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## Early Film Culture in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Republican China

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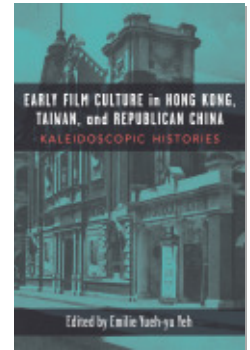
Published by University of Michigan Press

Yeh, Emilie Yueh-yu.

Early Film Culture in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Republican China: Kaleidoscopic Histories.

University of Michigan Press, 2018.

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## CHAPTER II

# *Rhythmic Movement, Metaphoric Sound, and Transcultural Transmediality*

## Liu Na'ou and *The Man Who Has a Camera* (1933)

Ling Zhang

Rhythm is the most supreme and sacred law of the universe; the wave phenomenon is the primal and universal phenomenon.

—RUDOLPH LOTHAR, *THE TALKING MACHINE: A TECHNICAL-AESTHETIC ESSAY*, 1924.<sup>1</sup>

In his brief yet prolific creative life, Liu Na'ou (1905–1940) worked in Shanghai as a neosensationalist (*Xin ganjue pai*) writer, translator, publisher, editor, film critic and theorist, screenwriter, and filmmaker.<sup>2</sup> Born into an affluent family in Taiwan, Liu attended high school and college in Japan and studied French at a Catholic university in Shanghai.<sup>3</sup> Liu was proficient in Chinese, Japanese, French, and English, which facilitated his intellectual exploration of multiple cultures and media.<sup>4</sup> Liu's linguistic aptitude and peripatetic experiences contributed to his utopian cosmopolitanism, in particular his view that art, especially cinema, could transcend national, linguistic, racial, and ethnic boundaries. Raised in Taiwan while it was under Japanese colonial rule, and lived in semicolonial Shanghai, Liu embodied an urban cosmopolitanism that indexed the contradictions of colonial modernity.<sup>5</sup>

In this chapter, I examine how Liu Na'ou's literary, cinematic, and theoretical work was enriched through the cross-fertilization of his transcultural and transmedial aspirations. Furthermore, I investigate how camera move-

ment and bodily kinesis, rhythm and musicality, communicate and become intertwined with the means of transcultural transmediality, creating a vivid sense of “metaphoric sound.”<sup>6</sup> By “metaphoric sound” in cinema, I refer to the sense of rhythm and musicality suggested by camera movement, bodily kinesis, and editing. In this case, “sound” cannot be heard but can be imagined even through silence. In American sound designer Walter Murch’s words, “Once you stray into metaphoric sound, which is simply sound that does not match what you are looking at, the human mind will look for deeper and deeper patterns . . . at the geographic level, the natural level, the psychological level . . . the ultimate metaphoric sound is silence.” Moreover, I outline how these intermingled concepts and practices created the possibility for a new audiovisual aesthetic with multilayered remediations (across different media, art forms, and materials, and between life and art) in 1930s Shanghai and advanced—as well as constrained—a distinctively cosmopolitan vision.

While cosmopolitanism and travel film (Liu’s *The Man Who Has a Camera*, on which I will elaborate later) denote border crossing and transculturality, metaphoric sound is intimately linked to transmediality. When conceptualizing the complex status of cinema as “pure” or “impure” and accounting for its “interbreeding with other arts and media,” film and media scholars have adopted the terms “intermediality” and “transmediality.”<sup>7</sup> Intermediality and transmediality point to “the ‘in-between’ of the forms,” and “processes leaving traces that have to be reconstructed.”<sup>8</sup> Such highly interactive procedures could include transposition, combination, coexistence, integration, and transformation between and among two or more art forms and media. In Liu Na’ou’s case, we find cross-pollination among literature, music, translation, screenwriting, film criticism, and filmmaking, as well as between his dramatic life experiences and everyday activities (such as travel and dance). In addition, the temporality and movement characterizing the fluid circuit between forms are “used in the sense of transfer and processuality in medial exchanges that resist closure.”<sup>9</sup>

Under certain circumstances, intermediality and transmediality can be discussed almost interchangeably; however, in this chapter, I specifically underline the separate but intimately related dimensions of transmediality and transculturality in Liu Na’ou’s work and life. By emphasizing “trans” rather than “inter,” I focus on the elements of process and mobility characterizing transfer, transposition, transformation, transgression, transcendence, and boundary traversing. As Nadja Gernalzick and Gabriele Pizarz-Ramirez state, “The terms ‘transmediality’ and ‘transculturality,’ by the ambiguity of

the prefix, denote transcendence as well as processuality and provisionality.” Furthermore, they point to “the ambiguity of ‘trans’ as denoting processes as between media-bound and non-media specific, or, as both at the same time.”<sup>10</sup> Compared to other contemporary Chinese literary luminaries engaged in similarly “trans” practices—Hong Shen<sup>11</sup> and Tian Han<sup>12</sup>—Liu was less accomplished at screenwriting and filmmaking, but his work is notable for its profound contribution to Chinese modernist literature and Liu’s understanding of film theory, rigorous attention to cinematic aesthetics, and ambiguous political and cultural position.<sup>13</sup>

Building upon and pushing beyond the existing perceptive scholarship on Liu Na’ou’s literary work, dandyish lifestyle, and complex cultural identity<sup>14</sup> in semicolonial metropolitan Shanghai,<sup>15</sup> my research contributes to both cinema and East Asian studies in two respects: first, this chapter extensively discusses Liu’s overlooked amateur travel film *The Man Who Has a Camera* (1933) and his kaleidoscopic film theories, to enrich our understanding of how early Chinese cinema and film history are in dialogue with European-American counterparts. Second, by linking “city symphony” film techniques, including camera and body movement, rhythm, and musicality, the chapter provides a nuanced treatise of “metaphoric sound” in relation to transmediality, thus complicating our perception of film sound and sound studies in general.

#### THE MAN WHO HAS A CAMERA: THE AMATEUR FILM, THE TRAVELOGUE, AND THE CITY SYMPHONY

In this section, I examine Liu Na’ou’s amateur film *The Man Who Has a Camera* and explore how the “city symphony” as a modernist film mode intimately interacts with the multisensory experience of traversing urban space by conveying a strong sense of mobility and rhythmicity. *The Man Who Has a Camera* is primarily a venture in border crossing, as it traverses various film modes and travels through different regions and across national borders. In this way, Liu creates a flowing transmedial aesthetic that embraces the transcultural circulation of film texts, criticism, and culture.<sup>16</sup> The city symphony film is cited in the genealogy of the modernist avant-garde, imbricated with poetry, photography, music, dance, graphic design, and modernist literature, as well as the constructivist and futurist art movements of the 1920s.

The city symphony film mode possesses a vivid literal and metaphoric

sound aesthetic (including movement, rhythm, and musicality) that incorporates sensory perceptions and urban soundscapes, even in its early silent incarnations.<sup>17</sup> Most of these films were screened with live musical accompaniment, which occasionally corresponded to the soundscape outside the exhibition space. For instance, the Austrian composer Edmund Meisel, who created the score for the prototypical city symphony film, *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (*Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*, dir. Walter Ruttmann, 65 min., 1927), conceived of his work as an assemblage of noises that characterized a cosmopolitan center. The expectation was that the urban spectator would recognize the “symphony” of sounds that emanated from, and resonated with, the sonic environment of quotidian life in the metropolis.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the intense sensations produced by the rhythm and speed of the metropolis and the spectacle of a “world in motion” are enhanced by a montage technique based on “visual rhythm.”<sup>19</sup> The visual elements—the intensive tempo underlined by alternation between stasis and movement, variations in camera angles, intertitles,<sup>20</sup> and rapid montage—powerfully evoke musicality and a dynamic acoustic environment.

