

Remolding Aesthetic Paradigm for Chinese Theater: Yu Shangyuan's *Qinxian* Articles and the American New Stagecraft Movement

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Abstract

Offering to fill in a gap in the modern Chinese theater history, this paper probes into the famous Chinese dramatist Yu Shangyuan's 余上沅 *Qinxian* 芹獻 series of articles which was published between 6 January and 23 May 1924 and has been received limited scholarly attention due to its scattered topics and equivocal wording. Via textual analysis and contextual investigation, this paper finds that *Qinxian* articles are not all original compositions but contain many unmarked translations rendered from the works concerning the “aesthetic paradigm,” an antirealistic theatrical scheme derived from the American New Stagecraft Movement. Based on the aesthetic paradigm, Yu Shangyuan devised a similar theatrical scheme in *Qinxian*, covering four facets: simple and symbolic stage sets decorated with lines, masses, and expressive lights; powerful anti-Ibsenite artist director; non-Ibsenian poetic drama; and presentational acting. Upon comparing *Qinxian* with the National Theater Movement's propositions, this paper finds that the movement's main arguments largely echo the key notions of *Qinxian*, indicating the movement's umbilical tie to *Qinxian* and, more at large, to the American New Stagecraft Movement. The analysis of *Qinxian* provides perspectives for the understanding of the aesthetic stance of the National Theater Movement, shedding light on the new insights that translation studies can bring to theater historiography.

Keywords

Yu Shangyuan, *Qinxian*, the National Theater Movement, the New Stagecraft Movement, aesthetic paradigm

1. Introduction

Modern drama came on the Chinese stage at the turn of the century in imitation of Western traditions, including “modern Euro-American dramaturgical (since Ibsen), performance (since Stanislavski), and production (since Duke Saxe-Meiningan) principles” (Liu 2013, 1). The encounter between Western and Chinese theater conventions led to the emergence of a hybrid theatrical form, the so-called civilized drama 文明戲 (*wenmingxi*), in the first two decades of the twentieth century, which is “reflective of indigenous performance even though they are often assumed to be based on the same modern dramaturgical, performance, and production principles” (2). By the 1920s, the doubt regarding the incompatibility of modern spoken theater with Chinese operatic conventions tolled the death knell for civilized drama. The 1920s became the “modernist orthodoxy” phase of modern Chinese theater, which featured a denouncement of “intercultural adaptation, appropriation and hybridization” (Wetmore, Liu, and Mee 2014, 12). Along with the embracement of Western drama was the vigorous condemnation by Chinese intellectuals of traditional Chinese opera’s incompatibility with the “art for the sake of life” paradigm. In a sense, most Chinese intellectuals denied Chinese opera the stature of national drama and even were hostile toward anything in the theater that was conventional, classical, or normative (Chen 2014, 1; Liu 2013, 1–3).

Against the backdrop of rejecting traditional Chinese opera came a unique call for a reexamination of Chinese indigenous drama, proposed by famous Chinese dramatist Yu Shangyuan 余上沅 (1897–1970) and a group of students who returned from their studies in the United States in the mid-1920s including Zhao Taimou 趙太侔 (1889–1968), Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (1899–1946), and Zhang Jiazhu 張嘉鑄 (1902–1985). Upholding the banner of building China’s national drama, they insisted that theater practitioners should renounce drama’s sociopolitical efficacy, reinsert Chinese indigenous resources into modern spoken theater, and follow an antirealistic theatrical paradigm (Liu 2016, 1; Ma 1989, 119). Yu and his comrades’ embracement of Chinese opera led to the movement being

condemned as a historical reversal of what Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962) and others had achieved in the Literary Revolution (Liu 2016, 16–22). Existing scholarship has paid extensive attention to the National Theater Movement and has yielded many important findings concerning the movement's progress, aesthetic stance, and positions in modern Chinese theater history (e.g., Liu 2016; Ma 1989). In particular, Liu Siyuan's study suggests a close relationship between Yu's experience in the United States and the aesthetic positioning of the movement (Liu 2016). What existing studies have largely ignored, however, is that Yu's writings composed in the United States contain many translations rendered from the works concerning the American New Stagecraft Movement. This finding reveals the close connection between the National Theater Movement and the New Stagecraft Movement, mapping out a neglected terrain in modern Chinese theater historiography that encourages new directions and interests.

The conception of the National Theater Movement can be traced back to Yu's publications on theater in Pittsburgh. In September 1923, financed by the Tsinghua Boxer Indemnity Fund (Liang 1992, 42),¹ Yu entered the Drama Department of the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh (Yu 1923). During his stay at Carnegie, Yu published altogether nineteen articles, collectively titled *Qinxian* 芹獻 (lit. celery offering). First occurring in *The Book of Lieh-tzu* 列子, *qinxian*, also known as *xianqin* 獻芹, is a modest way of saying one's contribution is not worth much (Hong 2002, 18). Although Yu humbly states in the title that *Qinxian* has little merit, this series of articles has brought into Chinese theater a variety of important topics on theater production, including stage setting techniques, playwriting principles, theater directing methods, and approaches to grasping histrionic art. Its preoccupation with the visualization of dramatic texts distinguishes *Qinxian* from most contemporary works, which often show little tincture of theatrical considerations. The thorough discussion of the physical arrangement of the stage laid the foundation for Yu to promote theater studies' splitting away from traditional literary studies. After returning to Beijing in May 1925, Yu united a group of intellectuals and launched the famous National Theater Movement (Liu 2016; Ma 1989). The fellow movement participants conducted a series of activities, including establishing a theater department at the National Art School in Beijing, instructing student performances in the Beijing theater circle, and launching *Jukan* 劇刊 (Theater supplement) to stimulate theoretical discussions (Liu 2016).

Aside from lending credence to the National Theater Movement's focus on the theatrical sphere, the *Qinxian* series of articles offered Yu and

his comrades a comprehensive paradigm for conducting holistic theater studies. According to my research, *Qinxian* articles contain a large amount of “unmarked translations” or “pseudo-originals,” that is, “translated texts falsely presented and received as originals” (Pym 1998, 60), which were rendered from the works concerning aesthetic theater, namely, an antirealistic theater that rejected ostensible verisimilitude on the stage and enshrined theater as a sphere for obtaining aesthetic experiences (Bloom 1996, 61–67). Reading extensively on writings regarding aesthetic theater, Yu translated segments from what he read and merged the translated texts into *Qinxian* articles, which subsequently influenced the formation and orientation of the National Theater Movement. In this sense, then, it is imprudent and injudicious to compress Yu and his comrades into rigid interpretive schemes that distinguish between apologists or antagonists of traditional Chinese culture.

Offering to provide more details to our understanding of the progress of modern Chinese theater, the present paper probes into Yu Shangyuan’s *Qinxian* series of articles. It first traces the original works Yu referred to in composing *Qinxian* and the translation strategies adopted so as to understand the process by which *Qinxian* articles were produced. With reference to the source texts and Yu’s textual maneuvers, it then examines each *Qinxian* article to unfold the intricate connection between these nineteen articles and Yu’s theatrical vision as revealed in these articles. As will be shown in the last section, the analysis of *Qinxian* offers much scope for the historical reconstruction of the National Theater Movement, which is not a phase of historical reversal but rather a theater revolution propelled by the period’s latest theatrical trends. The reexamination of the *Qinxian* series of articles complicates our understanding of the progress of modern Chinese theater, shedding light on the new insights that translation studies can bring to theater historiography.

2. Identifying the Unmarked Translations in *Qinxian*

Despite the considerable number of studies that mention *Qinxian*, most researchers only briefly allude to *Qinxian* to argue for Yu’s extensive theatrical knowledge. Among the few that have examined *Qinxian* (Liu 2016; Ma 1989), rarely do they probe into the inner intricacies between these nineteen articles. The scant findings drawn from the *Qinxian* series of articles are in close relation to the wide range of the topics it covered,

such as Swiss stage designer Adolphe Appia (1862–1928), British theater director Edward Gordon Craig (1872–1866), German theater director Max Reinhardt (1873–1943), and the Irish theater company the Irish Players, to name but a few. The variety of the topics covered in *Qinxian* blurs one's perception of Yu's theatrical vision, necessitating a search for whether there is a central thread throughout Yu's narrative.

