

**Alternate Paeans of Desire:  
the Chinese Film *JU DOU* and the  
American Play *DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS***

Li Zeng  
University of Louisville

**Abstract**

The internationally acclaimed Chinese film *Ju Dou* (1990), directed by Zhang Yimou, is about a love triangle among a dye-house master with impotence, his young wife, and his nephew apprentice. Although the film is adapted from Liu Heng's novella *Fuxi fuxi* (1988) whose title draws our attention to the Chinese myth about Fuxi and Nuwa—two siblings becoming spouses who created humankind, the incestuous relationship in the film reminds us of that in Eugene O'Neill's play, *Desire Under the Elms* (1924). The situation of *Ju Dou*, as this paper sees, is the Ephraim-Abbie-Eben plot of the *Desire Under the Elms* which is modeled upon the Hippolytos-Phaidra-Theseus relationship in Greek mythology. Apart from the similarity of plot scenario, there is technical similarity between the two works. In comparing *Ju Dou* with *Desire Under the Elms*, the paper suggests that these two artists emotionally revealed different aspects of their view of life through similar dramatic plots and characters and that O'Neill not only influenced modern Chinese playwrights in the early decades of the twentieth-century but might still be in rapport with Chinese culture in the post-Mao era.

**INTRODUCTION**

*Ju Dou* is one of the famous Chinese films by Zhang Yimou, an internationally renowned film director in contemporary China. Financed in part by foreign capital, *Ju Dou* came out in 1990.<sup>1</sup> Although the Chinese government banned the film domestically for two years and attempted to withdraw it from international competitions, *Ju Dou* was widely shown abroad, received the Luis Bunuel Award at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival, and became the first Chinese movie to be nominated for an Oscar in 1991.<sup>2</sup>

An internationally acclaimed work, *Ju Dou* has fascinated a large number of audiences, film critics, and scholars of Chinese culture over the past decade. Some believe that the film is highly Chinese in terms of expressed cultural notions such as *yin* (excessive eroticism) and *xiao* (filial piety), and others claim to find a kind of "Oriental's orientalism"

displayed by the director; and many of the critical comments and acclaims have noted the traits of Western influence in the movie and other movies of Zhang Yimou.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the highly parallel plots between *Ju Dou* and the American playwright Eugene O'Neill's play *Desire Under the Elms* have so far received little critical attention. Thus, the task assigned to this paper is to compare Zhang Yimou's *Ju Dou* with O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* as supplement to the existing studies of the film, other contemporary Chinese films, and Eugene O'Neill. In doing such a comparative analysis, I attempt not only to further point out some non-ethnocentric features of the content of New Chinese Cinema, but also to concretely exemplify the complexity and richness of contemporary Chinese culture.

### **PARALLEL PLOT SCENARIO BETWEEN *JU DOU* AND *DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS***

Set in a village of a mountainous area in China in the 1920s, *Ju Dou* is basically about a love triangle among a dye-house master, his young wife, and his nephew apprentice. Yang Jinshan, an old, cruel dye-house master with impotence, brings home a beautiful and young bride, Ju Dou, expecting that she bears him a male heir to continue his family line. Yang Tianqing, the owner's nephew apprentice, has eyes for Ju Dou from the first time he meets her and grows strong sympathy and affection for her after witnessing her being abused by her husband. The dye-house master's mistreatment and the discovery of Tianqing's secret passion for her lead Ju Dou to make advances to Tianqing who resists at first and then succumbs to her seduction and his own sexual desire. As a result of their transgressions, Ju Dou and Tianqing have a son whom Yang Jinshan initially believes to be his own. As time goes on, the old dye-house master becomes paralyzed by a stroke, and changes from a victimizer to a victim as he watches his wife and nephew openly having an affair. While the young lovers suffer psychologically and physically from their illicit relationship, their son, Yang Tianbai, becomes angry and frustrated in confusion as to who his father is. By accident, Tianbai drowns his acknowledged father and eventually kills his actual father willfully. In the end, Ju Dou sets a fire onto the Yang dye-house and vanishes in the blaze of her futile defiance.

