the new man further reflects the new feminism theory of Hsiu-Lien Lu that was mentioned in chapter one. As Hsiu-Lien Lu states, 'to do housework is an honourable thing. Both men and women should share the responsibility of household chores, cooking and childrearing together.'²⁹⁶

An-Zhen has a busy working schedule; she accepts the task of training a new member of staff, Rou-Yi Hu (Ying-Zhen Lin), so she has less time to spend with her daughter. She is concerned about her daughter, so Tian-Wei volunteers to take care of her daughter for her. An-Zhen is deeply touched and grateful for his assistance, and

²⁹⁶ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 229.

their romance gradually develops through the film. An-Zhen knows Tian-Wei likes her very much but she is uncertain if she is ready to fall in love or remarry. As Helen Frank states:

Remarriage is not only about restoring normality, it is also about correcting mistakes, showing the world that this time everything is going to be all right. There is a general belief that people remarry someone very similar to their first partner, but remarrieds generally profess the opposite – they need to demonstrate to themselves and everyone else that choice number one was an error of judgment, therefore choice number two has to appear to be very different.²⁹⁷

An-Zhen struggles to choose between her ex-husband and the young pursuer. She is uncertain whether she would like to remarry because she is afraid that she will encounter the same obstacles as in the previous marriage. There are various reasons for women to remarry: some women remarry because they need financial support from men, while others remarry because they need companionship. Lawrence H. Ganong and Marilyn Coleman state that previously married couples have more pragmatic than romantic motivations to marry:

Among the pragmatic reasons for remarriage are financial security, help in raising children, response to social pressure, response to legal threats regarding the custody of children, relief from loneliness, the need for a regular sexual partner, pregnancy, the need to have someone to take care of, the need to be taken care of, and convenience.²⁹⁸

In spite of the fact that this statement by Ganong and Coleman was made twenty years

²⁹⁷ Helen Frank, *Remarriage: What Makes It. What Breaks It* (London: The Bodley Head Ltd, 1988), pp. 48-49.

²⁹⁸ Lawrence H. Ganong and Marilyn Coleman, *Remarried Family Relationships* (California: Sage Publications, 1994), p. 49.

ago, their comments on remarriage remain beneficial in contemporary society. Ganong and Coleman further state that these practical reasons help to explain the short courtships of some remarried couples and the tendency for partners to cohabit before remarriage. However, there are some other reasons for remarriage including, 'love, a desire for companionship, shared interests, and liking the partner are also common reasons why people remarry.'²⁹⁹ Although the focus of this thesis is on the representation of women in film, it is useful to refer here to sociological studies on the relationships of remarried couples in relation to the issue of remarriage in the film. In doing so I am seeking to indicate something of the social context in which these representations are situated.

Women with financial independence may have more opportunities to meet more men or to date them. According to Ganong and Coleman, 'Women with financial means exercised a higher degree of choice in the men they dated, had more opportunities for dates, met more men, and had more steady relationships than women with limited finances. Yet women with means were also more selective in their dating choices and more often rejected relationships.'³⁰⁰ Ganong and Coleman acknowledge that women with economic independence are less likely to be married in the future.³⁰¹ The film presents An-Zhen as a financially independent woman who does not need to remarry for financial security. However, the film also presents An-Zhen as a busy working mother who does need someone to share the childrearing tasks. There are practical reasons for remarriage. But the film foregrounds the desire of the self. The main reasons An-Zhen wants to remarry are because of love and the desire for companionship; to find someone to assist her in childrearing is only part of the reason.

There are several important scenes in the film that depict the concerns of the

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 50.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

female protagonist in terms of relationships and remarriage. In an early scene, An-Zhen encounters a good friend, Ai-Lin He (Shu-Zhen Tsai), at the workplace. Ai-Lin tells An-Zhen that she is divorced because she realises that she is unsuitable for marriage. Ai-Lin says to An-Zhen: 'Marriage is like a harbour for me but I miss the adventure of sailing in the ocean.' Ai-Lin tells An-Zhen that she does not want to get married but she still wants to enjoy a romantic relationship with her Mr. Right. She prefers to live as a single woman and travels around the world searching for Mr. Right. Ai-Lin asks An-Zhen who she would like to be in a relationship with, her ex-husband or the young pursuer. An-Zhen replies her: 'I don't know.' Ai-Lin encourages her to have the courage to pursue love again. Ai-Lin says to An-Zhen: 'You need to have adventures to find your happiness.' The film presents Ai-Lin as a positive figure who is divorced but who still has faith in love. The main message that the film tries to convey to the audience through Ai-Lin is to have the courage to start a new relationship after a divorce. As Pei-Hua Wang states, 'Marriage cannot guarantee happiness.'³⁰² Ai-Lin is an example of a modern woman who chooses to divorce and who remains single. She is confident and content with her status as a single woman. The conversation with Ai-Lin is a turning point for An-Zhen to start thinking about her future and whether she should have a relationship again.

The second example is the conversation between An-Zhen and Rou-Yi at the pub. Rou-Yi feels depressed because she has just broken up with her boyfriend. Rou-Yi asks An-Zhen what kind of attitude she should have towards the broken relationship. An-Zhen says to Rou-Yi: 'Endure. Dry your tears and endure. Life has to move on. You still need to go to work. You still need to face life with courage even if you don't like it.' The film presents Rou-Yi as a twenty-something young woman in opposition to the main female protagonist. Rou-Yi also likes Tian-Wei very much so she tells

³⁰² Wang, *The Filming Diary of The Fierce Wife*, p. 17.

An-Zhen that she will pursue him. The young woman becomes a challenge for An-Zhen so she decides to express her affection toward Tian-Wei.

A scene in the middle of the film depicts An-Zhen looking at herself in the mirror in the bedroom. She invites Tian-Wei for lunch in order to express her gratitude for his assistance in taking care of her daughter. The scene first presents An-Zhen's reflection in the mirror; a medium-shot then presents An-Zhen's body in a body shaper. She gracefully puts on a white dress, while the camera slowly moves from her legs to her face. A close-up presents her facial expression as she smiles with confidence. An-Zhen looks at herself in the mirror and says: 'Go! An-Zhen.' An-Zhen decides to confess her true affection to Tian-Wei. She looks like a bride in a white dress; the image implies her expectations of marriage. Another scene in the middle of the film depicts the female protagonist confessing her feelings to the audience. The scene presents An-Zhen looking at herself in the mirror in her workplace toilet. She has misunderstood Tian-Wei so she wants to apologise to him. She practices the speech alone in the toilet; she looks at herself in the mirror and says: 'I would like to say thank you to you. And I also want to tell you that I really like you.' Both scenes in which An-Zhen looks at herself in the mirror represent her inner self as a woman who has expectations of romantic relationships and marriage. These scenes foreshadow her decision to remarry at the end of the film.

An-Zhen encountered various difficulties in her previous marriage. She wants to have the courage to pursue love again but she is afraid that she will encounter the same problems. Tian-Wei proposes to An-Zhen in the middle of the film. A medium-shot depicts the couple in the parking lot of the hotel; Tian-Wei expresses his true affection towards An-Zhen but An-Zhen is uncertain if she is ready to remarry. Tian-Wei takes out the ring and says to her: 'Do you have the courage to try again? Say yes. Let me prove to you that I love you.' An-Zhen looks at the ring, she takes the ring

and says to him: 'Tian-Wei. You make me feel like a princess.' Tian-Wei puts the ring on her finger then they go to the household registration office for the marriage registration. An-Zhen is anxious whilst they are waiting for the marriage registration. Tian-Wei takes her hand to put in his pocket. The scene then presents the inner self of An-Zhen who stands uncertainly in the room; she looks around and asks herself: 'Am I ready? Is this the end of happiness or the beginning of another mistake?' An-Zhen then goes to the toilet. She notices that she does not have the ring with her when she washes her hands. At that moment, she realises that she is not ready to remarry so she leaves the office without telling Tian-Wei. In a taxi, the camera shoots from the window; a close-up of An-Zhen depicts her sadness. She sits silently in the taxi, looking out the window with tears on her face. Background music plays: 'I think I can get used to living by myself. I think I can pretend that I no longer feel sorrowful.' The background music reflects the inner self of the female protagonist. The misunderstanding separates the couple; Tian-Wei thinks An-Zhen has refused his proposal when he finds the ring in his pocket. Both of them suffer great depression but they do not have courage to contact each other.

The film presents the struggle of its female protagonist to choose between Tian-Wei and Rui-Fan. An-Zhen's ex-husband Rui-Fan has changed a lot after four years. He applies for a work transfer from Kaohsiung to Taipei to share the childrearing responsibilities with An-Zhen. Rui-Fan cooks for the family and waits for An-Zhen to come home at night. He plans to propose to her at their daughter's birthday party. Rui-Fan has made all the preparations but a meeting with his ex-girlfriend has changed his mind. Wei-En Li (Xin-Yi Zhu) tells Rui-Fan that they have a son and the reason she has come back to Taiwan is to introduce their son to him. The moment when Rui-Fan takes out the ring to propose to An-Zhen at the birthday party, the image of his son appears in his mind; Rui-Fan feels guilty so he loses the courage to propose

to her. An-Zhen meets Wei-En who confesses to the former that she has a son with Rui-Fan. Wei-En wants An-Zhen to know the truth because An-Zhen is very kind to her. The incident reminds An-Zhen of the painful memories from her previous marriage, therefore she decides not to choose Rui-Fan and moves forward to a new romantic relationship.

An important scene in the film depicts An-Zhen's struggle to remarry. The scene presents a private conversation on a mountain between An-Zhen and her best friend, Rui-Xuan Wen (Ying-Zhen Hu). The scene begins with a long-distance shot from behind An-Zhen; Rui-Xuan walks to her from the right and then the camera moves closer to the two women. Rui-Xuan encourages An-Zhen to go abroad to see Tian-Wei but An-Zhen does not have the courage to meet him. An-Zhen asks: 'What is the end of love? You get married and realise he is not the type of man you thought.' Rui-Xuan says to An-Zhen that she worries too much about the future; on the contrary, she should enjoy the present and cherish what she has. An-Zhen asks Rui-Xuan: 'Why am I still afraid?' Rui-Xuan encourages An-Zhen, telling her that it is time to face her true feelings and to pursue love with courage. A close-up of An-Zhen depicts her sorrow to the audience. The camera then moves backward; a long-distance shot depicts An-Zhen leaning on Rui-Xuan's shoulders. The scene is significant in the film. Rui-Xuan's speech encourages An-Zhen to pursue happiness. The director conveys the main message of the film through the conversation between these two women in this scene. The film's slogans are: 'Cherish the happiness you have at the moment' and 'Have the courage to pursue happiness.' The slogans here mirror to the ideology of new feminism.

A turning point near the end of film gives An-Zhen the courage to fly to Guam to find her Mr. Right. Rui-Xuan tells An-Zhen that Tian-Wei is going to get married in Guam. An-Zhen is in shock and decides to pursue her happiness by flying to Guam to

stop the wedding. An important scene near the end of the film depicts the determination of An-Zhen to move forward and to seek her Mr. Right. An-Zhen decides to go abroad to find Tian-Wei; she takes her daughter to her ex-husband before she leaves. The separation scene depicts the struggle of a mother who finally has courage to pursue love again. The camera moves slowly from behind An-Zhen and her daughter in a high-angle shot to a medium-shot of the family. An-Zhen takes her daughter's belongings and asks Rui-Fan to take good care of their daughter. Rui-Fan promises An-Zhen and asks her not to worry too much. Their daughter runs toward An-Zhen to hold her hands and ask her where she is going. An-Zhen looks at her daughter and asks her to be a good girl and to listen to her father. Their daughter holds An-Zhen's hands tightly, unwilling to let her go. Rui-Fan comes forward to the mother and daughter, he kneels down and looks at their daughter and asks her if she wants her mother to be happy. The daughter nods her head then Rui-Fan says: 'How can mommy pursue happiness if you do not let go of her hands.' Then a close-up presents the father's hands separating the mother and daughter's hands in slow motion. The father walks away with the daughter. An-Zhen stands by the car, pausing for a second then running toward Rui-Fan to hug him. Rui-Fan says to An-Zhen: 'You always took good care of our daughter and me in the past. Now it is your turn to pursue your happiness.' A close-up of An-Zhen shows her sorrow to the audience. She has to separate from her daughter and the man she used to love. The scene not only represents the separation from her daughter but also the separation from her ex-husband. They both have feelings toward each other but An-Zhen realises she cannot remarry him.

The scene signifies the separation of the couple, who will not be united again in the film. An-Zhen walks toward the car then drives away. A high-angle shot depicts An-Zhen driving the car away while the father stands together with his daughter and looks at An-Zhen's car until it disappears from sight. Rui-Fan shouts: 'Go! An-Zhen.'

There is a white arrow sign on the road, which is a one-way street, which signifies the determination of An-Zhen to move forward in order to pursue happiness. Then the scene depicts An-Zhen going to Guam to find Tian-Wei. A hotel staff member tells her that the wedding ceremony has already begun; she runs speedily to the church to stop the wedding. The climax of the film depicts An-Zhen standing at the entrance of the church and shouting: 'Wait for a minute.' She walks toward Tian-Wei then says to him: 'You are mine. I did not reject you. How can you do this?' Tian-Wei smiles then tell An-Zhen that the beautiful bride who stands next to him is her cousin. An-Zhen furiously shouts and hits Tian-Wei: 'Why is it a cousin again?' The reason An-Zhen asks this question is because it was her cousin who had an affair with her ex-husband in the television drama. A man dressed in a white suit stands up and walks toward An-Zhen; he explains to her that he is the groom and the beautiful woman who stands next to Tian-Wei is the bride. An-Zhen realises that she has misunderstood the situation and laughs. Tian-Wei looks at An-Zhen with a smile, then he opens his arms, An-Zhen runs toward him and they hug each other tightly. The film ends with the reunion of An-Zhen and Tian-Wei.

The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right ends, as is typical of romantic films, with the wedding as its happy ending. There are numerous television dramas and films that place weddings as the climax or the perfect ending. As Cele C. Otnes and Elizabeth H. Pleck state, 'There are television programs devoted to following wedding planning; films centered on weddings; wedding plots in soap operas, situation comedies, and dramas; an increasing number of magazines devoted to the ritual; coverage of celebrity ceremonies; a plethora of wedding-themed toys and costumes for young girls; and, of course, Web sites.'³⁰³ Chapter three of this thesis

³⁰³ Cele C. Otnes and Elizabeth H. Pleck, *Cinderella Dreams: The Allure of the Lavish Wedding* (California: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 1-2.

will discuss several Taiwanese idol dramas that end with weddings, for instance *My Queen* (2009), *Miss Rose* (2012) and *In Time with You* (2012). It is important to note the popularity of placing weddings as the happy ending in television dramas and films. According to Chrys Ingraham, 'Watching our favorite actors achieve happiness or love allows us to live vicariously through the experiences of characters with whom we identify and grow to love and appreciate. The visual simulation of the wedding story is a powerful means for suturing an audience to the interests represented in a film or television show.'³⁰⁴ To watch the characters in television dramas or films achieve their happiness or find love makes the audience happy even though the audience knows they are fictional.³⁰⁵ Ingraham states that in spite of the fact that the audience can separate fantasy from reality, the audience still experiences the stories of the characters and their emotions both consciously and unconsciously.³⁰⁶ She further states: 'It's possible to be both critically aware of this medium while simultaneously crying or laughing with the characters. The romantic illusions created by media weddings construct desire to such an extent that, without realizing it, we place these illusions above reality.'³⁰⁷ Although new feminism stresses the importance of women's education, employment and financial independence, the film case studies here seem to suggest that women are still expected by society to have more responsibilities within marriage and child-rearing.

The wedding plot in television dramas and films supports the institution of marriage, which is still preferred by most people. Otnes and Pleck stress that the wedding ceremony in the media 'supports and bolsters the institution of marriage, which despite rising rates of voluntary singlehood, cohabitation, and divorce, is still a

³⁰⁴ Chrys Ingraham, *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 126.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

state highly desired by most people around the world.’³⁰⁸ They further stress that in spite of the increasing number of single people and female-headed households around the world ‘marriage is still regarded as the more acceptable state for adults, and couplehood as the norm.’³⁰⁹ In spite of the fact that cohabitation is more common in contemporary society, marriage is still a preferable option in forming a long-term heterosexual relationship.³¹⁰ Andrew J. Cherlin states: ‘marriage is still a much sought-after status, still the culturally preferred way to form a long-term heterosexual union. To be sure, it is no longer seen as the only proper status for adults; being single or, to some extent, cohabiting is acceptable. But for most people being married is preferable.’³¹¹ Pei-Hua Wang states in an interview with the Media Press that she would like to express happiness and hope to the audience through the film by presenting An-Zhen finding her Mr. Right, therefore she arranges for An-Zhen to remarry at the end of the film.³¹²

The ending of the film depicts the couple on a boat in Guam. They are dressed in a white wedding suit and gown. Tian-Wei sits on the boat, he places his hand on An-Zhen’s shoulders, she leans on him relaxedly with a smile. She looks at Tian-Wei and says: ‘You must take me to travel around the world with you.’ Tian-Wei replies: ‘Of course.’ An-Zhen looks at the ring on her left hand and asks Tian-Wei: ‘Do we have to get married?’ Tian-Wei asks: ‘What do you think?’ The couple hugs each other with joy. Then the camera moves away from the boat. A long-distance shot depicts the boat floating on the blue ocean with a clear sky. The image of An-Zhen in a white

³⁰⁸ Otnes and Pleck, *Cinderella Dreams*, p. 5.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Andrew J. Cherlin, *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 129.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Interview with the director of *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Pei Hua Wang, 2012) at the Media Press of Eastern Television in the United States, 25 August 2012, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ROyFloGXjM>>, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ELZnvU-iZo>> [accessed 26 May 2015].

wedding gown mirrors the image of her in a white dress mentioned earlier in this section. Otnes and Pleck acknowledge: 'The long white dress is the realization of the Cinderella dreams, the walk down the aisle is the moment of anticipation, and the kiss after the religious ceremony symbolizes true love.'³¹³ In spite of the fact that the film presents the wedding of the relatives rather than the couple, it depicts the image of An-Zhen in white wedding gown which signifies her fulfilment in finding Mr. Right. The image of her in a white wedding gown also signifies 'the realization of the Cinderella dreams' as Otnes and Pleck have stated.³¹⁴ An-Zhen says to Tian-Wei that he makes her feel like a princess when he proposes to her in the middle of the film. An-Zhen has found her Mr. Right and her dream has been achieved. The film ends with the picturesque image of the couple on the boat with blue sky and ocean which signifies hope and happiness. Soft background music plays: 'I am happy now. I do not need to worry about anything. I live an easygoing life as the seaweed. I do not need to be troubled by past memories.' In a voice-over An-Zhen says to the audience:

After this journey, I finally realise one thing. There is no best before date on love and there is no term of guarantee in marriage. However, it does not mean we cannot cherish the happiness we have at the moment. As long as you open your arms, you can embrace the sky. Actually, it is not difficult to find the man who can bestow happiness upon you.

³¹³ Otnes and Pleck, *Cinderella Dreams*, p. 198.

³¹⁴ Ibid.



Figure 6: An-Zhen and Tian-Wei get married.

At the box office the film made a billion in new Taiwan dollars within nine days of its opening in cinemas in August 2012. The main reason for the popularity of the film is because of its realistic depiction of life experience in terms of relationships and marriage. In an interview with the Media Press, Pei-Hua Wang states: ‘The film is like a reflection of society.’³¹⁵ What happens to the female protagonist may happen to many women in real-life. The audience may see themselves in the representation of An-Zhen or other characters in the film. The director expects to encourage both men and women who have been through broken relationships to move forward in their lives, to love themselves and have the courage to pursue happiness.³¹⁶ Pei-Hua Wang writes:

Many women who have been through broken relationships ask the question: “Can I really find happiness again?” I suppose it is the main reason for making the film if it can help women in current society find an answer about

³¹⁵ Interview with the director of *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Pei Hua Wang, 2012) at the Media Press of Eastern Television in the United States, 25 August 2012, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ROyFloGXjM>>, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ELZnvU-iZo>> [accessed 24 November 2014].

³¹⁶ Interview with the director of *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Pei Hua Wang, 2012) at the Media Press of Eastern Television in the United States, 25 August 2012, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ROyFloGXjM>>, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ELZnvU-iZo>> [accessed 24 November 2014].

love and to pursue happiness in their lives.³¹⁷

For women, men and marriage are not the main essences of happiness; self-dependence and career achievement can be the essence of happiness as well. Pei-Hua Wang explains the purpose of the film:

We wanted to convey this idea to the audience. The happiness of women does not only include men, marriage or love, it also includes independence, career achievement and good friends. As seen in the female character Ai-Lin in the film who chooses to divorce and live happily as a single woman.³¹⁸

Pei-Hua Wang as the director and editor of the film has created several inspiring speeches to encourage both the characters and the audience of the film. An important speech by Rui-Fan as vice-manager at the cosmetic product launch ceremony serves as a good example. Rui-Fan says to An-Zhen and the audience at the ceremony: 'For women who have been through broken relationships, their expectations of falling in love again remain through time. Do not let scars affect your faith in love. Give yourself one more chance. You will realise you deserve to have it. A sincere heart. A sincere love. Just for you.' In spite of the fact that the speech is a slogan of the cosmetic product, it points out the main message of the film which is to encourage women to have the courage to pursue love again.

The film focuses on the issue of remarriage; it encourages women who have been through broken relationships to start new relationships or to remarry if they have the opportunity. A divorced mother without financial independence may choose to remarry for economic security. Cherlin states: 'Remarriage improves the financial situation of a divorced mother and provides another adult to share the household tasks

³¹⁷ Wang, *The Filming Diary of The Fierce Wife*, p. 23.

³¹⁸ Ibid., p. 198.

and responsibilities. In addition, remarrying is a way to end the loneliness and isolation many divorced persons experience.’³¹⁹ Nevertheless, marriage does not guarantee happiness. Not every woman considers marriage the essence of happiness and not every woman is suitable for marriage. As long as they have confidence and independence, they can still enjoy their life as a single woman. Women in contemporary Taiwanese society have undergone a transformation when compared to women a decade ago. Men in contemporary Taiwanese society also need to change in order to adapt to the development of female status. Pei-Hua Wang says in an interview with the Media Press: ‘Man needs to change. Learn from the mistake he makes and change himself.’³²⁰ For this reason, Pei-Hua Wang depicts Rui-Fan cooking for his family in the film. He is the type of husband who does not do household chores or cook in the television drama but he has changed for love in the film; he has become a new man.

Pei-Hua Wang wanted to let male audiences learn how to change themselves for their partners in relationships or marriages by presenting the changes in the male characters in the film.³²¹ Rui-Fan cooks for the family and waits for An-Zhen to return home. Tian-Wei does not know how to communicate with children but he changes for An-Zhen. He reads magazines to learn how to communicate with children and he takes care of An-Zhen’s daughter when she needs to work late. Pei-Hua Wang stresses in the interview that Rui-Fan and Tian-Wei are both good examples of the new man for the men in contemporary Taiwanese society to learn from. The film presents An-Zhen’s

³¹⁹ Cherlin, *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage*, p. 80.

³²⁰ Interview with the director of *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Pei Hua Wang, 2012) at the Media Press of Eastern Television in the United States, 25 August 2012, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ROyFloGXjM>>, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ELZnvU-iZo>> [accessed 24 November 2014].

³²¹ Interview with the director of *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Pei Hua Wang, 2012) at the Media Press of Eastern Television in the United States, 25 August 2012, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ROyFloGXjM>>, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ELZnvU-iZo>> [accessed 24 November 2014].

struggle in choosing between the two men. Cherlin states: 'For most divorced men and women, living as a single adult is a temporary phase in a process of decoupling and recoupling.'³²² In spite of the fact that An-Zhen enjoys her life as a working mother, she chooses to remarry because of love and the need for companionship. Although An-Zhen is afraid to encounter the same problems as in her previous marriage, she decides to give herself another opportunity. The end of the film presents An-Zhen as a confident and financially independent woman who has found her Mr. Right. An-Zhen is, therefore, presented as an example of a modern woman in contemporary society who possesses the characteristics of the new feminist as stated by Hsiu-Lien Lu in her new feminism. The female protagonist of the film has transformed into a woman with financial independence and self-confidence; she is content with her life as a divorced mother who remarries.

This chapter has examined the representation of women from the housewife to the career woman and the divorced mother through these film case studies. *Osmanthus Alley* presents Ti-Home as a representation of woman in traditional Taiwanese society who possesses the characteristics of strong determination and endurance. She is an example of a woman who is constrained by patriarchal culture to accept the custom of Three Obediences and Four Virtues. The film presents the transformation of Ti-Home from a woman without financial independence to a woman with authority in her family business. Ti-Home transforms from a woman who obeys men to a woman who defies male authority. *Kuei-mei, A Woman* presents the development of the role of women from the 1950s to the 1980s, from the woman who learns to obey within patriarchal society to a woman capable of independent thought in modern society. Kuei-Mei transforms from an obedient woman who depends on a man for economic support to a woman who has a business of her own. These film case studies indicate the

³²² Cherlin, *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage*, p. 80.

development of women's status in terms of marriage from traditional to modern Taiwanese society.

The film case studies also point out the change of attitude towards marriage for women from traditional to contemporary Taiwanese society. Ti-Home in *Osmanthus Alley* serves as an example of a woman in traditional Taiwanese society. She gets married for financial security and social status rather than true love. She has to remain single after her husband passes away due to the repression of women by a patriarchal society. Kuei-Mei is also an example of a woman in traditional Taiwanese society. She also gets married for financial security rather than true love. She tolerates her husband's adultery and uncaring attitude towards her children. Although she wants a divorce, she eventually chooses to forgive her husband's adultery in order to maintain the marriage for her children. An-Zhen serves as an example of a woman in contemporary Taiwanese society who chooses to divorce because of her husband's adultery. Unlike Ti-Home and Kuei-Mei, An-Zhen has more choices as a modern woman with financial independence. She chooses to remarry because of true love rather than the need for financial support. Her purpose in and attitude toward marriage differ from the other two female protagonists. She has more choices and freedom as a woman in contemporary Taiwanese society. Marriage is a choice for An-Zhen rather than an obligation.

These film case studies indicate the development of women's status in marriage in Taiwanese society. Marriage has become a choice for women with financial independence in contemporary Taiwanese society. Modern women do not need to get married for financial support or social status because they are financially independent. Furthermore, they may choose to end a marriage if their husband is unfaithful or uncaring. It is important for modern women to possess the characteristics of the new feminist, which are financial independence, self-confidence and self-contentment.

Marriage is not the only route to happiness for modern women; career achievement and friendships are also means of obtaining happiness. The most important thing for women, as Pei-Hua Wang states, is to 'Be yourself with courage'.³²³ This chapter has examined three films from the 1980s to the 2000s to analyse the transformation of female roles from traditional to modern Taiwanese society. The three case studies suggest a change of attitude towards marriage for modern women and for the wider society. Additionally the films suggest that modern women have the freedom to choose to remain single, to get married or to divorce. They generate expectations of the development of female status through the representation of confident and independent female characters. This chapter has discussed the transformation of women's representation in Taiwanese cinema. The next chapter will examine the representation of women in Taiwanese television drama. It will further discuss the issues in relation to women and careers, singlehood, marriage and divorce.

³²³ Wang, *The Filming Diary of The Fierce Wife*, p. 15.

Chapter 3

New Feminism in Taiwanese Television Drama

3.1. Introduction: Television Drama and Women

The status of women in contemporary Taiwanese society has developed greatly since the feminist movement of the early 1970s. Taiwanese women have attained new legal entitlements in terms of education and employment. For instance, the ‘Gender Equality in Employment Act’ was announced by the government on the 16th of January 2002. And the ‘Gender Equality Education Act’ was announced on the 23rd of June 2004.³²⁴ Taiwanese women in the twenty-first century have a broader career path when compared to the women of the early 1970s, who were constrained by conventional expectations within the patriarchy to be full-time housewives. The growing number of influential female leaders in politics also indicates the developing status of women in Taiwan. As the first chapter of this thesis has discussed, for example, the ex-vice president, Hsiu-Lien Lu, as well as the first female presidential candidate, Ing-Wen Tsai, are both high profile examples of professional career women in Taiwan. Such involvement in politics and their campaigning for women’s rights indicate how Taiwanese women have become more independent and confident in contemporary society. Chapter One discussed the central value of Hsiu-Lien Lu’s feminist doctrine and its impact on the progression of women’s status in Taiwan in terms of a discourse of women’s self-realisation. This chapter will examine in more detail the relationship between Hsiu-Lien Lu’s feminist doctrine and the representation of women in the Taiwanese media.

³²⁴ Hsiu-Lien Lu, *New Feminism* (Taipei: Unitas Publishing, 2008), p. 298.

In doing so, this chapter argues that social change has led to changes in the representation of women in the media. Furthermore, the representation of women in the media parallels the development of women's status in society. The growing representation of career women in the Taiwanese media indicates the influence of Hsiu-Lien Lu's feminist doctrine. The representation of career women with financial independence and confidence mirrors the characteristics of the new feminist that she addressed in her feminist doctrine. Hsiu-Lien Lu put forward the idea of the 'three selves' which are self-dependence, self-confidence and self-contentment. She stresses that women need to have physical, intellectual and financial independence in order to be feminists. She argues that women need to build up confidence in whatever they think and whatever they do, instead of merely following others.³²⁵

The development of feminism in Taiwan was a challenging process due to the culturally prominent influence of Japanese male chauvinism and Chinese Confucianism. Although the feminist movement began in Taiwan in the early 1970s, its impact on society has developed gradually over the past three decades. For example, Taiwanese women have experienced a significant improvement in educational attainment since 1970. Hsiu-Lien Lu points out the tremendously increased number of women receiving tertiary education between 1970 and 2008: 'At the time I initiated the feminist movement, around one-quarter of Taiwanese women could not read. But today, less than 5 percent of adult women have not been to school, and most of these are immigrant brides.'³²⁶ Fran Martin and Tania Lewis echo Hsiu-Lien Lu's declaration in terms of the participation of Taiwanese women in higher education: '86 per cent of women between the ages of 18 and 21 were enrolled in tertiary education in 2008.'³²⁷

³²⁵ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 302.

³²⁶ Ibid., p. 296.

³²⁷ Fran Martin and Tania Lewis, "Lifestyling Women: Emergent Femininities on Singapore and Taiwan TV", in Youna Kim, ed., *Women and the Media in Asia: The Precarious Self* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 64.

