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made my cross-dressing friends his own. This project was made possible by his understanding, tolerance, sacrifice, and support.
ABSTRACT

In the mid-1990s, a new trend—the so-called fanchuan show, a male cross-dressing show—made a great impact on Taiwan’s entertainment industry. In my study, I examine cultural representation within and politics surrounding a male cross-dressing performance troupe called Redtop Arts. Redtop, established in Taipei in 1994, is a case study through which I scrutinize gender ideology and modernist cultures at large in Taiwan. Redtop’s organization, politics, representation of females, multicultural programs, and selection of various musical materials from around the world highlight the Taiwanese public’s perceptions of sexuality and gender, as well as exemplify the democratic hybrid culture of postcolonial Taiwan.

My study examines six aspects of fanchuan show: the history of male cross-dressing performance in China and Taiwan; the emergence of modern Taiwanese show business; musical meaning in Redtop's programs; fanchuan yiren on- and offstage; and the significance of fanchuan show in Taiwanese society. By placing this case study in a larger cultural context and by utilizing theoretical approaches to gender, identity, commercialization, and globalization in the postmodern era, I address issues of gender representation in the Taiwanese media, and the hybridization and commercialization of popular culture in Taiwan.
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INTRODUCTION

Male cross-dressing is a complex set of phenomena found in many historical documents as well as in modern societies in both the East and the West. Some well-known examples include ancient Greek plays, English Renaissance theatre, Chinese Peking/Beijing opera and Japanese noh drama and kabuki theatre. In addition, highly successful contemporary films featuring male cross-dressing performance have drawn large crowds at box offices worldwide. For example, Tootsie, Orlando, The Birdcage, Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, Paris Is Burning, Mrs. Doubtfire, M. Butterfly, Ed Wood, To Wong Foo, and Farewell My Concubine were all top sellers. Perhaps because of frequent implications of sexual variance, sexual transgression, and eroticism, male cross-dressing performance has always captured the audience’s eye.

In Taiwan, male cross-dressing performance played a very important role in the early development of traditional Taiwanese theater—about a hundred years ago, it was found in almost every theatrical genre. Male cross-dressing performance in traditional Taiwanese theater is becoming rare, while in the meantime, a new performance context for male cross-dressing, the fanchuan show 反串秀 [male cross-dressing show]¹, has made a big impact on Taiwan’s entertainment industry since the mid-1990s.

¹ The English word “show” has been adopted in Chinese and is written with a character 秀, pronounced like the English word.
In 1997, when I was still a graduate student at the University of Hawaii, during a home visit trip, a friend offered me two tickets for a cross-dressing show by *Hongding yiren* [The Redtop Arts]\(^2\) in Taiwan. Even though I was somewhat familiar with Western drag shows, I was surprisingly bewitched by the Redtop Arts performance. Their elegant and subtle methods of impersonation distinguished themselves from those of Western drag shows, in which the physical and emotional portrayal of female traits is exaggerated. Along with their charming physical gestures, and splendid costume design, the variety of cultural scenery was highly entertaining as well as artistic. Each piece of colorful chiffon and the clever use of lights on stage took me to a different place in space and time, from the 1940s to the 1990s, and from the East to the West.

After the performance, I felt captivated by the pervasive erotic emotion conveyed by the actors. As a woman, what made me feel anxious and uneasy? Didn’t these performances tend to attract more male audiences, since the object of desire is a woman (though a surrogate)? Was I attracted by the female characters of the skit, or the “woman” on stage, or the man who impersonated the female role? Or was it their resultant gender ambiguity and performing hybridities as a whole that put me in a confused state of mind? How did male spectators perceive them? What is the significance of the hybridized musical programs that Redtop male cross-dressing show represented?

\(^2\) Throughout the dissertation, for Chinese terms, I will first give the Roman script transliteration, then Chinese character, and finally the English translation and/or explanation.
After the show, I heard some excited women in the audience chatting about their favorite skits and discussing which one was the most beautiful “lady” on the stage. Some were waiting at the gate, hoping to see their favorite actors in their “real” appearance, so that they could get to know the actors better. Having removed their stage costume/makeup and dressed in T-shirts and jeans, some Redtop actors emerged from backstage. After a few words of greeting, they quickly got into awaiting cars, and disappeared down the street. In the end, perhaps no one in the waiting crowd recognized their favorite stars—after all, it was hard to see at night. All that was left behind were their bewitching cross-dressing photos posted in the theatre hallway, along with my feelings of uncertainty. That evening, Redtop’s powerful visual performance and the invisible interflow between the impersonator and the spectator impelled the beginning of this study.

From various Taiwanese textual and visual media, I learned that Redtop Arts was one of the hottest showcases in Taiwan’s entertainment industry. Following the popularity of Redtop, other male cross-dressing troupes established themselves one after another to take part in this new trend. Redtop Arts members, as well as other professional male cross-dressing performers, were frequent guests on Taiwan’s televised game and talk shows. The visibility and popularity of fanchuan show in the late 1990s became so well-known that it became a new Taiwanese cultural phenomenon. The media called this new upsurge of show business fanchuan rechao

---

3 Before the establishment of Redtop, there were already some individual male cross-dressers performing in the theatre. The Redtop Arts was the first male cross-dressing group in Taiwan.
反串熱潮 [the great mass fervor of male cross-dressing performance]. Redtop Arts became synonymous with this new-fashioned cross-dressing art.

**Purpose of This Study**

I faced some obstacles and doubts by choosing *fanchuan show* as my research topic. I have been often asked by my friends and colleagues, with suspicion and amazement, “Are you kidding? Doing this for academic research? What does ethnomusicology have to do with *fanchuan show*?” When the general public in Taiwan talks about *fanchuan show*, it is often in association with the amusement page in the popular press. *Fanchuan show*’s connection to leisure and entertainment suggests that the subject matter may not be “serious” enough for a dissertation topic and fails to be earnest or profound. Moreover, cross-dressing actors’ behavioral improprieties and/or sexual frivolities may cause some Taiwanese scholars to question the worthiness of doing research on this subject.

Within ethno/musicological academic circles in Taiwan, research on popular entertainment is still not equally weighted with that of traditional music/theatre, and gender issues have not yet been widely touched upon by ethnomusicologists. To many academics, my research topic on modern male cross-dressing performance is somehow truly “queer” in the traditional sense—strange, odd, or unusual. My study further resonates the current usage of “queer,” which refers to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and asexual communities.
Nevertheless, I argue that the emergence and popularity of _fanchuan show_ have raised some crucial questions for ethnomusicology: what is the significance of the historical recurrence of male cross-dressing performance in Taiwan and people’s fascination with it? How do historical, social, cultural, musical, and aesthetic elements shape the designs of _fanchuan show_ in the present? What is the meaning behind the variety of theatrical and musical settings of _fanchuan show_? How do _fanchuan_ performers represent or construct gender signs physically and ideologically? What is the role of _fanchuan show_ in Taiwanese popular culture and society?

In this study, I argue that _fanchuan show_, as a manifestation of the emergence of a new entertainment genre, not only expresses social values of gender, but also the cultural hybridity of postmodern Taiwan, resulting largely from diaspora, colonization, and global commoditization.