The divaricated topics in *Qinxian* in fact can be grouped into two types. The first is eight articles regarding Yu's experiences in the United States, including four diaries on his life abroad, "*Qinxian* 1: Leaving the Motherland This Time," "*Qinxian* 2: Twelve Hours in Chicago," "*Qinxian* 3: The Drama Department in Carnegie," and "*Qinxian* 4: After Entering Carnegie," two reading lists recommended by Yu to Chinese dramatists, "*Qinxian* 5: Why Not Organizing a Little Theater in Beijing?" and "*Qinxian* 15: Drama Magazines," and two review articles of the performances Yu saw in Pittsburgh, "*Qinxian* 18: The Moscow Art Theatre" and "*Qinxian* 19: Duse's Art." These eight articles do not have explicit arguments but serve mostly as records of Yu's experiences, reflections, and lessons learned in the United States.

Aside from these written accounts of Yu's life, the rest of the *Qinxian* articles are in the format of rigorous research papers, centering around the four facets of theater production: stage setting, theater directing, playwriting, and acting. To be specific, "*Qinxian* 7: The Art of Drama and Scientific Invention," "*Qinxian* 8: Tools for Stage Lighting," "*Qinxian* 9: The Color of Stage Lighting," "*Qinxian* 10: Some Opinions on Stage Scenery," and "*Qinxian* 11: Costume and Properties" present a detailed depiction of *mise-en-scène*, or "stage setting," the general physical arrangement of the production. These five articles cover exactly the four components of stage setting, that is, lighting, scenery, properties, and costumes (Ham 2014, 78; Weight et al. 2013, 333). Following these five articles, Yu published two articles on theater directing, "*Qinxian* 12: Reinhardt in Today's New York" and "*Qinxian* 13: Reinhardt's *The Miracle*," in which Yu utilizes Austrian-born theater director Max Reinhardt's theater directing as an example to detail the procedure and system of directing in modern theater. Aside from stage setting and theater directing, Yu embarks on the issue of playwriting in "*Qinxian* 14: Heroines in the Irish Literary Movement." Inspired by the Irish "national drama," Yu appeals to Chinese playwrights for discarding ostensible imitation of Western drama and focusing on composing original Chinese

plays that can manifest native cultural identity. Last, in “*Qinxian* 16: The Art of Acting” and “*Qinxian* 17: The Training of the Actor,” Yu elaborates on the performer’s acting styles and the importance of actor training.

In this sense, then, *Qinxian* articles contain detailed accounts of Yu’s study life and accommodate Yu’s view of the mode and method of theater production. Especially, the eleven research articles are not unrelated to each other but touch upon stage setting, theater directing, scriptwriting, and acting, exhibiting a systematic and comprehensive scheme of theater production that could be readily picked up by Chinese theater practitioners. The analysis of the content of *Qinxian* might raise the questions of why Yu could devise an all-embracing theatrical scheme and why he could embark on so many research topics in the short period of less than half a year, especially since theater as a research subject was new to the period’s Chinese intellectuals due to modern drama emerging in China only in the early twentieth century.

The great knowledge that Yu shows in *Qinxian* is in close relation to the role that translation has played in the composition process of these articles. There are many indications in the eleven research articles suggesting that the literary composition of these articles is related to the act of translation. To start with, Yu’s Chinese texts are often interspersed with English words. In *Qinxian* 7, for instance, the Chinese terms for lights are arranged in parallel with their English equivalents, in the following layouts: “腳光 (footlight),” “邊光 (border),” and “點光 (spotlight)” (Yu 1924c, 3). Aside from the bilingual parallel format, Yu often imparts detailed statistical data to his readers. For example, in *Qinxian* 13, Yu proffers extensive data on the production of Reinhardt’s *The Miracle* in New York in 1924, such as “two-hundred” seats in the theater, “eleven 37-feet high and 10-feet wide” windows around the apse, and “\$15,000 spent on the telegram” (Yu 1924h, 3). Besides, Yu also employs many outlandish concepts, such as *xinli ju* 心理劇 (psychologic drama) (Yu 1924f, 3), *weimei ju* 唯美劇 (aesthetic drama) (3), *paibie* 派別 (typecasting) (Yu 1924i, 2), and *neigong* 內工 (inner truth) (2). These details and theatrical concepts occupy significant positions in *Qinxian*, but they have not previously appeared either in Yu’s writings or in the Chinese dramatic discourse.

The foreign words, precise numbers, and alien concepts in the text all suggest that Yu might have referenced foreign articles in composing the research articles in *Qinxian*. To identify unmarked translations,

Anthony Pym cautions researchers against hastily assuming a text to be a translation without sound reasons (Pym 1998, 60). In other words, convincing archaeological evidence such as the language shift at the textual level is indispensable. In light of Pym's proposition, I first searched for the foreign words and precise numbers in each *Qinxian* article in the digital databases that store the full text of books, magazines, or newspaper articles, including both general, large-scale repositories, such as Google Books, the Internet Archive, Hathi Trust, Project Gutenberg, and Newspapers.com, and smaller, specialized archives such as the *New York Times* Archive. This step helps identify the work(s) containing the same foreign words and statistical data as in the *Qinxian* article. After locating the foreign work(s), I then compare the content of the identified work(s) with that of the *Qinxian* article to affirm whether Yu referred to the work(s). Through keyword searching and textual comparison, the source works that Yu referenced in composing the research articles in *Qinxian* were located, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The Source Work(s) of the Research Articles in *Qinxian*

Research Articles in <i>Qinxian</i>	Source Work(s)
<i>Qinxian</i> 6: The Contemporary American Playwright O'Neill	Shi Zhaoyun's English article
<i>Qinxian</i> 7: The Art of Drama and Scientific Invention	<i>Theatre Lighting: Past and Present</i> . Mount Vernon, NY: Ward Leonard Electric Company, 1923.
<i>Qinxian</i> 8: Tools for Stage Lighting	Pichel, Irving. "Stage Lighting." In <i>On Building a Theatre</i> . New York: Theatre Arts, 1920.
<i>Qinxian</i> 9: The Color of Stage Lighting	Pichel, Irving. "Stage Lighting." In <i>On Building a Theatre</i> . New York: Theatre Arts, 1920. Luckiesh, Matthew. <i>The Lighting Art: Its Practice and Possibilities</i> . London: Hill, 1917.
<i>Qinxian</i> 10: Some Opinions on Stage Scenery	Cheney, Sheldon. <i>The New Movement in the Theatre</i> . New York: M. Kennerley, 1914.
<i>Qinxian</i> 11: Costume and Properties	Cheney, Sheldon. <i>The New Movement in the Theatre</i> . New York: M. Kennerley, 1914.
<i>Qinxian</i> 12: Reinhardt in Today's New York	Kommer, Rudolf. "The Magician of Leopoldskron." In <i>Max Reinhardt and His Theatre</i> , ed. Oliver Saylor, 1–15. New York: Brentano's, 1924. Washburn-Freund, Frank. "The Evolution of Reinhardt." In <i>Max Reinhardt and His Theatre</i> , ed. by Oliver Saylor, 44–56. New York: Brentano's, 1924.

Research Articles in Qinxian	Source Work(s)
<i>Qinxian 13: Reinhardt's The Miracle</i>	"The Miracle, Statistically." <i>New York Times</i> , 3 February 1924, 138. Brock, Henry. "The Master Magic of Max Reinhardt." <i>New York Times</i> , 20 January 1924, 30.
<i>Qinxian 14: Heroines in the Irish Literary Movement</i>	Boyd, Ernest Augustus. <i>The Contemporary Drama of Ireland</i> . Boston: Little, Brown, 1917.
<i>Qinxian 16: The Art of Acting</i>	Macgowan, Kenneth, and Robert Edmond Jones. "New Acting for Old." In <i>Continental Stagecraft</i> , 91–105. New York: Harcourt, Branch, 1922.
<i>Qinxian 17: The Training of the Actor</i>	Irving, Henry. <i>The Art of Acting</i> . Chicago: Dramatic Pub. Co., 1887.