Hsiu-Lien Lu states that it is difficult for men in Taiwan to adjust to the changing status of women.³²⁸ Although Hsiu-Lien Lu focuses on women's change in her feminist doctrine, she also points out the importance of male change; that men should not stereotype women in terms of conventional patriarchal expectations.³²⁹ She takes household chores as an example to illustrate her ideology of equality: men should not take the household chores or cooking as their wife's obligation, nor should wives take earning money to be the man's responsibility. She argues that both husband and wife should cooperate and share the responsibility for financial income and domestic chores.³³⁰

Hsiu-Lien Lu was inspired by the writings of Simone de Beauvoir, particularly with regards to the equality of human beings. For this reason, she stresses in her feminist doctrine the importance of men treating women as human beings and showing them equal respect.³³¹ Although the central analysis of this thesis focuses on the representation of women in the media, it is essential to point out the changing representation of men in the chosen case studies. Chapter Two mentioned the way men are seen to have changed in the film *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right*. The representation of the new man in the film suggests the changing role of men in society. For instance, Rui-Fan cooks for An-Zhen when she works late and Tian-Wei shares child caring responsibilities with An-Zhen. The film seems to suggest that it is important for men to change in order to adjust to the developing status of women in contemporary Taiwanese society.

Taiwanese women have experienced greater self-realisation due to the influence of Hsiu-Lien Lu's feminist doctrine as well as feminism from western culture, in

³²⁸ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 171.

³²⁹ Ibid., p. 172.

³³⁰ Ibid., pp. 191-192.

³³¹ Ibid., p. 174.

particular the work of Simone de Beauvoir. As mentioned earlier, Hsiu-Lien Lu's advocacy of gender equality was put into action during her vice-presidency. Thus for example the Gender Equality in Employment Act went into effect on International Women's Day in 2002.³³² Western feminist theories had an impact not only on women in Taiwanese society (via feminist political advocacy as we have seen), but also the representation of women in the media. Television dramas have presented a wide range of representations of women since the 1990s, such as the 'career woman', 'single woman' or 'divorced woman'. This chapter focuses specifically on the influence of new feminism on the representation of women in Taiwanese idol dramas since the 2000s. It employs textual analysis, analysing the narrative structure and key themes, as well as the visual devices specifically used in idol drama. The chapter discusses the presence of the feminist theme in popular programming through detailed discussion of three case studies: *Miss Rose* (Xi Sheng Chen, 2012), *The Fierce Wife* (Fun Jun Xu, 2010) and *My Queen* (Qing Zhen Lin, 2009). *Miss Rose*, discussed in the second section of the chapter, depicts the life and romance of a single working woman. Under the influence of post-feminist discourses of choice from western culture, marriage is no longer presented as the only option for Taiwanese woman in this drama. Rather, divorce is depicted as an option for a woman who wants to pursue her new identity. As Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra state, 'postfeminist culture emphasizes educational and professional opportunities for women and girls; freedom of choice with respect to work, domesticity, and parenting; and physical and particularly sexual empowerment.'³³³ The idol dramas do not reject heterosexual romance and marriage; on the contrary, they present romance and marriage as a choice for female protagonists.

³³² Doris T. Chang, *Women's Movement in Twentieth-Century Taiwan* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 149.

³³³ Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, eds, *Interrogating Post-Feminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Cultures* (London: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 2.

The third section of the chapter examines the representation of a divorced woman in *The Fierce Wife*. The last section of the chapter discusses the representation of a career woman over the age of thirty through an examination of *My Queen*. Together these themes point to the rising status of women within the culture of new feminism in twenty-first century Taiwan.

Television is considered the most common medium for audiences to know the latest local and international news, while the broad variety of television programmes also provide great entertainment for audiences at their leisure. According to Gillian Dyer, 'Television, of all the media, seems to offer the most "real" images. They are readily available, for the initial layout of the cost of a television set and a licence fee – often they appear to be "live", conforming to "real time" and are, for the most part, consumed within the domestic environment.'³³⁴ Amongst a wide range of diverse television programmes, idol drama is one of the most popular types of programmes in Taiwan. Idol drama as an industrial term is a genre derived from 'trendy drama' in Japan.³³⁵ The genre 'trendy drama' was developed in Japan in the late 1980s.³³⁶ Koichi Iwabuchi states that the features of 'trendy drama' were 'their depictions of the stylish urban lifestyles and trendy nightspots abundant with extravagant designer clothes and accessories, sets with chic interior designs, and the latest pop music, all of which clearly reflected the then prevailing highly materialistic consumerism Japanese young people enjoyed under the so-called bubble-economy.'³³⁷ 'Trendy drama' was later developed into post-trendy drama' in the late 1990s.³³⁸ 'Post-trendy drama' focuses more on plot development and depictions of 'young people's yearnings for

³³⁴ Baehr, H. and Dyer, G., *Boxed In: Women and Television* (London: Pandora Press, 1987), p. 6.

³³⁵ Koichi Iwabuchi, ed., *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese TV Dramas* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), p. 9.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

love, friendship, work and dreams.’³³⁹ Despite the fact that ‘post-trendy drama’ focuses on plot development, popular idols, consumerism, and urban settings continued to be important features of the genre.³⁴⁰

In the 1990s, Japanese dramas became very popular in Taiwan, especially among female audiences.³⁴¹ Koichi Iwabuchi notes that prominent features of Japanese idol dramas are their depictions of young people’s romances, friendships and working life in urban settings, for instance in Tokyo.³⁴² According to Yu-Li Liu and Yi-Hsiang Chen, most of the Japanese idol dramas are adaptations of well-known manga (comic) stories. The average season of Japanese idol dramas is between ten to twelve episodes. Young women and students between the ages of fourteen and twenty-four are the target audiences.³⁴³ Yu-Li Liu and Yi-Hsiang Chen point out that there are several fundamental elements of Japanese idol drama: ‘pop idols, pledged tokens, distinctive locations, fantastic occupations, sweet-sounding music, and brand commodities. The fashionable role models of young audiences – the stars of idol-dramas – are the key to the success or failure of a production.’³⁴⁴ Taiwanese producers borrowed the format of Japanese idol drama and incorporated Taiwanese cultural elements into the genre in order to create a local idol drama format.³⁴⁵

The first Taiwanese idol drama was *Meteor Garden* (Yueh Hsun Tsai, 2001) which was an adaptation of the Japanese manga series *Boys over Flowers* (*Hana Yori Dango*) (Yoko Kamio, 1992-2003). Yu-Li Liu and Yi-Hsiang Chen take *Meteor*

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Yi-Hsiang Chen, “Looking for Taiwan’s Competitive Edge: The Production and Circulation of Taiwanese TV Drama”, in Ying Zhu, Michael Keane and Ruoyun Bai, eds, *TV Drama in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), p. 177.

³⁴² Iwabuchi, ed., *Feeling Asian Modernities*, p. 9.

³⁴³ Yu-Li Liu and Yi-Hsiang Chen, “Cloning, Adaptation, Import and Originality: Taiwan in the Global Television Format Business”, in Albert Moran and Michael Keane, eds, *Television Across Asia: Television Industries, Programme Formats and Globalization* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), p. 67.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Chen, “Looking for Taiwan’s Competitive Edge”, in Zhu, Keane and Bai, eds, *TV Drama in China*, p. 177.

Garden as an example to explain the distinctive features of Taiwanese idol drama: ‘In order to accommodate local tastes some distinctive Taiwanese cultural elements were retained, such as the rustic flavour of certain elderly roles, aspects of family relationships, generational conflicts, and religious superstitions. In this process Taiwanese resources were integrated into a Japanese story in order to simulate the Japanese idol-drama genre. The end result was the creation of a Taiwanese style idol-drama.’³⁴⁶ Typical Taiwanese idol dramas focus on romance, friendship and family.³⁴⁷ Yu-Fen Ko points out that romantic relationships are an important characteristic of idol drama.³⁴⁸ Similar to Japanese idol drama, the main characteristic of Taiwanese idol drama is the use of the most popular singers, actors, actresses and models in the entertainment industry in order to attract younger audiences aged from eighteen to those in their mid-thirties.

Utilizing pop idols to play the main characters of idol dramas is particularly significant. The pop idols in television dramas create the idol phenomenon. In spite of the fact that idol drama may belong to a different genre in comparison to film, it is useful to refer to Western theories on stardom and celebrity studies to frame this move. In his sophisticated analysis of stardom in *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (2004), Richard Dyer states:

The star phenomenon consists of everything that is publicly available about stars. A film star’s image is not just his or her films, but the promotion of those films and of the star through pin-ups, public appearances, studio hand-outs and so on, as well as interviews, biographies and coverage in the press of the star’s doings and “private’ life.” Further, a star’s image is also

³⁴⁶ Liu and Chen, “Cloning, Adaptation, Import and Originality: Taiwan in the Global Television Format Business”, in Moran and Keane, eds, *Television Across Asia*, p. 68.

³⁴⁷ Chen, “Looking for Taiwan’s Competitive Edge”, in Zhu, Keane and Bai, eds, *TV Drama in China*, p. 177.

³⁴⁸ Yu-Fen Ko, “The Desired Form: Japanese Idol Dramas in Taiwan”, in Iwabuchi, ed., *Feeling Asian Modernities*, p. 108.

what people say or write about him or her, as critics or commentators, the way the image is used in other contexts such as advertisements, novels, pop songs, and finally the way the star can become part of the coinage of everyday speech.³⁴⁹

Thus for Dyer stars are human beings, but also complex sites of signification that serve to express the difficulties of living in contemporary society. As Richard Dyer points out, ‘Stars articulate what it is to be a human being in contemporary society; that is, they express the particular notion we hold of the person, of the “individual”.’³⁵⁰ The stars of idol drama bring added impact to the audience and to society. The actress Sonia Sui serves as a good example in relation to Dyer’s statement here. Her star image articulates the idea about contemporary womanhood. She frequently shares her daily life as a wife and mother to her fans on social network. The following paragraphs will provide further discussions of her impact to Taiwanese society.

Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn acknowledge that stars and celebrities ‘can be viewed as fulfilling a pedagogic function, or as Chris Rojek puts it, as “informal life coaches” who provide us with tips, images and models which span fashion, diet, morals, politics and taste – influencing the construction of a “personal lifestyle architecture”.’³⁵¹ The actress and model Sonia Sui, who plays An-Zhen Xie in *The Fierce Wife*, is an example of an inspirational figure and a celebrity in the Taiwanese media. Sonia Sui went through a broken relationship during filming of the idol drama in 2012. Her ex-boyfriend was unfaithful to her so she decided to end her eight years’ long relationship with him. In front of news reporters, she described her feeling as if

³⁴⁹ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (Second Edition) (Oxon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 2-3.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁵¹ Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn, “Here, There and Nowhere: Ageing, Gender and Celebrity Studies”, in Deborah Jermyn and Su Holmes, eds, *Women, Celebrity and Cultures of Ageing: Freeze Frame* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 17.

her heart had been cut by a paper cutter, but she still wished him the best.³⁵² The Taiwanese media praised Sonia Sui as a woman with high intelligence and emotional maturity.³⁵³ Her image as a woman who chose to forgive her ex-boyfriend in real life mirrors her representation as a wife who chooses to forgive her ex-husband's adultery in *The Fierce Wife*. This is therefore an example of a celebrity using the public details of their private life to reinforce their star persona. For Sonia Sui this persona is bound up in ideas about marriage and gendered forms of behaviour.

In 2015, Sonia Sui married her husband in Las Vegas.³⁵⁴ She gave birth to a son in the same year.³⁵⁵ Sonia Sui has a Facebook fan page with 299,763 followers.³⁵⁶ She shares her daily life as a mother and posts photos with her son on Facebook. She frequently posts inspiring messages or quotes to encourage her fans to cherish what they have and to pursue their dreams. She also shares her tips on how to maintain a marriage on her Facebook page. Her seeming wisdom and positive attitude when she faced a broken relationship increased her popularity in the Taiwanese media. The media in Taiwan praised Sonia Sui as a 'smart lady' who knows how to balance family and work.³⁵⁷ Sonia Sui as an actress brings positive influence through her messages on Facebook and her role as An-Zhen in both the idol drama and film. In turn these associations inform the narrative and themes of *The Fierce Wife*.

As mentioned earlier, romance is an important feature of idol drama and therefore it is useful to refer to feminist analysis of romance narrative in order to

³⁵² "Sonia Sui Ends the Relationship with Yuan-Hao Yao", *CTI News*, 8 May 2012, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OR0ndhoitno>> [accessed 17 July 2016].

³⁵³ "Sonia Sui Ends the Relationship with Yuan-Hao Yao", *CTI News*, 8 May 2012, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OR0ndhoitno>> [accessed 17 July 2016].

³⁵⁴ "Sonia Sui Got Married! ", *EBC News*, 16 January 2015, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kz5LLBxWg14>> [accessed 17 July 2016].

³⁵⁵ "Thirty-Four Years Old Sonia Sui Gave Birth to A Son", *EBC News*, 31 August 2015, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyiNYIt9F2w>> [accessed 17 July 2016].

³⁵⁶ Sonia Sui's Official Fan Page, <<https://www.facebook.com/SoniaSuiOfficialFanPage>> [accessed 17 July 2016].

³⁵⁷ Chen-Yong Lee, "The Tips on How Sonia Sui Maintains Her Marriage", *Liberty Times Net*, 10 May 2016, <<http://istyle.ltn.com.tw/article/3445>> [accessed 17 July 2016].

analyse the narrative structure in Taiwanese idol dramas. This chapter employs Janice A. Radway's sophisticated feminist analysis of romance narrative in *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (1984), examining the thirteen logically ordered functions that Radway argues make up the heroine's transformation in romance, in relation to the narrative structure of romance in Taiwanese idol dramas. According to Radway's questionnaire and interview-based research on the purpose of romance reading, the main reason for female readers to read romance is for 'simple relaxation'; however, some readers also claim that romance allow them to 'escape' from their everyday lives.³⁵⁸ Radway argues that there are multiple functions for romance reading:

Not only is it a relaxing release from the tension produced by daily problems and responsibilities but it creates a time or space within which a woman can be entirely on her own, preoccupied with her personal needs, desires, and pleasure. It is also a means of transportation or escape to the exotic or, again, to that which is different.³⁵⁹

According to Radway, in order for the story to qualify as romance, 'the story must chronicle not merely the events of a courtship but *what it feels like* to be the *object of one*.'³⁶⁰ Radway asserts that the heroine in romance goes through a transformation process which will lead her to find new identity, however, she remains controlled by patriarchal culture.³⁶¹

Radway states that romance fiction does not judge the hero's indifference and mistreatment of women; instead it criticises women's failure to become nurturing wives and mothers: 'The romance blames not men's indifference, competitiveness, or

³⁵⁸ Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), p. 61.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

³⁶¹ Ibid., p. 145.

ambition for their rigid indifference and their mistreatment of women but rather women's own insufficiency as perfect wife-mothers.'³⁶² Radway's statement here echoes Hsiu-Lien Lu's statement in the first chapter of this thesis that emphasises the necessity of women having to change. Although Hsiu-Lien Lu does stress the importance of men changing too, it is women who need to make more effort to prove their abilities in order to be treated equally with men within society. In romance the transformation will lead the heroine to find her natural ability as a woman, then she will transform into a 'true' woman who possesses nurturing abilities as a 'good' wife and mother. As Radway states, the characteristic of the romantic heroine's ability to 'transmute the sick into the healthy reassures the reader that the heroine is, in reality, a "true" woman, one who possesses all the nurturing skills associated by patriarchal culture with the feminine character.'³⁶³ She further stresses: 'It is, in fact, the combination of her womanly sensuality and mothering capacities that will magically remake a man incapable of expressing emotions or of admitting dependence.'³⁶⁴ The transformation into a 'good' wife and mother is an adoption of the representation of womanhood in patriarchal society. Radway stresses that the heroine in romance 'has adopted the typical stance prescribed for women in patriarchal culture, it should also be noted that she has become infantile in the sense that she is all passive, incomplete desire, yearning for the life-giving nurturance of a tender and gentle but all-powerful individual.'³⁶⁵

Radway's feminist reading of romance provides a reference point for my analysis of idol drama, since romance is the essential element in idol drama. As mentioned earlier, female status in Taiwan has developed greatly during the past

³⁶² Ibid., p. 128.

³⁶³ Radway, *Reading the Romance*, p. 127.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 145.

decade. This thesis argues that the development of women's status in Taiwanese society has led to a transformation of the representations of women in idol drama. This chapter particularly focuses on an examination of the representation of women in current popular Taiwanese idol dramas. Idol drama may belong to a different genre than soap opera, yet there are some similarities between them which are significant, not least in terms of the impact of television drama on the female audience. As a consequence, Tania Modleski's analysis of a female audience's connection to soap operas in *Loving with a Vengeance* (1982) provides a framework through which to discuss the relationship of women to Taiwanese idol dramas. Modleski states: 'soap operas encourage women to become involved in – “connected to” – the lives of the people on the screen.' The way soap opera 'stimulates women's desire for connectedness is through the constant, claustrophobic use of close-up shots.'³⁶⁶ As Modleski further stresses, soap operas centralise on the use of close-up shots to let the audience see the facial expressions and emotions of characters: 'Soap operas contrast sharply with other popular forms aimed at masculine visual pleasure, which is often centered on the fragmentation and fetishisation of the female body. In the most popular feminine visual art, it is easy to forget that characters have bodies, so insistently are close-ups of faces employed.'³⁶⁷ These close-up shots of female facial expressions offer training in reading people's emotions. As Modleski states, 'Close-ups provide the spectator with training in “reading” other people, in being sensitive to their (unspoken) feelings at any given moment.'³⁶⁸ Similar to soap opera, the close-up shots of characters are essential features of Taiwanese idol dramas. The technique not only provides audiences with the opportunity to see the facial expressions of characters and

³⁶⁶ Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* (New York: Routledge, 1982), p. 99.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 100.

how their emotions develop, it also offers a sense of ‘connectedness’ to female audiences.³⁶⁹

As one of the most popular types of television programme among female audiences, soap opera has frequently been discussed among scholars in the United States. Topics such as love, marriage, family, birth and death are popular in American soap operas. Modleski’s analysis of 1980s American soap operas is useful in relation to current popular Taiwanese idol dramas. In 1980s American soaps women work outside the home as men do; however, the soaps focus on women’s personal problems rather than their working lives. As Modleski states, ‘most of everyone’s time is spent experiencing and discussing personal and domestic crisis.’³⁷⁰ The issue of domestic problems is essential to 1980s American soaps, which connect audiences to their everyday lives. The families in soap operas are not perfect families; they do not mirror the actual families of the female audiences; instead they are like an ‘*extended* family’ for them. Modleski acknowledges: ‘What the spectator is looking at and perhaps longing for, is a kind of *extended* family, the direct opposite of her own isolated nuclear family.’³⁷¹ She further stresses: ‘soap operas convince women that their highest goal is to see their families united and happy, while consoling them for their inability to realize this ideal and bring about familial harmony.’³⁷²

In a similar manner, family is one of the central themes in Taiwanese idol drama. For instance, both the female protagonists in *Miss Rose* and *My Queen* seek advice from their mothers when they encounter problems at work or in personal relationships. Mothers in these idol dramas are important for their daughters; they are frequently spiritual guides who listen to them with patience and console them when

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 86.

³⁷¹ Ibid., p. 108.

³⁷² Ibid., p. 92.

they are depressed. The female protagonists encounter numerous obstacles in their personal relationships with their partners. Personal relationships and emotional development are significant elements that attract female audiences.³⁷³ As Christine Geraghty states, ‘Personal relationships are the backbone of soaps. They provide the dramatic moments – marriage, birth, divorce, death – and the more day-to-day exchanges of quarrels, alliances and dilemmas which make up the fabric of the narrative.’³⁷⁴ Similar to soap operas, idol drama focuses on personal relationships and the emotional development of their characters. Yu-Fen Ko points out that the definitive characteristics of Japanese idol dramas are ‘goal-driven casual progression of narrative, stories of modern, popular life, and representations of urban experiences. In Japanese idol dramas, love relationships are thematic, but the emotional involvement from the audience is not as intense – the immediate tears of the viewers are not the key products of amusement of the idol dramas.’³⁷⁵ Female protagonists encounter various obstacles in heterosexual relationships, marriage and their lives. The development of personal problems in soap operas and idol dramas is enduring. They do not show the result to audiences immediately; on the contrary, they create duration and tension for audiences to experience their emotions alongside the characters.³⁷⁶

As in everyday life, female audiences feel familiar with the plots in soap operas and idol dramas when they see the characters struggling in hardship. The plots that depict relationships between men and women, courtship, marriage and death may be cliché; however, they offer a sense of familiarity for female audiences. Women can encounter similar problems in their lives to those experienced by the female characters in soap operas and idol dramas. According to Geraghty: ‘it is still women who are

³⁷³ Chen, “Looking for Taiwan’s Competitive Edge”, in Zhu, Keane and Bai, eds, *TV Drama in China*, p. 177.

³⁷⁴ Christine Geraghty, *Women and Soap Opera: A Study of Prime Time Soaps* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 41.

³⁷⁵ Ko, “The Desired Form”, in Iwabuchi, ed., *Feeling Asian Modernities*, p. 108.

³⁷⁶ Geraghty, *Women and Soap Opera*, p. 41.

deemed to carry the responsibility for emotional relationships in our society – who keep the home, look after the children, write the letters or make the phone calls to absent friends, seek advice on how to solve problems, consult magazines on how to respond ‘better’ to the demands made on them.’³⁷⁷ The personal relationship is the essence of soaps as well as of idol dramas, and their relations with women are closely connected. As Geraghty stresses, ‘It is this engagement with the personal which is central to women’s involvement with soaps but it is important to be precise about how that involvement works.’³⁷⁸ She further stresses:

It is the process which is important, the way in which soaps recognise and value the emotional work which women undertake in the personal sphere. Soaps rehearse to their female audience the process of handling personal relationships – the balancing of each individual’s needs, the attention paid to every word and gesture so as to understand its emotional meaning, the recognition of competing demands for attention.³⁷⁹

The broadcast time of Taiwanese idol drama varies from American soap opera; most of the idol dramas being broadcast during weekend evening slots. Idol drama provides anticipation to female audiences, just as soap opera does, to expect the next episode. The sense of expectation for the developing plot of an idol drama seems similar to the action of waiting for women who watch soap operas. As Modleski points out, ‘Soap operas invest exquisite pleasure in the central condition of a woman’s life: waiting – whether for her phone to ring, for the baby to take its nap, or for the family to be reunited shortly after the day’s final soap opera has left *its* family still struggling against dissolution.’³⁸⁰ Female audiences have to wait for the next episode of an idol

³⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 42.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 43.

³⁸⁰ Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance*, p. 88.

drama or a soap opera in order to know the developing plot, and the action of waiting reflects their lives that creates a sense of familiarity for female audiences. Modleski states that critics of television frequently ‘accuse its viewers of indulging in escapism’ and ‘distracting the housewife from her real situation’. However, Modleski stresses the importance of distraction for the housewife: ‘a distracted or distractable frame of mind is crucial to housewife’s efficient functioning *in* her real situation, and at this level television and its so-called distractions, along with the particular forms they take, are intimately bound up with women’s work.’³⁸¹ Taiwanese idol drama and soap opera share a focus on the development of personal problems in marriage, relationships, family and career that create a sense of familiarity and attraction for female audiences. Female audiences may not encounter the same dramatic experiences as the protagonists in soap operas or idol dramas, but they are able to learn how to face their personal problems in everyday life through soaps or idol dramas. The families in these dramas are not perfect and they do not mirror their real families, however, they are like their ‘*extended* family’ which can provide them relaxation and comfort.

3.2. *Miss Rose* (Xi Sheng Chen, 2012)

Romance is the essence of Taiwanese idol drama. The majority of Taiwanese idol dramas can be characterised in genre terms as romantic comedies. This section focuses on the representation of women in relation to themes of romance and work in two Taiwanese idol dramas, *Office Girls* (Fu Jun Xu, 2011) and *Miss Rose*. Both dramas share the themes of romance and work. They also centralise the description of the personal lives of the female protagonists as working women in a manner that can be productively analysed. Furthermore, this section takes *Miss Rose* as an idol drama case

³⁸¹ Ibid., p. 103.

study to analyse the representation of working women of Taiwan in current popular idol dramas. *Miss Rose* concerns a woman's search for Mr. Right. The female protagonist, Si-Yi Luo (Ya-Yen Lai), is a thirty-one-year-old single woman who works as a secretary in the Guang Qiang LED company. She is an intelligent, kind and thoughtful woman who devotes most of her time to work. Her colleagues frequently address her as 'Miss Screw', which refers to the stereotype of a thirty-something single woman of plain appearance. Si-Yi has lost faith in love since her previous broken relationship. She finds faith in love again when she meets Cheng-Kuan Gao (Ze Qiu) who is the vice manager of the Guang Qiang LED company. The heroine undergoes a journey of physical and spiritual transformation in and through romance.

Miss Rose presents the physical transformation of the heroine through her outfits, from a woman who wears glasses and grey suits with a white top, to a woman who wears contact lenses, bright colours and fashionable outfits. The main reason for Si-Yi's transformation is because of a bet with a fortune teller. In the first episode Si-Yi's best friend, Xiao-Ke Zhong (Yun-Fen Li), accompanies her to meet a fortune teller who predicts that she will be a lonely spinster for the rest of her life. Si-Yi declares her intention to find a decent man to marry within a year. The fortune teller promises Si-Yi that she will perform pole dancing at her wedding if she successfully gets married within a year. On the contrary, Si-Yi needs to pay the fortune teller a million dollars if she loses the bet. The promise leads the heroine to embark on a journey of transformation and her hunt for Mr. Right. Thus Si-Yi is depicted as rising to a challenge and her search for a perfect partner is framed in competitive terms.

Miss Rose presents Si-Yi as a working woman who spends a significant amount of time on her work. The representation of a working woman in Taiwanese idol drama suggests the transformation of women's social role in Taiwanese society. As mentioned earlier, Taiwanese women experienced a significant improvement in educational

attainment since the 1970s. Thanks to this higher educational attainment the desire of contemporary Taiwanese women to be involved in the labour market is increasing. In her analysis of women and the media in twenty-first century Asia, Youna Kim points out:

Women's desire to participate in the labour market is certainly on the rise, and educated women's choices in life appear to have become more varied, available yet unviable. The entrance of women into the paid workforce is driven by the role of education in mediating job aspirations, the seeming promise of liberation from traditional feminine identities through the achievement of economic independence and empowerment.³⁸²

Despite the fact that women in most Asian countries have higher levels of education and broader choices in the twenty-first century, Kim argues that they are still constrained by patriarchal culture: 'The operation of choice is regulated and constrained by social structures and persisting patriarchal cultures that continue to influence women's education – work transition and create new inequality, insecurity and a precarious self.'³⁸³ More educated women in Asia choose to participate in the workforce in order to gain financial independence.³⁸⁴ Suzanne Leonard cites the nineteenth century feminist writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman in *Women and Economics* (1898), making the point that 'women must work outside the home in order to gain economic independence.'³⁸⁵ The same phenomenon occurs in Taiwan; Martin and Lewis point out that the labour participation rate for Taiwanese women over the age of 15 is increasing, from 46% in 1999 to 49.6% in 2009.³⁸⁶ The social role of women in

³⁸² Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 3.

³⁸³ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁸⁵ Suzanne Leonard, "I Hate My Job, I Hate Everybody Here", in Tasker and Negra, eds, *Interrogating Post-Feminism*, p. 100.

³⁸⁶ Martin and Lewis, "Lifestyling Women: Emergent Femininities on Singapore and Taiwan TV", in

some Asian countries has undergone a transformation from housewife to career woman. As Kim states, ‘Women’s social roles in some parts of Asia have undergone a rapid transformation from the traditional image of the “good wife and wise mother” to the career women working and playing for pleasure.’³⁸⁷

Taiwanese idol dramas have presented the transformation of women’s social role from housewife to career woman, not least by presenting female protagonists in various workplaces. Take the female protagonists in the idol drama case studies in this chapter as an example: Si-Yi Luo works as a secretary in a LED company in *Miss Rose*, Wu-Shuan Shan (Jin-Hua Yang) is an editor of *I-Found* magazine in *My Queen*, You-Qing Cheng (Yi-Chen Lin) works as a manager of the shoe department in the department store in *In Time with You* (You Ning Qu, 2011), Xing-Ren Shen (Jia-Yan Ke) is a sales department supervisor in the Jing Shi department store in *Office Girls*, and Qing Ji (Wei Ning Hsu) is a cosmetic brand manager in *Love Me or Leave Me* (Qing Zhen Lin, 2012). Nevertheless, with a higher female labour participation rate, social issues such as singlehood, delayed marriage, a low fertility rate and a higher divorce rate are more common in contemporary society. Kim argues: ‘Increasingly, educated women are choosing to invest their resources into their career, rather than into marriage and family. The effects of the choices they are making can be seen in the growth of singles, delayed marriage, low fertility and high divorce rates.’³⁸⁸

Social issues such as singlehood and delayed marriage are indeed common themes in contemporary popular Taiwanese idol drama. For instance, the female protagonists in *Miss Rose*, *In Time with You* and *My Queen* are thirty-something single women. They are described as ‘Defeated Dogs’ by their colleagues and family in the dramas. ‘Defeated dog’ is a popular term which originates from Japan; it refers to

Kim, ed., *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 64.

³⁸⁷ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 18.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

single women over the age of thirty with financial independence and a higher level of career achievement.³⁸⁹ Both idol dramas present the poignant status of single working women and their struggles to find the right partner. In order to leave singlehood, the heroines need to undergo a transformation and start searching for new identities in romance. Thus, as I will argue, while these dramas prominently display the figure of the young, educated, working woman, they remain committed to discourses of romance and marriage as the source of female fulfilment.

In idol drama romance is the road that female protagonists need to walk down before they reach the realm of marriage. Women in the twenty-first century may have more options in life, but marriage is still presented within culture as a desirable option for them. Women still have concerns about becoming spinsters and never finding the right man in their lives.³⁹⁰ *Miss Rose* presents the concerns of its female protagonist as a single working woman who is searching for the right partner after her previous broken relationship. Although Si-Yi's best friend, Xiao-Ke, always encourages her to pursue happiness, she is uncertain if she can find true love. Among a number of current Taiwanese idol dramas, *Miss Rose* serves as a significant example of typical romance. For this reason, this section examines its narrative structure in relation to Radway's thirteen logically related functions that explain the process of the heroine's transformation in romance. Radway outlines: 'the heroine's transformation from an isolated, asexual, insecure adolescent who is unsure of her own identity, into a mature, sensual, and very married woman who has realized her full potential and identity as the partner of a man and as the implied mother of a child.'³⁹¹ Radway summarises the narrative structure of an ideal romance as follow:

³⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

³⁹⁰ See for example Angela McRobbie, "Postfeminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime", in Tasker and Negra, eds, *Interrogating Post-Feminism*, p. 36.

³⁹¹ Radway, *Reading the Romance*, p. 134.