I focus on the most popular _fanchuan_ troupe, the Redtop Arts, to examine their cultural representation and politics. The Redtop’s highly hybridized program, which conveyed ambivalent cultural-political messages, precisely expresses Taiwan’s unidentified cultural-national identity. I further argue that the organization of the Redtop Arts, their representation of females, multicultural programs, and selection of various musical materials from around the world highlight the Taiwanese public’s perceptions of sex, sexuality, and gender, as well as struggles between national identity, diasporic sentiment, postcolonial influence, and global forces.
This study intends to broaden the research domain of ethnomusicological research on Taiwan, particularly in the areas of popular culture studies and gender discourse. Also, this research attempts to provide a new window into Taiwan studies, and will contribute to the understanding of gender politics and popular culture in East Asian societies.

**Names, Terms, and Romanization**

Redtop Arts members do not reveal their entire real names to the public. They conceal the first character of their first name (real name or pseudonym) and insert either *hong* [red] or *ding* [top], according to the year when the member entered the troupe: senior members assume the character “*hong*,” junior “*ding*.” Such a system follows the Confucian social order, in which seniority is very important. The system also “protects” performers from totally exposing their “real selves” to the public media, and distinguishes their cross-dressing performances from their real selves. Equally important is that the use of stage names as a combination of real and stipulated/regulative ones attempts to present the troupe as a disciplined, organized, and cohesive team.

The term “male cross-dressing” itself needs some clarification. In pre-modern Chinese documents, there was no term comparable to “male cross-dressing.” Descriptive phrases were used, such as, *wei furen fu* 為婦人服 [wearing women’s
clothes], nong jia furen 弄假婦人 [disguising as a woman], and yi furen 衣婦人衣 [dressing in female clothes]. After the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), appellations like zhuangdan 粉旦/妝旦/裝旦 [impersonating female role], qiandan 乾旦 [female impersonator], and nandan 男旦 (or nanrendan 男人旦) [male in female role] were generally used among theatrical circles in both China and Taiwan. The use of the term fanchuan in Chinese opera is fairly recent. In Taiwan, before Peking opera became popularized after the 1950s, the term fanchuan was not commonly heard. Originally, it referred to playing a role other than one’s own specialty in a general sense, and was not limited to cross-gender impersonation. For example, if an actor who specializes in sheng 生 [the civil man character], plays the chou 丑 [the clown character], then it is said that he “fanchuan” the clown role. However, the term has been commonly used nowadays implying “to play the role of the opposite sex.” Furthermore, the term fanchuan show refers exclusively to a modern male cross-dressing show.

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4 In *Suishu zhi dishi yinyue xia* 隋書志第十 音樂下 [The book of Sui dynasty (581-618), volume ten, music records of the lower issue], there is a description about theatrical play in the period of Emperor Yang 炯帝 (669-618): “…there were over thirty thousand singers and dancers. The majority of them wore women’s clothes, decorated with bracelets, ornaments, and flowers.” 其歌舞者，多為婦人服。鳴環佩飾，飾以花毦者，殆三萬人 (Retrieved from http://www.starblvd.com/mem/l/a/lastwit/war-state/suesu/hur015.htm).

5 The term first appeared in *Yuefu zalu, Duanan jie* 樂府雜錄·段安節 [Miscellaneous notes on yuefu songs, section “Duanan”] (Tang dynasty [618-90]). See Chapter I under the first section “Male Cross-Dressing in Traditional Chinese Theatre” for details.


7 In traditional Chinese opera, performers choose and are trained in a particular role type such as old man, mature woman, or clown.
Other Chinese terms related particularly to modern cross-dressing are: *fanchuan* yiren 反串藝人 [cross-dressing performer], *yizhuang* 易裝 [changing attire], *banzhuang* 扮裝 [drag playing], *banzhuang huanghou* 扮裝皇后 [drag queen, a cross-dresser who dresses for theatrical reasons, and who may also impersonate specific individuals], and *banzhuang biaoyan* 扮裝表演 [drag show; cross-dressing show].

Recently, there seems to be a tendency to mix the usage of *fanchuan* and *banzhuang*, and accept the Western term “drag” for *fanchuan* show.

The name of the troupe, *Hongding yiren*, reflects some intriguing cultural and historical metaphors. *Hongding* [redtop] is sometimes interpreted as *hongtou yunding* 紅透雲頂 [reddening through the top of the cloud]. In Chinese, the color red implies “very popular.” Therefore, “redtop” could be “the top star.” However, the origin of the term “redtop” goes back to the mandarin official’s uniform in the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). The Qing officials were divided into nine ranks. Each rank had different clothes and caps. The uniform for the first rank officials had a splendid ruby decorating the cap (a “redtop”). The founder of the Redtop Arts, Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong 蔡斯聰, chose the name because of his expectation that the members of the troupe would reach the summit of achievement.

Redtop Arts particularly adapted the traditional terminology of Peking opera to name their performers. In Redtop Arts, theoretically all female impersonators can be called *dan* 旦 (the female role in Peking opera). However, the term *nǚ* 女 [female] dancer is more commonly used to indicate the female gender specialist. In Peking
opera, the terminology for the young man’s role, *sheng* 生, is not commonly used in Redtop. Instead, *nan* 男 [male] dancer is the term to refer to those members in the troupe who mostly (or exclusively) play male roles. In addition, contrast to the dominant beautiful female image constructed by Redtop Arts, a comic female role is also portrayed. The terminology *chou* 丑 [clown], used in Peking opera for both fe/male clowns in this particular role, is used in Redtop Arts exclusively for female clowns.

Regarding Romanization, I generally follow the *pinyin* system. However, I make exceptions for direct quotations from published works and I follow individuals’ preferences in the spelling of their names. Regarding the usage of the term for the Fujian dialog, I follow general Taiwanese scholars’ common usage, “Hokkien” (as the real pronunciation of the language) to indicate the dialog originally spoken in Fujian province, brought to Taiwan with Fujian immigrants several hundred years ago, and now treated as the synonym to “Taiwanese language.” For most Chinese names, I follow the traditional practice of surname first followed by given name, without a comma. All translations of Chinese texts are my own unless otherwise indicated.

**Fieldwork—the Truth behind Media Coverage**

In 1997, I contacted the head of the Redtop troupe, Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong, about my research plan, and I received a very warm response. I was able to get plenty of
information from Dr. Tsai, including videos and news reports. After that, I started to collect information from TV shows, interviews in the media, internet advertisements, and articles published in magazines and newspapers.

My early research on the Redtop Arts was based on public media reports and the information that Dr. Tsai provided. In the media, reports on Redtop Arts were centered on two notions: one was the artistry and excellence of their performance, and the other was that the actors were exclusively heterosexual. According to Redtop’s public statements, many Redtop Arts members were graduates of dance and theatre schools, and they joined the troupe simply because they enjoyed performing.

My research proposal largely focused on the analysis of Redtop Arts’ onstage gender performance, cultural identity, and their contesting and negotiating the notion of hybridity in the light of debates on cultural globalization. I planned to interview Redtop Arts members and their audiences. Relying on the media reports, I assumed that the interrelationship between cross-dressing and homosexuality was clearly not applicable in this particular case study. I believed that Redtop Arts members were an excellent example of the fact that Asian male cross-dressing performance could be distinguished from Western drag queens. The performers articulated that for them, male cross-dressing performance was one type of acting, and nothing more. Therefore, issues such as cross-dressing performers’ psychological analysis, gender identity, and offstage life were not a serious concern in my early research plan.