Although Zhang Yimou's *Ju Dou* is adapted from a Chinese novella *Fuxi fuxi*, published in 1988 by Liu Heng, the incestuous relationship in the film reminds us of that in Eugene O'Neill's play, *Desire Under the Elms*, first produced in 1924. The triangle relationship of *Ju Dou*, to a large extent, is the Ephraim-Abbie-Eben plot of the *Desire Under the Elms*. If we reverse the source and borrowing in order in our comparison here, we see the situation of O'Neill's play as following:

The play is set on a farm in New England in 1850. Like Yang Jinshan in the Chinese film, the old farmer Ephraim Cabot brings home a young and beautiful bride. Like Ju Dou, Abbie Putnam, Ephraim's newly-married wife, finds herself having passion for Eben Cabot, her husband's son, but conceals it before making advances. Like Tianqing, Eben resists at first his stepmother's advances but eventually succumbs to Abbie's seduction. As in the Ju Dou-Tianqing affair, Abbie and Eben have a son of their transgressions whom the old Ephraim initially believes to be his own. And towards the end of the play Abbie smothers her baby son in an effort to prove her love for Eben and testify to the strength of her own passion. Thus, as in the movie, but by sacrificing the life of an infant rather than two adults' lives, the

relationship among the mother, two fathers, and the baby son in the play ends with an unresolved questioning of the interplay between human desire and ethical prohibition.

### **A POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL RELATION BETWEEN *JU DOU* AND *DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS***

Obviously, the stories outlined above in *Ju Dou* and *Desire Under the Elms* are highly parallel. And the striking similarity between the two works invites some explanation. Tracing the genealogy of a story, as Wendy Doniger says, “is a mug’s game.” Yet she provides us with a solution to this quandary in comparative studies by suggesting that we explain similarity by “a degree of human (if not psychic) unity and a degree of borrowing or ‘dependence,’ plus a restructuring in each new situation.”<sup>4</sup> Since it is very possible that the influence of O’Neill’s play upon Zhang Yimou’s cinematic structure and vision exists, here I shall particularly proceed to trace the “borrowing.”

It is common knowledge that Zhang Yimou belongs to the Fifth-Generation Chinese filmmakers who participated in a nationwide intellectual movement in the mid- and late 1980s called “cultural self-reflection.” At that time, being rapidly exposed to recently introduced Western literary trends and recently-translated works of Western and other foreign literatures, young Chinese writers and artists sensed the obviously inferior position of contemporary Chinese literature and art in comparison. They then embarked on a broad discussion about reassessment of the value of traditional Chinese culture, aiming at criticizing the existing structural character of the nation by relocating the nation’s cultural experiences and memories that had been estranged by modern radical ideologies and politics ever since the May Fourth Movement of 1919.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, however, these young writers and artists of the 1980s resembled to a large extent the May Fourth generation (1910s-1930s), the forerunners of modern Chinese literature. As Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu points out in his remark on the Fifth-Generation filmmakers:

On the one hand, the Fifth-Generation was to inherit the critical legacy of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement, to launch a thorough, iconoclastic attack on tradition, to clear away the obstacles on the path to modernity. . . . On the other hand, “historical/cultural reflection” also implies a “search for the roots,” a return to the source of Chinese culture, and recovery of a national history obscured and distorted by authoritarian discourse.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, in their search for the cultural roots, the Fifth-Generation filmmakers, like other contemporary artists and writers including Liu Heng whose novelle *Fuxi, fuxi* was the base for *Ju Dou*, went back not only to the primitiveness of rural life and uncanonized written tradition, but also, dialogically and dialectically, to the foundation of modern Chinese literature since the May Fourth Movement. Critics have witnessed a basic thematic continuity between Zhang Yimou’s film or Fifth-Generation film and the legacy of modern Chinese literature which, as commonly known, is strongly influenced by Western literature in terms of themes and techniques, including those of Eugene O’Neill’s.<sup>7</sup>

As recorded in modern Chinese literary history, one of the first adaptations of O’Neill’s play *The Emperor Jones* in modern Chinese spoken drama was *Yama Zhao*, by Hong Shen in 1923, followed by a second Chinese reworking, especially in the expressionist