Except for *Qinxian 6*, which Yu acknowledges is translated from an unpublished English article written by his friend Shi Zhaoying 時昭瀛 (1901–1956) (Yu 1924a, 4), the other ten research articles are all translations of published and traceable English works. The language-level evidence to support that the ten articles are translations is noticeable. For instance, *Qinxian 9* is rendered from American director and actor Irving Pichel's (1891–1954) book chapter "Stage Lighting" in *On Building a Theatre*, and Yu also inserts in the text a segment translated from American physicist Matthew Luckiesh's (1883–1967) *The Lighting Art: Its Practice and Possibilities* to argue for the function of the colored light. Yu merges the translated segments and presents the text in the following layout:

正紅表示溫暖、刺激、動情。桔紅表示溫暖、刺激、倉卒、勃發、活潑。正黃——溫暖、刺激、歡喜、高興。松黃——快樂。正綠——安祥、平靜、曠逸。青綠——清爽、恬靜。正藍——冷淡、莊重、平靜、超拔。紫藍——鄭重、抑鬱、安靜、沈悶。紫紅——安靜、鄭重、高傲、漂亮、威嚴。……燈光的顏色，可用的工具很多，大概不外三種：用染料，用有色玻璃，用有色的膠質片。腳光、邊光、條光，兒點光的電泡，瓦特不過一百的，可以將電泡浸入染料。一百瓦特以上的電泡不能染，熱度太強，必將染料燒脫或變色；藍色的更壞，容易變成紫色或黑色。(Yu 1924d, 3)

Red indicates warm, exciting, passionate. Orange indicates warm, exciting, suffocating, glowing, lively. Yellow indicates warm, exciting, joyous, gay, merry. Yellow green indicates cheerful. Green indicates neutral, tranquil, peaceful, soothing. Blue-green indicates sober, sedate. Blue indicates cold, grave, tranquil, serene. Violet indicates solemn, melancholy, neutral, depressing. Purple indicates neutral, solemn, stately,

pompous, impressive. Many tools are available to color the lights, and they largely fall into three categories: using dyes, using colored glass, and using colored gel sheets. When handing footlight, border lights, strip lights, and spotlights, bulbs of no more than one hundred watts can be dipped into the dye, while bubbles above one hundred watts cannot be dyed, as the heat is too intense and will certainly burn off or discolor the dye. The blues especially deteriorate under heat, easily burning to a purple or black.²

The first part, regarding color's effect on the human mind, is rendered from Luckiesh's work:

Red—warm, exciting, passionate. Orange—warm, exciting, suffocating, glowing, lively. Yellow—warm, exciting, joyous, gay, merry. Yellow green—cheerful. Green—neutral, tranquil, peaceful, soothing. Blue-green—sober, sedate. Blue—cold, grave, tranquil, serene. Violet—solemn, melancholy, neutral, depressing. Purple—neutral, solemn, stately, pompous, impressive. (Luckiesh 1917, 76)

The outline of the tools needed to obtain colored lights is taken from Pichel's writing:

The color of light on the stage is obtained in three ways. Where lamps of low standard (twenty-five or forty watts) are used, as in the foots or borders, they may be coated with dyes, put up for the purpose, made with a collodion base. The burning lamp is dipped into the liquid and left alight until the dye coat has thoroughly dried and hardened. Bulbs of high standard, however, cannot be dyed, as the dye does not stand up under the intense heat generated by a lamp of one hundred or more watts. As a matter of fact, few of the commercial dyes are wholly satisfactory, even with smaller bulbs. The blues especially deteriorate under heat, either fading or cracking, or burning to a purple or black. (Pichel 1920, 68)

Yu's discussion of color's psychological influence is translated from Luckiesh's English text in a literal manner, and the three ways that Yu projects to achieve colored lights are the same methods proposed by Pichel. The text-level resemblances allow ample evidence to say that Yu's Chinese texts are translations of the English originals. The research articles in *Qinxian* are all composed in this way by merging translated segments rendered from foreign works into a complete article. Yu took

fragments from what he read and collaged the translated texts into one article. As the translation is not the literary rendering of the original, there is little awkward phrasing or language that obscures the meaning. Moreover, Yu utilized words and phrases that could fit together smoothly and logically in his Chinese renditions. As a result, the research articles in *Qinxian* conform to the Chinese language conventions. As revealed in the following discussion, knowing that the research articles in *Qinxian* contain many translated segments provides context clues to decipher the meaning encoded in the many unfamiliar and unexplained words in *Qinxian*.

3. *Qinxian* as Reflections of the New Stagecraft Movement

The foreign works Yu referred to mainly concerned the New Stagecraft Movement, a theater revival campaign that had its beginnings in Europe, took hold in the United States in the 1910s, and ran its course in the early 1960s (Larson 1989, xix). In particular, Yu translated many works regarding the aesthetic paradigm derived from this movement, which proffered a viable approach to concentrating all facets of theater production toward the actualization of a simple, symbolic, and synthesized performance (Bloom 1996, 93–106).

To see Yu's reference to the new trend, an introduction to the progress of the New Stagecraft Movement is in order. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a profound and vehement change was looming over European theater. Called variously "the New Stagecraft Movement" (Eaton 1912), "the New Movement" (Cheney 1914), or "the New Art of the Theatre" (Eaton 1913), the revolution was characterized by a denouncement of the traditional flat and naturalistic stage designs and an endorsement of the round and suggestive stage set. The Swiss stage designer Adolphe Appia and the British theater practitioner Edward Gordon Craig were regarded as the theoretical prophets of the movement (Bloom 1996, 65–66). Both Appia and Gordon Craig rejected the photographic design and envisioned a perfectly unified scenery that could manifest and support visually the mood and central idea of the theater production (Beacham 2013, 19–40). Inspired by the writings and designs of Appia and Gordon Craig, many European theater artists discarded photographic imitation and extolled the simple and suggestive scenography. Under the banner of "simplification," "suggestion," and "synthesis," the New Movement swept the German, Russian, French,

and English stages and was embraced by many prominent dramatists and theater groups, such as the Austrian-born theater director Max Reinhardt, the Russian theater company Moscow Art Theatre, the eminent French theater manager André Antoine (1858–1943), and the Irish theater company Irish Players (Macgowan 1921, 13–21).

In the 1910s, the theories and practices derived from European theater were brought to the American stage. At the time, American theater was occupied mostly by naturalistic productions, in which theater practitioners tended to go to great lengths to acquire the outward details that would lend scenes authenticity. The most telling example was the famous theater director David Belasco (1853–1931), whose productions featured masses of extraneous details to create a scenic illusion (Marker 2015, 1). Scenic naturalism obfuscated stage performance with genuine life, failing to satisfy the audience's imagination and support the need for dramatic art. If the stories shown on the stage were indistinguishable from real life, then perhaps there would be no need to specifically attend the theater in the first place. To justify the meaning of theater production, a group of American theater artists turned to the European stage, where they caught sight of a symbolic and imaginative spirit revealed through theater artists' grasp and implementation of new stagecraft.

The famous American critic Walter Prichard Eaton (1878–1957) noted three incidents that provided American theater with firsthand knowledge of the characteristics of the European new stagecraft: the publication of Gordon Craig's theory, the American tour of the Irish Players, and Reinhardt's production of the oriental mime *Sumurun* (1910) in New York (Eaton 1912, 104). Although Appia had published considerably on the new stage since the late nineteenth century, his works were all written in French and were not translated into English until the 1960s (Toten-Beard 2001, 34–39). It was Gordon Craig's theory that first aroused American theater critics' attention. In the early twentieth century, Gordon Craig's theory stoked the fire in American theater through the publication of the English version of his *On the Art of the Theatre* (1911), which went through nine editions in the United States by 1914 (42). Shortly afterward, Gordon Craig's other works were brought to American theater in succession. American theater artists learned from Gordon Craig's works important theoretical principles of simplification, suggestion, and unity. Aside from theoretical inspirations, Reinhardt's 1912 production of *Sumurun* and the American tour of the Irish acting group the Irish Players between 1911 and 1912 offered American theater concrete examples of

the new type of theater productions. The performances of the Irish Player were often on a simple, even bare stage, sparsely decorated, postulating a sense of enchantment that featured “a poetry of Ireland” (Jones 1941, 75). In a similar spirit, Reinhardt’s *Sumurun* was staged with the neutrally toned scenery, against which the gorgeously costumed performers moved in flaming contrast (Cheney 1914, 56). In its wordless presentation of the story, the spectator found a decorative beauty in the actor’s movements and the background pattern (56).

In examining the writings and productions of European theater, American theater artists thoroughly investigated the practical knowledge and skills required for theatrical production and began to reject the literal picture of people and happenings. As resemblance was no longer the end of theater production, the value of the theater ceased to derive from its homogeneity and indistinguishability from real life. Imitating European stagecraft, many American scenic designers, such as Samuel James Hume (1885–1962), Norman Bel-Geddes (1893–1985), and Robert Edmond Jones (1887–1954), started to provide the American audience with similarly imaginative stage designs beginning in the mid-1910s (Macgowan 1921, 21–26). Influenced by the theories and stage designs derived from the European theater, many American theater artists were no longer wedded to surface detail and resolutely rejected the imitation of objective reality. Accompanying the scenic designs were numerous American critics writing about the New Movement, such as Sheldon Cheney (1886–1980), Kenneth Macgowan (1888–1963), Hiram Moderwell (1888–1945), Irving Pichel, Oliver Sayler (1887–1958), and Carter Huntly (1862–1942) (Bloom 1996, 62). The complexities of theater production made it impossible for the proponents of the new stagecraft to have an entirely identical view on the physical arrangement of the stage, but they reached two consensuses: the stage set should be antinaturalistic and characterized by a sense of unity, and the production ought to be conducted by a powerful theater director with artistic instinct.