After deciding that modern male cross-dressing performance in Taiwan would be my dissertation project, I went back to Taiwan for my fieldwork in late 2000, and I
contacted Dr. Tsai again. Redtop Arts was no longer performing in their own exclusive theatre. They had moved into an amusement park to be one of the live performance programs. In order to attract tourists of all ages, amusement parks in Taiwan usually invite more than one entertainment troupe.8 From the media, I learned that there had been a swift decline in the live performance environment (show business in particular) in Taiwan in the last few years.9

After attending the Redtop Arts’ performances in Jiayi City, mid-southern Taiwan, I noticed that some of my previously prepared research plans would have to be changed. People going to the amusement park might not be going there exclusively for seeing Redtop Arts, and thus the background and psychological motivations of the audience became difficult to ascertain. The questionnaires I had designed for audiences (sex, age, occupation, purpose of going to the show etc.) were ineffectual if distributed in an amusement park.10

Furthermore, during the process of scrutinizing the information I had gathered, some trepidation had emerged and needed to be clarified. The media, as pointed out earlier, showed exclusively praise and support for Redtop, mentioning that the performers were “normal” and “healthy” in terms of gender identification, sexual orientation, and subsequently, psychological makeup. Such positive reports suggested two possible conflicting interpretations: 1) The social climate in Taiwan had become more tolerant of gender ambiguity or transgender activities; 2) Social tolerance

---

8 Such as magic shows, circuses, and acrobatics.
9 See Chapter III for more details.
10 According to my observations of the Redtop Arts’ performances in Jiayi and Zhanghua folklore villages, instead of waiting to see their favored stars, people rushed out of the hall after the show, heading to other shows or amusement facilities.
towards sexual/gender ambiguity was much more limited than what it first seemed to be. If the latter was likely to be closer to reality, then these “clean” reports might further imply another doubt: whether members of the troupe were “safely” heterosexual men at all. Perhaps the Redtop Arts members chose to present their best “face”—but not necessarily the truth? I wondered whether the members purposely concealed their homosexual orientation in order to keep their fame and respectable appearance, and to “protect” the troupe and themselves from a hegemonic society full of sexual prejudice. Such pre-fieldwork questioning turned out to be essential for me to revise my interview questions, not to mention the anthropological treatment of this research subject.

Following my suspicion on the reliability of media reports, I found other fundamental problems that needed to be dealt with. If there were different stories behind media reports, how could I get the administration and members of Redtop to tell me about them? As a female stranger and outsider, would they feel comfortable telling me the real/whole (if there was one) story? How would I know whether they were telling me the truth? If these hidden voices really existed, the real challenge of my fieldwork might not be in ensuring good technique and quality, but my ability to effectively investigate the underlying concepts of the subordinate “other.”

In 2001, I revised my research plans and made the male cross-dressing performers’ personal lives and psychological factors my major focus. However, the difficulty of dealing with such private matters made me hesitate to interview the members. I worried about being misunderstood and being perceived as a person
trying to dig up their private lives, an impression which could spoil my relationship with the troupe from the outset. As an outsider, what if my interviewees refused to reveal the information about their life stories and psychological mindset on which my study would rely?

With these doubts, considerations, and the uncertainty of how to begin the interview process, I put the project on hold. I hoped that a retrospective interview in the future might be able to solve the problem. Perhaps at a later time and in a different place, Redtop Arts members might feel willing to talk about the troupe and themselves more freely. Obviously, I could not foresee when the “right time” would be, and how long I would have to wait.

In the spring of 2005, two years after the Redtop Arts’ newly-built theatre was surprisingly knocked down and its members disbanded, male cross-dressing performance was no longer a hot topic in the media, and many professional cross-dressing actors had given up their performance careers. This seemed to be the right time for me to try out my interviews with the performers.

Doing fieldwork after the troupe had disbanded was particularly difficult because the original members no longer worked together. It took me a couple of months to relocate the members: Dr. Tsai himself had been teaching in China, and some of the former Redtop Arts members had formed their own group named Xin shiji fanchuan meiren xiù 新世紀反串美人秀 [New Century Cross-dressing Beauty Show], and performed daily at an amusement park in Zanghua County, mid-southern Taiwan. Moreover, due to a lack of performance opportunities, a few were
working at the *hongbao chang* 紅包場 [“red envelope” singing halls]\(^{11}\) and even at *disanxing gongguan* 第三性公關 [third-sex nightclubs],\(^{12}\) while the majority of the members got other jobs or were working overseas.\(^{13}\)

Except in a few cases,\(^{14}\) my initial attempts proved that such “retrospective fieldwork” worked with the majority of my interviewees. I pursued an ethnography of the performer’s offstage lives that had not been previously explored by the media. My analysis and interviews revealed a concealed reality starkly different from previous reports on the subject. During one year of tracing and visiting members—driving between Taipei, Taizhong, Zhanghua, and Jiayi—I successfully interviewed Dr. Tsai again (on his vacation in Taiwan), and twenty male cross-dressing performers,\(^{15}\) including one who had chosen to have sex reassignment surgery\(^ {16}\) and five former members working abroad temporarily or permanently. Those who agreed to be

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11 A type of singing hall where customers come to enjoy live entertainment (especially singing old songs) and later give their favored performer(s) tips in red envelopes. See Chapter II for more details.
12 A type of nightclub (similar to the cabaret in Western society), which sells alcoholic drinks, and has transsexuals, M2F (on the medical/surgical treatment of “male to female”) and/or male transvestites to accompany guests. Its business is commonly perceived as having erotic elements or even prostitutional deals under the table. In Taiwan, the term “third-sex” generally refers to transsexuals, M2F, and male transvestites who take female hormones. See Chapter VI for the relationship between “third-sex” and male cross-dressing performers.
13 In its heyday, the Redtop had around fifty members.
14 In Taiwan, some past research on gay cultures infringed on gay community members' privacy, disrespecting their human rights. The violence has caused some gays to be skeptical when dealing with invitations from academic researchers. During my fieldwork, four cross-dressing performers I wished to interview turned down my invitations. Also, my contact with the founder Tsai Tou 蔡頭 (the troupe leader Dr. Tsai’s elder brother) was difficult and unsuccessful. He refused my invitation for an interview: “Fanchuan show is no longer a hot issue. After the theatre was gone, I was afraid of hearing the name ‘Redtop’ for a long period of time. I’m physically and mentally exhausted. Please don’t do research on the Redtop” (phone interview, February 18, 2005). After learning that he was undergoing psychological treatment for depression, I decided not to bother him further.
15 Not limited to Redtop members. See Chapter V for details on my interviewees.
16 Another instance of a male cross-dressing performer becoming transsexual is Sun Hongyi, one of the anchormen of Redtop Arts. However, he refused to be interviewed after the surgery, for fear that it might reveal his previous male life.
interviewed included actors who had more than twenty years of cross-dressing experience as well as newcomers. The ages and performance experiences of my informants could be roughly divided into three “generations,” the term used by cross-dressing performers themselves. They were 35-45 years old (first generation), 25-35 years old (second generation), and under 25 years old (third generation).

I surprisingly learned that a former Redtop top star Zhou Xianggeng, now living in Shanghai, China, was a fellow student of mine, an alumnus of the National Taiwan University of Arts. During his vacation visit in Taiwan, I interviewed him and invited him to give a lecture on the topic of “cross-dressing performance in traditional Chinese theatre” at the Chinese Music Department of National Taiwan University of Arts, where I was teaching. Songtian Wanzi, another interviewee and fellow student, is now a graduate student in the Graduate School of Applied Media Arts. He won first place in the 1995 Show Queen Competition (i.e., the male cross-dressing model contest) held by the National Institution of Arts, and is the troupe leader of the Snow White Entertaining Troupe (SWET), which is famous for its drag shows. Due to these unexpected connections, my interviews with Zhou and Songtian were enjoyable as well as informative.