1. The heroine's social identity is destroyed.
2. The heroine reacts antagonistically to an aristocratic male.
3. The aristocratic male responds ambiguously to the heroine.
4. The heroine interprets the hero's behavior as evidence of a purely sexual interest in her.
5. The heroine responds to the hero's behavior with anger or coldness.
6. The hero retaliates by punishing the heroine.
7. The heroine and hero are physically and/or emotionally separated.
8. The hero treats the heroine tenderly.
9. The heroine responds warmly to the hero's act of tenderness.
10. The heroine reinterprets the hero's ambiguous behavior as the product of previous hurt.
11. The hero proposes/openly declares his love for/demonstrates his unwavering commitment to the heroine with as supreme act of tenderness.
12. The heroine responds sexually and emotionally.
13. The heroine's identity is restored.³⁹²

According to Radway, 'As the initial function indicates, the ideal romance begins with its heroine's removal from a familiar, comfortable realm usually associated with her childhood and family.'³⁹³ She further explains that the initial function that imposes the heroine's loss of connections and identity is deeply resonant in a psychoanalytic sense. When she is removed from her earlier relationships to a public world, the heroine's consequent fear and feeling of emptiness occupies her emotions. She attempts to establish an individual identity separate from her relation to her mother.³⁹⁴

Radway's thirteen logically related functions of contemporary romantic fiction are almost identically reproduced in the structure of the romance narrative in

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Radway, *Reading the Romance*, p. 138.

Taiwanese idol drama. Take the heroine Si-Yi and the hero Cheng-Kuan in *Miss Rose* for example. The first episode presents the initial encounter between the heroine and hero, which is an unpleasant experience. Si-Yi drops a cake unexpectedly on him and messes up his expensive suit at a hotel bakery. Both of them have poor impressions of each other; Si-Yi thinks Chen-Kuan is arrogant because of his media reputation as a cruel manager, while Chen-Kuan thinks Si-Yi is unattractive because of her lack of taste in clothing and ungraceful behaviour. Although Si-Yi apologises to Chen-Kuan, he retains an arrogant attitude towards her. The heroine behaves in a hostile manner to the hero because of his arrogance – as Radway states, ‘The heroine reacts antagonistically to an aristocratic male.’³⁹⁵

Both the heroine and hero effectively misjudge each other at the initial stage of their romance. Misjudgement is indispensable in romance, as Radway states, since the middle of each romance must create some form of conflict, such as misjudgement, in order to delay the happy union of the couple until the proper moment.³⁹⁶ The misjudgement between the heroine and hero commences at the beginning of their romance and will later dissolve when the hero confesses his past to the heroine. In episode five, Si-Yi and Chen-Kuan go to the local government office to submit their lighting project. Despite the fact that they are late for the submission, Si-Yi tries her best to persuade the officer by standing in front of her car in the rain. Chen-Kuan is impressed to see her determination to help the company and moves forward to stop the officer’s car as well. They successfully persuade the officer to accept their project though they both get wet. Chen-Kuan offers to give Si-Yi a ride to his apartment to change into some dry clothes. He warms up a glass of milk and dries Si-Yi’s hair; his tenderness is in marked contrast to his previous rudeness toward the heroine. Although

³⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 134.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 65.

Chen-Kuan explains his concern about her health as a manager, he has already fallen in love with the heroine. Radway states in her eighth and ninth functions: 'The hero treats the heroine tenderly.' Si-Yi feels the tenderness of Chen-Kuan and is deeply touched by his kindness. She also 'responds warmly to the hero's act of tenderness.'³⁹⁷

Chen-Kuan confesses to Si-Yi that he comes from a single-parent family, and his father was a driver for the chief manager of the company. The chief manager treats Chen-Kuan as his son and has provided him with financial support after his father passed away. His life has been arranged by the chief manager so he never thinks about pursuing his own life goals. The only way for him to repay the chief manager is to work harder and be a successful manager. This is the reason why he has to work so hard and be strict to his employees. Si-Yi is sympathetic to him and realises she has misjudged him. In Radway's tenth function, 'The heroine reinterprets the hero's ambiguous behavior as the product of previous hurt.'³⁹⁸ Both the heroine and the hero realise they have misjudged each other; their misjudgement has been resolved and then transformed into attraction. Si-Yi becomes a personal assistant to Chen-Kuan and their romance gradually develops after the hero's earnest confession.

A significant example which illustrates Si-Yi's physical transformation comes in the seventh episode. Chen-Kuan wants to take Si-Yi to meet a lighting product creator who is actually Si-Yi's ex-boyfriend. Despite Si-Yi's refusal to attend the auction, Chen-Kuan insists that she accompany him. He tells her that she is a wonderful woman who deserves to be loved and cherished; she should put on her best performance in order to make her ex-boyfriend regret leaving her. Chen-Kuan takes Si-Yi to choose a decent dress and jewellery for attending the auction. Si-Yi has her hair tied up gracefully to match the evening gown and jewellery. The hero is astonished

³⁹⁷ Radway, *Reading the Romance*, p. 134.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

to see her transformation and exclaims: ‘Actually, you can be a very beautiful woman.’ While the heroine’s transformation process continues throughout the drama, her search for a new identity in romance commences as well. As Radway states, the heroine undergoes a transformation from a woman who is uncertain of her own identity into a mature woman with new identity as the partner of a man.³⁹⁹ After a successful transformation and having a new identity as the partner of the hero, the heroine moves forward towards the marital stage.

Women in the twenty-first century may be represented as having broader choices in terms of their lives and careers, however their desire to enter the marriage realm remains strong. With financial independence, marriage is no longer presented as the only option for women to gain economic comfort. In her analysis of twenty-first century American cinema, Leonard states: ‘the modern woman is fully capable of supporting herself and free to couple as she chooses; put simply, she may marry for love not money.’⁴⁰⁰ The representation of women in Taiwan follows the representation of women in western culture in this respect. Unlike the representation of women in previous eras, Taiwanese women in contemporary media are presented as financially independent women. *Miss Rose* presents Si-Yi as a working woman with financial independence; she chooses to get married because of true love rather than for financial security. The idol drama seems then to suggest that marriage has become a choice for women with financial independence.

According to Radway, ‘the romance is an account of a woman’s journey to female personhood *as that particular psychic configuration is constructed and realized within patriarchal culture*. It functions as a symbolic display and explanation of a

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Leonard, “I Hate My Job, I Hate Everybody Here”, in Tasker and Negra, eds, *Interrogating Post-Feminism*, p. 100.

process commonly experienced by many women.’⁴⁰¹ *Miss Rose* focuses not only on marriage, but also on how a woman finds herself during the self-discovery journey to female personhood. At the end of a journey of self-discovery, as in romance, the drama presents the confidence of its female protagonist as a working woman over the age of thirty. Si-Yi learns that she is a valuable woman who deserves to be cherished and loved because of Chen-Kuan. The heroine learns how to read the hero’s behaviour; therefore she is able to enter the marriage realm. As Radway claims, the conclusion of romance promises the heroine that if she learns to read male behaviour successfully, she will find that her needs for fatherly protection, motherly care as well as passionate adult love will be satisfied perfectly.⁴⁰²

The drama’s seventeenth episode features a romantic scene in which the hero publicly confesses his love for the heroine. The scene begins with a long-shot of the crowds around a fountain in a square; the camera then moves closer to the couple. Chen-Kuan confesses his love for Si-Yi, and the heroine tenderly looks at him. In the meantime, the crowds cheer: ‘Say yes! Say yes!’ The heroine pleasantly accepts the hero’s offer to be his girlfriend, then they kiss each other in front of the crowds. This public confession echoes the later functions of romance that were mentioned earlier. Radway notes, ‘The hero proposes/openly declares his love for/demonstrates his unwavering commitment to the heroine with as supreme act of tenderness.’ and ‘The heroine responds sexually and emotionally.’⁴⁰³

Once the heroine learns how to read the hero ‘correctly’, she is able to move forward to the marital stage. Chen-Kuan proposes to Si-Yi twice. The first proposal occurs in the nineteenth episode; Si-Yi asks him to give her some time to consider. In a later episode, the chief manager threatens to destroy Chen-Kuan’s career if he chooses

⁴⁰¹ Radway, *Reading the Romance*, p. 138.

⁴⁰² Ibid., p. 149.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., p. 134.

to marry Si-Yi. Si-Yi expresses her uncertainty to Chen-Kuan when she hears what the chief manager has said to him.

Several dramatic incidents happen in the following episodes that separate the hero and heroine. For instance, the chief manager's daughter, Vivian (Xue-Fu Guo), who is very fond of Chen-Kuan, arranges a car accident to prevent the couple's romance continuing. Chen-Kuan thinks he is responsible for taking care of Vivian because she saves him from the car accident. Vivian pretends to be blind so she can force Chen-Kuan to stay with her. Si-Yi does not want to ruin Chen-Kuan's career so she declines his proposal and encourages him to marry Vivian. Despite the fact that Si-Yi feels sorrowful, she decides to separate from Chen-Kuan. For this reason, he accepts the arrangement of marrying Vivian in order to be responsible for her in her blindness. A close-up depicts the two women in the waiting room: Vivian sits on the sofa in a white wedding gown, Si-Yi stands beside her. Vivian asks her: 'How do you know if you really love a person?' Si-Yi looks at Vivian with gentleness, she says: 'If you really love someone, you will wish him well even though you cannot be together.' Si-Yi gives the bride her blessing then leaves the room. Si-Yi's kindness changes Vivian's mind therefore she decides to cancel the wedding. Vivian decides to let Chen-Kuan marry the woman he loves. The second proposal occurs in the final episode when Chen-Kuan leaves the wedding and goes to find Si-Yi; he tells her that the wedding has been cancelled and expresses his love for her again. The heroine accepts his second proposal without further consideration.

Miss Rose presents the expectation and the uncertainty of marriage for women over the age of thirty through its heroine. It presents Si-Yi as a thirty-one-year-old working woman who is concerned about marriage and fertility. On the one hand she desires to marry for true love, while on the other hand her desire is related to her anxiety around fertility. In the nineteenth episode there is a scene depicting a private

conversation between Si-Yi's mother and her daughters. A medium-shot focuses on Si-Yi, her mother and her younger sister. The three of them sit in the living room, and Si-Yi's mother and younger sister raise the issues of marriage and fertility. They urge Si-Yi to accept Chen-Kuan's proposal. The mother says: 'You are no longer young. You should think about giving birth to healthy babies before you reach the age of thirty-five.' The anxiety of the heroine in *Miss Rose* connects with Leonard's comments on the time pressure on career women in twenty-first century American cinema. Leonard argues that the discourse of fertility makes women believe that if they do not marry and reproduce now it may soon be too late. According to Leonard, 'women's marital aspirations are often fueled by an implicit pathologization of singlehood and are often offered in concert with more serious reminders of how time pressures are biologically enforced, specifically by declining fertility rates for women over the age of thirty.'⁴⁰⁴ The heroine in *Miss Rose* serves as an example of a female protagonist who follows the traditional norm for women to get married before the age of thirty-five.

Women in the contemporary media in Taiwan are presented as financially independent, and marriage is no longer presented as the only option for them to gain economic comfort. However, their desire to enter into marriage remains firm.⁴⁰⁵ In spite of the cultural differences between the United States and Taiwan, the media in Taiwan seems to follow the media in the United States by presenting the expectation of marriage for single female protagonists. It is useful to refer to Leonard's analysis of twenty-first century American cinema. According to Leonard, 'As both first- and second-wave feminists argued, paid female labor might free marriage of its economic incentives and free women from financial dependence on men. At its most extreme,

⁴⁰⁴ Leonard, "I Hate My Job, I Hate Everybody Here", in Tasker and Negra, eds, *Interrogating Post-Feminism*, p. 102.

⁴⁰⁵ See for example *ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

perhaps, the recognition of women's capacity to earn their own livelihood might even be used to rationalize the dissolution of the marital institution.'⁴⁰⁶ Although *Miss Rose* dramatizes the heroine's journey in romance, it also advocates the heroine's belief in finding true love as a working woman over the age of thirty. The final episode presents the wedding of the happy couple. It ends with the heroine's voice-over addressing female audience members: 'To those who have been through a broken relationship as I have. We are the most beautiful flowers. God lets us go through those difficult relationships in order to prepare for the right men that are worth cherishing for us. We will be able to bloom in love. Someday, you will realise God has prepared the best man for you. Your Mr. Right is waiting for you in the near future.' The drama then ends with a close-up of the happily married couple looking at each other with joy. It is an affirmation of marriage as an expression of self-fulfilment. As Leonard argues, despite increasing levels of female employment in contemporary American culture, 'the popular conception of marriage as the most vaunted and desirable institution in women's lives has changed little.'⁴⁰⁷ The ending of *Miss Rose* suggests that marriage is still the most desirable institution for women in contemporary Taiwanese society. It also suggests that feminism has clearly influenced Taiwanese society as expressed via its popular culture.

3.3. *The Fierce Wife* (Fun Jun Xu, 2010)

In traditional Taiwanese society divorced women used to be criticised as shameful to their families. In contemporary Taiwanese society, Taiwan civil law has been reformed and therefore divorce has become an option for women who no longer wish to stay

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 101.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 101-102.

married.⁴⁰⁸ This section focuses on divorce as a social issue in relation to the representation of divorced women and men in current popular Taiwanese idol dramas. It examines how women and men are presented in terms of marriage and divorce through an examination of *The Fierce Wife* as an idol drama case study. The last part of the section discusses the theme of motherhood and the representation of the single mother in *The Fierce Wife*. As mentioned earlier, Leonard states of the representation of modern women in twenty-first century American cinema: ‘the modern woman is fully capable of supporting herself and free to couple as she chooses; put simply, she may marry for love not money.’⁴⁰⁹ The divorce rate in Taiwan is higher compared to that of the last decade.⁴¹⁰ The social issue of divorce and the representation of the divorcee have become popular themes in current Taiwanese idol dramas.⁴¹¹ The following female characters are presented as divorced women over the age of thirty in current popular Taiwanese idol dramas: An-Zhen Xie (Sonia Sui) and the psychologist, Dr. Xi (Man-Ning Xi) in *The Fierce Wife* (2010), and Yi-Ren Liao (Kang-Yi Li) in *Love Me or Leave Me* (Qing Zhen Ling, 2012).

The Fierce Wife is a significant example of an idol drama which depicts the life of a couple during and after their marriage. The drama serves not only as an indication of the current social problem but also an encouragement for the divorcee. It focuses especially on the self-rebuilding process of divorced women and their transformation into financially independent, confident and content women. The producer and editor of *The Fierce Wife*, Pei-Hua Wang, stated in an interview with Eastern Television in 2011 that their purpose in presenting the female protagonist as a divorced woman was not

⁴⁰⁸ Civil law in Taiwan was reformed between 1984 and 1985. Taiwan civil law number 1052 states that both husband and wife can ask for a divorce if they do not wish to stay married. See for example, Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 270.

⁴⁰⁹ Leonard, “I Hate My Job, I Hate Everybody Here”, in Tasker and Negra, eds, *Interrogating Post-Feminism*, p. 100.

⁴¹⁰ Fran Martin and Tania Lewis, “Lifestyling Women: Emergent Femininities on Singapore and Taiwan TV”, in Youna Kim, ed., *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 64.

⁴¹¹ See for example Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 19.

only to reflect a current social issue in Taiwan but also to encourage women who have encountered broken relationships or who have gotten divorced to be brave and to be themselves.⁴¹²

The Fierce Wife is a well-known Taiwanese idol drama which depicts the life of its female protagonist, An-Zhen Xie. She is a housewife at the beginning of the drama and later becomes a divorced working mother. An-Zhen undergoes a journey of self-discovery, finding a new life and identity as a financially independent, confident and content woman by the end of the drama. At the beginning of the drama, its female protagonist is presented as a thirty-two-year-old woman whose life goal is to be a perfect housewife and mother. An-Zhen has a scrapbook which she refers to as her 'bible', and which contains numerous articles that offer useful skills, from household chores to communication skills in marriage. The scrapbook signifies her determination and effort to maintain a wonderful marriage. According to Estella Tincknell, 'housework was re-presented as a form of skilled labour and the housewife as the expert manager of a specialized domain. Importantly, these concerns also spoke to the pleasures and the autonomy that women found in the home and in their work there, as well as a sense of the dignity of domestic labour and its intrinsic value – as an expression of care, love and nurturing.'⁴¹³ The beginning of the drama depicts An-Zhen as a typical Taiwanese housewife who sacrifices her time in caring for her family. An-Zhen seldom has spare time for herself because she has to do countless household chores as well as care for her young daughter and parents-in-law. Nevertheless, she is presented as a woman who is content with her status as a housewife.

⁴¹² Interview with the producer of the television drama *The Fierce Wife* (Pei-Hua Wang, 2010) at the Media Press of Eastern Television in the United States, 17 July 2011, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oskf9UdyIS0>> [accessed 17 March 2015].

⁴¹³ Estella Tincknell, *Mediating the Family: Gender, Culture and Representation* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), p. 14.

Part of the reason for An-Zhen's strong determination to build a family is because of her personal background; she is from a single-parent family. She was raised by her mother after her father passed away when she was little. An-Zhen's mother always encourages her: 'Life is sweet and the future is sweet as well.' No matter what happens in the future, she will not be afraid and will face the problem bravely. An-Zhen helps her cousin from America, Wei-En Li (Xin-Yi Zhu), to settle down in Taiwan; she offers to let Wei-En stay in her house before she finds an apartment. Nevertheless, An-Zhen never expects that her kindness will lead to her marriage being broken up. In the middle of the drama, An-Zhen's husband has an affair with her cousin and asks his wife for a divorce.

In order to transfer attention from her husband's adultery, An-Zhen starts working as a car saleswoman in the later episodes of the drama. Although An-Zhen wants to maintain the marriage for the sake of her daughter, she cannot endure her husband's adultery. She decides to divorce him and become a single mother. An-Zhen undergoes a process of self-discovery after divorce. She gradually rebuilds herself with the help of her mother and good friends. The drama depicts the physical and psychological transformations of its heroine before and after her divorce. An-Zhen realises that to be single again is a way to find her new identity. She has more time for herself so she can enjoy reading and listening to music. She cherishes her job as a car saleswoman and enjoys her accomplishment as a working mother. The job not only provides an income but also serves as a motive for An-Zhen to move forward with confidence and courage.

In a later episode, one of An-Zhen's friends invites her to attend a television cooking show, which brings her popularity and fame because of her courageous speech on the show. The scene is a significant turning point in An-Zhen's life in the drama; it depicts An-Zhen teaching the audience how to cook curry on the cooking show. The

chef compliments An-Zhen's outstanding cooking skill, saying: 'Your husband is a very lucky man who is able to enjoy the delicious meals you prepare for the family.' The camera then moves to the heroine and a close-up focuses on her facial expression. She looks emotional but tries to control herself, then smiles to the camera. An-Zhen says to the chef and the audience through the camera: 'I am a divorced mother. I do not hate my husband, on the contrary, I admire his courage in giving up everything in order to pursue true love. I am grateful that he gave me an opportunity to find myself.' She further addresses the female audience members through the camera: 'Do not be afraid. Be brave and be yourself.'

The later episodes of the drama depict An-Zhen as a celebrity who is popular and well-known among audiences in Taiwan, especially female audiences. She attends several television shows and gives speeches to encourage women who have experienced broken relationships or been through divorces to rebuild their lives. Although An-Zhen feels confident and content in her role as an influential celebrity who has a positive influence on women in Taiwanese society, she wants to provide a secure and stable life for her daughter. For this reason she decides to return to her previous job as a car saleswoman. In the final episode An-Zhen gets a promotion and becomes a respectable manager in the car company. The ending presents her as a single working mother who is confident and content.

The Fierce Wife is not only about the life of An-Zhen; it also points out the current social problem of divorce. It portrays the process of self-reconstitution for divorced women in contemporary Taiwanese society. Each episode focuses on a social concern or issue, such as marriage and motherhood. To take the first episode as an example: An Zhen's best friend and sister-in law, Rui-Xuan Wen (Ying-Zhen Hu), suspects her husband is having an affair. Rui-Xuan explains to An-Zhen her observations of her husband's unusual behaviour. An-Zhen asks Rui-Xuan to trust her

husband in order to maintain the marriage. An-Zhen says to her: 'Marriage is like a dumpling.' An-Zhen explains that a husband and wife need to trust and tolerate each other; the dumpling skin needs to hold the ingredients tightly together so they will not fall apart when they are in the boiling water. The drama thus foregrounds, through the point of view of An-Zhen, the importance of women and men making compromises in marriage.

In an interview with Eastern Television, Pei-Hua Wang stated that her purpose in producing this idol drama was to encourage women to be brave and confident.⁴¹⁴ The most important message the producer wanted to pass on to female audiences was to be themselves. As An-Zhen says in the nineteenth episode, 'To be fierce is to be oneself bravely.' The drama presents its female protagonist deciding to enjoy her life as a divorced woman rather than grieving for her inability to maintain her marriage.

Divorce has become a common social issue in contemporary Taiwanese society. Doris T. Chang states: 'In a family-centered culture, divorced women had to cope with discrimination in Taiwanese society. Most women were socialized to believe that marriage was the most important component of their lives, and those with broken marriages often accepted the social stigma attached to their supposed failures. This contributed to low self-esteem and feelings of hopelessness.'⁴¹⁵ There are numerous Taiwanese television dramas which draw on the subject of marriage, for instance *Miss Rose* and *Love Me or Leave Me*. On the contrary, few television dramas draw on the subject of divorce. For this reason, Pei-Hua Wang presents her female protagonist as a woman who encounters and suffers from a divorce. She wanted, via her female characters in the drama, to educate women in how to maintain their marriages, and

⁴¹⁴ Interview with the producer of the television drama *The Fierce Wife* (Pei-Hua Wang, 2010) at the Media Press of Eastern Television in the United States, 17 July 2011, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oskf9UdyIS0>> [accessed 17 March 2015].

⁴¹⁵ Doris T. Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 128.

how to rebuild their lives if they are divorced. For this reason the drama presents different female characters and their lives inside and outside the realm of marriage. Rui-Xuan is an example of a wife that contrasts to An-Zhen. She is suspicious and unwilling to trust her husband because of his past adultery. For this reason, the drama depicts Rui-Xuan as a highly alert wife who pays strict attention to her husband's behaviour in a humourless way. Pei-Hua Wang said in the interview that one of the purposes of the drama was to advise women to be cautious about their husband's unusual behaviour, for instance a change of hairstyle or the purchase of new outfits.⁴¹⁶ The drama not only educates women but also men in how to maintain their marriages. For example, the drama presents An-Zhen's husband doing household chores. As mentioned earlier, Hsiu-Lien Lu stresses the importance for husband and wife to share household chores as a way to maintain their marriage (see Chapter One).⁴¹⁷

Changing patterns of female employment in the past decade have helped reduce the dominance of the traditional housewife role in contemporary Taiwanese society.⁴¹⁸ The typical Taiwanese family can no longer be stereotyped as including a breadwinner father, stay-at-home mother and dependent children. Married women may choose to continue working and to share the financial burden with their husbands. As mentioned in the first chapter, Hsiu-Lien Lu advocates in her feminist doctrine that marriage is a choice rather than obligation for women.⁴¹⁹ The main purpose for women to get married is not for economic comfort, therefore they should share the financial burden with men.⁴²⁰

There are several factors to consider for married women thinking about

⁴¹⁶ Interview with the producer of the television drama *The Fierce Wife* (Pei-Hua Wang, 2010) at the Media Press of Eastern Television in the United States, 17 July 2011, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oskf9UdylS0>> [accessed 17 March 2015].

⁴¹⁷ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 192.

⁴¹⁸ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 11.

⁴¹⁹ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 286.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

whether to remain in or return to employment, for instance a better lifestyle and career fulfilment. With additional income, married women are able to expand their household budget so that they can provide a better lifestyle for their families. To take the representation of a divorced woman in *The Fierce Wife* as an example; it depicts An-Zhen's return to employment while her marriage is unstable. An-Zhen is grateful that she has a job because she realises the importance of financial independence for women, especially after a divorce. Colin S. Gibson states: 'Greater employment participation by married women has provided them with more economic freedom and choice, as availability of paid work offers the opportunity to move away from dependency on the husband's earnings, and the means to separate if the marriage fails.'⁴²¹ Although Gibson's analysis focuses chiefly on divorced women in England and Wales since the 1980s, his statement on the benefits for married women returning to the workforce are valid within the Taiwanese context. Women gain financial independence and social confidence from the workplace, have higher expectations of marriage, and furthermore, they have the freedom and ability to choose if they wish to continue an unhappy marriage or seek divorce (see Chapter One). Hsiu-Lien Lu acknowledges that new feminism does not encourage women to divorce, however, it respects their decision if divorce is unavoidable in their marriages. Divorce should be considered as an option for women therefore society should respect divorced women rather than treating them as a shame to their families.⁴²²

There are several factors that might lead a broken marriage to divorce. The high employment rate among modern Taiwanese women is one of the factors which interconnects with the rising divorce rate in Taiwan. With financial independence and higher expectations of marriage, women have the freedom and ability to leave the

⁴²¹ Colin S. Gibson, *Dissolving Wedlock* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 124.

⁴²² Lu, *New Feminism*, pp. 286-290.

marriage realm as they wish. The divorce rate in Taiwan is consequently higher when compared to the 1980s. As Martin and Lewis point out, the divorce rate has increased significantly in Taiwan, from 14% in 1985 to around 37% in 2008.⁴²³ Kim also addresses the issue of the high divorce rate in Taiwan: 'About 39.5 per cent of marriages in Taiwan today are ending in divorce (Taiwan Ministry of the interior, 2010). As more women enter the workforce, they are increasingly making choices of independence from unfaithful or uncaring husbands.'⁴²⁴

In spite of the fact that the social status of women has improved when compared to a decade ago, the expectation that women will fit into a traditional female role still remain in contemporary society. An-Zhen in the idol drama is a significant representation of a typical full-time Taiwanese housewife who sacrifices her time to care for her husband's family and her own family. These caring tasks and endless household chores may seem to be a reward for some employed women, however they are considered a stressful burden for most women. As Tincknell points out, 'housework itself had a tenuous and problematic value in relation to the paid labour done in the public sphere. Not only was it unpaid and explicitly feminized, but it was also too heavily bound up with the expression of love, care and nurture to be readily disentangled from these, and its invisible character devalued it further.'⁴²⁵ Tincknell argues that 'the actual work of the family – the emotional and reproductive labour of childcare and housework, nurturing and home management – continued to be deemed largely the responsibility of women.'⁴²⁶ As mentioned earlier, Hsiu-Lien Lu advocates that the husband should share the responsibility of household chores with his wife.⁴²⁷

Men should not consider household chores the sole responsibility of women; on the

⁴²³ Martin and Lewis, "Lifestyling Women: Emergent Femininities on Singapore and Taiwan TV", in Kim, ed., *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 64.

⁴²⁴ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 7.

⁴²⁵ Tincknell, *Mediating the Family*, p. 21.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., p. 38.

⁴²⁷ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 286.

contrary, they should share housework with their wives. They can prepare meals or do housework together, which are essential ways to strengthen their relationship within the marriage.

The Fierce Wife suggests that marriage is based on trust; An-Zhen chooses to trust her husband even though she notices differences in his behaviour. In the same interview, Pei-Hua Wang stated that a traditional Taiwanese woman would choose to trust her husband, tolerate and forgive his mistakes in order to maintain the marriage for their children.⁴²⁸ For this reason, the drama presents An-Zhen's mother as a traditional Taiwanese woman who advises her daughter to forgive and tolerate her husband. Unfortunately, tolerance and forgiveness cannot prevent An-Zhen's marriage from falling apart. Although An-Zhen feels pain, she chooses to end the marriage. Pei-Hua Wang explained in the interview the reason for the drama's popularity in Taiwan was its similarity to real life situations for both male and female audiences.⁴²⁹ *The Fierce Wife* not only points out the current social problems surrounding divorce but also advocates that women find themselves. That emphasis on self-discovery has been extensively discussed with respect to western culture in terms of neo-liberal calls to self-management.⁴³⁰ The drama presents the physical and psychological transformation of An-Zhen, from a woman who pays little attention to her own appearance to a woman who wears light make-up and elegant dresses. The significant

⁴²⁸ Interview with the producer of the television drama *The Fierce Wife* (Pei-Hua Wang, 2010) at the Media Press of Eastern Television in the United States, 17 July 2011, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oskf9UdyIS0>> [accessed 17 March 2015].

⁴²⁹ Interview with the producer of the television drama *The Fierce Wife* (Pei-Hua Wang, 2010) at the Media Press of Eastern Television in the United States, 17 July 2011, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oskf9UdyIS0>> [accessed 17 March 2015]; and Xie-Chang Wu, "The Spanish Version of the Idol Drama *The Fierce Wife* Will Be Broadcast in Los Angeles", *Yahoo News*, 30 September 2015, <<https://tw.news.yahoo.com/%E7%8A%80%E5%88%A9%E4%BA%BA%E5%A6%BB%E8%A5%BF%E8%AA%9E%E7%89%88-%E6%90%B6%E9%80%B2%E6%B4%9B%E6%9D%89%E7%A3%AF-055255119.html>> [accessed 12 July 2016].

⁴³⁰ See for example McRobbie, "Postfeminism and Popular Culture", in Tasker and Negra, eds, *Interrogating Post-Feminism*, pp. 27-38.

progression of her status in the drama is based on her financial independence. The role of An-Zhen changes from a housewife who depends on her husband for financial support to a working mother who is financially independent. She even pays her ex-husband's credit card bills when he is bankrupt.

The Fierce Wife intentionally presents an ironic contrast between the wife who depends on the husband financially to the woman who provides the man with financial support when he is jobless, homeless and friendless. As is typical of the romance narrative, the benevolent character is rewarded and the malevolent character is punished. An-Zhen deserves to be rewarded, therefore the drama presents her new identity as a financially independent, confident and content working mother. On the contrary, her unfaithful husband has been punished as a penniless, homeless, and single man. Another function of the drama is to encourage women, especially divorced women, to be brave and be themselves. A society that advocates equality between men and women should not disrespect divorced women; on the contrary, it should be more considerate and supportive towards them. The drama seems to suggest that financial independence enables modern woman the position to choose divorce.