Analogously, the travel film is a diverse and porous form.<sup>21</sup> It is embedded in and reflects modern networks of transportation, communication, and colonialist values. In the silent era, travelogue exhibitions were usually accompanied by live illustrated lectures and imbued with pedagogical significance.<sup>22</sup> As a subset of travel film, the amateur travel film underwent technological transformations, shifting from the 9.5 mm format introduced in 1923 specifically for the amateur market to the popularization of 16 mm in the post–World War II era. As rare case of an amateur travel film made in 1930s China, *The Man Who Has a Camera* was shot in a 9.5 mm “Pathé Baby” amateur film system. It not only combines various styles of film (e.g., city, essay/diary, amateur, travel, sketch, and experimental/avant-garde) but also transcends dogmatic topographical, national, racial, linguistic, and media boundaries. This film had fallen into oblivion for more than half a century before Liu’s grandson, the documentary filmmaker Lin Jianxiang, rediscovered the film rolls in 1986, in a rusty tin box in their family’s attic in Xinying, Tainan.<sup>23</sup> The rediscovery and restoration of the film have inspired a few essays in Chinese, but a comprehensive, in-depth treatise on the work has yet to be produced.<sup>24</sup>

While most city films focus on a specific city, *The Man Who Has a Camera* presents the journey and experience of traveling as being as significant as the city itself.<sup>25</sup> The film documents Liu and his companions’ peregrinations

in and among four cities that traverse various political boundaries around 1933: Tainan, in colonial Taiwan; Canton (then under the control of the Nationalist government); Mukden (of ambiguous status); and Tokyo, Japan.<sup>26</sup> The film essentially unfolds as a private visual journal and souvenir or diary film, with Liu as its privileged agent.

*The Man Who Has a Camera* comprises five sections. The first is entitled "Human Life" (11 min.) and was shot in the Liu family mansion in Xinying, Tainan. It has the explicit characteristics of a home movie,<sup>27</sup> presenting Liu's family members and friends as they pose in front of the camera. The second segment, "Tokyo" (10 min.), unfolds as a travelogue about Liu and his companions' voyages, adopting certain patterns of the "city symphony" film. This is especially evident in the time-based structure, in the dynamic mobility of vehicles, and in the oblique camera movement and rhythmic editing. The third segment, "Scenery: Mukden" (10 min.), follows Liu's fellow travelers as they wander around Fengtian city.<sup>28</sup> The fourth section (10 min.) is shot in Canton, the only place among the four locations in which the Chinese Nationalist government had complete sovereignty in 1933.<sup>29</sup> The fifth and final segment (4 min.) portrays a street pageant in Tainan, on some unspecified special occasion.

The first section of the film highlights the subjects' keen affection and curiosity about the encounter with filming. The subjects inquisitively and intensely look into the camera, a recently invented "bizarre" mechanical gadget. Some shots are close-ups or even extreme close-ups, suggesting that the camera/cameraman came very close to the subjects, creating a sense of proximity and intimacy. The adults and older children seem to be taking instructions from the man behind the camera, taking a few steps, pausing, resuming their walk, shaking hands, and so forth. They pose ritualistically, as if being photographed, confused about being filmed since the practices with which they are familiar have previously been limited to photographic experiences. The experiential aspects of this section, and its images, fall into the interstices between still photography and the moving image, strongly evoking a transmedial implication. These scenes echo Alexandra Schneider's argument that the family film intersects with the travelogue, oscillating between spontaneous observation, playful staging, and photographic posing.<sup>30</sup>

Moments of "looking back at the camera" strongly raise the spectator's awareness of the film medium and the mediation of the image. This technique not only frequently appears in home movies, but also constitutes the self-reflexive convention in city symphony films. It draws attention to the

filmic medium itself by disclosing the process of film production—utilizing unusual camera positions and rapid montage or simultaneously presenting different events to reconfigure the big city as a palimpsest.<sup>31</sup> *The Man Who Has a Camera* takes such practices further by illuminating a dramatic and transparent form of revelation as a man points his still camera at Liu's movie camera on a ship while on an excursion to Canton (in section 3): there is a moment of demystification and transmedial revelation as the two cameras and media encounter and grapple with each other, such that the ongoing manipulation and mediation of the photographic and cinematic apparatuses are suddenly illuminated for the viewer.

The vigorous intensity of movement in the city symphony and travel film and the way these forms thematize the accelerated pace of the urban experience can be traced to the representation of dynamic machines like modern transportation vehicles, entertainment apparatuses (including the swing, the carousel, Ferris wheel, and roller coaster) and cinematic devices. Most of these machine elements are abundant in *The Man Who Has a Camera*, conspiring to highlight the movement, speed, and thrill of trains, steamships, automobiles, and airplanes—and creating an extraordinary sensational audiovisual and visceral experience.<sup>32</sup> As a technological invention and industrial machine, the train embodies the novel attractions of mobility and speed.<sup>33</sup> In the “Tokyo” segment, the exhilarating sensations afforded by these new forms of transport for the rider/camera are highlighted throughout the film. Here, double or triple movements are captured and intensified by the camera. By “double or triple movements,” I mean (1) the camera movement; (2) the camera mounted on a moving vehicle of some kind; and (3) the movement of a subject within the frame. When all three appear simultaneously, the sense of mobility is both multiplied and intensified. For instance, the audience is treated to aerial views from a plane and a train blazing past a haze of trees.<sup>34</sup> The built urban environment and landmarks of downtown Tokyo thus assume a kinetic presence within the film:<sup>35</sup> on one hand, the immobility of the buildings intensifies the sense of mobility by sharply contrasting with the moving vehicles and cameras; on the other hand, the movements of the vehicle and the camera animate these stationary constructions. The upbeat rhythm of urban life is externalized in this cinematic reconfiguration of urban space.

*The Man Who Has a Camera* can also be considered a work exemplary of the kinds of amateur and avant-garde filmmaking that took hold around the world.<sup>36</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s, with the advent of modern technology

and entertainment, affluent people in Taiwan (as well as in other East Asian regions including Japan and mainland China) started to deploy novel audio and visual devices like cameras, phonographs, and films (in 8 mm or 9.5 mm).<sup>37</sup> Taiwanese film scholar Lee Daw-Ming considers Liu's *The Man Who Has a Camera* a home movie lacking thematic and artistic sophistication and coherence—a far cry from its model, Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929).<sup>38</sup> While Lee's description draws attention to the composite nature and tentative experimentalism of Liu's aesthetic, his negative judgment of the work underestimates Liu's stylistic aspirations and the artistic sensitivities embedded in this film, as well as the film's historical significance within the context of 1930s East Asian amateur film practice and audiovisual culture. As an amateur film, *The Man Who Has a Camera* should not to be compared with *Man with a Movie Camera* in terms of scope and cinematic techniques like framing, camera movement, and rhythmic editing. Yet Liu's film is imbued with the vitality and spontaneity of amateur improvisation, playfully embracing and exploring the contingencies of the medium. For instance, two men mischievously make faces in front of the camera (section 3) and children frolic in the film (especially in the first section) with a sense of dynamism and vigor reminiscent of the moving train. Such seemingly insignificant yet whimsical details are juxtaposed with a high-angle panoramic view of the cityscape. The editing in the first section seems haphazard, yet the recurrence of a few shots and jump cuts indicates that Liu deliberately manipulated rhythm and refrain to produce a sense of temporal and spatial disorientation, which is further enriched by the rhythmic patterns of acceleration.