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17 Before joining the troupe, some Redtop members were already experienced in male cross-dressing performance. They performed individually in different theatrical and entertainment sites, such as traditional theatres, gay bars, and nightclubs, etc. See Chapter V for details.

18 Zhou Xianggeng obtained his master’s degree in 2002 with his thesis topic on “Qiandan yanjiu” [Research on female impersonator in Chinese opera].

19 Established originally in 1996 as a fanchuan troupe, SWET is now a male-and-female troupe. They still actively perform in show business and present male cross-dressing show from time to time. See Chapter VI for more details.
While trying to find out the returning dates of those performers abroad and making appointments with them, I regularly attended the New Century Cross-dressing Beauty Show at the Taiwan Folklore Village 台灣民俗村. Because the Cross-dressing Beauty Show performed daily, it was the major place where I conducted my fieldwork research. After their performances, I took my family backstage to greet them, expressing my appreciation of their show and my interest in their representations of gender. I presented myself as a university lecturer who had done some research on male cross-dressing performance. I initially did not point out my further research purposes.

This research process was a site of contestation and struggle between my research subjects and I, and between them and the society. In the early stages of my interviews, some performers remained quite closed even in casual conversations. Every time I went backstage at the New Century Cross-dressing Beauty Show, I realized the awkwardness of my situation: I was an ordinary female scholar with a plain outfit bursting into an outlandish world full of stunningly attired and heavily made-up cross-dressing actors. As an outsider seemed to represent mainstream social orthodoxy, I wondered in what way I might be able to break the invisible barrier between us.

In such situations, I did not attempt to ignore this confrontation. Rather, I attempted to transform it into a positive situation. I, as an outsider, came to listen to and to learn about these marginalized voices and their views. Gradually, after numerous visits, they began to trust me and we built a close “sisterhood” between us.
After getting to know each other better, I asked for permission to interview and videotape them on, off, and back stage, with the explanation that the outcome of this research would be a dissertation written in the English language. To them, this meant that only specific people in academia would read the work, and performers who accepted my interview would be safe from social criticism in Taiwan. This proclamation was important for it helped me to push through my interviews with the performers. Our friendship was also built up through showing them the DVD I recorded of them, giving them some comments on their program, performance, make-up, and attire, while sharing lunch together at their dormitory and at restaurants. From photos I took of them, I made personal albums for each of them, and this brought a positive reaction. They copy-edited the photographic portraits I took of them to make posters for advertising their upcoming performances. Perhaps I became no longer just an interviewer but an outlet for their anxieties, the experience they rarely found outside of their own world.

As my fieldwork continued, I consistently reminded myself of the hegemony of speaking for the Other. Eventually, I realized that the performers I interviewed and I were not that different and our sisterhood somehow allied us. Like them, I also struggled against oppression, control, and exploitation from patriarchal and

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20 At the beginning, one of the members told me that he would rather not to be interviewed because his parents showed detestation whenever they saw male cross-dressing performers on TV, without knowing their son was taking this job. Another example was that Jinmei, a former cross-dressing performer, now a married transsexual (TS), also hesitated to receive any public interview for the reason that her mother-in-law might find out her TS status through the media. After finding out that my research would be written in English—their families would not be able to read it—both of them then accepted my interview requests.
heterosexual hegemony.\textsuperscript{21} After becoming acquainted with me, a member told me: 
“\textit{jiejie} 姊姊 [elder sister], as they called me, I have so much to tell you, to unburden my mind! We gave you even our real names, what else can’t we tell you?” Out of respect for my interviewees, unless granted with their permission, I chose not to use their real names, but stage names instead.

Conducting audience surveys was another difficult task in my research because \textit{fanchuan show} no longer owned their exclusive theatres. When I attended cross-dressing performances in amusement parks, I observed the interaction between the actor and the audience. I randomly chatted with audiences and asked them about their thoughts on the performance. As pointed out earlier, to conduct the audience survey in an amusement park would have been fruitless. Instead, I designed a questionnaire particularly for the spectators of SWET’s 2006 annual production called \textit{Banzhuang tianhou} 扮裝天后 [The Drag Queen]. Unlike at the amusement parks, people who attended \textit{Banzhuang tianhou} were clearly there for the single purpose of watching the show.\textsuperscript{22}

Meanwhile, during Dr. Tsai’s returning trips from China in July and August 2005, I had extensive interviews with him, mainly by telephone. My questions to him focused on the establishment of the troupe, the screening of the members, the training system, the challenge of social critics and established gender structure, relationships

\textsuperscript{21} My husband comes from a very traditional family. After I got married, I was under strong pressure to produce male heirs of the family as soon as possible and as as many as possible. For the beginning four years of my marriage, I was not allowed to go out to work nor pursue my study. My assigned duties were limited to domestic work: doing housework and taking care of my three sons.

\textsuperscript{22} The problems and result of audience survey are discussed in Chapter VI.
between the members, aesthetic foothold, expectations for the troupe, and its cultural and sexual politics. He later kindly introduced me to his assistant who had Redtop Arts’ archival disk files. Keeping him informed of my fieldwork process on the former members, I got his warm support:

Since the establishment of Redtop, so many media have been trying to persuade me to publish a book about it or to write about it. I turned them all down. I thought the truth should be revealed only before I entered the coffin. My Redtop members are all tight-lipped, they know what to tell. Now, you are the first person to whom I would speak frankly, and so do my Redtop members—they get their feelings off their chests to you because you are not from the media and your writing in English won’t have any direct effect on them. I understand that your research has to be based on truth, and I shall answer your questions to the best of my knowledge.23

In addition, I also interviewed four major performers from two other cross-dressing troupes: Huali Bianshen 華麗變身 [Top Arts Entertainment] and Tiantangniao Gewu Jutuan 天堂鳥歌舞劇團 [Paradise Bird Song and Dance Ensemble], which were competitors of Redtop. A special case is my in-depth interview with Romansa, a member of Top Arts Entertainment. Romansa runs a website offering professional advice relevant to male cross-dressing performance and transvestites. On his webpage, he clearly states “homosexuals and ‘third-sex’ are all welcome to join his web-family,” openly indicating the link between male cross-dressing performance, homosexuals, and third-sex. He works at a third-sex nightclub in Taiwan and often flies to Japan working as a “barmaid” and occasionally gives cross-dressing performances there.

23 Phone interview on July 26, 2005.
I expanded my ethnographic research to other relevant sites which provide transsexual and/or transvestite cabaret shows, including Yidu biaoyan cun [Yidu Performance Village] (an amusement park, presenting She-male shows imported from Thailand), Jingong da geting [Jingong Singing Hall] (A red-envelope singing hall, providing male cross-dressing performance from time to time), and Dianjita [Electric Guitar] (a third-sex nightclub, presenting male cross-dressing floor shows on the weekend). All three types of entertainment business have causal interrelationships with the fanchuan show. My ethnographic work at the third-sex nightclub was especially difficult because it was located in the so-called red-light district or gay quarters in Taipei, and its opening hours were from 1:00am to 6:00am, not accessible by city bus or Metro Taipei. I had to ask my brother to go with me every time to avoid any unexpected trouble.

Throughout most of my fieldwork, I realized that my female identity very often smoothed my relationships with the interviewees, and facilitated rewarding and warm interactions. Some of my cross-dressing “sisters” often ignored my existence at backstage while dressing and undressing, and were eager to share their secrets on skin care and cosmetics with me offstage.