Besides the issues of divorce and marriage, motherhood is another essential topic in idol drama. In contemporary society women have various choices in terms of career, marriage and motherhood; furthermore, they may choose when and how they would like to become a mother. Recent feminist scholarship has examined and interrogated numerous representations of women in television drama, soap opera and film, however analyses of representations of motherhood are not as common. As Rebecca Feasey points out, 'although much work to date seeks to investigate the depiction of women on television, little exists to account for the depiction of mothering,

motherhood and the maternal role in contemporary popular programming.⁴³¹ Feasey argues:

And even though motherhood has developed as a central issue in feminist scholarship, with a wealth of texts committed to exploring mothering practices in relation to sexuality (Ferguson 1983), peace (Ruddick 2007), disability (Thomas 2007), globalization (Cheng 2007), work (Gatrell 2008) and health (Clark 2008), these texts do little to account for the portrayals of mothering and motherwork presented on television.⁴³²

Feasey argues that even though the maternal figure is portrayed in various television genres, texts, and schedules, it is important to stress the significance of these representations in a wider consideration of motherhood, motherwork and the maternal role.⁴³³

In spite of the fact that women in contemporary society may choose when and how they would like to become mothers, their mothering practice and maternal behaviour leads them to face criticism. Feasey argues:

Women today are given increased choices about whether, when and how to mother, and as such, they are mothering in a broad and diverse range of social, sexual, financial and political circumstances. However, these same women are being judged on their age, fertility and family choices and scrutinized in relation to their mothering practices and maternal behaviours.⁴³⁴

The media tends to present the ‘good’ mother as a middle-class, white, heterosexual, self-sacrificing woman, however, the working mother, single mother or teenage mother

⁴³¹ Rebecca Feasey, *From Happy Homemaker to Desperate Housewives: Motherhood and Popular Television* (London: Anthem, 2012), p. 1.

⁴³² Feasey, *From Happy Homemaker to Desperate Housewives*, p. 2.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

seem unsuitable for the ‘good’ mother image and are less often presented in the media.

Feasey argues:

Such scrutiny is in relation to those issues surrounding what is perceived to be the ‘correct’ and ‘appropriate’ path to motherhood, so that those lone, working, teen, mature, lesbian or feminist mothers who do not fit the idealized image of the white, heterosexual, self-sacrificing, middle-class, ‘good’ mother or perform in line with the ideology of intensive mothering, tend to be judged, ranked and found wanting within and beyond the media environment.⁴³⁵

In a similar fashion to the Western media, the Taiwanese media tends to present the ‘good’ mother image in various television programmes, for instance, Taiwanese idol drama. For this reason, it is worth discussing the characteristics of the ‘good’ mother and how Taiwanese idol drama presents the ‘good’ mother image to audiences. In spite of the national and cultural differences, the representation of the ‘good’ mother in Taiwan is similar to Western representations of the idealised image of the ‘good’ mother. Susan Chase and Mary Rogers describe the ‘good’ mother figure: ‘she is a full-time mother who is always present in the lives of her children, young and old; she remains home to cook for them after school and if she works outside of the home, she organises such responsibilities around the need of her children.’⁴³⁶ Therefore, a ‘good’ mother should be fully committed to her family and able to care for her family and fulfil their needs whenever they need her.⁴³⁷

Another key characteristic of the ‘good’ mother is a sense of fulfilment in the maternal role. Feasey states that the ‘good’ mother enjoys and finds ‘this intensive

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Susan Chase and Mary Rogers, *Mothers and Children: Feminist Analysis and Personal Narratives* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 30.

⁴³⁷ Deborah Borisoff, “Transforming Motherhood: ‘We’ve Come a Long Way’, Maybe”, *Review of Communication* 5.1 (2005), p. 7.

maternal role to be natural, satisfying, fulfilling and meaningful and feels no sense of loss or sacrifice at her own lack of freedom, friendships, financial independence or intellectual stimulation.’⁴³⁸ She argues that the contemporary media environment is filled with idealised and conservative images of selfless and satisfied ‘good’ mothers who conform to the ideology of intensive mothering.⁴³⁹ In a similar fashion to the Western media, Taiwanese idol dramas present the ‘good’ mother as caring, kind, selfless and self-sacrificing.⁴⁴⁰

The Fierce Wife depicts An-Zhen as a typical representation of the ‘good’ mother image. She is able to do the household chores well, she prepares delicious and nutritious meals for her family, and takes care of her young daughter and elderly parents-in-law. An-Zhen considers her maternal role to be a blessing and enjoys the intensive mothering and caring for her family without complaint or regret. An-Zhen is presented as a busy mother who tries to spend time with her daughter. The drama frequently presents her reading bedtime stories to her daughter, and teaching her etiquette and the importance of love.

In spite of the fact that An-Zhen decides to return to employment, she tries to strike a balance between work and family. There are several significant scenes in the drama that demonstrate the ‘good’ mother image in An-Zhen. An early episode depicts An-Zhen coming back home straight away from business trip when she knows her daughter is ill. The scene depicts An-Zhen sitting in her daughter’s bedroom, looking at her daughter, who sleeps soundly, deep in thought. A long-shot focuses on the mother and daughter then the camera draws closer. A close-up focuses on An-Zhen’s facial expression; her concern for her daughter’s condition is presented to the audience. She

⁴³⁸ Feasey, *From Happy Homemaker to Desperate Housewives*, p. 3.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ See for example Yu-Shan Huang and Jun-Qi Wang, “Introduction: Taiwanese Female Directors and Their Films After New Taiwan Cinema” in Ming-Zhu Chen and Yun-Chi Huang, eds, *The Research of Taiwanese Female Directors, 2000-2010*, p. 23.

later falls asleep next to her daughter. The next morning, her daughter tells her: 'I hate Daddy.' An-Zhen cannot believe that her five-year-old daughter uses the strong word 'hate' to express her emotion. She tells her that she should always remember the kindness of other people rather than their unkindness. An-Zhen tells her best friend that she is determined to teach her daughter how to love rather than to hate people. The drama shows that An-Zhen's caring and love towards her daughter is firm and endless.

Another example comes in a later episode after An-Zhen becomes a celebrity icon. A paparazzi photographer takes photos of An-Zhen with her male manager at work. He publishes the photos in a gossip magazine with the critical statement that she is the one who has had an affair first in the marriage. An-Zhen is anxious that this false report will cause harm to her daughter. She explains to the crowd of journalists who wait outside her house. She pleads them to show respect for her privacy and her daughter's feelings. One of the journalists accuses her of being a shameful mother who is using her daughter as a shield from society's rumours. The camera moves from the journalist to An-Zhen. A close-up focuses on An-Zhen who furiously replies to the reporter: 'My daughter is not my shield. I am my daughter's shield. I can endure countless arrows or even death for her.'

An-Zhen needs to face the criticism from society. She has to endure people gossiping when she walks in the street. She says that her main concern is her daughter. Her fierce statement about being her daughter's shield indicates her love and protection towards her. Fortunately, An-Zhen's father-in-law explains the truth to the journalists and the rumour is clarified. His confession of the truth rebuilds the reputation and popularity of An-Zhen as a celebrity. Her celebrity status allows An-Zhen to express her thoughts in order to encourage women with similar experiences to move forward. In order to provide a secure and stable life for her daughter, she decides to return to her previous job as a car saleswoman. An-Zhen's friend as well as agent, Ai-Lin (Shu-Zhen

Tsai), asks her a question: 'What do you want?' An-Zhen was previously uncertain about what she wanted but now she is certain that she just wants to be a role model for her daughter.

Beside motherhood, the mother-daughter relationship is central to idol drama. An-Zhen's relationship with her mother is worth discussing further in this respect. The relationship between mother and daughter may be benevolent or malevolent depending on various factors, for instance the personality or generation gap. Feasey refers to the statement by Andrea O'Reilly in *Mother Outlaws: Theories and Practices of Empowered Mothering* (2004): 'Andrea O'Reilly makes the point that daughters have to distance and differentiate themselves from their mother if they are to assume an autonomous and mature adult identity, while mothers struggle to create a sense of self beyond their maternal role, and as such, this dual search for self goes some way to explain the conflict voiced here.'⁴⁴¹ Taiwanese idol drama may vary in some ways from soap opera, but it shares the same themes of motherhood and the mother-daughter relationship, which are central to soap opera. As mentioned earlier, Geraghty acknowledges that the relationship between mother and daughter is essential in many soap operas, which provide 'an irresistible combination of female solidarity and family intimacy.'⁴⁴²

The women in soap opera struggle to achieve the standard of the 'good' mother, just like women in real life. The myth of the 'good' mother retains its significance in contemporary media. Feasey states: 'Soap operas present the reality of contemporary mothers struggling to live up to the 'good' mother myth that has dominated and continues to dominate the contemporary media landscape.'⁴⁴³ Modleski acknowledges that the relationship between the subject or spectator of soap operas is like the

⁴⁴¹ Feasey, *From Happy Homemaker to Desperate Housewives*, p. 25.

⁴⁴² Geraghty, *Women and Soap Opera*, p. 49.

⁴⁴³ Feasey, *From Happy Homemaker to Desperate Housewives*, p. 25.

relationship between an ideal mother and her children: 'The subject / spectator of soap operas, it could be said, is constituted as a sort of ideal mother: a person who possesses greater wisdom than all her children, whose sympathy is large enough to encompass the conflicting claims of her family (she identifies with them all), and who has no demands or claims of her own (she identifies with no one character exclusively).'⁴⁴⁴

As mentioned earlier, Modleski stresses that 'soap operas convince women that their highest goal is to see their families united and happy, while consoling them for their inability to realize this ideal and bring about familial harmony.'⁴⁴⁵ Modleski further emphasises the role of the 'good' mother in soap operas:

This is reinforced by the character of the good mother in soap operas. In contrast to the manipulating mother who tries to interfere with her children's lives, the good mother must sit helpless by as her children's lives disintegrate; her advice, which she gives only when asked, is temporarily soothing, but usually ineffectual. Her primary function is to be sympathetic, to tolerate the foibles and errors of others.⁴⁴⁶

Although the mother figure in *The Fierce Wife* contradicts the maternal ideology, there are some similarities with the 'good' mother figure in soap operas. The drama does not present a malevolent relationship between mother and daughter; on the contrary, it presents a benevolent and peaceful mother-daughter relationship between the female protagonist and her mother. Similar to the 'good' mother role in soap operas, An-Zhen's mother is an ideal mother who respects, listens and advises her daughter when she needs her. In spite of the fact that An-Zhen's mother is a traditional Taiwanese woman who has a different point of view on marriage and divorce, she gives her daughter the freedom to choose and decide for herself. An-Zhen's mother is a

⁴⁴⁴ Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance*, p. 92.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

widow who raises her daughter by working as a farmer. She is a caring and inspiring mother who always comforts An-Zhen when she needs her.

There are several examples which demonstrate the mother-daughter relationship in *The Fierce Wife*. Take an early episode which presents An-Zhen's status after her painful divorce as an example. She refuses to talk to anyone after the divorce; she feels pathetic and ashamed of herself because she was unable to maintain the marriage. She is reluctant to let her mother know about the divorce, however she eventually reveals the truth when she visits her. A medium-shot depicts mother and daughter in the living room. An-Zhen tells her mother that she feels ashamed because of her failure to secure the marriage. The camera draws closer to the mother and daughter, and a close-up focuses on their facial expressions. An-Zhen lowers her head while confessing the truth to her mother. She reveals to her mother that she feels ashamed to be a divorced woman.

The mother patiently listens to her daughter with a gentle smile. An-Zhen's mother says to her: 'You are not a failure or a shame to the family. You are my daughter.' Her mother tells her that life is unexpected and we never know what will happen in our lives. Nevertheless, everything happens for a reason, we just do not know the reason yet. In order to encourage An-Zhen, her mother reveals that she has got lung cancer. The ironic part is that she never smokes, and has a very healthy and regular life style. She tells An-Zhen that she is not afraid of lung cancer; she will find out the reason and accept treatment to cure the disease. She will not be afraid when she encounters death, on the contrary, she will take it as a journey abroad. It is the same in marriage: An-Zhen may not know the reason for her divorce at the moment, but she will find it out. What she needs to do is to find out the problem, face the problem with courage, then solve the problem.

An-Zhen's mother is an influential woman who always encourages her when

she encounters difficulties. She always gives her daughter useful advice and guides her to the right path with patience. Take the divorce as an example: An-Zhen consults her mother for advice when she encounters problems in the marriage. Her mother says that tolerance and forgiveness are key elements in maintaining a good marriage. She suggests that An-Zhen should forgive her husband for his adultery. The drama may present An-Zhen's mother as a wise woman, but it also points out the problem of her personal background as a traditional Taiwanese woman educated within a patriarchal culture. Her ideology of marriage may not be applicable to contemporary Taiwanese society. This chapter has mentioned the difficult circumstance of women in terms of economic security in traditional Taiwanese society. The drama presents the different point of view on marriage from the mother and daughter. In constructing such generational contrasts, the drama points out the changing attitudes on marriage for women in contemporary society.

Women with financial independence in contemporary Taiwanese society have the freedom to choose if they would like to remain in a marriage if their husbands are unfaithful or uncaring. The beginning of *The Fierce Wife* depicts An-Zhen as an obedient daughter who always listens to her wise mother. The drama empowers its female protagonist to make her own decision in terms of marriage. Mother and daughter have opposing points of view on marriage and divorce. An-Zhen's mother expects her to maintain the marriage even though her husband is unfaithful, while An-Zhen refuses to continue the marriage without trust. Although there is a sense of antagonism here, it does not diminish the intimacy of the mother-daughter relationship. An-Zhen dissolves her marriage of ten years because of her husband's unfaithfulness and neglect. An-Zhen's mother respects her decision to divorce, and encourages her to win her husband back. An-Zhen does try to win her husband back but eventually decides to move forward to the future. She likes her job and enjoys her status as a

divorced working mother. An-Zhen decides to live for her daughter and herself. She no longer wishes to be a perfect housewife; she only wants to be a role model for her daughter.

The ending depicts An-Zhen successfully transformed from a housewife to a working mother. Her life used to be centred on her family, but now she realises that caring for her family is just one part of her life. She has the ambition to help women with similar experiences to be confident and content about themselves. It is true that her marriage ends, and therefore that she may not be able to provide her daughter with a typical family as she has expected, but her love for her daughter will never end. *The Fierce Wife* attracted much attention and received a great response from audiences in Taiwan, especially from female audiences. Its producer and editor, Pei-Hua Wang, acknowledged that its similarity to real life situations and the fact that it drew its inspirations from real life are the main reasons for the drama's success.⁴⁴⁷ It was for this reason that they decided to continue the story and make it into the film, *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right*, which was discussed in Chapter Two. *The Fierce Wife* stresses the strength of womanhood: women should always support each other no matter what happens, as her mother and sister do for An-Zhen. It advocates that women should be confident and be themselves. As An-Zhen says, 'The fierce woman means the woman who has the courage to be herself.' The drama encourages divorced women not to feel ashamed of themselves, and to take divorce as a new start for them to find themselves.

⁴⁴⁷ Interview with the producer of the television drama *The Fierce Wife* (Pei-Hua Wang, 2010) at the Media Press of Eastern Television in the United States, 17 July 2011, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oskf9UdyIS0>> [accessed 17 March 2015]; and "The Idol Drama *The Fierce Wife* Will Be Broadcast in Latin America", *Wow News*, 11 April 2015, <<http://www.wownews.tw/article.php?sn=25268>> [accessed 12 July 2016].

3.4. *My Queen* (Qing Zhen Lin, 2009)

The previous sections have examined the development of female status in Taiwan in the twenty-first century, as well as representations of working women and divorced women in *Miss Rose* and *The Fierce Wife*. This section focuses on the representation of a career woman through an examination of *My Queen* as another idol drama case study. Contemporary Taiwanese women with financial independence have various choices in terms of education, their career, marriage and motherhood. They may marry for true love rather than for economic security. Furthermore, medical advances provide women the opportunity to become mothers even if they are over the age of thirty-five. These are the reasons behind a number of social phenomena in contemporary Taiwanese society, for instance delayed marriage, non-marriage or cohabitation.

This section further examines how the representation of career women interlinks with the current social phenomena of non-marriage and cohabitation through an examination of *My Queen*. Despite the fact that women in contemporary society have a broader range of choices in their lives, they still struggle to find their new identities as modern women. As mentioned earlier, Kim argues that persisting patriarchal cultures continue to influence women's education and work transition and therefore create 'new inequality, insecurity and a precarious self.'⁴⁴⁸ While the female characters in current popular Taiwanese idol dramas may be presented as empowering career women, they are still constrained by the traditional expectations of women to get married and become mothers. The female protagonist in *My Queen* is a significant representation of a career woman who defies the traditional gender expectations of getting married and reproducing before the age of thirty-five.

Women in current Taiwanese society are the betwixt and between because of

⁴⁴⁸ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 4.

their positions within a society that has both traditional expectations and which offers contemporary liberation for women. In spite of the fact that women in Taiwan have higher status compared to women a decade ago, the transformation is an ongoing process. It is worth applauding the transformation towards liberation and development of female status in Taiwan, however the transformation is followed by more challenges for women in adjusting to their new identities as modern women. The media in Taiwan has presented the image of career women and their dilemmas through various television programmes, such as the drama *My Queen*. This section examines the representation of career women over the age of thirty in relation to the problems of ageing and fertility.

My Queen is a romantic comedy that depicts the life of a single career woman. Its female protagonist, Wu-Shuang Shan (Jin-Hua Yang), is a thirty-two-year-old career woman who works at *I-Found* magazine as an editor. Wu-Shuang is an intelligent, ambitious and hard-working woman who enjoys working. She is a perfectionist who wants to be the champion on every occasion. She always tries her best to defeat her male colleagues in order to get the opportunity to place her news on the front cover of the magazine. Wu-Shuang spends most of her time at work and she frequently stays up late at the office so she has no spare time for dating. As a career woman, her goal is to be the chief editor at *I-Found* magazine, however she faces numerous challenges at the workplace from male colleagues who are jealous of her talent. They frequently mock her as a 'Defeated Dog', which refers to a thirty-something single woman. Like the heroine Si-Yi in *Miss Rose*, mentioned earlier, Wu-Shuang is addressed as 'Defeated Dog' by colleagues, friends and even her mother.

Wu-Shuang's mother is concerned about her status as a thirty-two-year-old single woman, and encourages her to start dating in case she misses the opportunity to get married and become a mother. Although Wu-Shuang tells her mother that her

working schedule is very busy, leaving her no time for dating, an encounter with a young man changes her attitude. *My Queen* depicts the anxieties of its heroine as a career woman over the age of thirty, who struggles to find a romantic relationship. It also depicts the concerns of the heroine as a woman whose 'biological clock' is ticking. One of the central issues in the drama is marriage; it questions whether marriage is a golden ticket for single woman to get rid of the title of the miserable and lonely 'Defeated Dog', in order to become the happy and blessed 'Champion Dog'. It presents the struggles of Wu-Shuang who anxiously wants to remove the title of 'Defeated Dog' and find a decent man to marry. Leslie (Sheng-Hao Wen) is the ideal man who the heroine would like to marry, especially after his confession of his everlasting love for her. While Wu-Shuang has an opportunity to get married, she starts questioning if marriage is what she really wants.

The beginning of *My Queen* presents Wu-Shuang riding a bicycle at top speed while a Santa Claus chases after her; then the heroine's voice-over says: 'I am Shan Wu-Shuang, I have been running for nearly thirty-three years. I never let anyone run ahead of me. I have a successful career and high-quality lifestyle. But when I turn around, the only man who is chasing me is a person who should not exist in the world, Santa Claus. Nevertheless, I have to keep on running in order to achieve my goal so I can have a prosperous life, don't I?' Wu-Shuang is a realistic woman who does not believe in fairy tales or Santa Claus, and she never expects that she will have a romantic relationship with the Santa Claus, who is actually a twenty-five-year-old part-time worker, Lucas (Jing-Tian Wan), in disguise.

The drama later presents the heroine's flashbacks to when she was deeply in love with her ex-boyfriend, Leslie. The flashbacks depict the romantic story of Wu-Shuang and Leslie, who proposed to her by placing the wedding ring on some Häagen-Dazs ice cream. Wu-Shuang looks surprised and says 'yes' with a joyful smile.

The flashback not only presents the heroine's life six years ago when she had just started her career, it also reflects the contrast with her current status as a successful career woman who only has her work as a companion. A flashback that presents Wu-Shuang and her ex-boyfriend busily preparing for their wedding also indicates that she once had faith in love and expectations of marriage. Unfortunately, a misunderstanding separated the couple, Leslie left Wu-Shuang to go to Africa for work before their wedding, and they had no contact for six years. Although Wu-Shuang tried every way of contacting him, she only received a letter from his assistant. The letter stated that Leslie regretted proposing to her and that he has a greater ambition to achieve as a photographer. Wu-Shuang was heartbroken, therefore she decided to focus on her career ever since this heart-breaking incident. The scene then moves back to Wu-Shuang's current life; she is always working and has no leisure time. Initially Wu-Shuang enjoys her single status and does not mind the criticism from the colleagues. Nevertheless she realises that everywhere she goes the people around her are all couples, especially at Christmas, New Year and on Valentine's Day.

An early episode of the drama depicts the heroine dressing smartly, walking on the street after work. Wu-Shuang wants to enjoy a treat for herself after a long day's work, so she goes to her favourite Häagen-Dazs store. There is a long queue waiting to order, and she notices that all the people queuing in front of her are couples. When it is her turn to order, the waitress apologises to her that they only serve couples today because it is Christmas. Wu-Shuang feels humiliated thus she pretends that she is talking to her boyfriend on the phone then leaves the store quickly. She then questions why society has to discriminate against a single woman who just wants to enjoy her life.

Besides being alone on special occasions, Wu-Shuang also realises that everywhere she goes, people remind her of her age and singlehood. In an early episode,

she dreams that she has died alone and that no one has noticed for three weeks. She sees herself on the social news, and the news reporter reminds single, thirty-something women to try harder to find a decent man to marry soon or they will die alone. Wu-Shuang is terrified by the dream and anxious that she will become a lonely spinster for the rest of her life. Wu-Shuang decides to prove to her colleagues that she can be a successful career woman with a wonderful romantic relationship. The dream reflects the anxiety of the heroine in a humorous way, however it also points out traditional social expectations of women. The drama presents the issue of singlehood and delayed marriage through the representation of Wu-Shuang as a single career woman. Through her the drama seems to suggest that women with financial independence may legitimately choose to remain single or delay marriage until a later age.

Women in contemporary Taiwanese society have higher educational attainment as well as higher job aspirations. As Kim states, 'The entrance of women into the paid workforce is driven by the role of education in mediating job aspirations, the seeming promise of liberation from traditional feminine identities through the achievement of economic independence and empowerment.'⁴⁴⁹ Kim acknowledges that educated women choose to invest their resources in their careers, rather than marriage or a family. Their choice to participate in the workforce has led to current social phenomena such as singlehood, delayed marriage, non-marriage and a higher divorce rate.⁴⁵⁰ Kim points out that the average of age of marriage for Taiwanese women 'rose from 22.3 in 1975 to 29.2 in 2009, and more than 30 per cent of Taiwanese women aged 30-40 remain unmarried.'⁴⁵¹ Martin and Lewis similarly point out the significant increase in the number of unmarried women in Taiwan between the age of 35 to 44

⁴⁴⁹ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 3.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., p. 6.

years old, which rose from 8.4% to 15.8% between 1998 and 2008.⁴⁵² These statistics indicate the phenomena of delayed marriage and non-marriage in Taiwan. Since marriage is a choice rather an obligation for women in contemporary Taiwanese society, one of the reasons for women not to get married is social inequality.⁴⁵³

Women in Taiwan still struggle to find their identities within the patriarchal society because of its expectations that women should follow the traditional caring roles of wife and mother. Kim declares: 'women's choices against marriage are affected by the conflicting burden of caring roles, and the seeming implausibility of combining paid work and domestic labour.'⁴⁵⁴ Women therefore choose to delay marriage in order to pursue higher education or career achievement. Angela McRobbie stresses the importance of choice for female individualization: 'Individuals must now choose the kind of life they want to live.'⁴⁵⁵ She further stresses: 'Choice is surely, within lifestyle culture, a modality of constraint. The individual is compelled to be the kind of subject who can make the right choices.'⁴⁵⁶ Despite the fact that women have more choices and opportunities to join the labour market are higher compared to a decade ago, inequality still remains in the workplace for women, for instance wage differences and a lack of individual choice.⁴⁵⁷ For women in contemporary Taiwanese culture the opportunity to make their own choices seems to introduce more obstacles into their lives. As Kim argues: 'The language of choice obscures the ongoing existence of gender inequalities, the highly exclusionary and regulatory function of the labour market in structuring the opportunities and identities available to women.'⁴⁵⁸

Women with a higher degree do not necessary receive an equal rate of pay to

⁴⁵² Ibid., p. 64.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Angela McRobbie, "Postfeminism and Popular Culture", in Tasker and Negra eds, *Interrogating Post-Feminism*, p. 35.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 36.

⁴⁵⁷ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 10.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

their male colleagues. Even when the wages are the same, they may not receive the same respect as their male colleagues. Kim further argues: 'Educated and skilled women are not necessarily mobile or upward in the labour market, which is still profoundly gendered, nor are they likely to achieve full economic individualization as a free female subject.'⁴⁵⁹ Take the popular terms in the mass media in Taiwan as an example: single women with successful careers over the age of thirty tend to be labelled 'Defeated Dog'. In contrast, men over the age of thirty with a successful career are crowned 'Golden Bachelors'. It is problematic to point out the different social standards toward women and men in current Taiwanese society. Kim argues: 'The popular expression "Defeated Dog" in Japan is seen as a personal responsibility that must be dealt with individually by women who fail to live up to the society's exacting standards and expectations, especially in terms of an age-specific hetero-normative biography: getting married by 30 and establishing a normal family.'⁴⁶⁰ Thirty-something career women are considered lonely and unhappy. On the contrary, men at the same age are thought to deserve greater respect from society because of their ambition to develop their career. It is problematic that society does not judge the choices of men to delay marriage or to remain single in the same way it views the same choices when made by women. The social inequality towards women leads to their insecurity and their struggle to find their new identities in contemporary society.

The female protagonist of *My Queen* serves as a significant illustration of a woman who struggles to find herself within society and therefore decides to fight against it. In an early episode, Wu-Shuang asks the question: 'Why should a woman's success depend on a man? A woman with a boyfriend is a "Champion Dog" but a

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

woman without a boyfriend is a “Defeated Dog”.’ The heroine questions whether marriage as the traditional expectation for women can really bring her happiness. As an empowering female figure, she chooses not to follow the traditional norms for women to enter into marriage. Even though her boyfriend proposes to her twelve times in the drama, she is determined to retain her status as a successful career woman who is independent, confident and content. The drama empowers its female protagonist against patriarchal society; it advocates that women in contemporary Taiwanese society should enjoy their status as single career women. As Kim remarks:

The transnational media appear to resist patriarchal institutional structures in order to encourage the intertwined trends of individualization and capitalist consumerism, particularly on the part of women who are increasingly tied to global cultural Others, while enabling the imagination of the fluid connections of consumerist agents between the local, the national and the transnational.⁴⁶¹

Another example in the drama empowers Wu-Shuang by depicting her interrogation of gender inequality. She has a blind date with an engineer who expects his future wife to be a traditional housewife. Wu-Shuang furiously replies: ‘Why in a society which advocates gender equality should someone think women should stay at home to prepare meals and do household chores for men? My working schedule as an editor is very busy as well. I might come back home later than you.’ Then Wu-Shuang stands up and leaves the man speechless in the restaurant. The scene depicts Wu-Shuang questioning the nature of gender equality in contemporary Taiwanese society. *My Queen* criticises traditional social expectations of women through Wu-Shuang’s dramatic response.

As in other typical idol dramas that centre on the romantic relationship between

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., p. 15.

the female and male protagonists, *My Queen* is no exception, however it provides a different romance narrative. Wu-Shuang undergoes a transformation during romantic relationships with two male characters. The first, Leslie, becomes a well-known photographer and returns to unite with the heroine. The second, Lucas, is her assistant at *I-Found* magazine and later becomes a doctor at the end of the drama. The drama depicts the dilemma of the heroine whilst she prepares for her wedding to Leslie. The main reason for the heroine deciding to marry Leslie is to fulfil her mother's wish, however she realises that she is not happy. Her struggle to find herself within a society with traditional expectations for women is enduring. There are several moments in *My Queen* that clearly depict the struggle of the heroine in romantic relationships and her self-discovery journey within a patriarchal society.

A later episode depicts Wu-Shuang working in the office overnight and rushing back home in the morning to prepare for her wedding day. Then the scene moves to her apartment; she wears a white wedding gown and sits on the sofa with her mother. Her mother asks her if it is true that she is getting married today because she is concerned that Leslie will leave, as he did six years ago. Wu-Shuang assures her that she certainly is getting married today and that Leslie will not run away. Wu-Shuang notices that her mother looks concerned and asks her: 'Aren't you supposed to be happy for me? You always wanted me to get married.' The camera then draws closer to the mother and daughter, and her mother replies: 'Indeed. It is true that I do wish you to get married but your happiness is more important for me.' She continues: 'Wu-Shuang. Don't get married just because you think you should. The marriage certificate can only prove that you have a husband but it cannot guarantee happiness for the rest of your life. I just want to make sure that Leslie is the one for you.' Then a series of flashbacks show the heroine's memories of Leslie and Lucas. Her mother says: 'Your name is Shan Wu-Shuang. You're my daughter. I do not mind if you are thirty-five, forty or fifty

years old or even if you remain single for the rest of your life, I will always love you because you are my precious daughter. I want you to live for yourself, not for others. I really hope you can be happy.' Wu-Shuang looks at her mother with tears in the eyes: 'This is my decision. I promise you I will be happy.' Then Wu-Shuang leaves for the wedding, and the camera moves back to her mother who stands by the door and says: 'You finally got married before you reached the age of thirty-three. I am no longer the shame of the village and you are no longer the "Defeated Dog".' Wu-Shuang's mother here implies the unequal expectations toward women in this society. The drama suggests that the social expectation for women to get married still exists in Taiwanese society.

As an independent career woman who has been searching for a new identity for six years, marriage certainly is not the end for the heroine in this idol drama. Wu-Shuang works late into the night before her wedding day and her lack of enthusiasm signifies her disinterest in the wedding and marriage. One of the reasons behind her unconcerned attitude is because she no longer loves Leslie; another reason is because her expectation of marriage has changed. Wu-Shuang chooses to get married in order to repay her gratitude to Leslie and to please her mother. She chooses to get married because of the traditional norms of society that expect women to enter marriage. A later scene implies an alternative narrative by presenting Wu-Shuang wearing the wedding gown, running down the street in order to get to the church. Her voice-over repeats a similar speech as at the beginning of the drama: 'I am Shan Wu-Shuang. I have been running for nearly thirty-three years. I never let any one run ahead of me. I have a successful career and a nice lifestyle. When I lift up my head, the end of my victory, the church for my wedding ceremony is so close to me.'