It is not a difficult undertaking to apply the movement’s key precepts of “simplification,” “suggestion,” and “synthesis” to stagecraft, but it is a difficult matter to employ these principles to manage the less visual aspects of theater production. American critics Sheldon Cheney and Kenneth Macgowan succeeded in employing the principles of the new stagecraft in playwriting and acting, thereby forming an all-embracing paradigm, the aesthetic paradigm (61–67).

Cheney provided the first comprehensive discussion of the New Stagecraft Movement in his influential book *The New Movement in the Theatre* (1914). Taking the theater productions of Gordon Craig, Max Reinhardt, and the Russian Ballet company as examples, Cheney noted that most scenic designs in the New Movement shared the same characteristic: impressionistic rather than realistic (Cheney 1914, 18). Not only did Cheney make pioneering efforts to introduce the New Stagecraft Movement to the American audience, but he also attempted to relate the principles of the new stagecraft to playwriting. For Cheney, one of the primary goals of American theater was to inaugurate dramatic literature for the new stagecraft, which he called the “re-theatricalized drama” (16).³ This call for retheatricalization can be understood as an appeal for the emergence of a new drama to perfect the visual side of plays that are typically dramatic.

Like Cheney, Macgowan’s discussion also went beyond revolutionizing scenography. Macgowan reasoned that considerations of histrionic art should also be included in the New Movement and appealed for consummate acting that would be compatible with the new stage design. Macgowan based his argument on the foundation of British art critic Clive Bell’s (1881–1964) notion of “significant form,” that is, the arrangement of forms, lines, and color (Bloom 1996, 80–81), Macgowan proposed that the task of the new theater was to turn away from pursuing verisimilitude and resort to “formal beauty” (80–81). For Macgowan, if scenic design aimed to evoke an imaginative beauty, then if the actor merely imitated real-life movement it would not be compatible. Macgowan insisted that the actor also turn to “form” and perform in a “presentational” manner (Macgowan and Jones 1922, 93). The technique for the presentational acting was to use bodily movement and voice beyond genuine life to create a linear design congruent with the formal setting.

The aesthetic paradigm was formulated on the basis of the principles derived from the New Stagecraft Movement on stage setting and theater directing. It was Sheldon Cheney and Kenneth Macgowan who applied the aesthetic principles to playwriting and acting, thereby exhibiting an all-embracing theatrical paradigm. The aesthetic paradigm was a comprehensive theatrical scheme of protest against the previous naturalistic representation of reality on the stage.

An examination of the content of *Qinxian* articles shows that Yu touches upon many important topics of the New Stagecraft Movement,

including the theoretical prophets of the movement, Appia and Gordon Craig, and many of the prominent representatives of the movement in the European theater such as Reinhardt, the Irish Players, and the Moscow Art Theatre. To be specific, Yu's introduction of stage lighting in *Qinxian* 7, *Qinxian* 8, and *Qinxian* 9, as will be discussed in detail in the next section, reveals his clear endorsement of Appia's and Craig's theories on the function of stage lighting; Yu devotes *Qinxian* 12 and *Qinxian* 13 specifically to Reinhardt's artistic career and his production of the pantomimic drama *The Miracle* in New York in 1924; *Qinxian* 14 embarks on the origins and progress of the Irish Dramatic Revival; and *Qinxian* 18 describes the history of the Moscow Art Theatre and its tour to Pittsburgh in 1924.

More importantly, realizing that *Qinxian* articles contain many translations allows us to see that Yu translated primarily from the writings of the proponents of the New Stagecraft Movement. Yu's discussion on stage lighting and theater directing was translated mainly from the works of Irving Pichel and Oliver Saylor, two staunch advocates of the New Theatre,⁴ with *Qinxian* 8 and *Qinxian* 9 being translated from Pichel's *On Building a Theatre* and *Qinxian* 12 being rendered from *Max Reinhardt and His Theatre*. Moreover, Yu referred to Cheney's and Macgowan's works when elaborating on stage setting and acting. The two articles on stage arrangement, *Qinxian* 10 and *Qinxian* 11, are translated mainly from Cheney's *The New Movement in the Theatre*. And *Qinxian* 16 on performers' way of acting is translated from Macgowan's "New Acting for Old." Through translating the works of Cheney and Macgowan, Yu also goes beyond revolutionizing scenic design to include playwriting and acting in his design of the theatrical scheme, presenting a comprehensive paradigm that encompasses stage setting, theater directing, playwriting, and acting.

An examination of the subjects of *Qinxian* articles reveals that they touch upon many important topics of the New Stagecraft Movement. Realizing that *Qinxian* articles contain unmarked translations further reveals that Yu translated primarily from the works of the proponents of the New Stagecraft Movement, especially Sheldon Cheney's and Kenneth Macgowan's treatises on the aesthetic paradigm. Therefore, it can be said that *Qinxian* articles, in fact, are Yu's reflections on the aesthetic paradigm derived from the New Stagecraft Movement. Upon knowing the interrelation between *Qinxian* and the aesthetic theatrical paradigm,

the subsequent questions awaiting answers are the following: How did Yu understand each facet of the aesthetic paradigm? Did he agree with all the principles proposed in the original? And why did Yu work toward the materialization of the aesthetic paradigm? The next section attempts to answer these questions by placing Yu's translation in the broader context of the progress of modern theater.

4. Remolding Aesthetic Paradigm to Fit Chinese Theater

As previous analysis shows, Yu breaks theater studies into four major categories and elaborates on how to deal with each part specifically. This section resorts to the original works that Yu referenced in an attempt to delineate Yu's theatrical vision and ambition as revealed in *Qinxian*. Although Yu's translation in *Qinxian* is not a word-for-word rendition of the original, Yu very much concurs with the acting principles of the new stagecraft and retains all the central ideas in the source work. Like the proponents of the New Movement, Yu also introduces an aesthetic theater that is simple, suggestive, and synthetic. However, Yu modifies the aesthetic paradigm into a theatrical scheme that rejects Henrik Ibsen's social-critical drama. This adjustment resulted from Yu's denouncement of Chinese intellectuals' injudicious embracement of all of Ibsen's plays at the time.

4.1 Stage Setting: *Qinxian* 7, *Qinxian* 8, *Qinxian* 9, *Qinxian* 10, and *Qinxian* 11

Conventionally, stage setting or *mise-en-scène*, the overall physical arrangement of the stage consists of four facets: lighting, scenery, costumes, and properties (Ham 2014, 78; Weight et al. 2013, 333). Yu discusses precisely these four facets in the first five *Qinxian* research articles, with *Qinxian* 7, *Qinxian* 8, and *Qinxian* 9 on lighting, *Qinxian* 10 on scenography, and *Qinxian* 11 on costumes and properties. It is not difficult to understand why Yu devoted the first few research articles to stage setting since the New Stagecraft Movement started with an attack upon the naturalistic treatment of the stage. It was from the reformation of the stage set that the movement began and later extended to other aspects.

Yu's elaboration on stage lighting in *Qinxian* 7, *Qinxian* 8, and *Qinxian* 9 is in close relation to his espousal of Appia's and Gordon

Craig's theories. Appia is customarily regarded as the first theater artist to propose and justify stage light's expressive possibilities. Seeing lighting as the very soul of theater performance, Appia argues that "light is to production what music is to the score: the expressive element as opposed to external sign" (Appia 1962, 72). Craig uses light as Appia perceives it, evocatively. Craig involves lighting in the larger picture of the stage scenery where "light does the painting" (Craig 1921, 51). What Gordon Craig promotes is not to light the painted scenery but to use lights to paint the scenery. Especially, Gordon Craig argues that "theatre is scientific knowledge" (Song 1920, 136), as theatrical effects often depend on stage mechanics, especially lighting apparatus. In *Qinxian* 7, Yu quotes the two famous sentences of Appia and Gordon Craig, respectively, "*Guang shi xiju de linghun* 光是戲劇的靈魂" (Light is the soul of drama) and "*Yishu shi kexue zhishi* 藝術是科學知識" (Art is scientific knowledge) (Yu 1924b, 3), which suggests that Yu translated lighting-related content was in close relation to him acknowledging the seminal role light played in the New Stagecraft Movement.