**Theoretical Framework**

Redtop Arts’ performances, as a contemporary cultural practice, involve complicated cultural-political negotiations. Its programs display Taiwan’s diasporic
memory of China, the postcolonial cultural sentiment toward its colonizer, Japan, its search of native roots, a portrayal of global multicultural forces, and gender ambiguity. In response, my study employs an interdisciplinary approach to investigate the complex issues of modern fanchuan show in cultural-specific sociopolitical contexts, including gender studies (Butler 1990, 1993, 2004; Suthrell 2004; Zhou 2004), cultural criticism (Epstein and Straub 1991; Atkinson 2005), postcolonial theory (Bhabha 1994; Appadurai 1996; Brah and Coombes, eds. 2000; Puri 2004), and anthropological approaches (Wu 1992; Yang 1993, 1994; Mackerras 1997; Li 2003; Guy 2005; Hung 2005).

I have particularly aligned my study with discourses within the field of gender studies in ethnomusicology. Ellen Koskoff gives an historical review of the research of women in music, women’s music, and gender studies by dividing these into three overlapping waves (2000: x). The first wave rose in the 1970s, and was concerned with “women-centric” studies (i.e., studying women’s music).24 The second wave, from the late 1980s, focuses on “gender-centric” scholarship (i.e., the relationship between women’s and men’s musicking).25 In the third wave, from the early 1990s, studies focus on the relationships between social and musical structures, display a wider view of gender (including gay and lesbian roles in music-making), and draw upon methodologies from other fields (e.g., feminist theory, performance studies,

24 See Farrer (1975); Cormier (1978); Bowers and Tick (1985); Biscoe (1986); Pendle (1991); Marchall (1993); and Neuls-Bates (1996).
cultural theory, psychoanalysis, and semiotics). Major issues discussed in these studies include women’s positions in music culture and music research; women’s contribution to music culture; how gender differences influence music-making and musical life; how gender relations, gender roles, and gender identities are reflected in music; how music functions in gender relationships; and how a author’s subject position effects his/her work. There are only a few gender studies in Chinese music (Zheng 1997, 1999, 2002; Witzleben 1999; Jones 2001; Baranovitch 2003). Most ethnomusicologists who study music and gender have centered the discussion on women’s music and/or women in music, some have published studies on the music of gender minorities (LBGT) (Solie 1993; Cusick 1994; Brett, Wood, and Thomas 1994; Fuller and Whitesell 2002), but there are very few ethnomusicologists who have studied cross-dressing performance (Rodger 1998, 2002; Pasler 2002).

For this particular case study, I propose the theory of cultural hybridity as my central interpretive framework for understanding gender representation, production, identity, and politics within fanchuan performance. I also draw upon historical sources and postmodern theoretical concepts on cross-dressing to approach this subject matter. I believe that this interdisciplinary approach will provide broad and diverse viewpoints in understanding fanchuan performance in postmodern Taiwan.

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26 See McClary (1991); Solie (1993); Citron (1993); Brett, Wood, and Thomas (1994); Babiracki (1997); Cusick (1999); Moisala and Diamond (2000).
27 Studies on cross-dressing performances are mostly found in the disciplines of theatre. See online information about bibliographies for gender studies in music, compiled by SEM’s Gender and Sexualities Taskforce members in 2003: [http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/music/SEM%20Bibliography.htm](http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/music/SEM%20Bibliography.htm) (viewed on July 17, 2007).
Review of Literature on Cross-Dressing and Hybridity Discourses

Cross-Dressing Literature

The literature on cross-dressing behavior can be generally divided into five categories: 1) psychological-biological-medical analysis; 2) the historical-sociological approach; 3) cultural studies, queer and feminist theories; 4) the anthropological approach; and 5) theatrical and literary approaches. In addition, recently, quite a few Chinese studies on cross-dressing theatres in China and Taiwan were published. These will be reviewed as a separate category.

Psychological-biological-medical Analysis

The psychological-biological-medical analysis and sociological approaches were the most influential and predominant among pre-1980s studies of cross-dressing. Early twentieth-century medical-psychological-psychiatric researchers tended to view cross-dressing as an illness or a behavioral problem, for it did not conform to the majority of sexual/gender behaviors. To theorize cross-dressing, specialists in this area labeled and classified cross-dressing by diagnosis. The diagnostic term “gender dysphoria” (or gender dissatisfaction) was commonly used in the 1970s for medical-psychological-psychiatric specialists to refer to cross-dressing behavior as gender deviation. In short, pre-1980s medical-psychological studies of cross-dressing

28 Recent studies on cross-dressing often apply interdisciplinary studies.
29 The term was introduced by Norman M. Fisk in his 1973 article “Gender Dysphoria Syndrome (the how, what and why of a disease)” (cited in Ekins 1996: 95).
generally limited its analytical domain to the doctor-patient context, with the presupposition of pathology or therapeutic problems.

Some post-1980s medical-psychological studies adjusted their viewpoint of gender dysphoria by introducing another level of interpretation and combining other disciplines. In the late 1970s, cross-cultural data of historicity in cross-dressing were accumulated and genetic studies were conducted. This led to medical-psychological specialists’ hypothesis that “not only [is] homosexual orientation biologically based but sexual orientation itself is also biologically derived” (Whitam 1978: 27). The complex interactions of brain systems, genetic predisposition, and physiological factors together contribute to cross-dressing and cross-gender behaviors (Wilson 1978: 142-148; Diamond 1977: 22-61; Pillard and Weinrich 1987: 425-454).

The Historical-Sociological Approach

The pre-1980s sociological approach to the subject of cross-dressing was based on a type of presupposition, similar to that of early medical-psychology. Researchers took preexisting meaning and types of sex and gender roles for granted. By generating a presupposition that illegitimatized cross-dressing behaviors were non-conformist, this type of approach categorized cross-dressing as deviant social behavior (e.g., Sagarin 1969; Feinbloom 1976; Talamini 1982). The approach selected materials that fit only into the preconditioned paradigm and conceptual framework, rather than looking at the data itself. Sources from different contexts or phenomena that may have resulted in a variety of findings were largely ignored.
Post-1980s sociological studies have gradually discarded the view of cross-dressing as social deviance. From the social constructionist perspective, the performative aspect of cross-dressing is a product of the socialization process within the family, community, and society. Moreover, the historicity and performativity of cross-dressing have been concerned within the domain of case studies for individuals or within a community. Other possible factors, such as social constructions and cultural variability, have been carefully examined since the late 1970s. Sociologists have drawn upon concrete empirical situations (i.e., historicity and performativity of cross-dressing in various cultures) to provide evidence of notions of gender representation (e.g., Newton 1979; King 1981; Garber 1992). For instance, Vern L. Bullough, drawing numerous examples from American society as well as from different cultures,\(^30\) indicates that cross-dressing is a ubiquitous and “normative aspect of human behavior” (1993: x). He suggests that the meaning and nature of cross-dressing should be understood in the light of cultural-historical context as well as social realities.

**Queer and Feminist Theory, Cultural Studies**

Scholars in queer and feminist theories and cultural studies have challenged both the medical model and sociological analysis, and have made remarkable contributions to the cross-dressing literature. Through the study of cross-dressing, they have raised fundamental questions about human nature, sensationalism, and

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\(^{30}\) He traces historical references of cross-dressing dated as early as the fifteenth century Greece, and gives numerous examples from different religions (e.g., Christian and Muslim) and cultures (e.g., Africa, India, Japan, and China) (1993: 13, 22).
interrelations between sex, sexuality, and gender. For example, Judith Butler comments on the meaning of cross-dressing performance as an insight into the social construction of gender:

As much as drag creates a unified picture of "woman"...it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence. *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency* [Butler’s emphasis] ([1990] 1999: 175).