Liu's camera is fascinated by the flow of the crowd in a street parade (the final section), during which anonymous human faces metamorphose as they confront the mobile camera, turning the human face and body into a constantly changing landscape. This is the "noisiest" section in the silent film, which conveys a "silent musicality"<sup>39</sup> of movement and a sense of metaphoric sound within and between the frames. Even though the street sounds are inaudible in the silent film, energy and clamor are strongly evoked by visual references to trumpets and other musical instruments being played, costumed performers dancing, the enthusiastic crowds streaming past, and firecrackers exploding. Like the archetypal city symphony films, *The Man Who Has a Camera* connects urban masses, velocity, and technology with perceptual disorientation: "The crowd and speed of modernization cause a constituent, profound uncertainty in perception that disrupts clear subject-object distinctions."<sup>40</sup>



Although Shanghai itself is absent from *The Man Who Has a Camera*, its imprint is omnipresent, since it was the film's backstage and provided the stimulating cultural milieu that Liu immersed in, conceptualized, and wrote about in his literary work, screenwriting, film criticism, and production.<sup>41</sup> Traveling and travel film for Liu Na'ou represented a means and practice of transcultural exploration: the film begins in Tainan, Liu's hometown, and winds up in the same location, forming a symbolic temporal-spatial circuit. The cinematic itinerary echoes Liu's life trajectory: his struggle with his status as a Japanese colonial subject and a Chinese litterateur. In his concern with formal issues, Liu attempted to transcend various boundaries and establish a depoliticized cosmopolitan cinematic utopia, a pure cinema, and a fluid cultural identity.

#### RHYTHMICITY, MUSICALITY, AND TRANSMEDIALITY IN LIU NA'OU'S FILM THEORY

Academic interest in the kaleidoscopic urban cultures and cinema of Republican Shanghai has been revived since the late 1990s. The significance of Liu's status as a cosmopolitan figure and the cultural value of his literary and film work have been rediscovered. Although Liu's film theories and criticism have also become more recognized by film scholars, his perceptive treatise on cinematic aesthetics and his contributions to Chinese (and world) film theory call for still more reflection and elaboration. Liu Na'ou extensively and insightfully discussed ontological and stylistic concepts of cinema, especially with regard to movement, rhythm, and sound. From the late 1920s to 1933, Liu Na'ou published more than ten critical essays,<sup>42</sup> and proposed that cinema should be differentiated from other media, cultivate its own aesthetics, and achieve what literature and theater cannot, by developing its own specific techniques, such as camera work, montage, fading in and out, and newfangled components like sound and color.

Liu's film theory and criticism were inspired by various intellectual sources, including European and American directors and film theorists.<sup>43</sup> He also examined the works of French and German "pure cinema" and "absolute cinema" auteurs<sup>44</sup> and praised their experimental works for relinquishing anything explicitly literary, theatrical, or painterly (such as plot, acting, and composition), in order to create a pure absolute for those visual and musical elements that are essentially cinematic.<sup>45</sup> Liu Na'ou's understanding

of cinema as a modern combination of artistic sensibility and mechanical innovation, and his sophisticated deliberations about the substantial components of cinematic art, produced a constructive comparison of Chinese and foreign films and engaged in fruitful dialogue with film criticism of the global 1930s. In this section, I will trace Liu's film theory in relation to movement, rhythmicity, and musicality, to delineate his theoretical and cultural contribution to studies of sound and transmediality.

### *Motion and Rhythm: Dance of Body, Landscape, and Image*

In his everyday life, literary writing, cinematic work, and film criticism, Liu Na'ou accentuated the significance of kinetic bodily movement (like dance) and the intoxicating corporeal experience of a rhythmic modernity in cinema. As studies on dance and intermediality in film history and culture suggest, early cinema emerged in a world where interest in bodily movement straddled aesthetic and scientific preoccupations.<sup>46</sup> From Liu Na'ou's viewpoint, modern urban dwellers were eager for speed, movement, and thrills. Since city people had become accustomed to urban noise, harmonious symphonic music was no longer essential or popularly prized.<sup>47</sup> In cinema as in dance, motion became a universal language and an emblem of modernity.

Liu and his renowned neosensationalist writer friend, Mu Shiying, notoriously frequented dance halls and had liaisons with dance hostesses.<sup>48</sup> Liu was a devoted dancer and gained the nickname "the Dancing King."<sup>49</sup> Some of Liu's and Mu's short stories are set in nightclubs and dance halls, exploring their multisensual imagery and synesthetic potentials, as well as the intensity of the sensorial stimulation.<sup>50</sup> The "dance craze" in Shanghai corresponded to the global dance fad in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>51</sup> Commercial dance halls were launched in the 1920s; newspapers and pictorials introduced social dancing and initiated exuberant discussions about the "craze."<sup>52</sup> Japanese writer Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927) also kept an account of Shanghai's dance scene during his 1921 China tour.<sup>53</sup>

Physical performances such as dance (also sports and gymnastics) not only attracted early film spectators, they also served as the basis for public discourse about machine aesthetics, the synchronism of aural and visual rhythms, and the "dance of images" (the editing model for 1920s French avant-garde cinema).<sup>54</sup> French filmmaker and theorist Jean Epstein referred to dance as a general metaphor for the paradigm of mobility in *Bonjour Cinéma* (1921), where he qualified the "landscape's dance," taken from a train or

from a car at full speed, as *photogénic*.<sup>55</sup> *Photogénie* was capable of multiplying and expanding movement, and this movement was what distinguished cinema from the plastic arts that were primarily considered a static means of expression.

This dance of landscape is widely highlighted in 1920s and 1930s city and travel films, including Liu Na'ou's *The Man Who Has a Camera*.<sup>56</sup> As a condition of cinema's true specificity, *photogénie*, or the "dance of images," as Jean Epstein noted, is organized in a manner analogous to the principles of musical composition. Dziga Vertov's theorization of film was also informed by music, most notably in the theory of intervals. He proclaimed that film was already a rhythmic and musical art, one that structured time and strove to find its specific rhythm.<sup>57</sup> In an article entitled "Film Theories of the Soviet Union and France," Liu Na'ou elaborated on the variations and rhythm of speed and energy espoused by "pure cinema," claiming that the films were "orchestral ensembles woven by light and shadow in connection with temporal duration."<sup>58</sup>

Liu Na'ou also summarized the interdependence of "interior" and "exterior" rhythm underlined by French film theorists and artists of the 1920s, including Fernand Divoire, René Clair, and Léon Moussinac. In Liu's discussion, the substance of cinema lies in movement, which epitomizes vitality and rhythm and whose qualities are determined by speed, direction, and force. He describes interior rhythm as the structuring principle within the cinematic frame, and it includes the movement of subjects and the camera; exterior rhythm instead is created by the succession of shots. On the one hand, film rhythm emanates from the actors' physical performances, for instance, the "serpentine dance" in early cinema; on the other hand, the cinematic rhythm enhanced by montage is an example of what sets cinema off from other arts. Liu Na'ou pointed out rhythmic components of film that escaped Clair's and Moussinac's attention and delineated their multisensory impact on cinematic style. For instance, he argued that interior rhythm could be achieved by a variation of light hues within the frame (which suggested the passage of time) or alternations of camera angles or changes of background induced by a tracking shot; all these elements helped constitute the interior rhythm. In Liu's view, exterior rhythm is more expressive than interior rhythm in developing a compelling cinematic style.<sup>59</sup>

Liu discussed Walter Ruttmann's city symphony film *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* in the "pure/abstract cinema" category and praised it for four stylistic aspirations (first, orchestrating musical rhythm across the whole

film through modern visual means; second, completely distinguishing itself from filmed theater; third, using no artificial settings; fourth, using no intertitles), particularly its “orchestrating musical rhythm across the whole film through modern visual means.”<sup>60</sup> The French “pure cinema” advocates Léon Moussinac, Emile Vuillermoz, and Paul Romain dreamed of an art based on mastering the rhythm of movement, purified of dramatic convention.<sup>61</sup> Liu claimed that the essence of cinema is a visual symphony (*symphonie visuelle*)<sup>62</sup> and a form of imaginary visual poetry generated by light and shadow, lines and angles; it is inseparable from musical rhythm but can be distant from plot.<sup>63</sup> In this sense, watching a film was analogous to attending a concert, with spectators perceiving the visual symphony as the mechanical dance of light.<sup>64</sup>