Yu's discussion on stage lighting centers mainly on two issues: lighting's physical setup and the effects to be achieved. As for the setup, Yu provides a thorough discussion of the latest lighting devices, methods to achieve colored lights, and the machinery of control. To be specific, in *Qinxian* 8, Yu provides a detailed introduction of the newest stage lighting apparatus—the fixed devices, including footlights, sidelights, and border lights, and the movable equipment, including bunch lights, floodlights, and spotlights (Yu 1924c, 3). In *Qinxian* 9, Yu presents two devices for the control of lights, the dimmer and the dial switch, and brings forward three applicable methods to obtain colored lights: coating lamps with dyes, coloring lamps with gelatin mediums, and using a sheet of glass with the color blown in (Yu 1924d, 3). Yu's discussion allows lighting of varying intensity, color, and movement. The stage lighting configurations might appear outdated and crude today, but they are unprecedented in Chinese theater in the 1920s in terms of their comprehensiveness and technicality.

The second issue regarding stage lighting on which Yu elaborates is the effect to be achieved. With an explicit intent to foreground light's artistic contribution, Yu's discussion brings the expressive function of stage lighting into stardom. In *Qinxian* 8, Yu details stage light's five functions, which are translated from Pichel's *On Building a Theatre* (Yu 1924c, 3). These five roles are progressive in nature, with stage light gradually turning from a tool to ensure the running of performance to an

indispensable means of bringing forth artistic contributions. Stage light's first function, "to illuminate the stage and actors," is the very reason for theater practitioners to employ artificial lights in the first place. From the second point onward, stage light is endowed with functions other than illumination. The second role, "to imitate the natural lights," is most often brought out on the naturalistic stage, where theater practitioners use light to mimic nature so as to create a highly realistic illusion. The third function, "to help paint the scene," treats light as pigment and renders color and the dimension of shape on the stage depending upon the change of light's color. To achieve the fourth function, "to lend relief to the actors and the plastic elements of the scene," stage light becomes the means of casting shadows for the elements on the stage, serving to avoid flattening the physical features to cartoon dimensions. The most pronounced expression of light's artistic significance is the last point, "to help act the play, by symbolizing its meanings and reinforcing its psychology," where stage light was placed in the same position as actors, conveying the desired mood and maintaining visual interest.

By listing these five functions, Yu requires stage lighting to express the meaning and mood of theater production, being the expressive element as opposed to the external sign. It was the awareness that stage lighting should not merely be used for illumination that led Yu to introduce lighting fixtures and their configuration. Yu's demand for stage lighting, in short, can be described as having adequate apparatus to allow stage lighting to perform expressively.

About a month after the three articles on stage lighting, Yu published *Qinxian* 10 and *Qinxian* 11, concerning the other three facets of stage setting: scenery, costumes, and properties. *Qinxian* 10 and *Qinxian* 11 deserve a parallel study, for they both contain many segments translated from Cheney's *The New Movement in the Theatre*. In the book, Cheney depicts two types of stage sets, the box-set scenery and the bare stage set decorated with lines, masses, and lights. The box-set scenery surrounds the performers on three sides to give the effect of a room, which is simpler than the traditional naturalistic set that crowds the stage with real buildings (Cheney 1914, 132). The only problem is that sometimes the box-set scenery is erroneously used for the exterior stage set, in which case complex landscape scenes are painted on three walls, "always conspicuously out of agreement with the actual floor and furniture lines, except from one point in the auditorium" (132). Given this situation, Cheney suggests that painted flats be used only for the interior and

occasionally for “an impressionistic tree or background seen in obscure light” (132). All props should be real furniture with true perspective lines and shadows. The second bare stage type of set rarely uses painted flats. Rather, it decorates the stage with unobtrusive neutral curtains or walls embellished with lines, masses, and lights (130). Cheney notes that the different combinations of lines, masses, and lights would yield a divergent theatrical atmosphere. For instance, long, straight, upright lines bring a sense of majesty, while accentuated horizontals carry a feeling of restfulness, and a large body of black mass often projects a sense of mystery. The change of light’s shape, intensity, and color is crucial as it can help paint the lines and masses (56).

By translating Cheney’s work, Yu details his suggestions on the arrangement of stage scenery, properties, and costumes. Yu argues that the indoor scenery can be arranged with “three walls and a ceiling” and necessary properties as long as the walls are not painted flats (Yu 1924e, 3). As to the outdoor set, Yu suggests abandoning painted canvas and adopting a *zhongli xing* 中立性 background with *ji* 積, *xian* 線, and *guang* 光 to afford proper atmospheric moods (3). Referring to Cheney’s work, one can tell that *ji*, *xian*, *guang* actually refer to “masses, lines, and lights,” while Yu’s *zhongli xing* background is translated from Cheney’s “neutral masses.” Yu, in essence, demands stage designers to build necessary objects against neutral masses in order to have true perspective lines and cast natural shadows under the light. As to the costumes and properties, Yu proposes that realistic drama can adopt naturalistic costumes and props, while there can also be gorgeously costumed actors standing out in flaming contrast (Yu 1924f, 3).

At this point, Yu’s introduction to stage setting appears to be quite thorough, as he has demonstrated a complete approach to stage arrangement by translating the works regarding both the technical and theoretical facets of the stage set. Yu basically follows the original depiction of the stage setting methods, leading to the first few research articles in the *Qinxian* series revealing an ardent endorsement of a simple, suggestive, and symbolic stage. This way of theatrical arrangement features a bare stage, real properties, and colored lights, which project lines and masses to set the mood and enhance the atmosphere. In contrast to the conventional naturalistic set, the practitioners of the new stagecraft eschew the imitation of a real-life scenario, demanding the spectator to be obliged to accept the physical conventions of a new fictional world.

Surprisingly and quite confusingly, Yu reveals staunch antagonism to Ibsen's plays. At the end of *Qinxian* 10, Yu says,

讀者又要問了，佈景廢除之後，伊卜生派的戲怎樣演呢？我說，假使我們真正有了廢除佈景的決心，不適於劇場的伊卜生派戲，我們還去演嗎？(Yu 1924e, 3)

Readers may wonder: "After the abolition of scenery, how should we stage Ibsen's play?" I want to say, if we are really determined to abolish the scenery, are we still performing the Ibsenian play that is not fit for the stage?

Here Yu places Ibsen's plays and the stage set he endorses on the opposite ends of the spectrum and suggests that Ibsen's plays do not fit with the symbolic and suggestive theater. He goes so far as to insist that Ibsen's plays are fundamentally unsuitable for stage performance. Although Ibsen's plays were not as popular as they had been in the early twentieth century when the realist movement was in full swing, there still were many theater practitioners engaging in the stage of Ibsen's plays in the 1920s. For instance, Reinhardt had put on stage many of Ibsen's plays, such as *Ghost*, which was believed to have brought Ibsen to stardom in Germany (Newmark 1938, 75–80). Since Yu was studying at one of the most prestigious American institutes on theater studies, it is impossible that Yu did not know that many theater practitioners still endorsed Ibsen at the time. As such, this objection to Ibsen was not to complement the original but was a deliberate attempt to somehow disparage and discredit the artistry of Ibsen's plays. As will be shown in the next section, Yu's opposition to Ibsen's plays remains evident in his subsequent discussion of theater directing.

Yu's perception of the stage setting is generally in line with the foreign works he is referencing. Rather than having the elements on stage serve the actors or the script, the stage set is the very carrier of the performance, expressively and evocatively demonstrating the meaning of the production. Like many of the proponents of the New Stagecraft Movement, Yu enshrines atmospheric mood over theatrical mimicry and appeals for the stage set to include sparse but real properties and appropriate costumes and to be decorated with lines, masses, and expressive lights.

4.2 Theater Directing: *Qinxian* 12 and *Qinxian* 13

After advising on the arrangement of the stage set, Yu turned to theater directing and published two articles on Reinhardt—*Qinxian* 12 on Reinhardt's artistic career and *Qinxian* 13 on Reinhardt's production of *The Miracle* in New York in 1924. In framing *Qinxian* 12, Yu first translated fragments from German journalist Rudolf Kommer's (1886–1943) "The Magician of Leopoldskron" regarding Reinhardt's artistic career. Then, Yu translated fragments taken from German theater critic Frank Washburn-Freund's (1878–?) "The Evolution of Reinhardt" on Reinhardt's view of the function of the theater. In constructing *Qinxian* 13, Yu began the article with a detailed account of the production process of *The Miracle*, which was translated from "The Miracle Statistically" written by an anonymous reporter for the *New York Times*, followed by a discussion of Reinhardt's directing method, which was translated from British illustrator and landscape painter Henry Brock's (1875–1960) "The Master Magic of Max Reinhardt."