Accordingly, gender is a reiteration of acts rather than a substantive natural one. Butler suggests that the study of drag should focus on three aspects of significant corporeality: “anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance” (ibid.). While Butler views drag performance as not necessarily relevant to subversion (176-177), other queer and feminist theorists read drag performance as a dispute to bipolar gender notions, a challenge to sociopolitical hierarchies, and a protest against political hegemony (e.g., Ferris 1993; Muñoz 1999; Seidman 1996).

Based on the notion of power relations, cultural critics have expanded their cross-dressing studies from sexuality and gender performance to racial issues (Ross 1989; Roediger 1991; Frankenberg 1993; McClintock 1995; Dyer 1997). Eric Lott, in his 1993 “Racial Cross-Dressing and the Construction of American Whiteness,” examines blackface performance. For Lott, blackface is an imagined identity that explores the construction and performativity of whiteness. He moves beyond the common interpretation of white will to blackness as a performance of masculine
mastery, by suggesting an undertone of expressing repressed forms of homosocial or “interracial male-bonding” (474-475).

*The Anthropological Approach*

Anthropologists explore cross-dressing based on first-hand (non-medical) information gathered from ethnographic work. This information includes work, leisure, education, families, communities, and social background (e.g., Mead [1949] 2001; Williams 1986; Bolin 1988; Herdt and Stoller 1990; Johnson: 1997). Many scholars employ historical analysis and construct concrete empirical situations within culturally specific socio-political contexts to seek out explanations for male cross-dressing behavior. Richard Tewksbury, who based his research on interviews with professional female impersonators in Midwestern City, argues that in a particular and limited range of contexts, socially constructed gender stereotypes are not a set of static categorical definitions. Rather, they are manipulated and interpreted by individuals who actively reconstruct their gender identities (1995: 155).

Charlotte Suthrell’s *Unzipping Gender* (2004), a comparative study on male cross-dressers (drag queens) in British cities and sex-changers (*hijras*) in India, is particularly inspiring. Through detailed ethnographic work in these countries, Suthrell examines how different cultures deal with cross-dressing. She explores mythology, imagery, and beliefs in a given society and how they have influenced the conceptualization of sex and gender.
Jennifer Ellen Robertson uses anthropological approaches and gender study theories to explore the all-female cross-dressing theatrical world of Takarazuka in Japan (1998). By examining the socio-historical background of the revue, Robertson points out that at particular historical moments, the revue conveys specific socio-political values and ideas (1994: 37). Notions including nationalism, imperialism, sexual politics, and modernity are closely discussed in this study. Moreover, Robertson provides sophisticated research on the relationships between administrators, performers, fans, and social critics. In particular, Robertson has done extensive surveys on Takarazuka fans, including their age, class, organization, activities, impact on the program, literature (e.g., fan magazines, letters, and viewpoints), and fans’ same-sex love toward Takarazuka stars.

Theatrical and Literary Approaches

For the past twenty years, studies on cross-dressing performances from theatrical and literature approaches have increased a pronounced amount (Slide 1986; Herrmann 1991; Senelick 1992, 2000; Suares 1994; Moore 1994; Bruzzi 1997). Centering on contemporary studies of Chinese cross-dressing theatre in English language, they mostly examine archival data by employing perspectives from comparative literature and gender studies (Tseng 1976; Hinsch 1990; Duchesne 1994; Cosdon 1995; Volpp 1996; Chou 1997). These studies examine fiction, dramatic texts, official histories, documentary archives, or previously recorded interviews.
Only a few studies on Chinese cross-dressing performance have employed ethnographic approach of first-hand data collection from living performers.

Li Siu Leung’s *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera* (2003) is the first in-depth study in the West about China’s cross-dressing tradition. Using an archaeological approach, literary studies, ethnography, and Western theory of cultural study, Li studies Chinese cross-dressing as presented in classical drama texts, regional operas, wall paintings, and modern films. Li views the theatre as a vehicle of ideological embodiment in expressing cultural imagination of sex, gender, and sexual desire. The book addresses censorship, social criticism, and the implicit power relations within cross-dressing performances. Li not only contributes a revisionist history of cross-dressing, but also provides an insightful view into gender representation in the Chinese theatrical world.

*Cross-Dressing Studies Written in Chinese*

Recently in Taiwan, there has been notable growing interest in the study of the phenomenon of cross-dressing performance. Song Zuci’s M.A. thesis “Kunsheng yu qiandan” 坤生與乾旦 [Male impersonators and female impersonators] (1998) is the product of extensive research on the historical documents relevant to cross-dressing performance. Zhou Xianggeng’s “Qiandan yianjiu” 乾旦研究 [Research on the female impersonator in Chinese opera] (2002), also a M.A. thesis, contributes an insider’s view on cross-dressing performance. He conducted his fieldwork both in

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31 Research is mostly conducted in the field of theatre and mass communication.

Regarding the research on the modern *fanchuan show*, there are two M.A. theses dealing with this topic. Yi Hui-Tsu’s “Banzhuang de meiti zaixian zhi fenxi” 扮裝的 媒體再現之分析 [The analysis of cross-dressing representation in the media] utilizes cultural studies and queer theory to analyze TV drag shows. Yen Yu-Feng’s “Dianshi tanhuaxing zongyi jiemu yu xingbie fanchuan zhi zaixian” 電視談話性綜藝節目與 性別反串之再現 [An analysis of transvestites on TV talk shows] (2001) chooses a particular TV talk show program as a text to scrutinize the format of the talk show genre, the narrative logic of TV talk shows, and the way transvestites are presented in the program. In addition, two articles give a close analysis on *fanchuan show* in Taiwanese TV programs (Chang 2000; Lin 2003). However, studies on *fanchuan show* that draw upon ethnographic interviews do not exist.

**Hybridity Discourses**

A wide spectrum of discourses and disciplines has embraced the concept of hybridity, such as the study of racial mixing generated from the fear of miscegenation
in the eighteenth century Europe, the critique of cultural imperialist hybridity in postcolonial theory, anti-essentialism in cultural studies, and semiotics in linguistics. “Hybridity” is often treated as a catch-all term applied to sociological theories concerning issues such as ethnicity, identity, class, sovereignty, location, gender, sexuality, multiculturalism, and globalization. Ella Shohat further suggests, one needs to “discriminate between diverse modalities of hybridity, for example, forced assimilation, internalized self-rejection, political co-optation, social conformism, cultural mimicry, and creative transcendence” (1993: 110).

For the purpose of this particular study, I will give an overview on the theory of hybridity focusing on: 1. mimicry and drag parody, 2. polyphony and carnival, 3. pastiche and heterotopias, and 4. hybrid identities.

**Mimicry and Drag Parody**

The term “mimicry” has been a key concept in discussions and debates within colonial discourse. Homi Bhabha argues that colonial mimicry, as a cultural-political embodiment, is a way of evading colonial hegemony. As Bhabha defines:

...colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. (1994: 86)
Bhabha acknowledges that the rising of third-world voices has challenged the entrenched eurocentric perspectives of Western intellectuals. He employs hybridity as a theoretical mode to analyze heterogeneous display in colonial encounters and to interpret the juxtapositions of time and space, domestic and foreign in postmodern life.