The scene implies Wu-Shuang will not enter into marriage as in the typical ending for the heroine in other idol dramas. The wedding has been cancelled because

Leslie realises that Wu-Shuang does not love him anymore. For this reason, he decides to let the woman he loves pursue her happiness. The cancellation of the wedding is a turning point for the heroine; on the one hand she feels humiliated to be left at the altar by the same man twice; on the other hand she appreciates his understanding. The event gives her an opportunity to rethink what she really wants in life and whether marriage is a golden ticket for happiness. Wu-Shuang takes a bike trip around Taiwan after the cancellation of the wedding. The journey is another turning point for the heroine since she realises that there are many things she can do besides work. She should spend more time enjoying the beauty of the world, and take a rest so she has the energy to move forward to a brighter future.

The second romantic relationship, between Wu-Shuang and Lucas, leads to more dilemmas for the heroine. The main reason for this is because of their age difference: the heroine is eight years older than Lucas. The second reason is because of their social backgrounds: she has a successful career but he is still a medical student who needs a few more years of training to become a doctor. Their differences in age and social background make the heroine feel insecure about their relationship. She lacks confidence in their relationship because of her age. She is afraid that Lucas might change his mind and fall in love with someone who is younger a few years later. Wu-Shuang has the concerns of a thirty-something woman whose time is running out. The drama presents her make-over from a professional office lady look with blouses and pencil skirt to a younger style with a t-shirt and mini skirt. Despite her efforts to remain youthful and dress younger for her boyfriend, she still feels insecure because of her age. The drama depicts Wu-Shuang as a successful career woman. Not only this, I would argue that her representation as a career woman provides an example of new feminism informing popular culture. Hsiu-Lien Lu stresses the importance for the new feminist of having a successful career and maintaining a romantic relationship with her

partner.⁴⁶² The drama presents the struggles of its female protagonist to maintain both a successful career and a romantic relationship. The drama therefore seems to suggest that there is a limit to new feminism.

Time has regularly been portrayed as a threat for women, and their struggles to defy biological time and ageing are significant in contemporary society as well as in the mass media. Both idol dramas and films present the time pressures for women over the age of thirty and their struggles to defy their biological clock. As Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra state: 'postfeminism evidences a distinct preoccupation with the temporal. Women's lives are regularly conceived of as time starved; women themselves are over-worked, rushed, harassed, subject to their "biological clocks," and so on to such a degree that female adulthood is defined as a state of chronic temporal crisis.'⁴⁶³ *My Queen* presents Wu-Shuang as a thirty-two-year-old career woman who struggles to defy time pressures within a society that still has traditional expectations of women to marry and become mothers. In a later episode Wu-Shuang goes to the gynaecology department to have a regular check-up. A close-up depicts her anxiety and shock when she reads a brochure about childbirth and mothering. The brochure states that women over the age of thirty-five have a higher risk of having babies with Down's Syndrome and that in order to check the condition of their unborn babies they need to accept amniocentesis. Wu-Shuang looks horrified when she reads the description of amniocentesis, and tells herself that she must get pregnant before she reaches thirty-five years old. The scene clearly portrays her anxiety about time pressures as a thirty-two-year-old woman, and to get married becomes an essential task for her.

Wu-Shuang is not the only female protagonist who has time pressure with regards to ageing and fertility. Si-Yi in *Miss Rose* and You-Qing in *In Time with You*

⁴⁶² Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 182.

⁴⁶³ Tasker and Negra, *Interrogating Post-Feminism*, p. 10.

both encounter the same problem. *In Time with You* presents You-Qing as a career woman who has just reached the age of thirty. She realises that she is no longer young and the pressure to marry and become a mother from her family and friends is overwhelming, therefore she is determined to get married before she reaches the age of thirty-five. The time crisis and the threat of ageing are common themes recognised within post-feminism. The idol dramas mentioned in this thesis present the anxieties of ageing and fertility for female characters that are over the age of thirty. Although women in contemporary society have broader choices in terms of career, marriage and motherhood, their anxiety to find a new identity as modern women and their struggles to defy ageing and fertility still remain. Kim argues that modern women may be liberated through their educational attainment and participation in the labour market, however their emancipation is still constrained by the 'bio-political control of their bodies and reproductive choices'.⁴⁶⁴ Women are not fully emancipated and their choices of singlehood, delayed marriage or non-marriage frequently lead them to face criticism from a largely patriarchal society. Under the influence of post-feminism from the United States and Western Europe, the media in Taiwan follows the media in America in presenting the time pressure as a threat to career women. The media in Taiwan especially focuses on the time pressure on ageing and fertility to career women over the age of thirty, who choose to delay their marriages in order to pursue career achievements.

The media suggests that women need to learn how to defy biological time in order to free themselves from the threat. It is essential for women to learn how to control their biological clocks, and furthermore, the ability to manage their time well has been recognised as an achievement in contemporary society as well as in the media. Negra criticises the notion of a temporal crisis and stresses the importance of defying

⁴⁶⁴ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 13.

time pressures for women in the media. She argues that the lives of women are represented as profoundly governed by time.⁴⁶⁵ According to Negra, 'Postfeminism suggests that symbolic forms of time mastery (particularly management of the ageing process) will provide the key to the reclamation of self.'⁴⁶⁶ In order to reclaim the self and to fully enjoy their lives as women while ageing, it is crucial for women to learn how to control their biological clocks. Nevertheless, the process of defying biological time is challenging, and women frequently struggle to find new identities during the process.

The ability to achieve a youthful appearance is essential for women in contemporary society as a way to defy time pressure. As Negra argues, 'Women are depicted as particularly beset by temporal problems that may frequently be resolved through minimization of their ambition and reversion to a more essential femininity.'⁴⁶⁷ The process of retaining a youthful appearance as a way to manage time pressure can be accomplished through cosmetic products or plastic surgery, for instance a Botox injection. Negra states: 'The reversion is often expressed through corporeal concepts and procedures – the “biological clock,” intense adherence to regimes of diet, exercise, and personal grooming and the decision to have plastic surgery or a Botox injection are all manifestations of/responses to a postfeminist culture climate.'⁴⁶⁸ As a career woman in post-feminist culture, *My Queen* presents Wu-Shuang as having the financial ability to purchase expensive cosmetic products in order to retain a youthful appearance.

A later episode that presents Wu-Shuang going shopping with her best friend is a significant illustration of consumerism. She tells her best friend that it is important

⁴⁶⁵ Diane Negra, *What a Girl Wants? Fantasizing the Reclamation of Self in Postfeminism* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 50.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 48.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

for women to look youthful, especially when they are over the age of thirty. Wu-Shuang takes herself as an example because she has a twenty-five-year-old boyfriend. In order not to be misrecognised as her boyfriend's older sister, she tries to remain youthful through cosmetic products. Wu-Shuang confesses that she spends a substantial sum of money on anti-ageing and anti-wrinkle cosmetic products in order to retain a youthful appearance. According to Negra, 'The achievement of a youthful appearance through consumerist "empowerment" is positively encoded even as it is disingenuously celebrated in some quarters as a genetic birthright and/or the natural outcome of a well-lived life.'⁴⁶⁹ There are other scenes in the drama that depict the process of anti-ageing in the heroine, for instance Wu-Shuang using facial masks while she watches television or sleeping with eye masks on.

The intention of *My Queen* is more obvious at the end, by presenting Wu-Shuang as an editor and writer who publishes columns about her life transformation from a lonely 'Defeated Dog' who is anxious about her singlehood to a 'Queen' who greatly enjoys her life and career. A horrific incident occurs at the end of the drama: Wu-Shuang nearly dies because of a car accident. Her memories with Lucas flashback to the moment when the explosion happens. Wu-Shuang decides to cherish her relationship with Lucas and enjoys her status as an unmarried career woman. She realises that marriage is not a golden ticket for happiness because for her happiness is to be with the man she loves even though they do not get married. She wants to encourage other unmarried career women to enjoy their lives so she starts writing about her personal experience as a thirty-something unmarried career woman in her magazine columns. Her articles have been published by the end of the drama.

Lucas goes abroad to study for two years and successfully becomes a doctor. Even though he proposes to Wu-Shuang twelve times within two years, she refuses to

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

accept. The final scene depicts the heroine attending her mother's wedding with Lucas; he proposes to her again but she does not accept. The camera draws closer to the couple, the heroine takes the diamond ring and replies: 'I will accept the diamond ring but I will think about marriage. I have to check my working schedule to see if I have time this year. I enjoy my life. Why do we need to get married?' Then the heroine walks away from the hero, the camera follows Wu-Shuang from the point of view of Lucas. His voice-over says: 'This is the woman I love who is never afraid to pursue her dream. Who always works hard for herself even until the last second.'

Lucas follows Wu-Shuang; they stand together to say goodbye to her mother, while a close-up focuses on the couple who look at each other with smiles on their faces. The heroine's voice-over addresses single women: 'I am no longer afraid to be alone. I am happy. I have found happiness and the man I love. I think it is fine to just enjoy the romance with him. It does not matter if we are "Champion Dogs" or "Defeated Dogs". We do not need to care what other people think about us. The most important question is whether you are happy. You should be the mistress of your happiness.' Then Lucas asks: 'Who says an unmarried woman is a "Defeated Dog"?' The heroine's voice-over replies: 'Because I am a Queen for him.' Then the drama ends with a scene of the couple looking into each other's eyes with smiling. The heroine has successfully transformed from a woman without confidence, with the title 'Defeated Dog', to a woman who has confidence to be herself and to be a 'Queen'. She has changed from a career woman who only has work as companion, to a woman who is confident and content with her current status as a thirty-five-year-old single career woman who not only has a successful career but also a man whom she loves. Marriage is not the end of her romantic relationship nor is it a golden ticket for happiness. As long as she has confidence, she is able to enjoy her life as a single career woman. The drama points out the unequal social expectations of women in society. It empowers its

female protagonist with the courage to challenge the traditional social expectation for women to get married. The ending suggests that women in contemporary Taiwanese society have more options than previous generations and that marriage is only one of them.

My Queen as an idol drama may share a similar narrative to other idol dramas with regards to the romantic relationship between its heroine and hero, however it empowers the heroine to defy the traditional norms for women within patriarchy. Its ending, in which the heroine chooses her career and remains single, is empowering, which differs from typical idol dramas that end with marriage and a wedding. The empowered female protagonist and her happy ending signify individual autonomy for women and emancipation from traditional expectations. The emphasis on self-realisation in opposition to the traditional values for women implies the transformation and development of female identity in contemporary society.

A society that advocates equality between men and women should not label women who choose singlehood or non-marriage 'Defeated Dogs'. Women cannot be fully developed or achieve equality if society does not liberate women's choices from the traditional expectations of marriage and motherhood. *My Queen* advocates the idea that being a thirty-something single career woman is not pathetic, and that such women do not need to follow the traditional norms of society. They have the freedom to make their own choices, and they can enjoy a wonderful single life as long as they have confidence. Women should enjoy their lives and walk gracefully with time because they are the Queen of their own lives.

Female status in Taiwan has greatly developed since the feminist movement in the early 1970s. Women have attained equal legal entitlements in terms of education and employment. The development of female status in Taiwanese society interlinks with new representations of women in the media in Taiwan. Idol drama, as one of the

key influences in the media on women's lives in Taiwan, presents new representations of women in various forms, from wife and mother to career woman. Such representations signify the social changes and the transformation of female identity in Taiwanese society. This chapter has discussed various representations of women, from working women in *Miss Rose*, to divorced women in *The Fierce Wife* and the career woman in *My Queen*, to examine the transformation of female status from housewife to modern career woman. This chapter has examined how numerous representations of women interconnect with women's issues on marriage and divorce through the female characters in the dramas. Si-Yi in *Miss Rose* has been presented as the typical female protagonist who follows the traditional norms for women to enter the marriage realm; An-Zhen represents the typical Taiwanese housewife who depends on her husband financially at the beginning of the drama but becomes a working mother after their divorce; finally, Wu-Shuang in *My Queen* is an empowering female figure who defies the traditional norms for women who remain in singlehood. The dramas present the transformation of these female protagonists from women without confidence because of their status as single women or divorced women, to women who are financially independent, confident and content with their lives.

Chapter 4

The Films of Sylvia Chang

4.1. Introduction: Sylvia Chang and Female Directors in Taiwanese Cinema

This chapter provides a discussion of female authorship and films directed by women in Taiwanese cinema through an examination of three Sylvia Chang films: *Tonight Nobody Goes Home* (1995), *Siao Yu* (1995) and *20, 30, 40* (2004). These films span a time period of significant change, as the thesis has addressed in the previous chapters on cinema and television drama, providing a counterpoint and an opportunity to consider in detail the works of an individual female filmmaker. I employ textual analysis in my reading of these films, focusing on the operation of cinematic signifiers and elements of plot, characterisation and the narrative structure of the films. I further examine their cinematic characteristics, including cinematography as well as music in the films. This thesis has discussed the development of women's status in Taiwan and the representation of women in Taiwanese cinema and television drama. Hsiu-Lien Lu remarks that women can make things better. Both men and women need to work together to create 'his story' and 'her story' into 'human story'.⁴⁷⁰ The previous film and television drama case studies have provided an examination of representations of women. This chapter further extends this examination of the representation of women to the works of female filmmakers who write and direct stories about women in order to explore the feminist discourse discussed in previous chapters.

The questions that frame my analysis are: Are women represented differently in

⁴⁷⁰ Hsiu-Lien Lu, *New Feminism* (Taipei: Unitas Publishing, 2008), p. 303.

films made by women? If so, in what ways? To what extent is the feminist discourse explored in previous chapters evident in Sylvia Chang's films? Does Chang, for example, empower female characters in her films? The chapter starts with a discussion of the growing number of female directors in Taiwan between 2000 and 2010. It then examines the diverse representations of women in films directed by women, in relation to the process of self-discovery and self-realisation. The second section concentrates on a discussion of women's self-discovery and growing independence in *Tonight Nobody Goes Home*. The third section examines the link between women and immigration in *Siao Yu*. The last section analyses the diverse representations of women of different nationalities and ages in *20, 30, 40*. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the significant progress of women's cinema and female directors in Taiwan in order to examine the still developing status of women in the country.

Taiwanese Female Directors

Female directors and women's cinema have undergone a progressive development since the 1980s, thanks to the influence of western feminism. Women not only perform in front of the camera as actresses, they have begun to show their talents behind the camera, editing, producing and directing films. A new generation of female directors have joined the film industry since the 2000s; for instance, Yu-Ya Wang, Wen-Zhen Zeng, Mei-Ling Zhou, Yun-Chan Lee, Xin-Yi Chen, Ying-Rong Chen, Fen-Fen Zheng and Tian-Yu Fu. Some of these female directors started their filmmaking career by making documentaries, some of them started from making short films. However, the majority have moved into mainstream films since the 2000s. This thesis argues that these female directors bring a greater influence of feminism into Taiwanese cinema. This chapter will provide examples to illustrate this argument.

This section begins with an introduction to the development of female directors in Taiwan and Taiwanese women's cinema. To begin with an introduction to the development of female directors in Taiwan, it is necessary to trace their history back to the development of women's culture and the new feminism of Hsiu-Lien Lu. In 1993 Hsiu-Lien Lu's follower and friend Yuan-Zhen Li (see Chapter One) and other members of the Awakening Foundation cooperated with the founder of Black and White Film Studio, Director Yu-Shan Huang, to establish the first Taiwan Women's Film Association (formally known as Taipei Women Film and Video Association).⁴⁷¹ The Awakening Foundation works with the film industry to make documentaries and films in order to promote women's rights in Taiwan, for instance *One Promise* (Shu Wei Chou, 2000). Here director Shu-Wei Chou films her daily life and struggle as a single mother who tries to balance work and family. The film criticises the childcare system in Taiwan and advocates the need for social change. Working mothers in Taiwan cannot afford to hire nannies or pay for nurseries. The documentary aimed to raise government awareness of the need to provide a better childcare service for working mothers.

In order to encourage more women to join the film industry, the Taiwan Women's Film Association has attempted different strategies since its establishment. The Association started their first video production training classes in 2009. It explores different aspects of women's lives as well as promoting equality and the rights of all genders. The Women Make Waves film festival covers a wide range of genres, issues, and representations of women. For instance, one of the subjects of the 2013 film festival was 'Modern Witch-hunt' which discussed the lives of women as single-divorced mothers and unmarried middle-aged women in modern society. An

⁴⁷¹ Ming-Zhu Chen and Yun-Chi Huang, eds, *The Research of Taiwanese Female Directors, 2000-2010* (Taipei: Showwe Information, 2010), p. 27.

example on this subject is the documentary *Eggs Matter* (Jessie Chang, 2013), which discusses the dilemmas of single women over the age of thirty under pressure from family and society to get married and reproduce. Director Jessie Chang films her own struggle as a single woman over the age of thirty who decides to freeze her eggs. She records various opinions from family and friends through interviews. The director argues that frozen eggs can be an option of giving birth for women in modern society in the documentary. The documentary points out the problem of social expectations towards women. In spite of the fact that women in contemporary Taiwanese society have freedom of marriage choice and motherhood, they are still expected by society to enter into marriage and to reproduce.⁴⁷² The Taiwan Women's Film Association aims to produce films about women and for women from a female point of view. It aims to encourage more women into filmmaking to contribute to women's cinema in Taiwan.

The Taiwan Women's Film Association was inspired by the media arts organization Women Make Movies, from the United States, to name its film festival Women Make Waves.⁴⁷³ The Taiwan Women's Film Association organised the annual Taiwan International Women Make Waves Film Festival with the aim of encouraging more Taiwanese women to make films. In order to establish a film platform outside male-centred mainstream cinema, the association has screened nearly a thousand international films and unique local films that are difficult to find. Since 2001 the association has arranged the Women Make Waves Film Festival around Taiwan. It works with local theatres, communities, schools and art centres in order to decrease the divide between urban and rural areas. The Women Make Waves Film Festival is the oldest in Taiwan, as well as one of the most important and well-known film festivals in Asia. The association distributes books, magazines, films and on-line resources on

⁴⁷² Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 12.

⁴⁷³ Chen and Huang, eds, *The Research of Taiwanese Female Directors, 2000-2010*, p. 28.

feminist film theory and gender studies. In 2016, the Taiwan Women's Film Association was invited to organise a Taiwanese Women's Film Festival in New York. Taiwanese films that focus on issues about women such as *Twin Bracelets* (Yu Shan Huang, 1990), *Taste of Life* (Yu Shan Huang, 2015) and *Our Times* (Yu Shan Chen, 2015) were chosen for the film festival in order to present the works of Taiwanese female directors to audiences in the United States.⁴⁷⁴ Such cultural events demonstrate both the international visibility of Taiwanese women's cinema and the work of the organization in promoting it.

However, within film studies women's cinema has proven a difficult category or concept to define. As Alison Butler points out, women's cinema suggests 'films that might be made by, addressed to, or concerned with women, or all three.'⁴⁷⁵ Butler further states that women's cinema 'is neither a genre nor a movement in film history, it has no single lineage of its own, no national boundaries, no filmic or aesthetic specificity, but traverses and negotiates cinematic and cultural traditions and critical and political debates.'⁴⁷⁶ Director Yu-Shan Huang and scholar Jun-Qi Wang suggest two definitions of women's cinema in Taiwan. They explain:

In general, women's cinema in Taiwan refers to the various genres of films directed by female or male directors that focus on issues related to women. As for the specific definition of women's cinema in Taiwan, it refers to the films directed by women directors from a female point of view on issues related to women.⁴⁷⁷

Using this definition as a starting point, the term women's cinema in this thesis refers

⁴⁷⁴ "Taiwanese Women's Film Festival in New York", *Apple Daily*, 27 March 2016, <<http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/international/art/20160327/19546703>> [accessed 25 July 2016].

⁴⁷⁵ Alison Butler, *Women's Cinema: the Contested Screen* (London: Wallflower Press, 2002), p. 1.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Yu-Shan Huang and Jun-Qi Wang, "Introduction: Taiwanese Female Directors and Their Films After New Taiwan Cinema" in Chen and Huang, eds, *The Research of Taiwanese Female Directors, 2000-2010*, p. 21.

to the films directed by women from a female point of view on issues associated with women.

The films of female directors may relate to women's cinema occasionally but not consistently. As Butler points out, 'A female film-maker's body of work might intersect with women's cinema on occasion, but not consistently, as in the case of Maggie Greenwald, director of a hard-boiled pulp fiction, *The Kill-Off* (1989), and the cross-dressed feminist western *The Ballad of Little Jo* (1993).'⁴⁷⁸ This chapter will later mention Xiao-Ti Wang as an example of a Taiwanese female director whose films are not always related to women's cinema. According to Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, 'The history of women filmmakers is a rich and fertile body of knowledge that has been largely ignored, until recently, by mainstream film historians. Nevertheless, women were very much involved in the creation of the visual art form known as motion pictures from its beginnings until the present.'⁴⁷⁹ Foster argues that, despite the fact that creative women were participants in the history of filmmaking, historians seem to be more interested in women as actresses and sex objects rather than filmmakers: 'Women were written out of history as active participants in the production and creation of film, film movements, special effects, the star system, the studio system, independent and experimental forms, and genres.'⁴⁸⁰

Like the film industry in the United States, the film industry in Taiwan was male-dominated before the 1980s. Male directors such as Ang Lee and Ming-Liang Tsai have been frequently mentioned in the history of Taiwanese cinema while, on the contrary, the achievements of female directors have been neglected in Taiwanese cinema. In spite of the fact that the first Taiwanese female director, Wen-Min Chen

⁴⁷⁸ Butler, *Women's Cinema*, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁷⁹ Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, *Women Filmmakers and Their Films* (London: St. James Press, 1998), p. xiii.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

started filmmaking in 1957, her achievements like that of many female directors, are seldom mentioned in the history of Taiwanese cinema.⁴⁸¹ Karen Hollinger argues: 'The failure to include women filmmakers in the pantheon of great directors in part is the result of the overwhelming male domination of the film industry, where top grossing Hollywood films are almost all directed by men, and women are greatly restricted in terms of employment as executive producers, producers, writers, editors and cinematographers.'⁴⁸² The New Taiwan Cinema movement in the early 1980s was very important for the representation of women and women directors in Taiwan. Numerous films adapted from the literary works of Taiwanese female authors were made during the New Taiwan Cinema movement, for instance *Osmanthus Alley* (1988) and *Kuei-mei, A Woman* (1985), both discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. This thesis has discussed the feminist issues of marriage and career choices for women in the film case studies.

A significant number of films of the New Taiwan Cinema depict the typical characteristics of Taiwanese women as strong and able to endure obstacles, thus reproducing cultural assumptions discussed earlier in this thesis. Another central feature of the movement was its focus on the development of women's roles in the films, an example being the female protagonist in *Kuei-mei, A Woman*. The development of the role of women has been presented in New Taiwan Cinema, which is significant to the representation of women in Taiwan. Women have been presented as having choices in terms of marriage and careers in New Taiwan Cinema; for example Kuei-Mei, who owns a restaurant, and her daughter who is a single career woman.

More women were able to join the filmmaking industry in the late 1980s, for

⁴⁸¹ Chen and Huang, eds, *The Research of Taiwanese Female Directors, 2000-2010*, p. 3.

⁴⁸² Karen Hollinger, *Feminist Film Studies* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 232.

instance director Yu-Shan Huang. She has had an important role in the development of women's cinema in Taiwan, and she was one of the directors who helped to establish the Taiwan Women's Film Association in 1993. She began her career making documentaries and she has made numerous documentaries and films, for instance *Autumn Tempest* (1988), *Twin Bracelets* (1990), *Peony Birds* (1990) and *Spring Cactus* (1998). She devotes her career to making films about Taiwan, and she also expresses her concerns about issues related to women.⁴⁸³ Yu-Shan Huang is a feminist who expresses her anger towards patriarchy and gender inequality through her films.

The female protagonist in *Autumn Tempest* is a woman who fights against traditional expectations for women to enter into marriage and to reproduce. The female protagonist Su-Bi (Soo-Yeon Kang) of *Autumn Tempest* is infertile and as a result her husband abandons her. The homeless Su-Bi stays in a temple. The temple is a holy place which does not allow people to have intimate relationships. A powerful scene in the film presents the female protagonist having an intimate relationship with the male protagonist, Wen-Xiang (Qing-Huang Yang), in the temple. An image of the female protagonist looking at herself in a mirror, touching her body whilst taking a shower, signifies her sexual desire. The scene raised controversial debates in the 1980s, however the purpose of the film is to encourage women to be aware of their physical desire and have full control of their bodies.⁴⁸⁴ The film condemns the traditional concepts which consider women as the property of men and their essential role to be a wife and mother.

Xiao-Ti Wang is another well-known Taiwanese woman filmmaker who began her filmmaking career in the late 1980s. Xiao-Ti Wang has directed a great number of

⁴⁸³ Yu-Shan Huang and Jun-Qi Wang, "Introduction: Taiwanese Female Directors and Their Films After New Taiwan Cinema" in Chen and Huang, eds, *The Research of Taiwanese Female Directors, 2000-2010*, p. 43.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

television dramas and films, for instance *Grandma and Her Ghosts* (1998), *Bear Hug* (2004) and *Fantôme, Où es-tu* (2010). The films of Xiao-Ti Wang are diverse, from issues related to women and family to animated films for children. Xiao-Ti Wang invited Sylvia Chang to co-direct the film *The Game They Call Sex* (1987), which is about the self-discovery of women in terms of marriage and sexuality. Women have the same equality in terms of career and educational attainment in the 1980s compared to women a decade ago.⁴⁸⁵ Yu-Shan Huang and Jun-Qi Wang state: ‘The films about women at this period focus on issues related to women and the repression of women in patriarchal culture. The films stress that marriage is not the whole part of women’s life, and furthermore, they should find their identity as a woman in order to construct their individuality.’⁴⁸⁶ In general, the films about women made during the 1980s and the 1990s focus on the self-discovery of women, on marriage and sexuality and the transformation of women’s roles from housewife to career woman in contemporary society.

As mentioned in chapter two, the New Taiwan Cinema movement has gained its reputation in international film festivals primarily through the films directed by Ang Lee and Ming-Liang Tsai. In spite of the fact that the movement has encouraged more film production, the filmmaking industry in Taiwan remained male-dominated in the late 1980s. Taiwanese women’s cinema and female directors experienced greater development in the 1990s with the help of activities, artists, authors and directors from the Taiwan Women’s Film Association, as well as financial support from the government.⁴⁸⁷

Since 1995 films directed by women have been gradually increasing in

⁴⁸⁵ Lu, *New Feminism*, pp. 261-264.

⁴⁸⁶ Huang and Wang, “Introduction: Taiwanese Female Directors and Their Films after New Taiwan Cinema” in Chen and Huang, eds, *The Research of Taiwanese Female Directors, 2000-2010*, p. 27.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 29.

mainstream cinemas of Taiwan, including such films as *Grandma and Her Ghosts* (Xiao Ti Wang, 1998) and *Tempting Heart* (Sylvia Chang, 1999).⁴⁸⁸ Films directed by those directors mentioned earlier and a new generation of female directors have increased in the 2000s; for instance *Princess D* (Sylvia Chang, 2002), *Love Me, if You Can* (Yu Ya Wang, 2003), *20, 30, 40* (Sylvia Chang, 2004), *Bear Hug* (XiaoTi Wang, 2004), *Fishing Luck* (Wen Zen Zeng, 2005), *The Strait Story* (Yu Shan Huang, 2005), *The Shoe Fairy* (Yun Chan Lee, 2005), *Catch* (Ying Rong Chen, 2006), *Spider Lillies* (Mei Ling Zhou, 2007), *My DNA Says I Love You* (Yun Chan Lee, 2007), *God Man Dog* (Xin Yi Chen, 2008), *Drifting Flowers* (Mei Ling Zhou, 2008), *Hear Me* (Fen Fen Zheng, 2009) and *Somewhere I Have Never Traveled* (Tian Yu Fu, 2009).⁴⁸⁹ These examples span diverse genres and modes from animated films for children to romantic comedies and feminist films, indicating the range of films made by Taiwanese female directors since 2000.⁴⁹⁰ As a result of technological advancements, and support from the Women's Film Association, the government and private companies, more female directors are able to show their talents through films festivals in Taiwan and across the world. Among the female directors mentioned earlier, this thesis will focus on the life and films of Sylvia Chang.

The main reason for examining the films of Sylvia Chang is because of her role as an auteur who writes and directs films.⁴⁹¹ Her persona as a woman with a strong determination to make films despite numerous difficulties in a male-dominated film industry is worth discussing. The second chapter of this thesis examined a film by Pei-Hua Wang who is a well-known producer and director in Taiwan. In spite of the

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁹⁰ Ting-Hui Zhao and Ru-Han Tsai, "The Recreation of Fairy Tales and the Rework of Female Characteristics: The Artistic Style, Narrative Structure and Women's Self-Consciousness in *The Shoe Fairy* (Yun Chan Lee, 2005)" in Chen and Huang, eds, *The Research of Taiwanese Female Directors, 2000-2010*, p. 155. Ting-Hui Zhao and Ru-Han Tsai state that *The Shoe Fairy* (Yun Chan Lee, 2005) is a feminist film.

⁴⁹¹ See for example Hollinger, *Feminist Film Studies*, p. 230.

fact that the film, *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right*, is popular in Taiwan, it is the only film Pei-Hua Wang has made so far. In contrast, Sylvia Chang has produced a significant number of films which provide a wide variety of examples to examine. Her films have been distributed to other countries such as Hong Kong, Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States, which has increased the visibility of her films.

Visibility is another reason for this thesis to examine her films. Her films are worth discussing not only because they are about women but also because of her persona as a woman who challenges gender roles. The chapter will discuss three films directed by Sylvia Chang: *Tonight Nobody Goes Home*, *Siao Yu* and *20, 30, 40*. The main reason to focus discussion on these three films is that each of them tackles subjects closely related to the position of women in contemporary Taiwan. *Tonight Nobody Goes Home* discusses the issues of divorce and marriage. Its female protagonist is presented as a middle-aged housewife without financial independence who decides to divorce her unfaithful husband. She leaves the house and works as an insurance seller. She undergoes a process of self-discovery and self-realisation. The end of the film presents the transformation of its female protagonist into a confident middle-aged woman capable of individual thought and possessing financial independence. The transformation of the female protagonist in the film suggests the presence of feminism within Taiwanese culture and society.

