

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### A critical study on wenyi and wenyi film in republican China

Tam, Yee Lok

*Date of Award:*  
2018

[Link to publication](#)

#### **General rights**

Copyright and intellectual property rights for the publications made accessible in HKBU Scholars are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners. In addition to the restrictions prescribed by the Copyright Ordinance of Hong Kong, all users and readers must also observe the following terms of use:

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from HKBU Scholars for the purpose of private study or research
- Users cannot further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- To share publications in HKBU Scholars with others, users are welcome to freely distribute the permanent URL assigned to the publication

## Abstract

*Wenyi* film has long been a research focus of Chinese film studies since the 1980s. An abundance of scholars has been writing on the topic of *wenyi* film, defining its generic nature as “literature and art film” or film adaptation of great literature, or understanding it in relation to themes of love and human relationships. Many scholars have explored the role of *wenyi* films in post-war Hong Kong and Taiwan cinemas. Yet, in terms of Republican Chinese cinema, only brief accounts on some *wenyi* directors or works can be found.

This dissertation aims to answer the question of “what is *wenyi* film?” by studying materials from the 1910s to the 1940s. *Wenyi* film as a discursive notion was never static in that period of time and the notion intersects with different discourses and practices. By investigating the interaction between the notion and those discourses and practices, this dissertation aims to present a taxonomy of *wenyi* film as grouped under the themes of romance, family, national character, heroism and the people.

## Table of Contents

DECLARATION .....	i
Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgement.....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
List of Figures .....	vi
Chapter 1. Introduction: <i>Wenyi</i> Film and its Modes of Expressions in Republican China.....	1
1.1. The Geneology of <i>Wenyi</i> Film.....	2
1.2. <i>Wenyi</i> Film and Mode of Expression.....	6
1.3. Beyond Romance and Family .....	9
1.4. Mapping Cultural Expressions in Republican China .....	12
1.5. The Four Intersections: Romance, Family, Hero and the People .....	15
1.5.1. Romance.....	15
1.5.2. Family .....	16
1.5.3. Hero.....	18
1.5.4. The People.....	20
Chapter 2. <i>Ailqing</i> : Death, Face and Affection-Image.....	22
2.1. <i>Ailqing</i> : The Label .....	23
2.2. Narrative Structure: Six-phase <i>Ailqing</i> Route .....	31
2.3. The Face of <i>Ailqing</i> .....	33
2.4. The Affection-images of <i>Ailqing</i> on Screen: <i>New Women</i> (1935), <i>The Rich House</i> (1942) and <i>Broken Spring Dreams</i> (1955) .....	39
2.5. Conclusion.....	46
Chapter 3. Between Large and Small Family: Family-themed <i>Wenyi</i> Film ..	48

3.1.	Introduction .....	48
3.2.	Family Reform Debate .....	49
3.3.	Patriarch and its Spatial Manifestation in <i>Torrents Trilogy</i> .....	52
3.4.	Chinese Nora’s Leaving Home in <i>Mother and Son</i> .....	59
3.5.	Conclusion.....	68
Chapter 4.	National Hero in <i>Wenyi</i> Biographical Picture .....	71
4.1.	Biopic, National Character and Nation Building .....	72
4.2.	The Great Man in <i>Confucius</i> .....	77
4.3.	Nationalism Contested: Globalism in <i>Confucius</i> .....	82
4.4.	The Loyal Hero in <i>National Spirit</i> .....	86
4.5.	One Nation, Two Meanings: Loyalty Contested .....	92
4.6.	Conclusion.....	96
Chapter 5.	Art for Life’s Sake: The People in <i>Wenyi</i> Film .....	98
5.1.	“Art for Life’s Sake” and its Vicissitude .....	99
5.2.	The People I: Oppressed Women in <i>The Young Mistress’ Fan</i> .....	109
5.3.	The People II: Corruption of the Individual in <i>The World of Gold and Silver</i> .....	113
5.4.	The People III: Oppressed Underclass Community in <i>Night Inn</i> .....	119
5.5.	Conclusion.....	124
Conclusion	.....	127
Bibliography	.....	133
Filmography	.....	150
CURRICULUM VITAE.....		153