The mode of colonial mimicry suggests a comparative link to drag performance. In the process of imitation, both colonial mimicry and drag parody involve a similar complex course of identification: signs between colonizer and colonized, and signs between drag and culturally signified womanliness. Their representations regulate a similar negotiation process: envy (want-to-be-ness) → a process of disavowal/dis-identification → hybridizing → representation of a difference → the resultant ambivalence (Bhabha 1984: 128-129; interpreted in Chang 2000, 140). One may further argue that colonial mimicry and gender parody of drag, although rendering different models of resistance, reserve the potential subversive power against the dominant hierarchy. Yet, unlike drag, colonial mimicry does not necessarily generate satire.

Polyphony and Carnival

Bakhtin’s concepts of polyphony, carnival, and the grotesque have been widely employed by anthropologists and folklorists in their studies of aesthetic hybridities and performed syncretisms. In his study of Dostoevsky’s works, Bakhtin locates polyphony (i.e., multiple voices) “with equal rights and each with its own world,
Bakhtin’s study on semiotics links linguistic hybridity to strategic politics as a means of resistance to the monolingual authority. Carnival is another Bakhtinian notion of artifice related to polyphony, in that multiple voices are distinct from each other, flourishing and interacting consciously with one another. Carnival, involving re-negotiations of power, is a utopian thrust made by oppressed people, as Bakhtin notes, “carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions” (1984b: 10). For example, employing Bakhtin’s notion in her study of Brazilian carnival, May Joseph points out that “carnivalesque” is a transgressive performance which evades restrictions set by the forces of official rules or established order. It is “a struggle for heterogeneous citizenship within the fictionalized, sovereign, monolithic postcolonial state” (1999: 9).

**Pastiche and Heterotopias**

In the analysis of postmodern world arts, Fredric Jameson’s notion of “pastiche” as an interpretive mode is influential. Jameson distinguishes pastiche from parody:

That is the moment at which pastiche appears and parody has become impossible. Pastiche is like parody, the imitation of peculiar mask, speech in a dead language; but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that, alongside the abnormal tongue you have normally borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody. (1988: 16)
Accordingly, “pastiche,” not a total object of mimicry or parody, conveys no political site or critical means. Rather, pastiche often emerges alongside capitalist consumption tied to the postmodern commodity sensibility. In other words, pastiche is a quote or imitation of past artifacts or cultural others into personal or communal usage for benefit. Traits of the production of pastiche include fragmentation, simultaneity, and multiplicity. In postmodern popular culture and global commoditization, pastiche functions as a strategy of aesthetic hybridities—for participating in global citizenship as a way of being in the world.

In terms of simultaneity and multiplicity, Michel Foucault interprets the “other space” (i.e., another real space) and the “juxtaposition of different time/space” as “heterotopias,” (i.e., heterogeneous spaces) (1986: 24, 25). Unlike utopia, which are “sites with no real place,” heterotopias are “formed in the very founding of society,” such as theater, cinema, and garden. These “other” spaces, allow the spectacle of excess: things that are considered deviant, unusual, abnormal, unordinary, or transgressive by the official order or social morality. The ideology of heterotopia has currently been employed by cultural theorists in Taiwan for their analysis of fanchuan show, queer hybridity, and homosexual negotiations.32

Hybrid Identities

In relation to questions of identity, the hybridity discourse emerges with the rise of colonial powers and mass immigration. In the colonial condition, modern hybrid identities have been shaped through the process of resisting “the colonizing notion of

singular identity” to demonstrate that “stories of original, ‘native,’ prelapsarian
cultures are produced by the conquerors to dehumanize the conquered” (Fink 1999:
249). Cultural hybridity has been a proclamation tool of cultural democracy and
sovereignty in the fight against authoritarianism and imperialism. In understanding
the resultant hybrid identity of diasporic linkage/connection, cultural hybridity relies
on the ideological framework of deterritorialization in which modern transportation,
 electronic technology, transnational media, global cultural economics, and
transnational labor markets have been taken into the inquiry (Slobin 1994: 7-8).

In the postmodern condition, the blurring of ethnic boundaries and the struggle
for cultural identity in the multicultural and multiethnic social reality of the
metropolitan West have been widely discussed (Friedman 1997; Revill 1998; Muñoz
1999; Bhabha 1984, 1990, 1994). For example, in the study of musical diaspora and
hybrid identity, Slobin (1993) provides an in-depth discussion of multicultural and
multiethnic social realities, musical tastes and choices of individuals and groups,
ambivalence, and the sentiment of diaspora. Slobin points out that there is a growing
interest in viewing diasporic identity as changeable and hybridized rather than static
and symbolic.33 This also indicates the attention given to the urban environment,
characterized by its dynamics, exchange, variance, conflict, and co-operation.

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33 This trend seems to parallel the previous shift of paradigm in ethnomusicology in the 1960s
mentioned earlier in this paper. This shift is also detectable in the topic of identity, discussed in the
following section.
Structure of the Study

I divide this study into six chapters. In Chapter I, I search for the genealogy and evolution of male cross-dressing performance particular to social and historical frames of different eras in both China and Taiwan. This historical examination is based on materials including books on the history of Chinese and Taiwanese theatres, historical writings, research projects, novels, poems, and anecdotal records. Not restricting my interpretation to the text, my commentary raises the basic questions of political and gender issues after presenting the evidence/source.

In Chapter II, the development of various forms of show business as a result of diasporic influences and capitalist investment is briefly introduced. Then, I delve into how the Redtop Arts emerged and flourished as a new form of show business. I further reveal how Redtop managers manipulated and controlled the mass media to create an entertainment empire. Culture and gender policies of the troupe are addressed in relation to the sociopolitical climate in Taiwan.

In Chapter III, I discuss the significance of Redtop Arts’ adoption of music and visual politics in various socio-historical contexts. Its involvement of complex issues of diaspora, nostalgia, indigenization, and globalization are closely examined. I further discuss the concomitant tension between colonizing and colonized, audiences’ fantasies and memories, cultural authenticity and consumption, and localization and globalization.

In Chapter IV, I observe onstage fanchuan performance. I analyze Redtop Arts’ programs in the light of gender studies and feminism. Female images represented and
reproduced in the troupe are closely examined in specific cultural and historical contexts.

In Chapter V, I deal with male cross-dressing performers’ backstage preparation and offstage life. This chapter applies deep analysis to interviews. From my observation of the cross-dressing actor’s backstage preparation, this chapter deconstructs gender elements, demonstrates the fluidity of gender identities, and seeks an understanding of the process of constructing femininity and performativity in contemporary Taiwanese culture. In my study of the male cross-dressing performers’ offstage life, I scrutinize how and why the performers chose this profession in terms of socio-cultural, physical, and psychological reasoning.

In Chapter VI, the popularity and decline of the Redtop Arts and the fanchuan show as a whole are presented. This chapter touches upon inquiries including the interrelationship between Redtop Arts, other fanchuan show troupes, and relevant institutions. Governmental sanctioning, censorship, public opinion, and audience surveys are also discussed.
CHAPTER I
HISTORICAL TRACES OF
MALE CROSS-DRESSING IN TRADITIONAL
CHINESE AND TAIWANESE THEATRES

To celebrate the Millennium, the Chinese organizations in the USA including
the World TV Station 世界電視, World Journal 世界日報, and World Artist
Association 世界藝術家協會, presented a carnivalesque show on 29 January, 2000 at
the Golden Center of Queen’s College for the Chinese community in New York City.
The advertisement for the show in the World Journal highlighted a male cross-
dresser, Hu Wenge 胡文閣 (1966-), who is presented as the heir of Mei Lanfang’s 梅
蘭芳 artistry,\(^\text{34}\) with his unusual talent in traditional Chinese opera, singing, and
cross-dressing performance. His performance embraced dancing and singing of
traditional operas (e.g., Peking opera, yuju 豫劇, yueju 越劇, and huangmei-xi 黃梅
戲),\(^\text{35}\) as well as popular songs of mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

Moving from the Chinese community in New York to Taiwan, the modern
fanchuan performance shows strong lineage to the Chinese male cross-dressing
tradition. In both China and Taiwan, contemporary male cross-dressing performers
repeatedly refer to the historical figure Mei Lanfang. Describing present artists as his
heir in terms of artistry could be the result of a couple of different phenomena. First,

\(^{34}\) Mei Lanfang (1894-1961) is the most famous Peking opera artist, known for his female
impersonation performance. More information about him is introduced later in this chapter.