Siao Yu offers a representation of women with social mobility. Its female protagonist is an immigrant from mainland China to the United States. The original reason for her moving to the United States is for her boyfriend but she later finds a motive to live in the country as an independent woman. *20, 30, 40* presents women of different nationalities, ages and backgrounds. It discusses the issues of singlehood, marriage and ageing. The film presents the lives of three different women and their

search for the identity. In what follows, I argue that the female protagonists in these films are important representations of women with ‘three selves’, as mentioned in the feminist doctrine of Hsiu-Lien Lu.⁴⁹² Sylvia Chang is well-known for writing stories about women and for women. Some female directors find it challenging to make more than one film. As Yvonne Tasker, writing in relation to American cinema, states in *Reclaiming the Archive*, ‘women find it tougher to make films – and, crucially, to make more than one film – than men. This is the case in the commercial cinema, where a track record of achievement matters a great deal, and in the seemingly relentlessly author-led independent sector.’⁴⁹³ Sylvia Chang is a different case in terms of the number of her works. She has written and directed a significant number of films and she remains prominent in the film industry. Her film *20, 30, 40* was the only Chinese film to be selected for the 2004 Berlin Film Festival. Her detailed portrayal of the emotion of the characters is an important feature of her films; for instance, the repeated use of close-ups of the characters. Another feature of her films is the theme of globalisation, for instance the depiction of the life of a young Malaysian who travels to Taiwan to pursue her dream in *20, 30, 40*. Such features are the reasons why her films are worthy of further analysis, in order to analyse the presence of the feminist discourses mentioned in previous chapters.

Sylvia Chang (Ai-Chi Chang) was born in Chiayi, Taiwan. Chang has shown her talents as an actress, singer, producer, writer and director in Taiwan and Hong Kong. She started her acting career in the middle of the 1970s, then she later showed her interest in script writing and directing in the 1980s. In an interview with CNN Talk Asia in 2004, Chang explained the reasons why she became a director. She stated in the interview that she was out of work for a period of time when she was young. She

⁴⁹² Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 302.

⁴⁹³ Vicki Callahan, *Reclaiming the Archive: Feminism and Film History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), p. 217.

watched about three hundred Chinese films during this period, realising that some of the films were not as good as she expected. For this reason, she started thinking about how she would have directed the films if she was their director. Chang explains: 'I began to think, that got me interested in starting to write scripts. And from writing scripts I started to think about the shots, and they became more like pictures, more like visions to me. So from then on, I thought I knew that one-day I will go behind the camera, which kept me really interested in the film industry for that long.'⁴⁹⁴ In *Our Talk Show* in 2012, Chang stated that she felt uncertain as an actress because her work was unstable when she was young. She did not want to be the one who was controlled by someone in front of the camera. She wanted to be the one in control behind the camera. Chang has strong self-determination to make films in spite of numerous difficulties in the male-dominated film industry. Her persona exemplifies the characteristics of feminism that this thesis has foregrounded as part of a larger cultural shift in Taiwan. Sylvia Chang had many stories that she wanted to share with others so she started writing film scripts and directing.⁴⁹⁵

The first directing experience for Sylvia Chang was discouraging so she went back to acting. Directing was a challenge for Chang because she had never accepted any professional training at school. The film education she gained was from film sets as an actress. She knew clearly that she could tell the story but she needed to learn the technical skills of directing.⁴⁹⁶ In spite of these challenges, Chang still had a strong passion for writing and directing films. She took courage and tried directing again after

⁴⁹⁴ Interview with Sylvia Chang on CNN Talk Asia, 27 October 2004, <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/asiapcf/10/27/talkasia.chang.script/index.html?_s=PM:WORLD> [accessed 18 February 2014].

⁴⁹⁵ Interview with Sylvia Chang on *Our Talk Show* in Taiwan, 5 May 2012, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Tsv-g-gb2I>>, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxU16Xhpkpc>>, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amqJA2xSVPm>> [accessed 18 February 2014].

⁴⁹⁶ Interview with Sylvia Chang on CNN Talk Asia, 27 October 2004, <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/asiapcf/10/27/talkasia.chang.script/index.html?_s=PM:WORLD> [accessed 18 February 2014].

a few years' acting experience. The second film she directed was *Passion* (1986) which is a film about female friendship and the life of women before and after marriage.⁴⁹⁷ Chang wrote the script and played one of the female protagonists in the film. Although Sylvia Chang did not win the best scriptwriting or directing awards for the film, she won the best actress award at the Golden Horse Awards in Taiwan in 1986. Chang gained confidence in script writing and directing after she made the film *Passion*, which received great acclaim at the 1986 Golden Horse Awards.⁴⁹⁸ The director then continued her interest in writing and directing films in the following years after the success of *Passion*.⁴⁹⁹ Sylvia Chang has directed thirteen films since the beginning of her filmmaking career in the 1980s. The other films directed by Chang are *Sisters of the World Unite* (1991), *Mary from Beijing* (1992), *In Between* (1994), *Siao Yu* (1995), *Tonight Nobody Goes Home* (1995), *Tempting Heart* (1999), *Princess D* (2002), *20, 30, 40* (2004), *Run, Papa, Run!* (2008) and *Murmur of the Hearts* (2015). This thesis will focus on *Tonight Nobody Goes Home*, *Siao Yu* and *20, 30, 40* in the later sections of this chapter since they are particularly resonant for the way they address the position of women and gender norms in Taiwanese culture.

As mentioned earlier, a feature of Sylvia Chang's filmmaking is her exquisite depiction of the emotions of her characters. She tends to use close-ups to depict the emotions of characters rather than speech; for instance there are several close-ups that depict the emotion of the female protagonists in *Siao Yu* and *20, 30, 40*. Chang is well-known for her depiction of the life of women and their struggles in their careers, marriages and relationships. As Yu-Shan Huang and Jun-Qi Wang state, 'She depicts

⁴⁹⁷ Huang and Wang, "Introduction: Taiwanese Female Directors and Their Films after New Taiwan Cinema" in Chen and Huang, eds, *The Research of Taiwanese Female Directors, 2000-2010*, p. 33.

⁴⁹⁸ Sylvia Chang was nominated as best director and actress for the film *Passion* (1986) at the Golden Horse Awards in 1986. She won the best actress for the Golden Horse Awards. See for example Huang and Wang, "Introduction: Taiwanese Female Directors and Their Films after New Taiwan Cinema" in Chen and Huang, eds, *The Research of Taiwanese Female Directors, 2000-2010*, p. 33.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

the self-identification and life of women from different ages, social backgrounds, careers and sexualities through her films. The main theme of her films is the pursuit of dreams and the struggle in the life of the characters.⁵⁰⁰ Chang married a Hong Kong businessman and currently lives in Hong Kong. Her life experience in Taiwan and Hong Kong makes her films less national. Immigration, social mobility and globalisation are other features that can be seen in her films; for instance the female protagonist emigrates from mainland China to the United States in *Siao Yu*, and one of the female protagonists moves from Malaysia to Taiwan to pursue her dream to be a singer in *20, 30, 40*. Yu-Shan Huang and Jun-Qi Wang state that the films of Sylvia Chang are less national because of her immigration and living experience in Taiwan and Hong Kong: 'Her films do not show strong national identification as Taiwanese, on the contrary, they present a general Chinese culture to the audience.'⁵⁰¹ Sylvia Chang is an important Taiwanese filmmaker due to her prominence in the film industry and her wider cultural visibility. She has directed more than ten films and is still actively working in the film industry. Most of her films focus on issues related to women, including marriage, divorce, career and the search for self-identity. The focus on issues of globalisation in her films suggests that her films are not only about women in Taiwan but also about women around the world.

Most of the female filmmakers in Hollywood tend to be restricted to making films like romantic comedies, however there are some women filmmakers who break gender roles. As Karen Hollinger points out, 'Hollywood woman filmmakers have been restricted largely to making family melodramas, romantic comedies, and teen flicks, but the success of Kathryn Bigelow, unquestionably the most important contemporary Hollywood female auteur, as an action director may indicate that those

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

limitations are lessening somewhat.’⁵⁰² Female directors in Taiwan encounter similar difficulties as women directors in Hollywood. The genre of Sylvia Chang’s films may differ from the films of Kathryn Bigelow, but she is also a significant example of a female director who breaks gender roles. As a female director Chang is well-known for making films about women and for women; however she breaks gender roles in her film *Run, Papa, Run!* (2008). The film was co-written by Sylvia Chang based on the novel of the same title written by Benny Chun-En Li. It is about the life of a Triad boss and his relationship with his mother, wife and daughter. In order to provide a stable life for his daughter, the male protagonist quits his position as a Triad boss and opens a cram school. The Hong Kong film industry regularly makes films about gangsters or police which portray the masculinity of men. On the contrary, Sylvia Chang wants to explore the gentle side of men therefore she presents the changes in the protagonist after he becomes a father in the film.

Sylvia Chang discussed the gender constriction in Hong Kong in an interview on *Run, Papa, Run!* in 2008: ‘I still think the film industry in Hong Kong is male-dominated. There aren’t many male filmmakers who would write scripts for women.’⁵⁰³ She states that it is difficult to change the male-domination of the film industry in Hong Kong in a short period of time and that it is challenging for women filmmakers to work in the film industry; they encounter various obstacles to filmmaking.⁵⁰⁴ As Foster acknowledges: ‘An unbelievable amount of hardship seems to have been suffered by women directors, yet an unrivaled degree of perseverance seems to be a common factor in many of their experiences.’⁵⁰⁵ As a female director,

⁵⁰² Hollinger, *Feminist Film Studies*, p. 234.

⁵⁰³ Interview with Sylvia Chang on *Run, Papa, Run!* (2008), 5 April 2008, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvfNIZULffU>> [accessed 4 May2015].

⁵⁰⁴ Interview with Sylvia Chang on *Run, Papa, Run!* (2008), 5 April 2008, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvfNIZULffU>> [accessed 4 May2015].

⁵⁰⁵ Foster, *Women Filmmakers and Their Films*, pp. xvii-xviii.

Sylvia Chang states: ‘we’ve just got to do the best we can.’⁵⁰⁶ Chang explains the gender constrictions in the same interview; she discusses how male directors, like female directors, prefer to make films on topics they are most familiar with. She says this is not out of any disrespect towards women but some male directors just do not know how to write about women.⁵⁰⁷ Sylvia Chang states at the end of the interview: ‘I hope someday they can break this rule. I already have!’⁵⁰⁸

As a female director, Sylvia Chang challenges gender roles by making films about men. Chang has made numerous films that have market potential in the film industry. Foster praises the role of women filmmakers:

Whether working in the industry or making films with the aid of grants and personal financial subsidies, women filmmakers have helped to shape the world of film as it is today. Some women film practitioners see themselves as harbingers of change, instructional forces, barometers of social reintegration; other women see themselves as workers within a tradition that they attempt to subvert from within.⁵⁰⁹

As Foster makes clear, Sylvia Chang’s role as a female filmmaker is that of a ‘worker within a tradition’ who endeavours to challenge the male-dominated film industry.⁵¹⁰ In the interview with CNN Talk Asia in 2004, Sylvia Chang stated that she has a strong passion for filmmaking; she has many stories would like to share with others so she will continue working in the film industry.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁶ Interview with Sylvia Chang on *Run, Papa, Run!* (2008), 5 April 2008, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvfNIZULffU>> [accessed 4 May 2015].

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ Foster, *Women Filmmakers and Their Films*, p. xviii.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Interview with Sylvia Chang on CNN Talk Asia, 27 October 2004, <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/asiapcf/10/27/talkasia.chang.script/index.html?_s=PM:WORLD> [accessed 18 February 2014].

4.2. *Tonight Nobody Goes Home* (1995)

The female protagonist of the film, Mrs. Chen (Ya-Lei Kuei), is a middle-aged woman who has been married to her husband, Dr. Chen (Hisung Lang), for more than thirty years. The old couple have a daughter and a son, and they live a simple life as a typical couple. The opening of the film depicts the daily life of the couple: Mrs. Chen goes dancing at the park and Mr. Chen goes swimming in the morning. Mrs. Chen is presented as a housewife at the beginning of the film. Mr. Chen has just reached sixty so the family gathers together to celebrate his birthday. An early scene in the film depicts Mrs. Chen busy preparing meals for her husband's birthday celebration. Mrs. Chen enjoys her life as a housewife though she is always busy caring for the family. She does the grocery shopping, household chores, cooking, runs errands for the family, and looks after her granddaughter for her son and daughter-in law. In spite of the fact that she sacrifices most of her time for the family, she is shown to be satisfied with her current life as a housewife. Mrs. Chen feels secure to have a simple life and stable marriage.

Mrs. Chen encounters Mrs. Qin (Kuei-Mei Yang) who is the headmistress of the kindergarten that her granddaughter goes to. Mrs. Qin has toothache therefore Mrs. Chen advises her to go to her husband's clinic to have a check. Mrs. Chen finds out her husband is having an affair with Mrs. Qin in a later part of the film. Mrs. Chen asks her husband to end his affair but he refuses. The argument scene depicts Mrs. Chen condemning her husband and criticising Mrs. Qin as a shameful woman. Mr. Chen is irritated to hear the judgment of his wife, and he defends for Mrs. Qin as a woman who knows how to enjoy her life. Furious, Mrs. Chen asks her husband for a divorce and he accepts. Mrs. Chen says to her husband: 'I want a divorce.' Mr. Chen replies: 'I want nothing but a little freedom.' Mr. Chen agrees to let his wife own the house and his

fortune, then he leaves the house. Mrs. Chen is very disappointed in her unfaithful husband but she does not know what to do. She goes to her son's nightclub for a drink. She encounters a gigolo, Long-Long (Alex To), who changes her life. Mrs. Chen decides to move out, but she has no place to stay, therefore she moves into the house of the gigolo. She undergoes a process of self-realisation and self-awareness when separated from her husband. With the help of her daughter's boyfriend, she starts working as an insurance seller.

There are several important scenes in the film that present the transformation of its female protagonist from housewife to career woman. An early scene at the beginning of the film portrays Mrs. Chen's desperation when she encounters a difficulty in her marriage. The scene depicts Mrs. Chen sitting in the living room talking to her children about the affair their father has had. The children try to comfort their mother by telling her that their father is not serious about the divorce and that he will come home shortly. Mr. Chen comes home to pack his personal belongings whilst they are talking. Their daughter, Xiao-Qui (Rene Liu), says to them: 'I really don't understand. You're the most perfect couple I know. My dream is to have a marriage just like yours.' Xiao-Qui begs her father to stay; he asks her to take care of her mother then he leaves. Mrs. Chen sits in the living room when her husband leaves. A close-up presents her sorrow to the audience. Mrs. Chen is sobbing as she looks at her husband walking away from home. The camera shoots from the point of view of Mrs. Chen who looks at the back of Mr. Chen as he closes the door and walks away. Mrs. Chen cannot control her emotion any longer, and keeps on crying after her husband has left.

The scene represents the dependence of the female protagonist on her husband. Mrs. Chen sacrifices her time to care for her family; she does not understand why her husband would have an affair at his late age. The film presents Mrs. Chen as a woman who endeavours to enact the position of the 'good wife' and who struggles to

understand why her marriage breaks down. This conflict of expectation and experience is presented as leading to her depressed state. Thus, for example, after Mr. Chen moves out, a mid-shot portrays Mrs. Chen sitting outside her husband's clinic (see figure 7). She sits quietly on the bench and looks at the floor, deep in thought. The background scene is a street in Taipei. A lady stands by the road calling a taxi. Five taxis stop at the same time as the lady waves her hand. The taxi in front stops suddenly, which causes a traffic accident in the street. The taxi drivers argue with each other and start fighting. The contrast between the silent female protagonist and the quarrel signifies her inner emotion. The scene may present Mrs. Chen sitting quietly, ignoring the fight behind her, however the fight signifies the repressed anger inside her. She has lots of questions about the affair her husband has had and about her life as a middle-aged woman. She questions the value of her sacrifice as a wife during the marriage for the past thirty years. Many questions remain unanswered for Mrs. Chen at this stage, but she will later find the answers through a process of self-realisation.



Figure 7: Mrs. Chen sits outside her husband's clinic in depression.

A significant scene in the film is the meeting between Mrs. Chen and Mrs. Qin

after her husband leaves. Mrs. Chen brings Mr. Chen's personal belongings to the kindergarten where Mrs. Qin works. Mrs. Chen asks Mrs. Qin to tell her husband to move all his personal belongings away if he really wants to move out. Mrs. Chen questions Mrs. Qin: 'I do not understand. You are young and attractive. Why do you want to be with an old man?' Mrs. Qin replies: 'Which century do you live in? Nowadays men and women struggle for a living just the same. You think if you stay at home and wait for him, he would be kind to you?' A close-up presents the facial expressions of the two women (see figure 8). Mrs. Chen looks confused by this reply from Mrs. Qin. Mrs. Qin asks her: 'Don't you have a name of your own?' Mrs. Chen has been named after her husband since she got married. She has misunderstood the question and replies: 'My name has been Chen for many years.' Mrs. Qin is presented as successful businesswoman who owns three kindergartens. As a financially independent woman, she thinks women should not depend on men. Mrs. Qin criticises Mrs. Chen's dependence on her husband when she asks her the question. Mrs. Chen feels insulted and says: 'You are capable and liberated. For you, it is just a game, nothing serious. But my husband and family are my life. They are my life.'



Figure 8: Mrs. Chen (left) confronts Mrs. Qin (right).

The conversation between the two women is an important scene in the film. The scene presents two generations of women from different backgrounds and of different ages. Mrs. Chen is a conventional middle-aged woman who has devoted her time to caring for her family as a housewife. Mrs. Qin is a young businesswoman who is divorced, and who enjoys her life as a financially independent single woman. It is true that she does not take the relationship with Mr. Chen seriously. She addresses Mr. Chen as her friend with benefits when she introduces him to her good friend. Mrs. Qin is a representation of the career woman; her representation signifies the social change and transformation of the role of women in modern society. In contrast, Mrs. Chen is a representation of a housewife who is an example of a 'good wife and wise mother'. As Kim points out, 'Women's social roles in some parts of Asia have undergone a transformation from the traditional image of the "good wife and wise mother" to the career women working and playing for pleasure.'⁵¹² The film thus points to changing expectations of modern women with newly acquired financial independence and physical freedom. It suggests that the traditional role of housewife is outdated in contemporary society.

The film presents the contrast between the two women to the audience. Mrs. Chen is a conservative woman who cannot tolerate obscene language. An early scene in the film depicts Mrs. Chen and her partner from dancing class look at a man practicing Kung Fu; the partner tells her that the man has a very special sexual organ. A close-up presents Mrs. Chen's facial expression; she feels harassed by her partner's obscene speech and stares at him angrily. This example demonstrates the conservative nature of Mrs. Chen as a woman, which is in contrast to Mrs. Qin who is presented as a liberated woman in the film. The liberty of Mrs. Qin can be seen from her outfits. She is depicted as an attractive woman who likes to wear fitted dresses that reveal her

⁵¹² Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 18.

figure. In contrast to Mrs. Qin, Mrs. Chen dresses plainly with a loose top, cardigan and trousers. Mrs. Qin's taste in art also demonstrates her liberty; for instance there are two paintings of naked women in her house. As for Mrs. Chen, she places many family photos in her house, which demonstrates her love for her family. For Mrs. Chen her husband and family are the centre of her life.

Another important scene in the film depicts a discussion on marriage through a conversation between Mrs. Chen and Long-Long, and her daughter's boyfriend, Chang-Gang (Jordan Chen). A mid-shot presents Mrs. Chen and the two men standing by a road on a mountain. They do not know each other very well, however they start talking with each other about marriage. Chang-Gang says to Mrs. Chen that he thinks there is no true love, only sexual desire between Mr. Chen and the woman. Mrs. Chen criticises her husband as a shameful old man who still has the desire to do 'that' in his sixties. Long-Long intentionally asks Mrs. Chen what 'that' means. Mrs. Chen is too embarrassed to answer the question and asks Chang-Gang to explain for her. Long-Long points out this problem to Mrs. Chen, which is her conservatism. Long-Long says to her that to have physical desire is normal so she should not feel ashamed to say the word 'sexual desire'. Long-Long asks Mrs. Chen if she ever asked her husband to have sex with her. A close-up depicts Mrs. Chen turning around; she remains silent for a while then turns back and tells the young men her opinion on marriage. Mrs. Chen says: 'I think sex is not the most important thing between couples. The most important thing is that men should be responsible and provide security for the family.'

Chang-Gang then asks Mrs. Chen what security means for women. He tells her that he feels insecure as a man because her daughter always changes her mind about marriage. Mrs. Chen asks him if he has provided security for her daughter. Chang-Gang then defends himself: 'Of course. I have. I am an insurance seller. I am a

good example of security.’ Mrs. Chen laughs when she hears his answer. She tells the young men that she enjoys talking with them. She does not have the same feeling when she talks with her children. Long-Long advises Mrs. Chen that she should treat her children as friends and her husband as a lover so that her life will be more delightful. It is interesting to note that the film presents the contrast between Mr. Chen having an intimate relationship with Mrs. Qin whilst Mrs. Chen is having this conversation about marriage and physical desire with the young men. Mrs. Chen says that sex is unimportant, however her statement contrasts with an intimate scene depicting her husband with Mrs. Qin. The conversation with the young men points out the problems with Mrs. Chen’s marriage. She is too conservative because she does not even have the courage to say the phrase ‘sexual desire’. In spite of the fact that she has devoted her time to being an obedient wife and a caring mother, she has lost herself as a woman. Mrs. Chen does not know what else she can do except for caring her family.

The encounter with Long-Long is a turning point for the film’s female protagonist. Mrs. Chen embarks on a journey of self-realisation and self-awareness after she moves out and starts working as an insurance seller. A later scene in the film portrays Mrs. Chen’s transformation from housewife to career woman. Mrs. Chen goes to the bank where her daughter works to sell insurance to the managers. She looks confident in a black suit with make-up and heels. A mid-shot depicts Mrs. Chen confidently introducing different types of insurances to the managers. Three of the managers look at Mrs. Chen with respect. Mrs. Chen looks confident in her current position as a career woman. Her physical transformation is presented to the audience. She starts wearing dresses or suits for work, which contrasts with the plain outfits she wore previously. The separation with her husband and beginning work enable Mrs. Chen to find herself. She had thought that her role as a woman was to be an obedient housewife and a caring mother. Her husband and family were the whole of her life.

With financial independence, however, Mrs. Chen becomes more confident. She realises that she can have a different life and be a successful career woman. As Kim points out, 'As more women enter the workforce, they are increasingly making choices of independence from unfaithful or uncaring husbands.'⁵¹³ With financial independence, Mrs. Chen does not need to depend on her unfaithful husband because she is capable of having a prosperous life without him. Mrs. Chen's transformation into a career woman suggests an engagement with contemporary feminist and gender discourses on marriage choice and employment.

The affair between Mr. Chen and Mrs. Qin does not last long. Mrs. Qin does not like Mr. Chen anymore so he decides to move back home. Mr. Chen regrets his betrayal of his wife, however it is too late for him to change the situation. Mr. Chen is surprised to hear that his wife has moved out to live with Long-Long since he left. Xiao-Qui encourages her father to win her mother back. Mr. Chen and his daughter go to the gigolo's house to see his wife. Mrs. Chen and Long-Long are getting dressed up to go to the nightclub when Mr. Chen and Xiao-Qui come to see them. Mr. Chen and Xiao-Qui look at Mrs. Chen and Long-Long from the car, and they are surprised to see the way Mrs. Chen has changed in mini-skirt and high heels. Mr. Chen deeply regrets his foolish mistake of leaving his wife but he does not know how to win her back.

An incident occurs near the end of the film when Mr. Chen has a heart attack whilst swimming. Mrs. Chen goes to see her husband and saves him when he is in danger. Mr. Chen cannot express his gratitude toward his wife. A scene in the hospital depicts the reunion of the couple; the husband lies on the bed while his wife is peeling an apple for him. Mr. Chen apologises to Mrs. Chen and expresses his gratitude to her: 'It's you who saved me at last. I cannot thank you enough.' Mrs. Chen remains silent

⁵¹³ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 7.

and refuses to look at her husband. She leaves the room for a walk. She talks to herself: 'No. I cannot forgive him so easily. Definitely not forgive him so easily.' Long-Long comes to see her at the hospital. Mrs. Chen decides to punish her unfaithful husband therefore she introduces Long-Long to Mr. Chen as her godson. She says to her husband: 'He is the one who took me in when nobody cared for me. He is my godson now.' Mr. Chen is speechless when he sees the young man. Mrs. Chen is delighted to see his surprised expression. Mrs. Chen then says to Long-Long: 'This is the husband who abandoned me at that time.' In spite of the fact that Mr. Chen is astonished to learn that Long-Long has become his godson, he accepts the arrangement.

The end of the film presents the reunion of the couple. Mrs. Chen moves back to the house as well but she also continues her career as an insurance seller. The ending is similar to the opening; Mrs. Chen prepares dinner for the family whilst she talks on the phone with a client. She looks confident and content as a career woman. The scene of her cooking and talking on the phone at the same time signifies her ability to manage both her career and family well. Mr. Chen sits on the sofa watching television whilst his wife is cooking. The image of the female protagonist as a hardworking career woman contrasts with the idling retired husband. The woman is still the one who does household chores and cooks for the family. As Kim argues, 'Surely women in contemporary Asia still take much more responsibility for the unpaid work of family care than men, not necessarily being released from gender fates or moving towards more equal, flexible and democratic relationships between women and men and within families.'⁵¹⁴ The ending points out the problem of gender stereotypes in society. Women still have full responsibility for childcare and household chores. Mr. Chen does not share the household chores with Mrs. Chen. He just sits on the sofa and watches television while his wife is busy cooking. As mentioned earlier, Hsiu-Lien Lu suggests

⁵¹⁴ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 11.

that both husband and wife should share household chores in order to enact gender equality in domestic as well as working life.⁵¹⁵ While the film may not overtly develop this argument, it certainly presents the unequal gender expectations with respect to domestic work.

The film portrays Mrs. Chen as career woman who is able to manage work and family well at the end of the film. Her well-managed ability as a career woman contrasts with the inability of her husband to offer financial support for the family as a retired man. Kim stresses: 'working women are burdened as a professional family coordinator, which requires a great deal of strategic life-planning and skilful juggling to gain some control over their otherwise risky lives.'⁵¹⁶ The end of the film is similar to the beginning, however the head of the family has changed from the husband to the wife. Mr. Chen is retired and Mrs. Chen is just beginning her career. The beginning of the film presents the husband as the breadwinner of the family while, on the contrary, the end of the film presents the wife as the head of the family. Mr. Chen looks at an advertisement for anti-ageing product on the television which portrays the back of a young woman in swimming suit. A man's voice-over says: 'Find the youth that we once had.' A close-up of Mr. Chen depicts his interesting facial expression; first he smiles when he sees the woman in the swimming suit, then he sighs when he hears the advertisement's slogan. Mr. Chen knows that it is impossible for him to be youthful again and his fantasy of dating the younger woman is unrealistic.

The final scene of the film depicts the couple doing exercise in the park. Similar to the opening, Mr. Chen and Mrs. Chen look at the man practicing Kung Fu. Mrs. Chen tells her husband that the man has a very special sexual organ. Mr. Chen is astonished to hear her speech. The final scene depicts the astonishment of the husband

⁵¹⁵ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 192.

⁵¹⁶ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 11.

who looks at his wife talking on the phone with a smile and walking away from him. Mrs. Chen has transformed from a middle-aged housewife without financial independence to a successful career woman with complete self-confidence. She used to think that her husband and family were the centre of her life but she has now found the value of herself as a woman. She used to sacrifice her time caring for the family but she has learned how to love and care for herself more. The ending presents Mrs. Chen dressed professionally at the park. She talks on her mobile phone with a client in the early morning, which represents her status as a successful career woman. Her representation as a career woman is in contrast to the retirement of her husband which signifies the empowerment of women in the end of the film. Mrs. Chen has become more liberated. She felt harassed when she heard the obscene speech at the beginning of the film, but she has become the person who says the same speech to her husband by the end of the film. The empowerment of women is presented through the female protagonist and other female characters in the film. The representation of the female protagonist has been transformed from that of a conservative housewife into a liberated, modern career woman who is independent and confident.

4.3. *Siao Yu* (1995)

The female protagonist of *Siao Yu*, Siao-Yu Lin (Rene Liu), is a twenty-four-year-old woman who moves from mainland China to the United States for the sake of her boyfriend, Giang-Wei (Chung-Hua Tou). Siao-Yu does not have American citizenship therefore she has to hide from immigration officers when she works at a sweatshop. The main reason Siao-Yu comes to the United States is because of Giang-Wei's mother. She does not want her son to marry an American, therefore she asks Siao-Yu to accompany Giang-Wei to the country. Giang-Wei has a difficult life as an international

student in the United States. He works at a fish market in order to pay his tuition fees and rent. In spite of the fact that he has a difficult life in the United States, he wants to stay in the country to fulfil his American dream. In order to attain a Green Card, he arranges a fake marriage for Siao-Yu with an Italian American old man, Mario (Daniel J. Travanti), an author. The film is about the life of Siao-Yu, who struggles to attain American citizenship, and her journey of self-searching. In order to avoid the suspicions of the immigration authorities, Siao-Yu moves into Mario's house. The film presents Mario as a father figure to its female protagonist. He educates Siao-Yu about life through his personal experience and his book *For Flying Shame*, which Siao-Yu enjoys reading.

The film depicts a journey of self-searching for its female protagonist. The beginning of the film presents Siao-Yu as an obedient woman who listens to her boyfriend. She accepts the arrangement made by her boyfriend for her to marry to Mario, who is old enough to be her father, in order to gain American citizenship. Mario does not like Siao-Yu when she first moves into his apartment. Nevertheless, their friendship gradually develops throughout the film. Siao-Yu is a polite woman who always says 'thank you' and 'please'. She cleans the house, cooks and does the laundry for Mario. Her life with Mario is a turning point for the film's female protagonist; she becomes more independent. Her separation with Giang-Wei enables Siao-Yu to think for herself and her reason for staying in the country. There are several significant scenes in the film which portray Siao-Yu's struggle as an immigrant in the United States and her journey of self-searching. Her role as an immigrant suggests the theme of mobility, which this chapter will explore later.

The opening scene presents an image of New York City, then the scene moves to the sweatshop where Siao-Yu works. A long-shot depicts both men and women working at the sweatshop. A close-up presents the image of a piece of red cloth that

Siao-Yu is sewing, then the camera moves slowly from the red cloth to her red skirt then to her face. Another close-up depicts Siao-Yu concentrating on sewing the garment in the sweatshop. The alarm rings, and the supervisor says to Siao-Yu: 'Immigration'. Siao-Yu quickly runs upstairs to the roof of the building. The immigration officers hear the noise and follow Siao-Yu to the roof. Siao-Yu hides around the corner. The scene depicts Siao-Yu standing in the corner of two walls (see figure 9). She wears a white blouse with a red skirt; her red skirt mirrors the red walls which extend the visual image of the scene. The scene is significant in the film as it signifies her struggle as an illegal immigrant in the United States. The scene also foreshadows Siao-Yu's struggle, and her relationships with Giang-Wei and Mario. The two walls represent her choices between two nations, the United States and mainland China, and two men, Giang-Wei and Mario.