techniques, *The Wilderness*, produced first in 1937, by Cao Yu, one of the most influential figures in modern Chinese theater; and among attributions of foreign ancestry for Cao Yu's another play *Thunderstorm* which was first published and staged in 1934, was O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*.<sup>8</sup> Ever since its first publication, Cao Yu's *Thunderstorm* has become the most performed play in the history of modern Chinese drama, and there have been quite a few different film adaptations of the play made in the 1930s, 1980s and 1990s respectively, whereas Cao Yu's *Wilderness* was revised for republication in 1982, made into a film in 1981 which was regarded as a pioneering work inspiring some late comers, and adapted as a Western-style opera in 1987.<sup>9</sup> In their search for ancestral motifs for subject matter from modern Chinese literary and cultural tradition, including an important part that had been cut out of the authoritarian version of the May Fourth legacy, the strong Western influence in literary arena and the active interaction among such drama, literature, and film in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century (and its continuity into more recent years) undoubtedly provided Zhang Yimou and other "searching-for-roots" artists and writers with inspiring images, characters, fictional structures and artistic techniques. Zhang Yimou once claimed that the pre-Communist-era Shanghai movies, many of which bear either the May Fourth inspiration or traits of Western modernist aesthetics, "were as good in their time as any made in the West;" and almost all his famous movies are adaptations of modern and contemporary literary works which, as noted above, might have already absorbed thematic and technical elements unknown to the Chinese tradition.<sup>10</sup>

### **A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF *JU DOU* AND *DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS***

Having suggested the possible indirect influence of *Desire Under the Elms* on *Ju Dou* or Liu Heng's novella *Fuxi fuxi* on which Zhang's movie was made, we can now move on to a brief analysis of the two works. Parallel plots like these are enticing because they can not only reveal why and how certain motifs and structures are shaped or recreated, but also help us understand better why writers or artists use certain characters and plots for specific purposes in a particular place and time. For a talented artist, no matter whether he or she is Chinese or American, art is never an end itself. Using drama as a medium, Eugene O'Neill, one of the best playwrights in the United States, is believed to try to find a remedy for his fundamental despair or to give a passionate answer to the problems that tormented him in his life; through film-making, Zhang Yimou claims to attempt an embodiment of a humanistic content in an inhuman social system.<sup>11</sup> Juxtaposing the two works shows that in *Desire Under the Elms* and *Ju Dou* these two artists emotionally revealed different aspects of their view of life through similar dramatic plots and characters.

In a remark to the critic Joseph Wood Krutch, O'Neill pointed out the basic difference between himself and the majority of modern dramatists: "Most modern plays are concerned with the relation between man and man, but that does not interest me at all. I am interested only in the relation between man and God."<sup>12</sup> Obviously, O'Neill thought of himself as a religious playwright. But his religion is not in the sense of Christianity. In spite that he was brought up a Roman Catholic, O'Neill lost his faith as an adolescent. His nature, however, detested this spiritual vacuum and urged him to look for a substitute ever after. This is proved by Louis Sheaffer: "He [O'Neill] once told Weeks, however, that he was not an atheist but an agnostic. What kept him from being an atheist was the feeling that there had to

be Something, Someone, some Purpose behind this life.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, like a passionate pilgrim, O’Neill attempted to find his personal religion almost in all his plays. But, what did he find in *Desire Under the Elms*?

To this question O’Neill gave a Nietzschean answer: “desire.” An irresistible passion, the desire makes Ephraim leave his farm in spring and go in search of a new wife; it makes Eben’s eyes look like “a wild animal’s in captivity” and makes him feel “inwardly unsubdued;” the desire drives Abbie to seduce Eben who is in turn drawn to Abbie by desire. In short, the “desire” that flows through the elms and drips from them and pervades everything under these trees is O’Neill’s God. It is not, of course, the God worshipped by the Christians, but rather a dynamic, impersonal “Something” present in all things. In the play, O’Neill described his omnipresent God through Ephraim Cabot’s speaking:

[Ephraim] Cabot--(at the gate, confusedly) Even the music can’t drive it out--somethin’. Ye kin feel it droppin’ off the elums, climbin’ up the roof, sneakin’ down the chimney, pokin’ in the corners! They’s no peace in houses, they’s no rest livin’ with folks. Somethin’s always livin’ with ye.<sup>14</sup>

Here we see that O’Neill’s religion, the desire represented by “something,” is very powerful. Since he had found a shrine for his soul in search of a new faith, O’Neill repeatedly exalted the transfiguring power of the desire: “I’m gittin’ stronger. I kin feel it growin’ in me--growin’ an’ growin’--till it’ll bust out--!”<sup>15</sup> And it becomes Nature when Abbie forces Eben to submit to his passion:

Hain’t the sun strong an’ hot? Ye kin feel it burnin’ into the earth--Nature--makin’ thin’s grow--bigger ‘n’ bigger--burnin’ inside ye--makin’ ye want t’ grow--into somethin’ else--till ye’re jined with it--an’ it’s your’n--but it owns ye, too--an’ makes ye grow bigger--like a tree--like them elums.<sup>16</sup>