Reinhardt was one of the most representative theater directors who had actualized the seminal principles proposed in the New Movement (Huntly 1914, 9–14). As American scholar Styan argues, it was Reinhardt who "put into practice some of the thinking of 'aesthetic drama' movement which wanted to combine the arts of space and light, of music, design and the spoken word, and of acting, mime, and dance" (Styan 1982, 1). The pantomimic drama *The Miracle* was conventionally believed to be most reflective of Reinhardt's artistic philosophy (93). Without spoken words, the production of *The Miracle* synthesized the art of space, light, music, design, and acting, winning both a box-office hit and high critical acclaim (101). It debuted in December 1911 in London and toured more than twelve cities before its 1924 production in New York (101).

Yu's two articles on Reinhardt are replete with sincere praise for Reinhardt and fervent hope for the emergence of such a director in Chinese theater. To be specific, Yu reveals his clear reverence for two characteristics of the director: he is decisive to the point of being dictatorial and is artistically sensitive. As for being decisive, in *Qinxian* 13, Yu says, "In the land of the dramatic arts, there is an Emperor, to whom all must obey, and I quote Gordon Craig: 'Long live my Emperor!'" (Yu 1924d, 3). It is odd that this passage should appear in *Qinxian* 13, for the original author notes that Reinhardt is willing to

negotiate with all practitioners in the production, including the author, set designers, music composers, technicians, and performers (Kommer 1924, 11). In particular, Kommer in the original notes that Reinhardt's success is largely due to his capacity to bring out the best in the performers by giving them adequate freedom (11–12). Yu apparently felt the need to overstate Reinhardt's power, leading to him deleting the discussions on Reinhardt's willingness to give actors freedom and portraying Reinhardt as an all-powerful dictator in the theater.

Aside from being decisive, Yu holds that the theater director should be artistically sensitive. Yu writes, "It is Reinhardt that put Gordon Craig's theory into practice. I admire Reinhardt the most. That is why I specifically introduce him here" (Yu 1924g, 4). Gordon Craig's theory, Yu continues, is that there should be an artist-director who "understands all aspects of theater and designs everything through his mind" (Yu 1924h, 3). Yu's perception is correct. Unlike traditional directors who act to ensure the completion of the production, the theater director in the New Movement is also an artist who understands all aspects of the production and designs everything through creative efforts. The new theater director's aim is not to reveal other practitioners' arts but to actualize the director's artistic vision. Gordon Craig and Reinhardt are typical artist-directors. Holding the view that extant theater performances are not works of art at all, Gordon Craig calls for "a binding spiritual quality" and "a unity of feeling," which he believes could be achieved only through "the creative effort of an artist" (Innes and Shevtsova 2013, 24). Although writing extensively on theater directing, Gordon Craig was less active in practice than Reinhardt. Craig was more of a theorist with few theatrical productions, whereas Reinhardt had some 452 plays performed on 23,374 occasions before 1930 (Styan 1982, 5).

In this sense, then, Yu introduces Reinhardt largely because Reinhardt is the period's most successful artist-director who can serve as a model for Chinese theater practitioners. Traditionally, Chinese theater does not require a director, for Chinese opera focuses its attention on the performer rather than the scenery, lighting, or even the script (Sui and Lovrick 2013, ix). The audience went to the theater to appreciate the performer's singing skills, which is why attending the theater is often described as *tingxi* 聽戲 (listening to the opera) (Wichmann 1991, 1). Although the position of modern theater director was introduced to Chinese readers in the 1920s, the theater director was most often referred to as *wutai jiandu* 舞台監督

(stage supervisor), indicating that the sole purpose of the position is to oversee the smooth running of the performance (Li 2020, 335). Yu's introduction of Reinhardt offers Chinese readers a rare glimpse into the Western theater directing system centered on the artist-director.

In these two *Qinxian* articles, Yu also reveals his clear disdain toward the Ibsenian social critical plays. For instance, in *Qinxian* 12, Yu says,

那時，勃拉姆一班人正高揭伊卜生打穿第四堵牆的旗幟，用自然主義去與古典主義及浪漫主義宣戰。來因哈特則大不謂然，所以他便加入反浪漫派的團體，專攻擊當時盛行的自然主義及威廉二世所御准的一切藝術。(Yu 1924c, 3)

At the time, Brahm and his companions were declaring war on classicism and romanticism with naturalism under the banner of Ibsen's breaking the fourth wall. Reinhardt disagreed and he joined an anti-romantic group that attacked the prevailing naturalism and all the arts approved by William II.

The original text reads,

He began his work in Berlin by assuming the leadership of the neo-romantic movement, which was directed against the dominating school of naturalism as well as against all official art approved by the court and by that self-appointed arbiter, Wilhelm II. (Kommer 1924, 6)

In the original, Kommer notes only that Reinhardt is averse to the school of naturalism. Yu depicts Reinhardt as standing in direct opposition to German theater director Otto Brahm's (1856–1912) endorsement of Ibsen's plays. The fact is that Reinhardt did not combat Ibsen's plays but merely denounced Brahm's naturalistic directing style. As one of the most influential naturalists in Germany after Émile Zola (1840–1902) (Osborne 1971, 28), Brahm's theater production was reflective of the naturalist movement that championed a detail of actuality and mimicry of reality. Enthralled by the Ibsenian play's social efficacy, Brahm began the long and loyal campaign on behalf of Ibsen in the early 1890s (30). It is true that Reinhardt represented a divergent directing style from that of Brahm, but it is wrong to say that Reinhardt was opposed to Ibsen's plays because, for Reinhardt, there was not much difference between performing Ibsen's plays or any other plays since the script was only one of the many theatrical materials of the theater director. The

atmospheric effect in aesthetic theater is dependent only on the director's theatrical ambition. As Reinhardt is depicted by Yu as the model theater director for Chinese theater practitioners to imitate, Ibsenian plays are thereby set as the unsuitable type of dramas for Chinese theater.

By introducing Max Reinhardt, Yu in fact appeals for the emergence of an artist-director like Reinhardt in the Chinese theater. To underline the director's full control over the production, Yu depicts Reinhardt as assuming the attitude of a dictator in the theater. In the meantime, Yu also reveals a hostile attitude toward Ibsen, demanding that Ibsen's plays be discarded in Chinese theater performances. Such being the case, Yu's requirement for theater directing is to have a powerful anti-Ibsenite artist-director to manage all elements in theater.

4.3 Playwriting: *Qinxian* 14

Following the discussion of stage setting and theater directing, Yu published *Qinxian* 14, which contains many segments translated from Irish writer Ernest Augustus Boyd's (1887–1946) *The Contemporary Drama of Ireland* (1917) regarding the origins and progress of the Irish Dramatic Revival, a movement that radically redefined Irish theater and saw the birth of the Irish national theater, the Abbey Theatre, in 1904. An analysis of *Qinxian* 14 unveils that Yu's denouncement of the Ibsenian plays is in fact inspired by the Irish Dramatic Revival.

In the original, Boyd notes that Irish drama did not flow into "Sardoodledom," that is, well-made works of drama with mechanically contrived plot structure and stereotyped characterization, largely because of the launching of the Irish Dramatic Revival movement (Boyd 1917, 1–2). When Ibsen's plays first came to Ireland, there was a short-lived campaign to imitate Ibsen's plays, known as the "Ibsenite movement," led by the famous Irish dramatist Edward Martyn (1859–1923), whose interest in the drama was mainly stimulated by the revelation of Ibsen. At the time, W. B. Yeats (1865–1939) ardently dissented from Martyn's indiscriminate advocacy of Ibsen and insisted Irish drama "return to the people" and "either tell the Irish people of their own life or of that life of poetry where every man can see his own image" (34–35). Financed by Annie Horniman (1860–1937), a middle-class Englishwoman with experience in theater production, Yeats and his comrades John Millington Synge (1871–1909) and Lady Gregory (1852–1932) founded the famous

Abbey Theatre in 1904, devoted to cultivating Irish native drama with national characteristics (36–37). With advanced equipment and adequate funding, the Abbey Theatre brought its nationally distinctive theatrical productions to many countries through world tours, allowing the Irish national drama to be known worldwide.