Figure 9: Siao-Yu hides from the immigration officers on the roof.

Siao-Yu is an example of women's representation in terms of immigration and mobility. Kim points out the transnational mobility of women in Asian countries such as Japan, Korea and mainland China since the 1980s: 'From the mid-1980s onwards

there has been a rising trend in women leaving their country to experience life overseas either as tourists or as students, which has eventually surpassed the number of men engaging in foreign travel.⁵¹⁷ Women in Asian countries migrate to Western countries such as the United States in order to pursue a better and more liberated life. Kim acknowledges: 'Today women are significant and active participants in the increased scale, diversity and transition in the nature of international migration.'⁵¹⁸ Women choose to study abroad in order to gain wider experience or a higher degree which might help them to find better employment. Kim states that studying abroad has become a common career move for Asian women in their twenties.⁵¹⁹ Kim further states: 'This new generation of women, who depart from the usual track of marriage, are markers of contemporary transnational mobility, constituting a new kind of diaspora – a "knowledge diaspora".'⁵²⁰

An early scene in *Siao Yu* depicts Siao-Yu and Giang-Wei in their bedroom. Giang-Wei has just finished his work at the fish market. Siao-Yu sits by the window and looks outside at the street. Siao-Yu wants to go out for a walk but Giang-Wei is exhausted. He tells her that it will cost twenty-five thousand dollars to arrange a fake marriage. Siao-Yu says to him: 'Don't be ridiculous. That is too expensive. I would rather go back to China.' Giang-Wei replies: 'Great. Go back. You'll never see me again. You know. A Green Card will take care both of us.' Giang-Wei finds a man who can arrange the fake marriage at a lower price for him. The man introduces Mario who owes a great amount of money because of gambling. He agrees to pay Mario ten thousand dollars for the fake marriage. Giang-Wei makes the arrangement without informing Siao-Yu. When Mario asks Giang-Wei if Siao-Yu knows about him,

⁵¹⁷ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 31.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

Giang-Wei replies: 'She has no choice.' Giang-Wei does not respect Siao-Yu; his decision to arrange the fake marriage in order to get a Green Card is for his own benefit. He plans to let Siao-Yu gain the citizenship first, then he will marry her to stay in the United States.

As he plans, Siao-Yu marries Mario in the city hall. The film presents Giang-Wei as a man with strong desire for control over Siao-Yu; he represents patriarchy in the film. For instance, an early scene depicts Giang-Wei and Siao-Yu having sex on her wedding night. Giang-Wei says to her: 'You are mine.' Giang-Wei makes decisions for Siao-Yu and commands her to accept his arrangements without respect. Giang-Wei considers Siao-Yu to be his property therefore he thinks he has the right to control her life. Siao-Yu is presented as an obedient woman who obeys patriarchy without complaint or doubt. Nevertheless, the film presents a process of increasing self-awareness and self-realisation in Siao-Yu with the help of Mario. Mario represents a father figure who assists Siao-Yu in finding herself.

Although the original reason for Siao-Yu to go to the United States was for her boyfriend rather than for education, suggesting a rather different perspective on transnational mobility, she can nonetheless be read as an example of an immigrant woman who goes abroad to pursue a better life. One scene in the film depicts Siao-Yu explaining to Mario her reasons for coming to the United States. Siao-Yu cooks Chinese food for Mario. They talk about Chinese food culture when they have meals together. Mario is impressed that Siao-Yu can speak English fluently. He asks her: 'Why are you here? Why are you going through all this rigmarole?' Siao-Yu replies: 'For Giang-Wei.' Mario is astonished that Siao-Yu is going through so many obstacles to come to the United States only for her boyfriend. Siao-Yu tells Mario that she grew up in an orphanage managed by Giang-Wei's mother. The following scenario depicts how Mario educates Siao-Yu about the importance of self-value. Mario asks Siao-Yu

what her wages are when she pays him the rent. Siao-Yu tells Mario that her wages depend on how many garments she sews in a day. She tells him that she earns less than ten cents for sewing one garment because she does not have a Green Card. Mario cannot believe how little the sweatshop pays her. He suggests Siao-Yu joins the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union in order to receive a higher payment. Mario encourages Siao-Yu to organise a union for Chinese women. Siao-Yu says: 'Right. And then send back to China.' Mario replies: 'You will become an American citizen soon.' A close-up focuses on Siao-Yu's facial expression as she smiles gently.

This conversation between Mario and Siao-Yu is important in the film. It indicates Siao-Yu's obedience as a woman. She obeys the decision of Giang-Wei's mother to go abroad. She obeys Giang-Wei's arrangement for her to marry to Mario in order to attain American citizenship. She does not defend for her rights even though she receives low payment for her hard work at the sweatshop. Mario, as a father figure, educates Siao-Yu about the importance of self-value. Siao-Yu never thinks about the reasons why she is staying in the country. She accepts the arrangements made by her boyfriend rather than making decisions of her own. Nevertheless, Mario's advice enables Siao-Yu to think about the purpose of her stay in the United States. He encourages her to find her value and fight for her rights as a woman.

Her life with Mario enables Siao-Yu to undergo a journey into self-awareness. She does not need to give her salary to Giang-Wei; she can go to the places she wants to visit at leisure. Siao-Yu has financial independence and physical freedom. The beginning of the film presents her in the domestic sphere or at the sweatshop. Her physical freedom is confined within the domestic sphere because of her boyfriend. Siao-Yu has more opportunity to enjoy walking around New York after she moves out of Giang-Wei's apartment. A scene in the middle of the film presents Siao-Yu walking around the city. She wants to see a Broadway show but she does not have spare money

to spend. The scene depicts Siao-Yu walking down Broadway in mid-shot. The camera shoots from Siao-Yu's point of view as she looks at the buildings on Broadway. A low-angle shot then portrays Siao-Yu lifting up her head and looking around at the buildings and the night sky. She enjoys the freedom to walk around in the city and smiles joyfully. The scene ends with a mid-shot of Siao-Yu's back as she walks alone in the street. The scene signifies her physical freedom and liberation as a woman outside the confinement of patriarchy. She does not need to stay at home to wait for Giang-Wei or to cook for him after he comes back from work. She is no longer confined within the domestic space because of Giang-Wei.

Siao-Yu encounters various obstacles to staying in the United States, for instance having to hide from the immigration officers, having to accept the fake marriage arrangement and live with Mario, and having to endure her controlling boyfriend. Siao-Yu finds out that Giang-Wei is unfaithful to her. She is uncertain of her purpose to get a Green Card anymore. Siao-Yu says to Mario: 'I don't want to go to the interview. I think Giang-Wei is cheating on me. I don't know why I'm getting the Green Card.' Mario says to her: 'Fine. We won't go to the interview if you don't want to go.' Siao-Yu furiously replies: 'Mario, you are not helping me.' Mario then tells her: 'I respect your decision, not Giang-Wei's. Maybe it is time for you to respect yourself as well. It is your life.' Siao-Yu eventually goes to the interview with Mario. The scene then presents Mario congratulating Siao-Yu on her new status as an American citizen. The attainment of American citizenship signifies her new status as an immigrant and her new life. With American citizenship she is able to find a better job with higher wages. Giang-Wei is delighted to know that Siao-Yu has finally become an American citizen. He asks Siao-Yu to move back to live with him the next day. In spite of the fact that she knows her boyfriend has been unfaithful to her, she tries to forgive him.

A significant scene in the film presents Siao-Yu's process of self-analysis. It

portrays Siao-Yu working at the sweatshop. The supervisor plays the radio whilst the women are working. A long-shot presents Siao-Yu and other women sewing the garments in the sweatshop. A close-up then depicts Siao-Yu concentrating on her work quietly. The background music plays: 'It's just that I have never been really looking.' The camera shoots from the point of view of Siao-Yu as she looks at another working woman and her children. The woman starts singing the song from the radio whilst she is working. She sings: 'Looking at this thing called emotion. I never regret coming here.' A close-up focuses on Siao-Yu as she looks at the mother and children with a smile. The children sleep soundly without being disturbed by the noise around them. The woman continues singing: 'And give you all my heart and affection. Can anything be made perfectly clear? You really know what is true and dear?' Siao-Yu looks at the woman who continues: 'You may not be the only love of my life. Though I once needed your support and all. I know your love for me is true.' Other women at the sweatshop also look at the woman who is singing. All of the women at the sweatshop remain silent, except for the woman who is singing. The woman sings: 'I won't. I didn't and I can't forget. I hope you won't hold me tightly in your hand. I long to breath freely in this land. The sky over here is so beautiful, open and wide. So just let me make my own decisions and choices.' A close-up depicts Siao-Yu, who looks deep in thought. She remains silent and continues her work. The song signifies Siao-Yu's inner emotions. The lyrics speaks for her and what she would like to say to her boyfriend.⁵²¹ The film points out the repression of women within patriarchy through the song. The song challenges Siao-Yu's position without locating her in direct conflict with the patriarchal structure that represses her. The song foreshadows the decision of Siao-Yu to leave her boyfriend in the end of the film. The film uses the song to advocate that women find their self-identities and be independent.

⁵²¹ This is my interpretation of the song which signifies Siao-Yu's inner emotions in the film.

Siao-Yu knows her boyfriend has been unfaithful to her therefore she is uncertain whether she would like to continue the relationship. The original reason for her coming to the United States was for Giang-Wei but now she wants to make her own decisions. Siao-Yu comes to the country for her boyfriend without regret. She believes that Giang-Wei does love her but she hopes he can give her the freedom to choose. As the lyrics of the song says, 'I hope you won't hold me tightly in your hand. I long to breath freely in this land. The sky over here is so beautiful, open and wide. So just let me make my own decisions and choices.' The song mirrors the scene mentioned earlier which depicts Siao-Yu joyfully walking around on Broadway. Siao-Yu enjoys living in the city which is full of excitement. She longs to enjoy the freedom of walking around the city which she does not have when she lives with her boyfriend. According to Kim, 'The notion of the self that is "free to choose" is not simply a cultural fact, but becomes an autonomous self when a woman is able to make a life for herself in her everyday existence – to make herself the centre of her biography.'⁵²² In spite of the fact that Siao-Yu remains silent in this scene, the song signifies her voice. The song speaks for her and her longing to have the freedom and right to choose.

The ending of the film depicts Siao-Yu becoming an American citizen. She goes back to Mario's apartment to pack her personal belongings. Giang-Wei tells Siao-Yu that he will come to pick her up the next day. Mario is unwell; he lies on the sofa unable to move. Siao-Yu is concerned about Mario though he says he will be fine. In the morning, Siao-Yu goes to say goodbye to Mario in his bedroom. She asks him if there is anything that she can do for him. Mario says he would like to have a cup of coffee and a newspaper. Siao-Yu goes to get the newspaper and make a cup of coffee for him straight away. Giang-Wei calls Siao-Yu to inform her that he will arrive shortly.

⁵²² Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 49.

Siao-Yu tells Giang-Wei that Mario is unwell therefore she wants to stay for two more days to take care of him. Giang-Wei is furious; he tells her that she can stay there as long as she wants but he will only wait for five minutes. Siao-Yu says to him: ‘Giang-Wei. Don’t force me.’ Siao-Yu feels disappointed in her boyfriend. She hangs up the phone and goes to see Mario. Unfortunately, Mario has passed away. He lies on the bed peacefully. Siao-Yu is astonished. She sits in the bedroom quietly. Giang-Wei comes to pick her up, he waits for few minutes downstairs then he drives the car away. Siao-Yu cannot believe how cruel he is. She has made sacrifices for him but he is ungrateful to her. The ending presents Siao-Yu staying in the bedroom with Mario; she closes the curtain then looks at Mario who peacefully lies on the bed. A mid-shot presents Siao-Yu lifting up her head and looking at the wall (see figure 10). Giang-Wei has left and Mario has passed away in the end of the film.



Figure 10: Siao-Yu stands beside Mario who passes away peacefully.

The ending depicts Siao-Yu refusing to obey Giang-Wei when he asks her to go with him. She has learned her value and her ability to be an independent woman. She does not want to be controlled by her boyfriend anymore. Mario is the one who

educates Siao-Yu to find her value and fight for herself. As Mario says in the film, 'She is a fighter. She fights in her own way.' Siao-Yu has learned to make decisions on her own. She does not need to depend on her boyfriend therefore she refuses to be controlled by him anymore. Her refusal to obey Giang-Wei in the end signifies her self-awareness and self-realisation as a woman. Her status as an American citizen bestows her with a new life. Her new status signifies her right to stay in the country and the equality she deserves as an American citizen. She deserves to have higher wages and equality as a human being. This new status bestows her with confidence and the power to defy her boyfriend who represents patriarchy. In spite of the fact that Siao-Yu finds her value as a woman with the help of Mario, who represents the father figure in the film, she has transformed from an obedient woman into an independent woman. The final scene of the film presents Siao-Yu standing beside Mario who lies on the bed peacefully. The departure of Giang-Wei signifies the fall of patriarchy; the standing position of Siao-Yu signifies the rise of feminism. In spite of the fact that the ending does not provide further details about Siao-Yu's new life, it opens various possibilities for the female protagonist who has become an American citizen.

4.4. *20, 30, 40* (2004)

20, 30, 40 is the story of three independent women of different ages, nationalities and backgrounds. Xiao-Jie (Angelica Lee) is in her early twenties; she goes to Taiwan from Malaysia in order to pursue her dream of being a singer. Xiang-Xiang (Rene Liu) is a flight attendant at the age of thirty. She does not have faith in love and marriage because of her mother. She struggles in a relationship with two men, one is young and the other one is married. Lily (Sylvia Chang) is at the age of forty and owns a florist shop. She is divorced because her husband was unfaithful. The three women do not

know each other but they encounter each other in their lives. Their stories run in parallel and occasionally overlap in the film. For instance, they sit next to each other at a restaurant or they walk past each other in the street. The opening scene presents the arrival of the three women at Taoyuan Airport in Taiwan. Xiao-Jie is one of the passengers of the airline for whom Xiang-Xiang works as a flight attendant. They are on the same plane though they do not know each other. Lily is coming back from a holiday with her husband and daughter. The three of them arrive at the airport at the same time. A mid-shot first presents Xiao-Jie, who looks excited about her new life in Taiwan. The scene then moves to Lily who holds a digital camera, filming her beloved family. Then the scene presents Xiang-Xiang walking with the other cabin crew. The three of them walk past each other at the airport, not knowing that their lives are closely connected. The three female protagonists live close to each other; Xiao-Jie stays at a hotel close to Lily's florist shop, while Xiang-Xiang moves to the neighbourhood of Lily's florist shop in the middle of the film. The film presents the struggles of the three women who encounter various difficulties in their lives. It depicts their journey to find themselves as women, and their pursuit of dreams and happiness. Xiao-Jie has a dream to become a popular singer but she struggles to achieve her dream. Xiang-Xiang wants to settle down but she struggles in her relationships with two men. Lily finds out her husband has had an affair with another woman. She divorces her unfaithful husband and starts a new life as a single woman. She wants to find a partner but struggles to find a suitable man in her forties.

There are several significant scenes in the film that depict the three women's struggles and journey of self-analysis. An early scene depicts an earthquake in Taiwan. The scene presents Xiang-Xiang arriving in her apartment, and talking on the phone with her ex-boyfriend, then the earthquake happens. A mid-shot depicts Xiang-Xiang hiding under her desk in horror. The earthquake stops and she starts cleaning the mess

in the living room. She watches the latest news about the earthquake whilst she cleans the apartment. The camera portrays the point of view of Xiang-Xiang who watches a reporter interviewing Xiao-Jie and her friend on the street after the earthquake. The scene moves to the arrival of Xiao-Jie at a music studio in Taipei. She stays in the hotel with her singer partner, Tong (Kate Yeung), who comes from Hong Kong. Xiao-Jie is talking with Tong when the earthquake happens. Both of the girls are frightened because there are no earthquakes in their countries. A mid-shot presents them hugging each other tightly and hiding in the bathroom. The earthquake stops and they go out to see what has happened on the street. The news reporter interviews people on the street about the earthquake. The scene parallels the scene that depicts Xiang-Xiang watching the news reporter interviewing Xiao-Jie and her friend after the earthquake.

The earthquake at the beginning of the film dramatically foreshadows the obstacles encountered by the three women. Xiao-Jie encounters difficulties in the pursuit of her dream of being a singer. She comes to Taiwan to have training to become a singer but she does not have much opportunity to perform. The producer promises Xiao-Jie and Tong that he will make them famous but he does not keep his promise. Xiang-Xiang struggles in her relationships with two men. It is revealed that her parents were divorced when she was little and that her mother has repeatedly warned against reliance on men. She wants to settle down but she questions the possibility of finding the right man. Lily encounters problems in her marriage because she finds out her husband has been unfaithful to her. He has an affair with a young woman who gives birth to his son. Lily feels astonished and disappointed in the husband to whom she has been married for over twenty years. For this reason she decides to divorce her unfaithful husband. The earthquake signifies the instability of their minds and lives. The three female protagonists are uncertain of their lives. The film portrays their struggles and their journey to find themselves.

The representation of Xiang-Xiang as a flight attendant having complex relationships indicates her liberated sexuality. As Diane Negra remarks, ‘Flight attendant chic seemed to give rise simultaneously to two contrastive images; one is of the virtuous and straightforward “good girl” and the other of the sexually-knowing postfeminist “working girl.”’⁵²³ An early scene in the film depicts Xiang-Xiang taking a bath. She has had an argument with her young boyfriend who broke her car window. They had sex after the argument. A high-angle shot presents Xiang-Xiang taking a bath, and looking at the ceiling in deep thought. She starts thinking about the past then she sinks into the water. The scene presents her memories of the married man. Xiang-Xiang breaks the married man’s car window then furiously shouts his name in the street. The married man comes downstairs to meet her then they kiss each other passionately in the car. Xiang-Xiang comes out from the water then looks at her young boyfriend who lies on the bed sleeping. The scene presents the struggles of Xiang-Xiang in relationships. She does not know if she really loves these men or how to manage her relationships with them. Xiang-Xiang feels exhausted and wants to end the relationships. The middle part of the film depicts Xiang-Xiang breaking up with these two men. She moves to a new apartment and changes her phone number in order to have a new start.

The film presents the lives of the three women in a parallel way. It first depicts the struggles of Xiang-Xiang in her relationships with the two men, then it depicts Lily’s marriage problems. An early scene portrays Lily cleaning up the mess in her florist after the earthquake. Her staff cannot come to work due to the earthquake. Lily delivers the flowers to her clients by herself. She delivers the flowers to a family for their one-year anniversary. A close-up depicts her astonishment when she sees the

⁵²³ Diane Negra, *What a Girl Wants? Fantasizing the Reclamation of Self in Postfeminism* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 113.

family photos on the wall. The man in the photo is her husband who she has been married to for over twenty years. Lily is even more astonished when she sees a little boy riding a bike towards her in the apartment. She runs away from the apartment immediately. She cannot believe her husband has had an affair. A close-up depicts Lily crying in the car on her way back to the florist. Lily decides to divorce her unfaithful husband in order to start a new life. As mentioned earlier, Kim states that women with economic independence are increasingly making choices of independence from unfaithful or uncaring husbands.⁵²⁴ A later scene depicts Lily's depression after the divorce. She moves out her husband's apartment. Lily tries to control her emotions in front of him, however she loses her self-control the moment she enters the elevator. The scene presents her image on the CCTV camera, first smiling joyfully, then she starts crying hysterically. Lily does not show her sorrow in front of her friends, however; the film presents her depression to the audience when she is alone.

A significant scene in the film presents her struggle after the divorce and her search for a new life as a single woman. The scene depicts Lily standing in front of the mirror in the bathroom. She looks at herself in the mirror thinking about what her friends have said to her and how to explain to her daughter about the divorce. The camera shoots from Lily's back as she looks at herself in the mirror (see figure 11). There are three mirrors on the wall and one small mirror on the left of the female protagonist. The scene presents the mind of Lily to the audience. The image of Lily's daughter appears in the small mirror. She asks Lily: 'Mommy, why do you want to divorce?' Lily replies: 'You'll understand when you get older.' The voices of her friends are in her mind talking to her. Her friend's image appears in the left mirror. She says to Lily: 'Men can't be relied upon. We can get by just fine without them.' Another image of her friend appears in the right mirror. She asks Lily: 'Do you have any

⁵²⁴ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 7.

savings? Don't forget about alimony.' The camera shoots from behind Lily, presenting her reflection in the mirrors to the audience. In the voice-over her friends say to her: 'It's hard to find someone at forty. Even when you do, you don't want them.' Lily replies: 'Why not? If he's good then why not?' The scene is significant in the film, as it reflects Lily's inner self in an interesting way by, presenting her thoughts in the mirrors to the audience. The scene reflects her thoughts in the mirrors rather than presenting the memories to the audience in flashback. This significant scene depicts Lily's struggle as a divorced woman trying to find a partner at the age of forty.



Figure 11: Lily stands in front of the mirror thinking about her life after divorce.

Xiao-Jie encounters difficulties in her pursuit of becoming a singer. She stays in Taiwan for about a month but does not have the opportunity to record music. Her producer says they can start recording once he finishes the songs. An early scene depicts Xiao-Jie and her singing-partner, Tong, staying in the hotel. The scene portrays Tong taking a bath with the door open while Xiao-Jie lies on the bed. Xiao-Jie records her life in Taipei in a tape recorder; she says to herself: 'I am really happy here. It's been a month since I came here. I met a girl who is ugly and talkative.' Tong hears her

speech in the bathroom and asks her what she said. Xiao-Jie continues: 'We haven't had the opportunity to record our music yet but it's fine. I can wait.' The scene implies Xiao-Jie's struggle to achieve her dream. The producer does not keep his promise to make Xiao-Jie and Tong into popular singers. A scene near the end of the film further demonstrates Xiao-Jie's struggles. Xiao-Jie does not have enough money to stay in Taiwan. She goes to see the producer who confesses to her that he is unable to make her dream come true. He has tried to find a recording company to support his music but they criticise his music, telling him that it is terrible. He decides to close the music studio because he is unable to pay the rent. The producer gives some money to Xiao-Jie and asks her to leave. Xiao-Jie says to him: 'I didn't even have an opportunity to enter the recording studio and you want me to leave.' The producer lets her enter the recording studio. A mid-shot presents Xiao-Jie singing in the recording studio. There is no background music and we cannot hear the voice of the female protagonist. The quietness of the scene signifies the failure of Xiao-Jie's dream. In spite of the fact that she is very fond of singing, she is unable to achieve her dream of becoming a singer. The quietness of the scene also represents her repressed emotion. Xiao-Jie conceals her sorrow without telling her family or friends about her difficulties in Taiwan.

Lily starts searching for her new life as a single woman. She goes to a night club with her female friends and enjoys dancing with men at the club. Lily starts dating a young and energetic tennis coach who enjoys outdoor activities. However their relationship does not last long because Lily prefers a peaceful and simple life at the age of forty. She volunteers to care for a comatose woman at a care home. There are several scenes depicting Lily caring for the woman at the care home. She reads the newspaper to her and talks with her as if they are friends. A scene in the middle part of the film depicts Lily reading the newspaper to the woman. She has just ended the relationship with the young tennis coach. She is concerned that she will never find the

right partner and will live alone for the rest of her life. A mid-shot depicts Lily reading the newspaper; she realises that most of the news is about lonely old people. Lily asks: 'Why is the news today all about lonely old people?' Her question reflects her insecurity as a single woman at the age of forty who may live alone for the rest of her life.

Another scene in the film presents the loneliness of Lily as a single woman. A mid-shot depicts Lily having lunch alone at a restaurant. She receives a call from her daughter who is studying abroad. A close-up portrays her excitement when she hears her beloved daughter's voice. She lies to her daughter, telling her that she is having lunch with some new friends and that she is having an enjoyable time. She says: 'I've been busy playing tennis and dancing and hiking too!' Her daughter tells her that she will not be able to come home for Christmas because she has plans with friends. A close-up portrays Lily's facial expression change from excitement to disappointment but she tries to conceal her emotions. Lily replies: 'It's fine. Mommy can attend parties here. Maybe I'll go abroad with friends. Sandy, don't forget to call your dad. Mommy misses you. Take care.' Lily hangs up the phone and eats her lunch. She takes a tissue to dry her tears. Even though Lily wears sunglasses, the audience can feel her sorrow. In spite of the fact that Lily pretends that she has an enjoyable life after divorce, the truth is that she feels extremely lonely as a single woman.

Anthea Taylor argues that there is nothing new in the presentation of the single woman as a problematic figure in mainstream media culture: 'At times the single woman appears to be celebrated – within specific temporal limits and for particular commercial purposes – and at others she continues to be pathologized, seen as a lamentable product of the pervasive feminist rhetoric that encouraged women to pursue independence and autonomy at the cost of a husband and, perhaps more importantly, a

nuclear family.⁵²⁵ This thesis argues that the film is an example of post-feminist culture that Taylor criticises via its depiction of Lily as a single woman. A later scene in the film presents Lily's true feelings to the audience. She is caring for the comatose woman at the care home. She says to her: 'Children grow up and leave. Parents age and go away. Men go away, too.' A close-up depicts her sorrow to the audience. Lily feels her speech is too depressing then says: 'It's good that they are gone or I would not have time to take care of you.' Then she smiles gently to the woman. Lily feels lonely as a single woman; she wants to find a partner who shares similar hobbies as her.

Lily encounters her elementary schoolmate, Jerry (Tony Leung), at the gym. They are a similar age and share the same hobby, staying at home at leisure and listening to music. Nevertheless their friendship does not develop further because Jerry already has a girlfriend who is a colleague of Xiang-Xiang. However, the encounter with Jerry gives Lily hope and she cherishes their friendship dearly. The scene depicts them going to the pub to listen to music. They sit next to each other listening to the singer who sings: 'I keep the sadness for myself. And let you bring the beauty with you. I think I can conceal my sorrow. Can you think of me occasionally?' Jerry asks Lily: 'Doesn't the song make you feel sad?' Lily replies: 'I don't have time for sadness. I just try to enjoy my life.'

The film presents the loneliness of the two other female protagonists using the same background music. Xiang-Xiang has just moved to a new apartment; she stands outside the balcony, alone in deep thought. Xiao-Jie sings songs alone at the KTV. The song reflects the sorrow of the three women. Xiao-Jie does not have much opportunity to perform. Xiao-Jie and her singer partner have an argument, and she feels lonely

⁵²⁵ Anthea Taylor, *Single Women in Popular Culture: The Limits of Postfeminism* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 6.

without her friend. Xiang-Xiang ends the relationship with the two men and moves to another apartment to make a new start. The three women encounter obstacles in their lives and they try to move forward. As the lyric says: 'I keep the sadness for myself.' Xiao-Jie does not tell her parents in Malaysia about her struggles in Taiwan. Xiang-Xiang does not reveal her concern about relationships and marriage to her friends. Lily does not tell the truth about her loneliness to her daughter or friends. The three women keep their sorrow in their minds. Nevertheless, the film presents their struggles and sorrow to the audience. They overcome their struggles and move forward to new lives.

The film presents the lives of these three women of different ages, nationalities and backgrounds. It depicts their struggle and their journey of self-analysis. Xiao-Jie comes to Taiwan to pursue her dream to become a singer. In spite of the fact that her dream does not come true, she does not regret coming to Taiwan. Xiao-Jie has tried to pursue her dream and she is certain her friendship with her partner will continue. Xiao-Jie decides to go back to Malaysia because she does not have enough money to stay in Taiwan. She knows her dream will not come true so she decides to go back to find an ordinary job in order to support her family. At the airport, Xiao-Jie says goodbye to Tong. A close-up depicts the girls hugging each other tightly. Her partner gives her the video record of their interview on the news after the earthquake. The two girls look at each other with tears in their eyes. Xiao-Jie kisses Tong, she says goodbye to her then leaves. A close-up presents Xiao-Jie's facial expression as she smiles joyfully. Her partner looks astonished because of the kiss. Xiao-Jie and her singer partner have a very close friendship. In spite of the fact that their friendship seems very intimate at times in the film, Sylvia Chang does not explain their close friendship further.

The film presents Xiang-Xiang's struggle in terms of her relationships with the

two men. She does not have faith in relationships and marriage. She wants to settle down but she is uncertain whether she can find the right man. Xiang-Xiang encounters a widower who has an eight-year-old daughter. He purchases a piano from Xiang-Xiang to send as gift for his daughter. Xiang-Xiang encounters the man several times. He lives around the corner from her new apartment. He even helps her move when she first arrives at the apartment. A scene near the end of film portrays Xiang-Xiang's inner thoughts. She goes to the grave of her mother. A close-up depicts Xiang-Xiang sitting by her mother's grave. She talks to her mother in her mind. The voice-over says: 'Mom, I want to settle down but how? It's easy to find someone who loves me. But where is the right man?' She continues: 'You always said "Men always leave." So whenever I'm in love, I'm always suspicious of the man. Will I ever be lucky enough to find true love? Is love ever that simple?' Xiang-Xiang asks: 'When the right man shows up, how will I know if he's the one? Mom, can you at least give me a sign? Maybe with sound of a bell or angels singing or even a gust of wind.' A gust of wind blows on her face after she finishes her speech. A close-up depicts Xiang-Xiang lifting up her head in surprise. The camera shoots from her point of view as she looks at the widower and his daughter who are also in the graveyard. Xiang-Xiang smiles because she knows that it is a sign from her mother.

The film then depicts Xiang-Xiang's life with the widower and his daughter. A close-up presents Xiang-Xiang teaching the young girl to play the piano. Xiang-Xiang tells the girl that she can play the piano to her loved one when she grows up. The piano is a gift from Xiang-Xiang's mother when she was the same age as the girl. Her mother always told her that she should not depend on men because they will leave her someday. Her mother encouraged Xiang-Xiang to learn piano so she can teach piano as a way to support herself if she is abandoned by a man. For Xiang-Xiang the piano is a source of financial security. She sells the piano to the widower who sends it as a gift

for his daughter. The meaning of the piano has changed from financial security to love. Xiang-Xiang tells the girl that she can play the piano to her loved one when she grows up rather than teaching the piano to support herself if she is abandoned by a man. As Anthea Taylor points out, 'Women are no longer indoctrinated into believing a man will make them happy, they now (apparently) actively *choose* to believe he will, and this is seen as cause for a postfeminist celebration.'⁵²⁶ In spite of the fact that Xiang-Xiang's mother always told her not to depend on men, Xiang-Xiang still believes that the right man will bring her happiness. This thesis argues that the film is an example of the post-feminist culture that Taylor criticises via its characterisation of Xiang-Xiang. The ending portrays the widower placing his hands on Xiang-Xiang's shoulders; she lifts up her head and holds his hand gently with a smile on her face. The scene presents the nurturing part of Xiang-Xiang as a mother figure to the girl. Her caring ability as a flight attendant suggests that she deserves to be rewarded with a romantic relationship.⁵²⁷ The ending presents Xiang-Xiang as having achieved her goal of finding the right man to settle down with.