Obviously, in Abbie and Eben the desire becomes a sexual urge. And the exaltation of their desire in the play reflects O’Neill’s view of life and of tragedy. Undoubtedly he was to some extent influenced by Nietzsche’s philosophy. According to Louis Sheaffer, O’Neill became acquainted with Nietzsche’s writings five years after he had given up Catholicism. And in 1928, two decades after he had first read Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*, he was asked if he had a literary idol. “The answer to that,” he said, “is in one word--Nietzsche.”<sup>17</sup> It seemed that in Nietzsche’s attack on all phases of the established order, as well as man’s charting of heaven and hell, O’Neill discovered some justification for the notorious inconsistencies of the human condition and a shrine for his faith at which he could worship. With Nietzsche’s philosophy as his warrant, O’Neill did not hesitate to portray the spontaneous and beautiful love between Abbie and Eben although the love is something approaching incest. Now, O’Neill’s God is the manifestation of passionate desire. And under this God, even the notion of sin becomes meaningless. “He was the child o’ our sin,” says Eben when he discovers he cannot bear the separation from Abbie either in guilt or in love after the first horror and outrage of Abbie’s infanticide; but Abbie proudly answers “as if defying God”: “I don’t repent that sin! I hain’t askin’ God t’ fergive that!”<sup>18</sup> Framed in the Nietzschean philosophy, the play shows how Abbie and Eben are driven at first by their desire for the possession of

the farm and their desire for the possession of each other's body and finally reach a deification of love.

It was perhaps the "desire" in the Nietzschean sense, a libidinal force yet to symbolize the rebellious spirit for his own time, that inspired the talented Chinese film director Zhang Yimou. To all appearances, in the film *Ju Dou*, Zhang Yimou seemed to manipulate the implication of desire to unfold before the audience the devouring tensions of Chinese family relations. If it is only so, the movie is a domestic, melodramatic tragedy. But, I believe, what Zhang Yimou ultimately attempted to do was to create a psychological tragedy that functioned as cultural critique of the Chinese nation.

At deeper levels than the linear story, Zhang Yimou's approach to this film was first of all political and allegorical, as noticed by some critics.<sup>19</sup> The unending, inescapable cycle of conflicts between generations is caused by the patriarchal system. Seen from a traditional Chinese moral perspective, the illicit, incestuous love affair between Ju Dou and Tianqing is an unpardonable violation of social ethics and human relationships; the excessive sexual desire on the part of Ju Dou and the lack of filial piety on the part of Yang Tianqing are both to be condemned in the eyes of Yang Jinshan and the whole Yang clan who symbolize the oppressive social normality that sets out to quench the desires of young people.

Utilizing his film as such political/allegorical instruments was openly admitted by Zhang Yimou himself. When asked of the unique features of contemporary Chinese movies in Mainland China in comparison with those in Hong Kong and Taiwan, Zhang Yimou said:

"Using literature to transmit the Tao" (wenyi zaidao) is a habit of thought in literary and artistic creation that has been sedimented (jidian) in Mainland China for thousands of years. Therefore, the works from Mainland have a heavy literary quality, and their main objective is to embody a humanistic content. The famous works of the Fifth-Generation directors are basically the awakenings of cultural reflection and cultural awareness in this broad humanistic background.<sup>20</sup>

With "using literature to transmit the Tao" as his warrant, however, Zhang Yimou explored further in his cinematic world and attempted to reveal more profound meanings in *Ju Dou*. And here our attention is drawn more to the psychological and philosophical aspects. As commonly known, Zhang Yimou's films often bear these hallmarks: visual lushness, sensuality, and a strong female lead. This last hallmark is significantly foregrounded in this movie. If in *Desire Under the Elms*, by portraying modes of unholy lust and infanticide, O'Neill conveyed a Nietzschean viewpoint that man's desire alone can enable him to transcend himself, then, in *Ju Dou*, by probing the inner turmoil of the female protagonist, the film director showed us a woman torn between social institutions and passion. Moreover, in relation to her two men, Yang Jinshan and Yang Tianqing, Ju Dou functions as a central agent in the film whereby the sexually-impotent husband restores his patriarchal power and the socially-emasculated lover fulfills his sexual desire. Playing such an object for social and physical masculinity, Ju Dou's desires for escape as well as for love are suppressed and punished eventually by either physical or psychic pains. The following dialogues from the film illustrate that when piety confronts transgression, Tianqing can be only an apologist:

(Ju Dou takes out a bottle of arsenic.)