In his essay “On Cinematic Art,” Liu claimed that montage (interweaving)<sup>65</sup> is the essential component of cinema, since it enlivens images from the *photographique* to the *cinégraphique*<sup>66</sup> and organizes them into an orderly, unified rhythm; this re-creates a new cinematic time-space that does not duplicate actual time-space. This type of effect is exemplified in Soviet filmmaker Vsevolod Pudovkin’s *Mother* (1926) and *The End of St. Petersburg* (1927).<sup>67</sup> In their still silent films, Soviet directors became increasingly skilled in rhythmic editing and the use of images to evoke aural associations.<sup>68</sup> Liu contended that such montage was cinema-specific because of its transmedial analogies: montage is at once the verses of a poet, the form of an article, and the visual expression of a filmmaker.<sup>69</sup>

Liu described various rhythmic styles (“linear” or “curved” lines, in his words) in films of different genres and narrative structures. He praised the concordance of rhythm/cadence and songs/melody in film musicals, which visualized rhythm and created films that had “symphonic orchestration.” As an example of a well-executed *interweaving/montage* in sound films, Liu acclaimed Viktor Tourjansky’s *Le Chanteur Inconnu* (*The Unknown Singer*, 1931):

The director Tourjansky is able to use silent images to emphasize musical effects. The unknown singer’s enchanting voice is transmitted from a broadcast station, gliding over clouds and mountains, traversing various countries in Europe and entering different houses as well as the bosoms of affectionate lovebirds. This sequence is an exquisite example of montage that complements the musical score and imparts to the audience an intoxicating rhythm.<sup>70</sup>

Liu considered this film free of the trite “canned theater” conventions of early sound films. To him it introduced a truly innovative style that opened up a promising road for future sound films.

#### SOUNDS OF THE EVERYDAY, IN THE FILM THEATER AND ON THE SCREEN

In addition to writing about metaphoric sound elements, Liu Na’ou’s acoustic sensitivity was equally captivated by sound culture and the variations of the human voice characterizing daily life, Chinese operatic performance, the film theater, and on screen. During his three-month sojourn in Beijing with his poet friend Dai Wangshu in 1927, Liu frequented the Beijing opera and Kun opera performances<sup>71</sup> and learned opera singing from his friend, as he had earlier learned to play the *huqin*.<sup>72</sup> Liu’s diary from 1927 also documents his experience of listening to phonographs in Shanghai and Tokyo.<sup>73</sup> All of this suggests that listening to phonographic records was an important popular pastime and a method for cultural cultivation of urbanites in the 1920s and 1930s. Liu clearly had a strong penchant for music, whether in the form of live performance or personal practice, or mediated through sound technology.

These acoustic experiences inspired Liu Na’ou to assume a more sophisticated approach to sound aesthetics when he wrote the screenplay of *Eternal Smile* (*Yongyuan de weixiao*, dir. Wu Cun, 1936), whose protagonist is a singsong girl, thus rendering music and singing essential features in the film.<sup>74</sup> Liu invokes various sound elements in abundant detail in his screenplay, including sound effects (the clatter of horse hooves, skylarks singing, dogs barking, street clamor, and the sound of rain, wind, sirens, and bells), the human voice (peddlers shouting, the heroine singing, people laughing), and music (*huqin* performances and popular songs, both as diegetic and extradiegetic music). Through an elaborately interwoven acoustic texture and careful attention to sound scales,<sup>75</sup> Liu attempted to create acoustic realism and capture the urban aural atmosphere. When he expressed dissatisfaction after seeing the completed film, several of his criticisms were directed toward the film’s sound techniques. For instance, Liu wrote, “If ‘laughter’ appears in inappropriate occasions, it is like jazz mingled into Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony; this is a bad screen—Americanism!” He also argued that

the “diction” (delivery of dialogues) is too slow and flat, making the film drag and lose its psychological tension.<sup>76</sup>

The chaotic soundscape in many Chinese film theaters<sup>77</sup> impelled Liu to write a section called “In Chinese Film Theaters” in a longer 1928 article titled “Random Thoughts on Cinema.”<sup>78</sup> Liu sarcastically complained about the roar of the crowd, the vendors shouting, children clapping, people reading intertitles aloud or cracking sunflower seeds, and the incompatibility of musical accompaniment to the films being exhibited. All this discordance and disturbance made him dizzy and light-headed; he wrote that he had to leave before the film ended. Disciplining the audience and controlling the sound environment in theaters had been a concern for different cultures beginning in the early twentieth century.<sup>79</sup> In the Chinese case that concerned Liu, it was related to social class and cultural differences.<sup>80</sup>

Liu Na’ou offered insightful reflections on sound film aesthetics and pertinent theory and criticism. In his article “Pursuing the Formal Beauty of Cinema,”<sup>81</sup> Liu proclaimed that the two essential sensual factors creating cinematic beauty are the senses of vision and hearing. He believed that when the three aural components of sound films (music, sound effects, and dialogue) intertwined to create a symphonic audio texture, they contributed to the formal attraction of cinema.<sup>82</sup> Liu derided early American all-talkies for resembling the typewriter: the action and the sound were synchronized, becoming more like exhibitions of sound technology than artistic creations, since Liu argued that the expressive effects of sounds did not just depend on *synchronization*<sup>83</sup> but on whether the coordination of image and sound was able to create cinematic significance. Liu urged Chinese film professionals to catch up with the sound film trend; otherwise they would not be able to resist the invasion of foreign films.<sup>84</sup>

In his 1932 article “On Cinematic Art,” Liu introduced the Soviet avant-garde filmmaker Dziga Vertov’s first sound film, *Enthusiasm: The Symphony of the Don Basin* (1931) to Chinese readers. He identified the film as an embodiment of the transition between Vertov’s cinematic concepts of “kino eye” and “radio ear.”<sup>85</sup> Liu applauded the natural sounds present in *Enthusiasm*, which were recorded in industrial locations, including coal mines and steel plants, without artificial manipulation or embellishment. Nonetheless, Vertov’s conception and editing were able to render these mechanical sounds musical.<sup>86</sup>

In another article that directly addressed film sound, Liu Na’ou drew comparisons between “light tone” and “acoustic tone” in relation to various

cinematic genres and styles.<sup>87</sup> He argued that variations of volume and pitch in acoustic tone are comparable to those of light and shadow in “light tone.” Liu outlined the affinities between different sound pitches (high, midregister, and low) and the various film genres and styles. Higher-pitched sounds should be employed for comedies, to match their faster dialogue and action and depict a brisk, jaunty atmosphere. In addition, high-pitched sound better pierces through the laughter and clamor made by the audiences in the theater. This sound, however, is not appropriate for serious dramas like tragedies or the German-style *Schauspiel*,<sup>88</sup> because it does not match the solemn emotion and atmosphere of such genres. A low-pitched tone is more suitable for expressing restraint and austerity, as well as the profound emotional force of dramas, whose audiences were inclined to be more serious and subdued. As an example, Liu praised Franklin H. Hansen for designing a low-pitched tone that was almost a whisper for *A Farewell to Arms* (dir. Frank Borzage, 80 min., 1932). Alternatively, the middle-pitched tone suits melodrama and its sentimental emotional fluctuations, since the flexibility of the midpitch tone can be employed to express and reinforce a sense of the vicissitudes of life and their alternation between joy and sorrow. In retrospect, Liu’s insightful discussions about sound design are visionary and forward thinking, especially since sound would become a pivotal part of cinema’s “medium specificity.” His concepts seem especially prescient since “sound design” as a category and creative concept would not emerge in Hollywood until the 1970s.<sup>89</sup>