The third female protagonist, Lily, struggles to find the right partner after her divorce. In spite of the fact that Lily remains single at the end of the film, she has found confidence and is content with her life as a single woman. A scene near the end of the film presents her depression after the divorce and her failure to find the right man. A mid-shot depicts Lily lying on the bed eating ice cream; she watches a Korean soap opera and cries for the death of its female protagonist. Lily's voice-over says to the audience: 'I finally feel pain. Until there is a cure perhaps soap opera and ice cream will do the trick.' The scene portrays her inner emotions to the audience. She feels lonely and pathetic as a single woman at the age of forty. A later scene portrays her

⁵²⁶ Taylor, *Single Women in Popular Culture*, p. 16.

⁵²⁷ See for example Negra, *What a Girl Wants?*, p. 116.

self-searching process to the audience. A close-up first shows Lily's face in the water. She cleans her face then she looks at herself in the mirror in the bathroom. She takes the razor then cleans it in the water. Lily talks to herself: 'I am an abandoned woman. I am an abandoned woman. I am an abandoned woman.' An earthquake occurs. Horrified, Lily holds the razor in her hand; she closes her eyes and keeps on repeating the same line 'I am an abandoned woman'. Lily repeats the same sentence nine times. She opens her eyes then the earthquake stops. A powerful image depicts Lily raising her hands in the air with the razor in her right hand (see figure 12). Her gesture signifies her victory: she has defeated her loneliness and fear as a single woman. She used to consider being a divorced woman to be pathetic and embarrassing but now she just wants to enjoy her life. She stands firmly when the earthquake strikes, overcoming her fear not only of the natural power but also of loneliness. The earthquake stops, Lily looks at herself in the mirrors and says: 'So I am an abandoned woman. Yeah. I am an abandoned woman.' Lily smiles then she shaves her underarms as if nothing has happened.



Figure 12: Lily looks at herself in the mirror with confidence.

This significant scene portrays Lily's self-consciousness. Lily used to feel lonely and pathetic as a divorced woman who was abandoned by her husband. The scene portrays her self-consciousness as she decides to face the reality and accept the truth in order to move forward. She stands firmly when the earthquake strikes which signifies her defeat of loneliness as a single woman. Anthea Taylor acknowledges that 'the single woman has been irrevocably refigured. That is, she is now culturally celebrated where once she was denigrated.'⁵²⁸ The film affirms Taylor's point of view through its presentation of Lily as a confident single woman at the end. In spite of the fact that Lily remains single at the end of the film, she finds confidence in her current status as an independent single woman. The ending presents Lily's confidence as she jogs in the street. She greets her neighbours when she sees them. The image of flowers, puppies and light music indicate that spring has come. The background music plays: 'I want you. I want your love. Why don't you come to me?' A close-up depicts Lily smiling delightfully as she looks at the clear sky and beautiful sunshine. She sees a man who is also jogging and says to him: 'Good morning. Have a nice day!' The man turns around and follows Lily. She keeps on jogging with smile on her face not knowing the man is following her. The ending implies that Lily might have the opportunity to find the right man in the future. The film ends with an image of Lily who looks confident and content with her life as a single woman.

This chapter has provided a discussion of female authorship and films directed by women through an examination of three Sylvia Chang films: *Tonight Nobody Goes Home*, *Siao Yu* and *20, 30, 40*. The chapter has examined the diverse representations of women in relation to the processes of self-discovery and self-realisation. The chapter has concentrated on a discussion of women's self-discovery and growing independence in *Tonight Nobody Goes Home*. Mrs. Chen is presented as a middle-aged housewife

⁵²⁸ Taylor, *Single Women in Popular Culture*, p. 7.

without financial independence who decides to divorce her unfaithful husband. She leaves the house and works as an insurance seller. She undergoes a process of self-discovery and self-realisation. The end of the film presents her transformation into a confident middle-aged woman capable of individual thought and possessing financial independence. This chapter has examined the link between women and immigration in *Siao Yu*. The film provides a discussion of the representation of women with social mobility. Siao-Yu is portrayed as an immigrant from mainland China to the United States. The original reason for her to move to the United States was for her boyfriend but she later finds a motive to live in the country as an independent woman. This chapter has also analysed the diverse representations of women of different nationalities and ages in *20, 30, 40*. The film presents the lives of three different women and their search for the self. Xiao-Jie comes to Taiwan from Malaysia to pursue her dream of becoming a singer. In spite of the fact that her dream has not come true, she has met her best friend in life. The friendship between Xiao-Jie and Tong is sincere and everlasting. Their friendship represents the powerful sisterhood in the film. Xiang-Xiang struggles in her relationships with two men. She wants to settle down but she does not know how. The end of the film depicts Xiang-Xiang achieving her goal having found the right man. Lily encounters difficulties in her marriage. She divorces her unfaithful husband and starts searching for the right partner in her forties. In spite of that fact that she does not find the right partner at the end of the film, she finds confidence as a single woman in her forties.

This chapter has examined the issues of singlehood, marriage and ageing from a female point of view. The three films are significant examples of women's cinema because they are films presented from a female point of view on issues closely related to women. The female protagonists in the films are important representations of women with self-dependence, self-confidence and self-contentment, as Hsiu-Lien Lu

states in her feminist doctrine.⁵²⁹ Sylvia Chang is well-known for her depictions of the lives of women and their struggles in careers, marriages and relationships. Immigration, social mobility and globalisation are other features that can be seen in her films. Her outstanding cinematography can be seen in her films. The images she presents in her films reveal detailed depictions of daily life and the emotion of human beings. As a female director, Sylvia Chang challenges gender roles when making films about men, for instance, *Run, Papa, Run!* (2008). She points out the difficulties for female filmmakers in the male-dominated film industry. She states: 'we've just got to do the best we can.'⁵³⁰ Sylvia Chang writes and directs stories about women from a female point of view. She empowers the female characters in her films through various representations of women, for instance, the modern businesswoman, Mrs. Qin in *Tonight Nobody Goes Home* and the confident divorced businesswoman Lily in *20, 30, 40*. Sylvia Chang has strong passion for filmmaking and she will continue working in the film industry.⁵³¹ Her role as a female filmmaker represents the development of female status in Taiwan. She is not only an actress in front of the camera, but also the editor and director behind the camera. She not only performs in numerous films but also creates films that have been very important in film history. She has opened a new chapter of women's development in the history of Taiwanese film and her influence remains significant in the film industry.

⁵²⁹ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 302.

⁵³⁰ Interview with Sylvia Chang on *Run, Papa, Run!* (2008), 5 April 2008, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvfNIZULffU>> [accessed 4 May 2015].

⁵³¹ Interview with Sylvia Chang on CNN Talk Asia, 27 October 2004, <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/asiapcf/10/27/talkasia.chang.script/index.html?_s=PM:WORLD> [accessed 18 February 2014].

Conclusion

This thesis has provided an examination of gender culture in relation to representations of women in Taiwanese films and television dramas. Marriage, divorce and heterosexual relationships are the essential themes of both the Taiwanese idol dramas and the films which have provided the case studies in this thesis. Women in contemporary Taiwanese society have become more independent financially when compared to women in the 1980s. Educational attainment and financial independence are the two major factors that have enabled Taiwanese women to develop a greater capacity for independence. Marriage, divorce and motherhood have become increasingly framed in culture as a choice rather than a responsibility for contemporary Taiwanese women. For instance, the female characters Cheng-Fong in the film *Kuei-mei, A Woman* and Wu-Shuang in the idol drama *My Queen* are representations of single career women. They are presented as women who choose not to get married. An-Zhen in the idol drama *The Fierce Wife* is depicted as a woman who chooses to divorce because of her husband's unfaithfulness. These film and idol drama case studies suggest that women have the choice to reject patriarchal expectations to get married and reproduce. As these examples indicate, the films and television shows I have explored in this thesis perform their cultural work in different ways, indicating a feminist-informed rejection of patriarchal concepts and traditions while seeking to re-pose romance, marriage and family loyalties as vital for contemporary Taiwanese women.

My concern with social phenomena such as delayed marriage, a higher divorce rate and singlehood are closely related to the representation of women in Taiwanese media. I argue in this thesis that the social change evident in Taiwanese society has in

several ways impacted upon the representation of women in the media. At a basic level, women's economic and cultural position in Taiwan has been reflected in the media, with films and television shows increasingly centred on the figure of the successful working woman; for instance, the representation of a successful career woman in the idol drama *My Queen*. Nonetheless the films and television shows that this thesis has analysed portray at some length the difficulties experienced by such women. US television and films also seem to suggest that professional success brings new anxieties for women. As McRobbie notes in her examination of the film *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 'There is the fear of loneliness for example, the stigma of remaining single, and the risks and uncertainties of not finding the right partner to be a father to children as well as a husband.'⁵³² Similar to Bridget (Renée Zellweger), Wu-Shuang in *My Queen*, Si-Yi in *Miss Rose* and You-Qing in *In Time with You* are portrayed as single women who are afraid of loneliness and not being able to find the right partner. The film and idol drama case studies examined in the thesis suggest that there are limits to new feminism with respect to women's lived experience. These case studies may present women with successful career achievements, but they also point out the anxieties of single women.

Across the thesis I have explored how the representation of women interlinks with feminist discussions of the power and function of these narrative structures in constructing female identities. My argument is that new feminism has drawn from western feminism, and that the scholarship on post-feminism as a cultural rather than political phenomenon has useful insights to bring to bear on the Taiwanese media. As mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, Negra usefully points out the difference between feminism and post-feminism: 'By caricaturing, distorting, and (often wilfully)

⁵³² Angela McRobbie, "Postfeminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime", in Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra eds, *Interrogating Post-Feminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (London: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 36.

misunderstanding the political and social goals of feminism, postfeminism trades on a notion of feminism as rigid, serious, anti-sex and romance, difficult and extremist.⁵³³ She further states: 'In contrast, postfeminism offers the pleasure and comfort of (re)claiming an identity uncomplicated by gender politics, postmodernism, or institutional critique.'⁵³⁴ Negra's characterisation of post-feminism here is useful to this thesis but not entirely applicable to popular culture in Taiwan. As I have argued, feminism still has a significant influence on Taiwanese society via popular cultural forms such as television drama and film. The television and film case studies in this thesis are designed to indicate the influence of feminism and feminist themes on the media in Taiwan.

This thesis has attempted to examine the representation of career women in a way that takes account of and interlinks with the current social phenomena of non-marriage and cohabitation through an examination of idol dramas such as *My Queen*. Despite the fact that women in current society have broader choices in terms of access to education and employment, such dramas suggest that they still struggle to find their new identities as modern women. Kim argues that persisting patriarchal cultures continue to influence women's education and transition into work, and therefore create 'new inequality, insecurity and a precarious self.'⁵³⁵ I have argued that although the female characters in current popular Taiwanese idol dramas may be presented as empowering career women, they are nonetheless constrained by traditional expectations that women will get married and become mothers.

The female protagonist in *My Queen* is a significant representation of a career woman, who defies traditional gender expectations that women will marry and

⁵³³ Diane Negra, *What a Girl Wants? Fantasizing the Reclamation of Self in Postfeminism* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 2.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Youna Kim, ed., *Women and the Media in Asia: The Precarious Self* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 4.

reproduce before the age of thirty-five. The popularity of such shows is suggestive of the resonance within contemporary Taiwanese culture of women's aspirations and experience. Women in current Taiwanese society are betwixt and between because of their positions within a society that is attempting to negotiate both traditional expectations and contemporary liberation for women. In spite of the fact that women in Taiwan have higher status compared to the women in the 1980s, the transformation is still an ongoing process. The media texts that have been explored in this thesis present the difficulty of this transformation, for example the struggle of An-Zhen who is transformed from a housewife to a divorced working mother in *The Fierce Wife*. It is worth applauding the transformation and development of female status in Taiwan, however the transformation brings more challenges for women to adjust to their new identities as modern women. As I have mentioned, Kim states that the role of education has inspired the job aspirations of women and inspired them to achieve economic independence and empowerment.⁵³⁶ Kim acknowledges that educated women choose to invest their resources into their careers, rather than into marriage and family. Their choice to participate in the workforce contributes to current social phenomena such as singlehood, delayed marriage, non-marriage, low fertility and a higher divorce rate.⁵³⁷ This thesis has examined various representations of women who participate in different professions. Several of the films and television dramas depict women in professional or office-based roles, evidently benefitting from education. In contrast, Siao-Yu works at a sweatshop in *Siao-Yu* and Kui-Mei works at home making artificial flowers in *Kuei-mei, A Woman*; both films use images of labour to thematise women's subordinate position.

Since, as I have argued here, marriage is a choice rather an obligation for

⁵³⁶ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 3.

⁵³⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

women in modern Taiwanese society, one of the reasons for women's discontent with marriage is its social inequality. Women in Taiwan still struggle to find their identities within patriarchal society because of its expectations for women to follow the traditional caring roles as wife and mother. As I have mentioned, Kim argues that women's choices in regards to whether or not to reject marriage are affected by the conflicting burden of caring roles, and the difficulty of balancing work and domestic labour.⁵³⁸ Women therefore choose to delay marriage in order to pursue higher education or career achievements. McRobbie stresses the importance of choice for female individualization: 'Individuals must now choose the kind of life they want to live.'⁵³⁹ She further stresses: 'Choice is surely, within lifestyle culture, a modality of constraint. The individual is compelled to be the kind of subject who can make the right choices.'⁵⁴⁰ Despite the fact that women have more choices and participation in the labour market is higher compared to a decade ago, inequalities still remain in the workplace for women, for instance wage differences and individual choice. For women in contemporary culture the opportunity to follow their choices seems to bring more obstacles into their lives. As Kim argues, 'The language of choice obscures the ongoing existence of gender inequalities, the highly exclusionary and regulatory function of the labour market in structuring the opportunities and identities available to women.'⁵⁴¹ Besides the problem of wage difference, poor childcare systems and low maternity leave payments are also problems for women in the still-gendered workplace. It is difficult for women to concentrate at their workplace if the company is unable to provide a better childcare system or maternity leave payments. The film *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* points out the difficulties An-Zhen has as a

⁵³⁸ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 6.

⁵³⁹ McRobbie, "Postfeminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime", in Tasker and Negra eds, *Interrogating Post-Feminism*, p. 35.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 36.

⁵⁴¹ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 10.

working mother in balancing family and work. In spite of the fact that the film depicts An-Zhen's ex-husband and young admirer as new men who share childcare responsibilities, the film still depicts An-Zhen having more responsibilities as a mother. The film seems to suggest that the idea of choice brings more inequalities for women in the society.

Women with higher degrees and skills do not necessarily have higher positions in the still-gendered labour market. Kim argues: 'Educated and skilled women are not necessarily mobile or upward in the labour market, which is still profoundly gendered, nor are they likely to achieve full economic individualization as a free female subject.'⁵⁴² The media in Taiwan follows the media in Japan in labelling single women over the age of thirty with successful careers 'Defeated Dogs'. In contrast, men over the age of thirty with successful careers are crowned as 'Golden Bachelors'. These popular terms used in the mass media indicate gender inequality in contemporary Taiwanese society. Kim argues: 'The popular expression "Defeated Dog" in Japan is seen as a personal responsibility that must be dealt with individually by women who fail to live up to the society's exacting standards and expectations, especially in terms of an age-specific hetero-normative biography: getting married by 30 and establishing a normal family.'⁵⁴³ Thirty-something career women are presented as lonely and unhappy in the media in Taiwan. They are also depicted as needing to be cautious of their biological time because they may miss their opportunity marry and reproduce. On the contrary, men at the same age receive greater respect from the society because of their career ambitions. Negra criticises the notion of defying temporal problems for women in American popular culture. She argues that women's lives are represented as profoundly governed by time and that popular culture suggests the importance for

⁵⁴² Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 10.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., p. 13.

women of defying time pressures.⁵⁴⁴ The notion of time crisis for women in popular culture indicates gender inequality in society. This social inequality towards women leads to their insecurity and struggle to find new identities in contemporary society.

Time has been portrayed as a threat for women and their struggles to defy biological time and ageing are widespread in contemporary society as well as in mass media. In common with US culture, in Taiwan various anti-ageing cosmetic products are promoted, underlining through advertisements the importance of retaining a youthful appearance for women. Both idol drama and film present the time pressures for women over the age of thirty and their struggles to defy the so-called biological clock. As mentioned in this thesis, Tasker and Negra state that ‘postfeminism evidences a distinct preoccupation with the temporal. Women’s lives are regularly conceived of as time starved; women themselves are over-worked, rushed, harassed, subject to their “biological clocks,” and so on to such a degree that female adulthood is defined as a state of chronic temporal crisis.’⁵⁴⁵ Time crisis and the threat of ageing are common themes in post-feminism. Similarly, the Taiwanese idol dramas analysed in this thesis present the anxiety of ageing and fertility for female characters over the age of thirty.

Although women in contemporary society have broader choices in terms of their career, marriage and motherhood, their anxiety to find a new identity as modern women and their struggles to defy ageing and fertility still remain. Kim argues that modern women may be liberated through their educational attainment and participation in the labour market, however their emancipation is still constrained by the ‘bio-political control of their bodies and reproductive choices’ of society.⁵⁴⁶ Women are still not fully liberated; furthermore, their choices of singlehood, delayed marriage

⁵⁴⁴ Negra, *What a Girl Wants?*, p. 50.

⁵⁴⁵ Tasker and Negra, *Interrogating Post-Feminism*, p. 10.

⁵⁴⁶ Kim, *Women and the Media in Asia*, p. 13.

or non-marriage frequently lead them to face criticism from a patriarchal society. With the influence of post-feminism from the United States and Western Europe, the media in Taiwan follows the media of America in presenting time pressure as a threat to career women. The media in Taiwan especially focuses on the time pressures of ageing and fertility to career women over the age of thirty, who choose to delay their marriages in order to pursue career achievements. This thesis has examined the representation of thirty-something career women in *My Queen*. The drama presents Wu-Shuang as a thirty-two-year-old career woman who struggles to defy time pressure within a society that still has traditional expectations for women to enter marriage and motherhood. Wu-Shuang is not the only female protagonist who has time pressure on ageing and fertility; Si-Yi in *Miss Rose* and You-Qing in *In Time with You* are other female protagonists who are presented as having the same problem. Similar to Wu-Shuang and the above female protagonists in the idol dramas, Xiang-Xiang in *20, 30, 40* is presented as a thirty-something career woman. The film stresses Xiang-Xiang's anxiety over not finding the right partner. The difference is that Xiang-Xiang has been taught by her mother not to depend on men. Despite the fact that Xiang-Xiang's mother educates her not to trust men, Xiang-Xiang still believes the right man will bring her happiness. The film suggests that women still have expectations about marriage and motherhood.

This thesis has examined the issues of marriage and divorce through television drama and film case studies. Through detailed discussion of texts such as *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* this thesis has argued that the social phenomena of delayed marriage, a higher divorce rate and remarriage are reflected in the media. In spite of the fact that Pei-Hua Wang disagrees with the social expectation that marriage equals happiness for women over the age of thirty, she sets up a scenario in which her female protagonist has a heterosexual relationship and remarries in the

film. As I have mentioned, Pei-Hua Wang explains: ‘With the social expectation, women over the age of thirty are expected to enter the marriage realm. Under the pressures of society and family members, they consider the purpose of having a relationship is to get married. For women over the age of thirty, “to marry a good man” seems to equal their happiness and marriage seems to be the only ending for them.’⁵⁴⁷ The director further questions: ‘What about An-Zhen? As a woman and mother over the age of thirty who has been divorced. Is marriage what she really wants?’⁵⁴⁸ The director states that marriage cannot guarantee happiness.⁵⁴⁹ It is difficult for women who have been through broken relationships to have the courage to start new relationships. Pei-Hua Wang writes: ‘You need to have courage to move forward to pursue happiness. You need to have adventures in order to find happiness.’⁵⁵⁰ The main purpose of the film is to encourage women to have the courage to pursue their happiness, to have faith in love and fall in love again.⁵⁵¹ This case study is important to this thesis because it focuses on the issues of divorce and remarriage that have seldom been discussed in a positive way in Taiwanese media. Women are being presented as having freedom of marriage choice and divorce. The film suggests that divorced women can have an enjoyable life as long as they have confidence. The representation of a divorcee in the film indicates the development of women’s status in Taiwanese society.

The television drama, *The Fierce Wife*, and the film, *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* were very popular in Taiwan. The television drama has also been broadcast in other countries such as Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia

⁵⁴⁷ Pei-Hua Wang, *The Filming Diary of The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Taipei: Kate Publishing, 2012), p. 17.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

and the United States since 2010.⁵⁵² Pei-Hua Wang argues that the main reason behind the popularity of the film was its realistic depiction of life experience.⁵⁵³ What happens to the female protagonist may happen to women in real life. The audience may see themselves in the representation of An-Zhen or other characters in the film. The director hoped to encourage both men and women who have been through broken relationships to move forward in their lives, to love themselves and have the courage to pursue happiness.⁵⁵⁴ Pei-Hua Wang states: ‘Many women who have been through broken relationships ask the question: “Can I really find happiness again?” I suppose this was the main reason for making the film, if it can help women in current society to find an answer about love and pursue happiness in their lives.’⁵⁵⁵ For women, men and marriage are not the main essence of happiness; self-dependence and career achievement can be the essence of happiness as well. Pei-Hua Wang explains the purpose of the film: ‘We wanted to convey the idea to the audience that the happiness of women does not only include men, marriage or love, it also includes independence, career achievement and good friends.’⁵⁵⁶ The director points out the example of the female character in the film, Ai-Lin, who chooses to divorce and live happily as a single woman.⁵⁵⁷ As a director, Pei-Hua Wang empowers her female characters with the courage and confidence to be themselves. Most of the female characters in her television drama and film have successful careers, for instance An-Zhen works as manager in a well-known hotel and Ai-Lin is the manager of a cosmetic brand.

⁵⁵² “*The Fierce Wife* Will Be Broadcast in Los Angeles”, *Yahoo News*, 30 September 2015, <<https://tw.news.yahoo.com/%E7%8A%80%E5%88%A9%E4%BA%BA%E5%A6%BB%E8%A5%BF%E8%AA%9E%E7%89%88-%E6%90%B6%E9%80%B2%E6%B4%9B%E6%9D%89%E7%A3%AF-055255119.html>>, [accessed 21 July 2016].

⁵⁵³ Interview with the director of *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right* (Pei Hua Wang, 2012) at the Media Press of Eastern Television in the United States, 25 August 2012, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ROyFloGXjM>>, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ELZnvU-iZo>>, [accessed 24 November 2014].

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Wang, *The Filming Diary of The Fierce Wife*, p. 23.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 198.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

Pei-Hua Wang provides an expectation of a new society in her film by presenting the role of new men who share the household and child-caring responsibilities with working mothers. In spite of the fact that Pei-Hua Wang has directed fewer films compared to Sylvia Chang, she has produced numerous television dramas that have had significant influence in the media in Taiwan.

The gains of feminism and new feminism in Taiwan are hard-fought due to the continuing cultural influence of Japanese 'male chauvinism' and Chinese Confucianism. As I have mentioned, the emergence of the earliest Taiwanese women's movement was in the 1920s during the Japanese colonial era. This first phase of the Taiwanese women's movement collapsed in the early 1930s during a period of hard authoritarianism, re-emerging in the early 1970s and then continuing through the remainder of the twentieth century.⁵⁵⁸ In spite of the fact that women in Taiwan gained the right to vote in 1947, their participation in politics was low in the early 1970s. In this context Hsiu-Lien Lu argued the case for more women to run for elections and become lawmakers.⁵⁵⁹ The women's movement in the early 1970s was the turning point for the development of women's status in Taiwan. With the determination of numerous feminist activists, the status of women in Taiwan has made significant progress since the 1980s. The status of women was further developed via the law during the vice-presidency of Hsiu-Lien Lu from 2000 to 2008. The Gender Equality in Employment Act went into effect on International Women's Day in 2002.⁵⁶⁰ The Gender Equality Education Act went into effect in 2004 with the help of educational reformers and the Awakening Foundation.⁵⁶¹

Feminism and post-feminism from western culture further helped to change the

⁵⁵⁸ Doris T. Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 1.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 105-106.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 149.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., p. 125.

status of women in Taiwan. The development of women's status in society has been reflected in the transformation of the representation of women in the media in Taiwan. The main body of this thesis is taken up with an analysis of the representation of women in selected Taiwanese films and television dramas. I show in Chapter One that the development of feminism and new feminism in Taiwan are closely connected with the history, culture, politics and the society of the country. For instance, I outline the persisting historical influence of Chinese Confucianism on the status of women in Taiwan. By contrast I point to the impact of Hsiu-Lien Lu's feminist doctrine on policy reformation with regards to gender equality in terms of education and employment attainment in Taiwan. Discourses emerging from both a Confucian tradition and a more recent feminist challenge to patriarchy are evident in the texts I have analysed in this thesis. This thesis contends that an understanding of the political and the social background to the development of feminism and new feminism in Taiwan is required to effectively analyse the visual representation of women in media forms such as the idol dramas and films that form my case studies.

It should be clear that Hsiu-Lien Lu's new feminism is central to the thesis. She states in her feminist doctrine that women are human beings, and that they should not be valued as commodities. For her, women who have gained financial independence do not need a dowry to ensure economic security. The genuine dowry for women, as Hsiu-Lien Lu states, is made up of their 'talent, intelligence, elegance, and skill.'⁵⁶² The texts considered here represent precisely women who thrive through their intelligence and entrepreneurial skills. In her feminist doctrine Hsiu-Lien Lu points out that traditional concepts consider the family as the life and the whole world for women. Taiwanese society has developed in the early twenty-first century. Men used to be considered the bread-winners and the head of the family in traditional Taiwanese

⁵⁶² Hsiu-Lien Lu, *New Feminism* (Taipei: Unitas Publishing, 2008), p. 197.

society. However, contemporary Taiwanese women are well-educated and financially independent. Women can also have a successful career just as men do. Family is no longer the only world for modern women in Taiwan. Hsiu-Lien Lu believes that women can change the world and there are a significant number of successful women mentioned in this thesis that have contributed their intelligence and skills to society.

The case studies in this thesis have been selected to indicate the development of women's status in Taiwan. The representation of women has transformed from housewife to career woman, from 'good' wife and 'wise' mother to confident working mother. This thesis has presented the development of women's status from the first film case study, *Osmanthus Alley* to *Kuei-mei, A Woman* and then *The Fierce Wife: Woman Onerous: Seeking Mr. Right*. These case studies indicate the transformation of the representation of women in Taiwanese Cinema, from the housewife without financial independence to the career woman with financial independence. Ti-Home is presented as a housewife who depends on her husband for financial support in *Osmanthus Alley*. Kuei-Mei is presented as a woman without financial independence at the beginning of the film, to a woman with her own business in *Kuei-mei, A Woman*. The last film case study presents An-Zhen as a working mother who has a successful career and romantic relationship. The transformation of the representation of women can be seen in these film case studies from the 1980s to the 2000s. The case studies demonstrate the social change and the development of women's status in terms of employment and marriage. Ti-Home chooses to remain a widow due to traditional expectations towards women within patriarchy. Kuei-Mei tolerates her husband's adultery. She chooses to maintain the marriage for her children. An-Zhen is a divorced mother who starts a new relationship with a young admirer and remarries at the end of the film. The transformation of women's role from housewife to career woman, from widow to divorced mother who remarries, can be seen clearly in these film case

studies.

The television drama case studies further demonstrate the development of women's status in society and the transformation of women's role in the media of Taiwan. Si-Yi in *Miss Rose* is presented as a woman who follows the traditional expectations for women to enter the marriage realm before she reaches the age of thirty. An-Zhen in *The Fierce Wife* is a woman who decides to get a divorce because of her husband's adultery. She is transformed from a woman who feels ashamed of her status as a divorcee to a confident working mother. Wu-Shuang in *My Queen* is presented as a successful career woman who defies patriarchy. She is transformed from a woman who is afraid of ageing to a woman who is confident and content with her status as a single woman over the age of thirty. If we are to judge via representations in film and television, women in contemporary Taiwanese society are no longer satisfied with the role of housewife, or with being defined by domestic responsibilities. Women in current Taiwanese society have equality in terms of educational attainment, employment and marriage choice. The representations of women in the idol dramas indicate the extent of social change and the development of women's status in the country. Marriage is no longer the only choice for a woman to gain economic support, despite the fact that the case studies in the thesis tend to suggest that marriage remains a choice which is culturally valued over singlehood. The phenomena of delayed marriage, singlehood, cohabitation and a higher divorce rate in contemporary Taiwanese society can be seen in the idol drama case studies.

The case studies in this thesis indicate the transformation of women's role from housewife to career woman, from widow to divorced woman and single woman. In spite of the fact that the films and television dramas are fictional, they indicate changing social attitudes. They also demonstrate the transformation of women's representation in the media of Taiwan. This thesis further demonstrates the

development of women's status in Taiwan through its examination of Taiwanese female directors and their films, in particular the work of Sylvia Chang. Chang writes and directs films that discuss issues closely related to women, such as marriage and divorce. She presents the struggle of women's lives and how the characters overcome hardships in her films. She bestows individual thought, independence, confidence and hope on her characters. Her films have significant influence on the film industry not only in Taiwan but also in Hong Kong and other countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States.

Since this thesis focuses primarily on textual analysis of the film and television drama case studies rather than audience research, it can only suggest an argument that the representation of women in the media in Taiwan is more empowering than in previous decades. It cannot speculate as to whether women in Taiwan do feel more empowered after watching the television dramas or films that I have analysed here. Despite these limitations in terms of audience research and social impact, the thesis makes an important contribution to the understanding of gender culture in Taiwan via a consideration of popular media forms. As I have mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, research on the representation of women in the media in Taiwan is developing, however the resources on women's cinema and Taiwanese female directors are limited. I believe this thesis can extend existing scholarship although there is clearly space to conduct further research on the representation of women and the media in Taiwan. Hsiu-Lien Lu states in her feminist doctrine that women can be anything.⁵⁶³ The case studies in this thesis indicate the change of women's status in Taiwan and the transformations in the representation of women in the media in Taiwan. The conclusion may be the last part of my thesis, but it is only the beginning of the development of women's status in Taiwan. I firmly believe that women's status in society and the

⁵⁶³ Lu, *New Feminism*, p. 303.

representation of women in the media will further progress in Taiwan. I conclude this thesis with the belief that the media in Taiwan will present more empowering female figures in the future. As the title of this thesis implies, the status of women in Taiwan will further develop, just like the blooming plum blossom.

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