Ju Dou: Listen to me, it's either him or me.

Tianqing: Who?

Ju Dou: Who else should it be?

Tianqing: How dare you? After all, he is my uncle.

Ju Dou: He is your uncle, then what am I to you?

(Ju Dou and Tianqing are at the old man's deathbed.)

Tianqing: Killing one's husband cries out for punishment.

Ju Dou: Didn't he deserve to die? What a loyal son you are.

(Tianqing slaps Ju Dou's face.)

Ju Dou: You, too, are beating me. Revive the old man, and you can both beat me. I don't want to live anymore.<sup>21</sup>

Even Tianbai, her illicit son by Tianqing, tries to verify his patrilineal subjectivity at the sacrifice of castration of Ju Dou's passion and life of his biological father. Having identified himself with his acknowledged father earlier and therefore symbolically with the patriarchal social structure, Tianbai's relationship with Ju Dou in the father-mother-son triangulation in the later part of the film is more than a Chinese oedipal complex.<sup>22</sup> Towards the end of the film, Ju Dou and Tianqing go to the family's cellar to reunite one more time as husband and wife. When discovering his mother and father embracing in a suicidal attempt, Tianbai rescues Ju Dou but throws Tianqing into the dye-vat where he gives him a fatal hit with a thick stick. Tianbai's disrupting his mother's sexual affair with his father and killing him are seen as the triumph of the patriarchal power and patrilineal subjectivity over transgression

If we see O'Neill's female protagonist Abbie is redeemed with a great passion when the play ends, even though she is to be punished by law for her filicide, Ju Dou, in Zhang Yimou's art, being sexually abused by her husband and mutilated of passion by her son, and with the final loss of her lover, symbolizes the carrier of the burdens of cultural negation. As Shuqin Cui points out:

If Jinshan represents China's past, Tianqing the present, Tianbai the future, the film and fiction sound a nostalgic elegy: men and power, . . . But when, where, and by what have you been castrated into an impotent being? In order to utter the unspeakable, the representation of woman is created. From father figure to son and from the past to the future, all men's burdens, desires, and losses are laid on a single woman's shoulders. This is the deep structure and inner voice of the film.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, in the end of the film, by Ju Dou's burning down the Yang dye-house and eventually vanishing in the blaze in a fixed shot while the noise of the flame is in the meantime still heard, we, the audience, was left in a sort of eternal space with indefinite temporality. This cinematic effect metaphorically suggests that the ceaseless and cyclic interplay among these characters and between them and the sociocultural system in their pursuit of desire is not just a story of "our time," but rather a story of "all times."

Apart from the similarity of plot scenario, there are technical similarities between the two works. Both the tall elms in O'Neill's play and the high-hung colorful strips of dyed cloth in Zhang's film, for example, symbolize respectively man's irresistible desire, longing for libidinal and psychic liberation. Other examples may include the similarity between

O'Neill's use of psychoanalytic expressionism and Zhang's cinematic point-of-view structure. In Part II Scene 2 of the *Desire Under the Elms*, O'Neill showed us two bedrooms simultaneously: Eben alone and brooding in his, and the married couple in theirs—Ephraim is strangely excited by the thought of another son and Abbie concentrating on the sounds from Eben's bedroom.<sup>24</sup> In the first half of *Ju Dou*, knowing that Tianqing has been peeping at her, Ju Dou tries to seduce him by performing a slow strip for him as he (and the audience) watches from his hiding place, but, instead, she reveals her bruises and which becomes the first bond between the two characters. In both the play and movie, we see a scene of powerful sexual undercurrents.

## CONCLUSION

In comparing the Chinese movie *Ju Dou* with O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*, my paper shows that O'Neill not only influenced modern Chinese playwrights in the early decades of the twentieth-century but might still be in rapport with Chinese culture in the post-Mao era. Also, my paper attempts to show that in their search for artistic/literary inspiration outside the overdefined social realities of contemporary China, Zhang Yimou and other contemporary Chinese artists and writers were found either directly inherited or philosophically akin to May Fourth literary tradition in which Western influence had been embedded. In fact, as Catherine Vance Yeh points out, like their May Fourth predecessors, these artists and writers "wholeheartedly accepted foreign literature as important to their literary endeavor." And, as she quotes from the "searching-for-roots" writer and critic Li Tuo's argument, they realized that the "searching-for-roots" literature movement "first had to learn from the Western modernists and then try, on that basis, to absorb Chinese traditional culture."<sup>25</sup>