## CONCLUSION

When I knew such a genius with languages, it was like seeing a person who had lost his nationality and social belonging, a human being deprived of his shadow: one must often feel emptiness and trepidation.—  
Keiji Matsuzaki<sup>90</sup>

Liu Na’ou made a seemingly naive attempt to transcend the tensions surrounding his complex colonial and transcultural identity by devoting himself to the elusive values of itinerant cosmopolitanism. Given the political and cultural struggles complicated by the contesting forces of the era,<sup>91</sup> and Liu’s lack of national allegiance and ideological commitment, it seems logical

that he aspired to find opportunities for “pure art” and “free” cinematic creation and condemned leftist writers’ works as being “contaminated by politics.”<sup>92</sup> However, according to a memoir by Huang Gang, Liu worked with the Japanese closely after the latter fully occupied Shanghai<sup>93</sup> and directly profited from the collaboration.<sup>94</sup> Consequently, Liu’s claim to being apolitical may be challenged. As Leslie Pincus observes, “Cosmopolitan concentration on values of an intangible and universal nature encouraged adherents to withdraw into an expanded and enriched realm of interiority while distancing themselves from more immediate and more material social realities.”<sup>95</sup>

In Liu Na’ou’s trajectory as a transcultural raconteur, Shanghai became a symbolic location, one with which he both identified and associated his “future.”<sup>96</sup> Rather than in Tokyo or Taiwan, Liu chose to live and work in Shanghai, “a space of shifting struggles and alignments,”<sup>97</sup> where confrontations among various imperial powers both from the West and from Japan were being negotiated. This “intertwined colonization” illuminates China’s multilayered colonial past and attends to the intersecting relationship of cosmopolitan Shanghai and colonial Taiwan.<sup>98</sup> There Liu’s sense of alienation and rootlessness could be ameliorated or even alleviated, and he could reside there emancipated and anonymous and might easily assume any number of identities. By drifting among and immersing himself in different cultural identifications, Liu might be understood to have located himself in the dissolution of the essential self into “an endlessly fragmented subject in process,” in an interstitial temporality, a “space-in-between.”<sup>99</sup>

By framing Liu Na’ou’s life experience, film career, literary and cinematic writings, and film *The Man Who Has a Camera* as transcultural and transmedial, I have accentuated issues related to mobility and border crossing. In a larger historical context, as modern technology made traveling across long distances and the resulting translation and transculturation increasingly possible, such boundary-traversing journeys gave rise to a metamovement—an aesthetic cosmopolitanism born of the flow of technology, knowledge, film production, and cinematic discourse. The center of gravity in Liu Na’ou’s versatile creative life was Shanghai, with its uncertain subjectivity at the extraterritorial borders of the nation-state and the intersection of Chinese, European, American, and Japanese interests.<sup>100</sup> Shanghai was the epicenter of conflicts and tensions around sovereignty, the expansion of global capital, and the flourishing of entertainment and consumption. Liu Na’ou himself embodied many of these same tensions; and yet, his works on sound, move-



ment, rhythm, and musicality in the transcultural and transmedial milieu can yield profound insights for how we envision metaphoric sound in relation to proliferating transcultural and transmedial cinematic practice.

### Notes

1. Rudolph Lothar, *Der Andere: Schauspiel in vier Aufzügen* (Leipzig). Quote from Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 71.

2. Neosensationalist literature is a modernist literary school that came into existence in Japan in the mid and late 1920s. As Yokomitsu Riichi, a representative neosensationalist writer, explained: “I believe that futurism, stereo-school, symbolism, structuralism, modernism and part of factualism—all of these belong to neo-sensationalism.” The Japanese neosensationalist writers pursued “new sensations,” new life modes, and new ways of perceiving objects. Their mental states, sentiments, nerves, and moods all boasted the most intense perceptibility. This form, introduced to China from Japan by Liu Na’ou, was influenced by French modernist writer Paul Morand (1888–1976). Represented by Liu Na’ou, Mu Shiyong, and Shi Zhecun, Chinese neosensationalist literature remained active in the history of Chinese modern literature for six years, from the launch of the literary journal *Trackless Train* by Liu Na’ou in September 1920 to Shi Zhecun’s departure from *Modern Times* at the end of 1934. Around 1935, novelists in this school changed direction, fell into decline, or converted to realism. For more information, see David Der-wei Wang, “Chinese Literature from 1841–1937,” in *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, vol. 2, *From 1375*, ed. Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 413–564.

3. Liu received his bachelor’s degree in English literature from Aoyama College in Tokyo in 1926 and soon thereafter registered for a French class at L’Université LAurore in Shanghai, establishing friendships and forming a collaboration with later literary luminaries Dai Wangshu, Shi Zhecun, and Mu Shiyong.

4. In the “Chinese” category, he could converse in Mandarin, the Shanghai dialect, and Cantonese, in addition to speaking his mother tongue, the Minnan dialect.

5. Taiwan was ceded to Japan in 1895 by the Qing dynasty as a consequence of its defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War, in line with the Treaty of Shimonoseki. It was returned to the government of the Republic of China government in 1945, with the unconditional surrender of Japan at the end of World War II.

6. Walter Murch, “Touch of Silence,” in *Soundscape: The School of Sound Lectures, 1998–2001*, ed. Larry Side, Jerry Side, and Diane Freeman (London: Wallflower Press, 2003), 100.

7. *Pure* refers to a medium specificity and is stressed by 1920s European, and especially French, avant-garde filmmakers and critics; *impure* refers to the cinematic hybrid-

ization accentuated by André Bazin in 1951. See André Bazin, "In Defense of Mixed Cinema," in *What Is Cinema?* vol. 1, ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press), 53–75; Lúcia Nagib and Anne Jerslev, "Introduction," in *Impure Cinema: Intermedial and Intercultural Approaches to Film*, ed. Lúcia Nagib and Anne Jerslev (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013), xix. For a brief history of the critical terms *intermediality* and *intermedia*, see Stephanie A. Glaser, "Introduction," *Media inter Media: Essays in Honor of Claus Clüver*, ed. Stephanie A. Glaser (Amsterdam, NY: Rodopi, 2009), 12–28. For the conceptual history of "transmediality" and "transculturality," see Nadja Gernalzick and Gabriele Pisarz-Ramirez, "Preface and Comparative Conceptual History," in *Transmediality and Transculturality*, ed. Nadja Gernalzick and Gabriele Pisarz-Ramirez (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2013), xii–xxiii.

8. Jürgen E. Müller, "Media Encounters—an Introduction," in *Media Encounters and Media Theories*, ed. Jürgen E. Müller (Münster: Nodus Publikationen Munster, 2008), 10.

9. Gernalzick and Pisarz-Ramirez, *Transmediality and Transculturality*, xii.

10. Gernalzick and Pisarz-Ramirez, *Transmediality and Transculturality*, xiii. The authors also assert that "since the mid-20th century, transmediality and transculturality have been launched into debates about cultural and medial sectionalism when competing terms such as inter- or multiculturalism and transmediality and transculturality entrenched virulent distinctions for the organization of privilege and hierarchy . . . [We] seek to describe experience with more comprehensive realism and greater temporary adequacy."

11. Hong Shen (1894–1955) was a pioneering Chinese dramatist and filmmaker. Educated in Beijing and at Harvard University, Hong taught dramatic arts and Western literature at various universities after his return to China in 1922. He directed plays by both Chinese and Western writers (e.g., Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*) in the 1920s. Hong also worked as a film producer, screenwriter, and film director at Star Motion Picture Company in the 1930s. See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Hong Shen" (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014), <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/276606/Hong-Shen> (last updated July 22, 2005).