After recounting the original depiction of the process of the Irish Dramatic Revival, Yu adds a paragraph at the end of his Chinese rendition, arguing that the period's Chinese theater is undergoing a similar "Ibsenite movement":

馬丁的旨趣，並不是愛爾蘭的復興，卻是伊卜生的復興。他的作品中只看得見伊卜生的影響，卻看不見愛爾蘭的靈魂。……中國劇界的運動是什麼趨向呢？我們可以毫不遲疑的答道：歸向伊卜生！自從《新青年》的伊卜生號出世以來，學生們不會談幾句《娜拉》、《群鬼》便是絕大的差恥。少年作家把《娜拉》重新描畫過的已是不少了。研究伊卜生是不錯的。有幾個人的技術趕得上他的呢？但是，崇拜英雄，崇拜偶像的罪過，是真理所不寬的！不然，愛爾蘭的劇場，讓伊卜生的旗幟飄揚著好了，何必又要建設愛爾蘭國家劇院 (Irish Theatre) 呢？(Yu 1924i, 4)

Martin's vision is not a revival of Ireland but a revival of Ibsen. In his work, we see Ibsen's influence, but not the spirit of Ireland. ... What is the trend in Chinese theater? We can answer without hesitation: toward Ibsen! Since the publication of the Ibsen issue of *New Youth*, it would be considered a great shame if students could not say a few words about *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*. There are many young writers who have rewritten *A Doll's House*. Studying Ibsen is not problematic, but how many writers can pull off Ibsen's techniques? The evils of hero-worship and idolatry are not tolerable to the truth! Otherwise, the Irish theater could have let Ibsen's flag fly. Why bother with a national theater at all?

Yu fears that Chinese theater will lose national interpretation if it follows the tradition of Ibsen. The anxiety is to be expected since the influence of Ibsen's social-critical realism became overwhelming in Chinese theater as a result of the fellow *New Youth* intellectuals' ardent promotion of realistic drama's social efficacy at the end of the 1910s. Chinese dramatists embraced Western realistic plays and held the Ibsenian social-critical play as the model for dramatists to imitate (Liu 2015, 110–111). For Yu, this tendency to imitate Ibsen is exactly what has occurred in the Irish theater, resulting in him regarding the progress

of Irish theater as a paradigmatic reference for the development of Chinese theater. Yu envisages the emergence of a national drama in China like that in Ireland and hence denounces the dominance of Ibsen's plays on the Chinese stage.

After combatting Ibsen's play, Yu did not write a separate article in *Qinxian* to further describe the dramatic literature he advocated. But in *Qinxian* 17, Yu implicitly states what he expects from dramatic literature by describing his ideal playwright as a "dramatic poet" (Yu 1924k, 3), assigning a poetic quality to the script for performance. In a 1926 article, "*Lun shiju* 論詩劇" (On poetic drama), Yu further specifies the model drama as "poetic drama," which "evokes the essence of poetry and the imaginative beauty" (Yu 1926a, 2). Yu desires poetic drama with two qualities, imaginative theme and rhythmic elements. The poetic drama's story, Yu argues, may not necessarily take place in real life. It may even be so far from probable that it verges on the impossible, for only when the action lies out of the realm of reality can the story reach the audience's imagination and elicit specific emotions, convictions, and reactions (2). Also, Yu necessitates rhythmic elements in dramatic literature because he believes that lyric passion is most capable of producing imaginative beauty. Yu notes that investing in rhythmic elements does not mean that each line has to end with the same rhyming syllable, nor does it mean that the entire play should follow a certain stylistic form; indeed, the demand for a uniform rhythm of balanced sentences may lead one astray into the pursuit of empty formulas and a lack of dramatic treatment (2). In a way, poetic drama indicates that the script for performance should afford a poetic beauty, albeit one that may not be in the form of a poem.

In sum, Yu's opposition to Ibsen's plays is largely ignited by his admiration of Ireland's national drama, which sprang out of the rejection of the "Ibsenite movement" in the Irish Dramatic Revival. The championing of a national dramatic interpretation prompted Yu to denounce Chinese intellectuals' unfettered endorsement of the Ibsenian plays. To better adapt to the aesthetic paradigm, Yu proposes to inaugurate a "poetic drama" with an imaginative theme and rhythmic language so as to evoke a sense of poetry and beauty. Unlike the Ibsenian plays, which have been endowed by the period's Chinese intellectuals with a strong and overwhelming determination for social reform, poetic drama opposes conventional realism and social criticism and opts for spiritual, nonmaterialistic matters.

4.4 Acting: *Qinxian* 16 and *Qinxian* 17

Following the discussion on the script, Yu expounds on the performer's way of acting. Translating many segments from Macgowan's "The New Acting for the Old," Yu argues that performers should act in a "presentational" manner in *Qinxian* 16. To achieve such a goal, Yu proposes systematic actor training in *Qinxian* 17, which is translated mainly from Henry Irving's (1838–1905) *The Art of Acting* (1887). By this time, Yu has found an optimal means of acting for the stage setting and dramatic literature he envisions.

In *Qinxian* 16, Yu proposes four types of acting, *xieshi* 寫實, *paibie* 派別, *neigong* 內工, and *xieyi* 寫意, which are actually translations of "impersonation," "typecast," "inner truth," and "presentational" proposed by Macgowan in "The New Acting for the Old." Yu disregards the first three acting styles and subscribes wholly to the fourth type, presentational acting. The logic of the first three types of acting is realistic and representational, requiring immersion by the actor in the character so as to behave like the character. "Impersonation" refers to the style in which the actor attempts to "look like a different human being in each new play and never at all like himself" (Macgowan and Jones 1922, 93). The second type of acting is "typecasting," which means that the actor can only impersonate one type of character (96–97). The third type of acting is "to achieve impersonation and emotion by their use of features and voice as instruments" (98). With this acting method, the actors "create their impersonations before your eyes, not in their dressing rooms," for their arts do not require heavy makeup but lie in their voices and facial expressions (98).

Unlike the preceding three types of acting, presentational acting aims not at achieving resemblance but requires the actor "to put Form into the lay figure" and use body and voice to create a sense of beauty and grace (Macgowan and Jones 1922, 94). The technique of presentational acting is to use bodily movement and voice that transcend genuine life to create a linear design congruent with the formal setting. Macgowan finds presentational acting in Jacques Copeau's (1879–1949) Vieux-Colombier theater, in which the actors keep their normal appearance and strive for impersonation in emotion rather than physique (103). Presentational acting is achieved upon the actors having complete control over their vocal, gestural, and kinetic skills.

After introducing the four types of acting, Yu argues that presentational acting is most compatible with the simple and symbolic stage set. As the stage eschews material illusion, noted Yu, the actor should also discard any attempts to imitate real-life movement (Yu 1924j, 2). Yu criticizes mimetic representation and proposes that the art of acting can occur only when the actors are aware that they are performing in front of the audience and explain feelings and emotions using acting techniques (2). Yu agrees with Macgowan and argues that full control of the body and voice is the prerequisite for presentational acting (2).

Yu further elaborates on the method to train actors toward acting presentationally in *Qinxian* 17, which consists largely of segments rendered from Henry Irving's *The Art of Acting*. Irving proposes three types of training for the actors. The first is that the actors should be "constantly cultivating his perceptions of life around and all the arts, painting, music, and sculpture"; second, they should receive "bodily training" in which "everything that develops suppleness, elasticity, and grace, such as physique, pronunciation, and action, should be carefully cultivated"; and last, they need "mental training" to familiarize the mind with "the structure, rhythm, and the soul of poetry" (Irving 1887, 17). Yu agrees with Irving on the importance for the actor to fathom histrionic art through receiving artistic training. In *Qinxian* 17, Yu translates the three types of training proposed by Irving as *zhishi de xiuyang* 知識的修養 (knowledge training), *shenti de xiuyang* 身體的修養 (bodily training) and *linghun de xiuyang* 靈魂的修養 (mental training) (Yu 1924k, 3). All three types of training aim to assist the actor in controlling the means of communication, intelligence, physical fitness, and artistic insight.

Thus far, Yu has addressed all aspects of theater production, forming a complete paradigm from stage setting to directing, playwriting, and acting. Compared with the aesthetic paradigm devised by Cheney and Macgowan, the theatrical scheme formed in *Qinxian* deviates only with regard to the script to be performed. The requests for the stage setting, theater directing, and acting in *Qinxian* echo almost exactly the key principles of the aesthetic paradigm. However, Yu refuses to reconcile with the Ibsenian drama in terms of the script for performance. As such, what is presented in *Qinxian* is a modified aesthetic paradigm that is utterly antagonistic to Ibsen's plays.