Looking for such influences or "international relations" and pointing out the similarity (as well as dissimilarity) between the two works may help us understand better the complexity and richness of contemporary Chinese culture and literature and, in addition, explain something better which might be otherwise problematic. For example, *Ju Dou's* traits of Greek mythology in terms of the Hippolytos-Phaidra-Theseus relationship upon which *Desire Under the Elms* was modeled, I believe, helped the film and Zhang Yimou to have been received into Western audience's favor rather than the unknown Chinese myth about Fuxi who fathered mankind by mating with his sister. This specific trait of the Hippolytos-Phaidra-Theseus myth has yet to receive enough attention although critics of *Ju Dou* have generally mentioned the movie's Oedipus complex. As for Liu Heng's novella *Fuxi fuxi* on which Zhang's film was adapted, apart from being the title, Fuxi is neither a character in the work nor alluded to. Nevertheless, some critics think it was to underscore the incestuous liaison between Ju Dou and her husband's nephew that the novella was named after this mythical figure.<sup>26</sup>

### Notes

1. The Tokuma company co-produced it because of Gong Li's popularity in Japan. See Zhang Erwei. *Zhang Yimou Talks* (Zhang Yimou shuo). (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi, 1998, 18.
2. There were several alleged reasons for the banning among which was the one that Chinese authorities deemed the movie unsuitable for a Chinese audience by virtue of its sexual content.
3. See, e.g., Jenny Kwok Wah Lau. "Judou—A Hermeneutical Reading of Cross-cultural Cinema." *Film Quarterly* 45, no.2 (1991): 2-10; Rey Chow. *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, and Ethnography in Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia UP, 1995) 170-171.
4. Wendy Doniger. *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth*. (New York: Columbia UP, 1998) 140; 139.
5. For a further discussion of the reassessment of traditional culture by these writers and artists, see Catherine Vance Yeh. "Root Literature of the 1980s: May Fourth as a Double Burden," in Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova and Oldrich Kral eds. *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Asia Center, 2001) 230-236.
6. Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu. "National Cinema, Cultural Critique, Transnational Capital: The Films of Zhang Yimou," in Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu ed. *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997) 110.
7. For a detail discussion on Western literary influence, see Bonnie S. McDougall. "The Impact of Western Literary Trends," in Merle Goldman ed. *Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1977) 37-61.
8. See Bonnie S. McDougall and Kam Louie. *The Literature of China in the Twentieth Century*. (New York: Columbia UP, 1997) 173; 180; 178.
9. See, e.g., McDougall and Louie, 177; 180.
10. For a brief discussion of the Shanghai film scene then, see Shuqin Cui. *Women Through the Lens: Gender and Nation in a Century of Chinese Cinema*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i P, 2003) 11-12; for discussions of his adaptation from literature, see Zhang, 8-12.
11. For Zhang's claim, see Luo Xueying. "Characterization, Narration, and Meaning" (Xieren, xushi, neihan). *Dangdai dianying* 51 (November 1992): 12; and Lu, 109-110.
12. Quoted from Egil Tornqvist. *A Drama of Souls*. (New Heaven: Yale UP, 1969) 11. Louis Sheaffer. *O'Neill: Son and Playwright*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968) 121.
13. Eugene O'Neill. *Complete Plays 1920-1931*. (New York: The Library of America, 1988) 363.
14. O'Neill, 325.
15. O'Neill, 342.
16. Sheaffer, 122.
17. O'Neill, 375.

18. See, e.g., Lu, 114-115. Some of the points in my discussion here in this paragraph are shared with Lu.
19. Quoted from Lu, 109.
20. See *Ju Dou*. Dir. Zhang Yimou. Perf. Gong Li, Li Baotian, and Li Wei. Videocassette. LHV, 1991. The translation used here is from Cui, 142.
21. Shuqin Cui's analysis of the relationship between the son and two fathers in the film is illuminating. See Cui, 146-149.
22. Shuqin Cui. "Gendered Perspective: The Construction and Representation of Subjectivity and Sexuality in *Ju Dou*," in Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu ed. *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*, 328.
23. See O'Neill, 347-348.
24. Catherine Vance Yeh. "Root Literature of the 1980s: May Fourth as a Double Burden," in Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova and Oldrich Kral eds. *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Asia Center, 2001) 250.
26. For the myth about Fuxi and Nuwa, see Andrew H. Plaks. *Archetype and Allegory in The Dream of the Red Chamber*. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976) 35-36.