12. Tian Han (1898–1968) was a Chinese playwright and poet known for his expressive and powerful one-act plays. He studied for several years in Japan, where he developed a lasting interest in modern drama. Tian experimented in and popularized modern vernacular drama and films in the 1920s. He also wrote a few successful screenplays with progressive inclinations. He composed librettos for traditional Chinese opera and is the author of the national anthem of the People's Republic of China, "March of the Volunteers." See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Tian Han," (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014), <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/594812/Tian-Han> (last updated July 22, 2005). For a more comprehensive discussion of Tian Han's creative career and transmedial practice, see Liang Luo, *The Avant-Garde and the Popular in Modern China: Tian Han and the Intersection of Performance and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014).

13. As previously mentioned (note 3), Liu experienced a complicated identity as a colonial subject of Japan living in semicolonial Shanghai.

14. In the words of his writer friend Shi Zhecun, “1/3 Shanghainese, 1/3 Taiwanese, and 1/3 Japanese.”

15. Liu’s film writings were largely neglected by official Chinese film historiography until the 1990s, due to their strong formalist tendencies (considered sign of the lack of a progressive social consciousness) and harsh criticism of 1930s Chinese left-wing films. There was also a stigma attached to Liu as a “cultural traitor.” In recent years, a growing body of scholarship from mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, and the United States has taken up his literary creations and cultural identity in relation to modernity, modernism, and Shanghai urban culture. See Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Lee Daw-ming, “Liu Na’ou de dianying meixueguan: Jiantan ta de jilu dianying ‘Xiezhe sheyingji de nanren’” [Liu Na’ou’s Concept of Film Aesthetic, and His Documentary *The Man Who Has a Camera*], in *Liu Na’ou guoji yantaohui lunwenji* [Proceedings of the International Conference on Liu Na’ou], ed. Department of Chinese Literature of National Central University (Tainan: National Museum of Taiwan Literature choubweichu, 2005), 145–159; Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Face, Body, and the City: The Fiction of Liu Na’ou and Mu Shiyong,” in *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 190–231; Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Shanghai Modern: Reflection on Urban Culture in China in the 1930s,” *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (1999): 75–107; Hsiao-yen Peng, *Dandyism and Transcultural Modernity: The Dandy, the Flaneur, and the Translator in 1930s Shanghai, Tokyo, and Paris* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Peng Hsiao-yen, *Haishang shuo qingyu: cong Zhang Ziping dao Liu Na’ou* [Shanghai Desire: From Zhang Ziping to Liu Na’ou] (Taipei: Zhongyanyuan wenzhesuo, 2001); Yomi Braester, “Shanghai’s Economy of the Spectacle: The Shanghai Race Club in Liu Na’ou and Mu Shiyong’s Stories,” *Modern Chinese Literature* 9, no. 1 (1995): 39–57; Li Jin, *Haipai xiaoshuo lun* [On Shanghai-Style Fiction] (Taipei: Xiuwei zixun, 2005); Li Jin, “Xin ganjuepai he ersanshi niandai haolaiwu dianying” [Neosensationalism and Hollywood Films in the 1920s and 1930s], *Modern Chinese Literature Studies* 3 (1997): 32–56; Hsu Chen-chin, “Chongdu Taiwanren Liu Na’ou (1905–1940): Lishi yu wenhua de hudong kaocha” [Rereading Taiwanese Liu Na’ou (1905–1940): A Study on History and Culture] (master’s thesis, National Central University, 1998); Hsu Chen-chin and Kang Laixin, eds., *Liu Na’ou quanji* [The Complete Works of Liu Na’ou] (Tainan: Museum of Taiwan Literature and Tainan County Bureau of Culture, 2001); Hsu Chen-chin and Kang Laixin, eds., *Liu Na’ou quanji: zengbuji* [The Complete Works of Liu Na’ou: The Supplement] (Tainan: Museum of Taiwan Literature and Tainan County Bureau of Culture, 2010); Hsu Chen-chin, *Modeng, Shanghai, xin ganjue: Liu Na’ou, 1905–1940* [Modern, Shanghai, Neosensationalist: Liu Na’ou, 1905–1940] (Taipei: Xiuwei zixun keji gufen youxian gongsi, 2008); Mamie Misawa, *Zai “diguo” yu “zuguo” de jiafeng jian: Rizhi shiqi Taiwan dianyingren de jiaoshe yu kuajing*

[Between the “Empire” and the “Mother Country”: Taiwanese Filmmakers’ Transcultural Negotiations during the Japanese Occupation], trans. Li Wenqing and Xu Shijia (Taipei: Taiwan University Press, 2012).

16. See, for instance, works by Liu Na’ou and Mu Shiyong, as well as Japanese writer Yokomitsu Riichi’s modernist installment fiction *Shanghai* (1928–1929).

17. Early city films or city symphony films include Alberto Cavalcanti’s *Rien que les Heures* (1926), Walter Ruttmann’s *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (1927), Mikhail Kaufman and Ilja Kopalín’s *Moskva* (*Moscow*, 1928), Dziga Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), Joris Ivens’s *Rain* (1929), László Moholy-Nagy’s *Impressionen vom alten Marseiller Hanfen* (*vieux port*) (1929), Corrado D’Erric’s *Stramilano* (1929), Jean Vigo’s *À Propos de Nice* (1930), Herman Weinberg’s *City Symphony* (1930), as well as other early avant-garde films picturing New York City in the 1920s, such as Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand’s *Manhatta* (1920), Jay Leyda’s *A Bronx Morning* (1931), and so on.

18. Nora M. Alter, “Berlin, *Symphony of a Great City* (1927): City, Image, Sound,” in *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide to Classic Films of the Era*, ed. Noah William Isenberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 196. Interestingly, *Berlin* was categorized as a “pure film” or an “absolute film” in Liu Na’ou’s writing, since it was not a plot-oriented fictional film with an artificial setting (although it contains a couple of constructed dramatic scenes, such as a woman jumping from a bridge to commit suicide), and has an overall cinematic rhythm uninterrupted by verbose explanatory intertitles. See Liu Na’ou, “Yingpian yishu lun” [On Cinematic Art], in *Liu Na’ou quanji: dianying ji* [The Complete Works of Liu Na’ou: On Cinema] in Hsu and Kang, *Liu Na’ou quanji*, 274.

19. Alter, “Berlin, *Symphony of a Great City* (1927),” 199.

20. For instance, the shape, size, length, and frequency of the intertitles also influence the audience’s perception of rhythm and speed. See Liu, “Yingpian yishu lun,” 276–280.

21. Travel film dominated the early cinema period from 1895 to 1905 and is considered the “first chapter” in the history of the documentary by British documentary filmmaker John Grierson. The genre was later incorporated into mainstream Hollywood fiction films as spectacular attractions, showcasing exotic cultures and locales.

22. For books on amateur cinema, see Charles E. Tepperman, *Amateur Cinema: The Rise of North American Movie Making, 1923–1960* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015); Laura Rascaroli, Gwenda Young, and Barry Monahan, eds., *Amateur Film-making: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); Jennifer Lynn Peterson, *Education in the School of Dreams: Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Patricia R. Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

23. This is now called the Xinying District, a second administration center of the Tainan City Government. Sugar production was the most important industry in Xinying during the Japanese colonial period. The Liu family was prominent there, holding

large parcels of land, and the family sent many of its descendants to study abroad, either in mainland China, Japan, or Germany. After format conversion and restoration by NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation), Liu's film was released on DVD in 2006 as part of the fifteen-film collection, "Moving Images in Contemporary Taiwan: From Documentary to Experimental Films." These details were gathered from my several interviews with Lin, in 2010 and on September 26, 2015 respectively.

24. See Lee, "Liu Na'ou de dianying meixueguan," 145–159.

25. Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* is an exception, with footage shot in five different Soviet cities, including Moscow, Kiev, and Odessa.