The all-encompassing theatrical paradigm presented in *Qinxian* was groundbreaking in the Chinese theater in the early 1920s, as

theater studies in China had long been utterly partial, centering almost exclusively on the study of dramatic literature. *Qinxian* brought a multidimensional understanding of the theater, unveiled the pitfalls of naturalistic production, and offered an approach to freeing Chinese theater performances from the shackles of photographic replication of reality. The comprehensiveness of *Qinxian* articles distinguishes them from most writings on the drama at the time, positioning *Qinxian* as an important group of documents that cannot be ignored in modern Chinese theater history.

5. *Qinxian* and the National Theater Movement

The analysis of *Qinxian* provides new insights into the understanding of the origins of the National Theater Movement. The idea of launching the movement was conceived by Yu Shangyuan, Zhao Taimou, Wen Yiduo, and Zhang Jiazhu, when they were studying in the United States (Yu 1926b, 4). Upon their arrival in Beijing in the summer of 1925, Yu and others prompted the establishment of *Guoli yizhuan* 國立藝專 (the Theater Department at the National Art School), the first department in a national university in modern China to have instituted a course leading to a bachelor's degree on drama (Yu 1979, 215–216). To promote the aesthetic paradigm, they also approached Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, who was the editor-in-chief of *Chenbao fukan* 晨報副刊 (Morning post supplement) at the time (Wong 2008, 283–284). With Xu's support, they borrowed the space of *Chenbao fukan* and launched *Jukan* as the organ journal of the movement on 17 June 1926 (Yu 1926b, 1). In the short life *Jukan* (it ran only fifteen issues and lasted less than three months), Yu and his three comrades solicited articles from nineteen Chinese literati who published a total of forty-one articles. Before more action could be taken, the political turmoil in Beijing led to the abrupt end of the movement, marked by the sudden demise of *Jukan* in September 1926 (Liu 2016, 28). Existing scholarship, though at odds with the underlying rationale for the occurrence of the movement, has generalized the main arguments proposed by fellow National Theater Movement advocates: theater is a synthesis of the arts; theater performance should detach from the Ibsenian realism; and Chinese opera bears artistic merit and deserves critical reevaluation (e.g., Liu 2016; Ma 1989).

It is not difficult to find that the first two propositions echo the key concerns of the *Qinxian* series of articles. To start with, the idea that the

theater should be understood as a synthesis of the arts is the premise for Yu to devise this series of articles. Rather than attributing the artistry of the theater to traditional modes of high art, such as literature, music, and painting, Yu pushes to the fore the synesthetic nature of theater production. The second perception, the deleterious effects of Ibsenian social critical play on Chinese theater, is constantly stressed by Yu in *Qinxian*. Yu combats Ibsen because Ibsenian social realism is enshrined by most Chinese intellectuals as the sole model drama. For Chinese theater to embrace the new theatrical scheme necessitates the influence of the Ibsenian paradigm being significantly weakened or overturned. That is why Yu commits to portraying Ibsen's plays as being incompatible with, even detrimental to, modern Chinese theater.

Yu and his comrades' call for a reevaluation of traditional Chinese opera in the National Theater Movement is also in close relation to Yu's theatrical vision in *Qinxian*. The fellow National Theater Movement advocates espousing the artistry of Chinese opera because they regard modern aesthetic theater and traditional Chinese opera theater as aligned in their nonrealistic nature. In an article he published in *Jukan*, Yu suggests that Chinese opera verges on aesthetic theater in terms of the performers' acting, the stage setting, and the nature of the staged scripts (Yu 1924b). Like aesthetic theater, Chinese opera theater also refuses to mimic reality and appeals for a suggestive presentation. The opera actor strives to explain the characters to the spectators and performs in a stylized way, symbolizing character instead of imitating it. As for the stage setting, Chinese opera theater often utilizes a simple set to emphasize its subordination to the performers' movements. In terms of the script, Chinese opera plays are exactly the nonrealistic type of drama grown out of passion with poetic elaborations at key points in the action to intensify the dramatic atmosphere.

In this sense, then, the National Theater Movement is not a form of cultural conservatism but rather a theatrical reform ignited by the period's progressive intellectuals who perceived the efficacious impact of the aesthetic paradigm on reaching people's hearts and on revealing true art. Through introducing the aesthetic paradigm, Yu proffered many seminal insights into the progress of modern Chinese theater through the publication of *Qinxian*. To start with, Yu's interpretation of the theater as a synthetical art of stage designing, playwriting, acting, and directing served to wrest authority from playwrights to pass over to theater artists that spoke of theatricality. In addition, Yu ardently promoted an

anti-illusionist aesthetic paradigm, offering Chinese theater an alternative to realistic literature and theatrical verisimilitude. Most crucially, Yu's endorsement of the aesthetic paradigm contributed to the National Theater Movement's eloquent defense of traditional Chinese opera's artistry, evoking an engagement with Chinese opera as an antiquity that suited new ends and purposes.

6. Conclusion

Although the National Theater Movement persisted for only a short period of time, it formulated many crucial ideas that exerted significant influence on modern Chinese theater. The present research reveals the close connection between the movement and Yu Shangyuan's *Qinxian* articles, providing new insights into the origins and the aesthetic stance of the National Theater Movement. In August 1923, Yu went to the United States and entered the Drama Department of Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh. At the time, the new spirit derived from European theater had already made inroads into American theater. Called variously the New Stagecraft Movement, the New Movement, or the New Art of the Theatre, the movement ignited a renaissance in American theater, resulting in many theater practitioners and critics appealing for an imaginative beauty as opposed to the conventional replication of reality. While most critics focused on scenographic innovations, American theater critics Sheldon Cheney and Kenneth Macgowan took a step further by applying the principles of the new stagecraft to the less visual facets—playwriting and acting—devising an inclusive aesthetic paradigm that covered all facets of theater production.

The spirit of the aesthetic paradigm largely influenced Yu's theatrical thinking. Incorporating textual analysis and contextual investigation, this paper has found that the nineteen *Qinxian* articles Yu published when he was in Pittsburgh contain many unmarked translations rendered from works concerning the aesthetic paradigm. Yu breaks down theater production into four facets: playwriting, stage setting, directing, and acting. In elaborating on each aspect, Yu took many segments from foreign works, resulting in *Qinxian* articles presenting an all-embracing paradigm that could be readily picked up by Chinese theater practitioners. However, what Yu presents to Chinese readers is not exactly the same paradigm proposed by Cheney and Macgowan. In light of Chinese

intellectuals' excessive and injudicious endorsement of Ibsen's social problem plays, Yu devises in *Qinxian* a modified aesthetic paradigm repugnant to Ibsen, which includes four facets: the simple and symbolic stage set decorated with lines, masses, and expressive lights; a powerful anti-Ibsenite artist-director; non-Ibsenian poetic drama with native interpretation; and a presentational acting method.

The in-depth analysis of *Qinxian* articles has brought much-needed nuances to the understanding of the National Theater Movement and, more largely, of the progress of modern Chinese theater. As it turns out, the ideas derived from the aesthetic paradigm served as the foundation for Yu to wage a constant battle in the National Theater Movement against Chinese intellectuals' advocacy of the literary and realistic drama. The fellow National Theater Movement proponents' embracement of the synthetical theater, opposition to Ibsen's social-critical plays, and endorsement of Chinese opera's artistry are largely prompted by the conviction that the aesthetic paradigm is the primary means of guaranteeing a production remaining true to art. The examination of *Qinxian* articles challenges the existing scholarship on the intellectual grounds for the National Theater Movement and brings to light the complexity and multifaceted nature of the construction of modern drama in the Chinese context.

Notes

- 1 According to Liang Shiqiu (1903–1987), because Yu was a staff member of the Registration Department at Tsinghua University, he received only half of the number of subsidies that the students did. Fortunately, Yu managed to obtain financial support from a Mr. He from his hometown, Shashi, Hubei province (Liang 1992, 42).
- 2 Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
- 3 The catchphrase “re-theatricalize the theatre” (*rethéâtraliser le théâtre*) was first proposed by German stage designer and theorist Georg Fuchs (1868–1948) in his book *Revolution in the Theatre* (1909). The term can be understood as a demand for more focus on the stage mechanics compared with previous productions, which attempted to hide them (Hulfeld 2013, 17).
- 4 Since the beginning of the 1920s, Irving Pichel and Oliver Sayler had actively participated in the New Stagecraft Movement by writing a substantial number of works on American theater's status quo and the

viable approaches for its future progress. Pichel published two important books concerning the new theater, *On Building a Theatre* in 1920 and *Modern Theatres* in 1925. And Sayler authored *Our American Theatre* (1923), which provided a detailed account of the progress of the movement and its impact on American theater.

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