26. The area, located in northeast China, was known as Manchuria and designated by the Qing dynasty as the homeland of the ruling family's ethnic group, the Manchus. In 1931, Japan seized Fengtian (Mukden) following the Mukden Incident and in 1932 installed a Japanese puppet state, Manchukuo, with Puyi, the last Qing emperor, as its ruler. Puyi was forced to abdicate in 1912, in response to the Republican revolution of the previous year, thus ending 267 years of Qing rule. During the Manchukuo era (1932–1945), the city was called Fengtian in Chinese and Mukden in English. Manchukuo's government was abolished in 1945 after the defeat of Japan at the end of World War II. Since then, the city has been called Shenyang.

27. For scholarship on "home movie," see Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann, eds., *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

28. They visit tourist destinations such as the Northern Mausoleum and Xinjing Park. Northern Mausoleum Park was established in 1927 and located in the northern part of Fengtian. It includes Zhaoling, the tomb of the second Qing emperor, Huang Taiji, which was constructed between 1643 and 1651.

29. In addition to Tokyo, Tainan and Fengtian were also under Japanese control.

30. Alexandra Schneider, "Homemade Travelogues: *Autosonntag*—a Film Safari in the Swiss Alps," in *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, ed. Jeffrey Ruoff (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 158.

31. Derek Hillard, "Walter Ruttmann's Janus-Faced View of Modernity: The Ambivalence of Description in *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*," *Monatshefte* 96, no. 1 (2004): 88.

32. As Heiner Fruhauf points out, the large-scale steamship and its dense facsimile of modern society was a topic of universal interest during the 1920s and 1930s. On the one hand, it is a floating hotel equipped beyond the standard luxuries of its counterparts on land; to the beholder ashore, on the other hand, the ship moves from and to infinity, eventually merging with all-encompassing nature at the meeting point of sky and ocean. Most of all, this elaborate construction bears witness to the superhuman qualities of mankind. Heiner Fruhauf, "Urban Exoticism and Its Sino-Japanese Scenery, 1910–1923," *Asian and African Studies* 6 (1997): 145.

33. For trains and the cultural perception of speed and visuality, see Wolfgang Schivel-

busch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Lynn Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

34. This view of a “phantom ride” strongly evokes Jean Epstein’s *La Glace à Trois Faces* (1927), with its sense of mysterious and compelling excitement engendered by speed.

35. Many urban landmarks in Tokyo appear in this film, including the Japan Theater and the Imperial Theatre in Ginza. Thanks to Michael Raine for pointing this out.

36. See Tepperman, *Amateur Cinema*, 2015; and Jan-Christopher Horak, ed., *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919–1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995). There were also numerous advertisements for 8 and 9.5 mm equipment in Chinese film magazines in the 1930s. More substantive research on this issue in 1930s China has yet to be conducted.

37. Lee, “Liu Na’ou de dianying meixueguan,” 152. Liu Na’ou’s contemporary, Deng Nanguang, a Taiwanese photographer who also studied in Japan, likewise made a short amateur film in the 1930s: *Fishing Tour* (Yuyou, 1935, 8 mm).

38. Lee, “Liu Na’ou de dianying meixueguan,” 153.

39. Yuri Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and Its Cultural Reception* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 81.

40. Hillard, “Ruttman’s Janus-Faced View,” 88.

41. Shanghai was where Liu Na’ou worked and lived; the life and scenery there for him was probably quotidian, lacking the splendor and excitement of faraway places and requiring more artistic effort to be defamiliarized. Another possibility is Shanghai’s debris: the city had endured severe Japanese bombardment in 1932, and the Chinese section outside of the International Settlement was nearly reduced to ruins. Thanks to Kristine Harris for pointing this out.

42. Including Liu Na’ou, “Yingpian yishu lun” [On Cinematic Art], *Dianying zhoubao*, published as installments July 1–October 8, 1932; Liu Na’ou, “Dianying jiezou jianlun” [A Brief Discussion of Film Rhythm], *Modern Screen* 6 (1933): 1–2; Liu Na’ou, “Kaimaila jigou—weizhi jiaodu jinenglun” [On the Mechanism of the Camera—the Function of Camera Positions and Angles], *Modern Screen* 7 (1934): 1–2; Liu Na’ou, “Dianying xingshimei de tanqiu” [Pursuing a Formal Beauty in Cinema], *Wanxiang* 1, May, 1934; Liu Na’ou, “Guangdiao yu yindiao” [Light Tone and Acoustic Tone], *Shidai dianying*, November 5, 1934.

43. For example, Léon Moussinac, Rudolf Arnheim, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, and Hugo Münsterberg.

44. Including Viking Eggeling, Hans Richter, Fernand Léger, Walter Ruttmann, René Clair, Alberto Cavalcanti, and Man Ray. Liu introduces Eggeling’s two seminal abstract films, *Horizontal-Vertikal Messe* (*Horizontal-Vertical Orchestra*, 1921, now lost) and *Symphonie Diagonale* (*Diagonal Symphony*, 7 min., 1924), and mentions Richter’s abstract films *Rhythmus 23* (1923) and *Rhythmus 25* (1925). He also introduces the use of close-ups on faces and objects as a means of constructing visual rhythms and psychological

effects in his *Inflation* (1927). Liu assesses Léger's *Ballet Mécanique* (1924) in terms of its employing images of ordinary objects and use of skillful cinematography to create "significance of movement" without scenario. More importantly, the harmony of speed, force, and rhythm in this film strongly evokes cinematic attraction. Liu differentiates Ruttmann's attitude and method of filmmaking from that of Eggeling and Richter, stating that the latter two place more emphasis on cinema's scientific and mathematical base. Ruttmann, however, concentrates more on empathy, ornamental beauty, and psychological effects, through multiplying modes of movement and employing sensational techniques. Clair's *Entr'acte* (1924), Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures* (1926), and Man Ray's *Emak-Bakia* (1926) are also under discussion.

45. Liu, "Yingpian yishu lun."

46. For the Symbolists, the art of motion evoked the harmonious rhythm of dance. See Tom Gunning, "Loie Fuller and the Art of Motion," in *The Tenth Muse: Cinema and Other Arts*, ed. Leonardo Quaresima and Laura Vichi (Udine: Forum, 2001), 25–53; Laurent Guido, "Rhythmic Bodies/Movies: Dance as Attraction in Early Film Culture," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 139–152.

47. Liu, "Dianying jiezou jianlun."

48. Mu married the dance hostess Qiu Peipei in 1934. Liu Na'ou's diaries in 1927, as well as Shanghai tableau newspapers, described his infatuation with dance girls, both Japanese and Chinese, in Shanghai, Tokyo, and Nanjing. See Hsu Chen-chin and Kang Laixin, eds., *Liu Na'ou quanji: riji ji* [The Complete Works of Liu Na'ou: Diaries] in Hsu and Kang, *Liu Na'ou quanji*.

49. Peng, *Dandyism and Transcultural Modernity*, 27–35. Miaodou, "Zuojia yu wudao: Liu Na'ou shi huoshanshang de qianbei" [Author and Dance: Liu Na'ou Is a Veteran in the Dancing World], *Tiaowushijie* 2, no. 2, 1937, n.p.

50. For instance, Mu's famed short stories "Shanghai Foxtrot" ("Shanghai de hubuwu") (1932) and "Five People in the Nightclub" ("yezonghui li de wugeren") (1932) and Liu's short story collection, *Urban Scenery* (*dushi fengjingxian*, 1930).

51. The Soviet compilation/city film *Shanghai Document* (*Yakov Bliokh*, 1927) juxtaposes Western expatriates having a dance party in a lavish garden with impoverished Chinese children dragging heavy carts in the street, graphically matching the rotating phonograph with the cart's wheels, creating a trenchant social and racial critique. 1930s Chinese leftist films also portray characters' decadent dance hall lifestyles in a sarcastic tone; see, for instance, *New Woman* (*Xin nüxing*, dir. Cai Chusheng, 1935) and *City Scenes* (*Dushi fengguang*, dir. Yuan Muzhi, 1935), among others.

52. Many dance schools were founded by both Russian expatriates and the Chinese. They offered classes ranging from the tango, fox trot, and waltz to the Charleston. Instruction books on dancing were widely published and popularized among fashion-conscious business people and urbanites. In 1933, thirty-nine dance halls had official operating licenses. In 1946, there were 1,622 registered dance hostesses in Shanghai. Luo

Suwen and Song Zuanyou, *Minguo shehui* [Republican Society], vol. 9 of *Shanghai tongshi* [History of Shanghai], ed. Xiong Yuezhi (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1999), 177–178.

53. He observed people (including a cross-racial couple: a Filipino girl in red and a young American man in a suit) dancing in a café named “Paris” and noticed that the level of orchestral performance was much higher there than in the Asakusa-area cafés and dance halls of Tokyo. Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, *Zhongguo youji* [Travel Notes of China], trans. Chen Hao (Beijing: Xinshijie chubanshe, 2011), 10.

54. Guido, “Rhythmic Bodies/Movies,” 139.

55. Guido, “Rhythmic Bodies/Movies,” 150.

56. Liu’s short story “Scenery” (“Fengjing”) (1930) recounts the chance encounter and erotic adventures of a woman and a man on a train and in an open landscape. Liu describes the characters’ experience in the train as “sitting on speed.”

57. Jeremy Hicks, *Dziga Vertov: Defining Documentary Film* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 79.

58. Liu Na’ou, “E’fa de yingxi lilun” [Film Theories of the Soviet Union and France], in *Liu Na’ou quanji: zengbuji*, 179.

59. Liu, “Dianying jiezou jianlun.”

60. Liu, “Dianying jiezou jianlun.”

61. Liu, “Dianying jiezou jianlun.”

62. Originally in French in the text. Liu, “Yingpian yishu lun.”

63. Liu, “Yingpian yishu lun.” Originally in English.

64. Liu, “E’fa de yingxi lilun,” 180.

65. A literal translation of the Chinese term *zhijie* would be “interweaving.” To learn more about the theoretical permutations and cinematic practice of montage after it was translated and introduced to China in the early 1930s, see Jessica Ka-yee Chan, “Translating ‘Montage’: The Discreet Attractions of Soviet Montage for Chinese Revolutionary Cinema,” *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 5, no. 3 (2011): 197–218.

66. Liu’s original text used the French words; Liu, “Yingpian yishu lun.”

67. Liu, “Yingpian yishu lun.”

68. Hicks, *Dziga Vertov*, 71.

69. Liu, “Yingpian yishu lun.”

70. Liu, “Yingpian yishu lun.” The Chinese films *Fate in Tears and Laughter* (*Tixiao yinyuan*, 1932) and *A Night of Glamour* (*Yiye haohua*, dir. Shao Zuiweng, 1932) were cited as negative examples for their primitive editing, which Liu Na’ou critiqued and compared to *The Volga Boatman* and *Le Chanteur Inconnu*.

71. Hsu and Kang, *Liu Na’ou quanji: riji ji*, 688, 702, 708, 734, 740.

72. “Gen Laopang xuele jiju Ma Lianliang de Zhulianzhai” [Learn a Few Lines of Ma Lianliang’s Zhulianzhai from Laopang], in *Liu Na’ou quanji: riji ji*, 662; The *huqin* belongs to a family of bowed string instruments; *jinghu* is used primarily for Beijing opera accompaniment.



73. See Hsu and Kang, *Liu Na'ou quanji: riji ji*, 176, 186, 328, 346, 370, 476, 550, 594.

74. For the complete screen script, see “Yongyuan de weixiao’ jiben (zi di 1 mu zhi 566 mu)” [Script of *Eternal Smile* (Scene 1 to Scene 566)], in *Liu Na'ou quanji: dianying ji*, 46–219.

75. Sound in “close-up” or in “long shot”; the scale refers to the distance between the sound source and the camera.

76. Liu, “Yingpian yishu lun,” 40–45.

77. In Republican Shanghai, the most luxurious first-run film theaters were mostly owned by foreign exhibitors and usually showed foreign films (mainly from Hollywood). Chinese films were primarily shown in the second- or third-tier film theaters, whose equipment was relatively humble and which catered to a lower-class demographic by offering more affordable ticket prices.

78. Published in the journal *Trackless Train* (*Wugui lieche*), which was funded by Liu Na'ou. “Yingxi manxiang” [Random Thoughts on Cinema], *Wugui lieche* 5 (1928): 281–284.

79. For audience discipline related to gender issues in early American film culture, see Shelly Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture after the Nickelodeon* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), particularly chapter 1, 1–40.

80. Most Chinese theaters screened films in addition to presenting other kinds of performance, such as Chinese operas; in the latter, the audiences were used to eating, drinking, and chatting during the performance. This habit continued during film exhibitions.

81. In Liu, “Dianying xingshimei de tanqiu.”

82. Words in italics are originally in English.

83. Originally in English.

84. Liu Na'ou, “Ecranescape,” *Modern Screen* 2 (1933): 1.

85. See Liu, “Yingpian yishu lun,” 267–269.

86. This is reminiscent of a note that Charlie Chaplin wrote Vertov after watching *Enthusiasm*: “Never had I known that these mechanical sounds could be arranged to sound so beautiful. I regard it as one of the most exhilarating symphonies I have heard. Mr. Dziga Vertov is a musician. The professor should learn from him, not quarrel with him. Congratulations.” See Hicks, *Dziga Vertov*, 126.

87. Liu, “Guangdiao yu yindiao.”

88. Originally in German. *Schauspiel* refers to any spectacle or public performance. In late eighteenth-century German literature, the word took on the more specific meaning of a play with the characteristics of both tragedy and a comedy, meaning a serious play with a happy ending and in which the hero does not die. See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “Schauspiel” (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014), <https://global.britannica.com/art/Schauspiel> (last updated September 17, 1999).

89. The term “sound designer” gained wider currency in connection with the work of film editor and sound designer Walter Murch, for his significant contributions to Fran-

cis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979); Murch, "Touch of Silence."

90. Referring to Liu Na'ou's death. Keiji Matsuzaki, "Liu Canbo qiangji" [Liu Canbo Was Shot], in *Liu Na'ou quanji: zengbuji*, 258.

91. For example, the Western colonial powers, Japanese military invasion, the Nationalist regime, and the underground Communist activities.

92. Huang Gang, "Liu Na'ou zhilu (baogao): huiyi yige 'gaogui' de ren, ta de dijiande xunshen" [The Road of Liu Na'ou (Report): Recalling A "Noble" Man, and His Contemptible Death], *Ta Kung Pao*, January 27–February 7, 1941.

93. After the outbreak of the Pacific War on December 7, 1941.

94. See Huang, "Liu Na'ou zhilu (baogao)." Japanese film writer and producer Keiji Matsuzaki (1905–1974) also recalls that Liu worked as an "emissary" for the Japanese to approach Chinese film professionals and intellectuals. In Matsuzaki, "Liu Canbo qiangji," 273.

95. Leslie Pincus, *Authenticating Culture in Imperial Japan: Kuki Shuzo and the Rise of National Aesthetics* (University of California Press, 1996), 39.

96. Hsu and Kang, *Liu Na'ou quanji: riji ji*, 446.

97. Seiji M. Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 86.

98. Ying Xiong, "Ethno Literary Identity and Geographical Displacement: Liu Na'ou's Chinese Modernist Writing in the East Asian Context," *Asian Culture and History* 3, no. 1 (2011): 5.

99. Jessica Berman, *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 17.

100. Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*, 77.