\(^{35}\) Yuju, yueju, and huangmei-xi are local Chinese opera genres popular in the Henan Province,
Zhejiang Province, and Anhui Province respectively.
cross-dressing performances (both male and female cross-dressing) have long traditions rooted in Chinese and Taiwanese cultures. The social memory of the past makes the past remain part of our present life. Male cross-dressing performance is particularly viewed by today’s general public as the keystone (or, at least as a predominant practice) of traditional Chinese theatre. Despite moralists’ opposition and society’s resistance to the discussion of sex throughout history, male cross-dressing performance and related homosexual issues have remained relevant to almost all social classes of Chinese society (from the imperial monarchy, elite, to actors).

Before discussing the subject of the modern *fanchuan show*, two crucial questions need to be addressed: How does the history of male cross-dressing shape the nature of performance in the present, and how does present male cross-dressing differ from that of the distant past? In order to answer these questions, I search for the genealogy and evolution of male cross-dressing performance in China and Taiwan, in particular, social and historical frames of different eras from two hundred B.C. to the 1950s. Specifically, I will trace the involvement of homosexual issues in male cross-dressing performance, for it remains a battleground between political authorities, social tolerance, and actual practice. I will analyze how knowledge about cross-dressing performance had been represented in the dominant cultural discourse and other non-official theatrical writings. My sources are mostly drawn from premodern

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36 Some scholars have pointed out that female cross-dressing in China has a tradition which is as old as male cross-dressing (Li 1995; Chou 1997). Their researches have drawn much attention to the ignored female transvestism in the history of Chinese theatre.

37 The socio-political climate toward male cross-dressing performance varied from dynasty to dynasty. I will discuss this matter in more detail in the later part of this chapter.
texts on drama, historical writings, poems, novels, as well as previous studies. Overall, the sources I gathered on historical male cross-dressing in China and Taiwan were not exhaustive; however, this chapter offers a helpful background for readers to understand the general socio-historical development of male cross-dressing performance in historical China and Taiwan. The chapter is divided into two parts: 1. male cross-dressing in traditional Chinese theatre, and 2. male cross-dressing in traditional Taiwanese theatre.

**Male Cross-Dressing in Traditional Chinese Theatre**

*Speculations—Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.)*

A few scholars suggested that female impersonation could be traced back to as early as the Western Han dynasty (206 B.C.-240 A.D.). The Qing scholar Jiao Xun 焦循 (1763-1820), in his book *Jushuo 劇說* [Discourse on drama] quoted the Ming scholar Yang Yongxiu’s 楊用修 (1488-1559) statement:

> In the “Book of State Sacrifice and Worship” from [the] *History of Han*, it is recorded that male entertainers disguised themselves as female

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38 My research on historical Chinese male cross-dressing performance was originally done in the US. Therefore, my sources depended on what was accessible at that time and in that place. I also heavily relied on secondary English-language sources. I use Bert Hinsch as one of the most important English language sources. Later, I had opportunity to consult some researches in Chinese language, and to have access to original Chinese texts and information on websites. As a result, I noticed that several translations by the scholars I quoted are problematic or inaccurate. Therefore, I have altered them in order to render the translation closer to the original text. My research on male cross-dressing performance in Taiwan’s traditional theatre was done mostly in Taiwan, during which time I was able to access original Chinese texts, sources, and other scholars’ studies on Taiwan’s traditional theatre.

39 Premodern authors and historical personas mentioned in this study are provided with their respective names of the Chinese characters, and their birth/death dates are indicated when available.
players.\textsuperscript{40} This is the beginning of female impersonation in subsequent ages…. (Jiao [1805] 1959: 91; quoted in Li 1995: 46)

漢〈郊祀志〉優人為假飾伎女，蓋後世裝旦之始也・・・。 (Tseng 1983: 32)

Jiao pointed out that according to Yang’s study, the beginning of male cross-dressing performance was found in the Western Han dynasty. However, the contemporary scholar Tseng Yung-I \textsuperscript{41} suspends this assertion since there are no such words as “male entertainers disguised as female players” in the “Book of State Sacrifice and Worship” from \textit{Hanshu} 漢書 [The history of Han] ([1976] 1983: 33). Tseng’s theory also disproves the linkage of early Chinese cross-dressing performance with ritual ceremony.

Although there is no direct evidence to support whether male cross-dressing had begun in the Western Han dynasty, there are historical documents indicating the tendency of wearing cosmetics among Han courtiers. According to the famous Han historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 145 B.C.-90 B.C.),\textsuperscript{42} “not only did women apply cosmetics in order to seduce [men], but courtiers also focused on their outward appearance [to gain the emperor’s favor]” 非獨女以色媚，而士宦亦有之. Sima further notes that “therefore, at the court of Emperor Huidi 惠帝, all the palace

\textsuperscript{40} This should be translated as female entertainers.
\textsuperscript{41} Tseng is one of the leading scholars in Taiwan. His research interests are traditional theatres in China and Taiwan. He is currently teaching at National Taiwan University.
\textsuperscript{42} The following translations of Sima Qian’s texts are taken from Burton Watson’s translation (1993: 419). In some places, I revised Watson’s translation to make it closer to the meaning of the original Chinese texts. The original Chinese texts are retrieved from: \url{http://www.xysa.net/a200/h350/01shiji/t-125.htm} (viewed on March 20, 2007).
attendants wore caps with gaudy feathers and sashes of seashells, and wore cosmetics” 故孝惠時，郎侍中皆冠鵔鸃，貝帶，傅脂粉43 In this case, male cross-dressing practice/behavior was associated with flamboyant dandyism in the Han dynasty, in which courtiers “competed to ornament themselves as seductive beauties and used artful speech to captivate [the emperor]” (Wuxia Ameng 1909-1911, 9: 8A; quoted in Hinsch 1990: 46).

**Beginnings—Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties (220-581)**

In Song Yuan Xiqu Kao 宋元戲曲考 [Studies of Song and Yuan drama] (1912),44 the Qing official/scholar Wang Guowei (1877-1927) points out that the earliest official document referring to male cross-dressing performance is from the Three Kingdoms period (222-265), during which time men began to play female roles in a theatrical act (Wang [1912] 1969:8).45 According to the historical source quoted by Wang,46 two male entertainers Guo Huai 郭懷 and Yuan Xin 袁信, who were “favorites” of the corrupt Wei Emperor Feidi 廢帝 (240-254), impersonated female

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43 The website Xiaoyao yiwen wangjie 蕭堯藝文網界 [Xiaoyao’s art and literature Website] (http://www.xysa.com/index2.htm) provides thorough Chinese historical texts, including the first systematic Chinese historical text *Shiji* 史記 [Records of the grand historian of China] (91 B.C.) up to the *Qing shigao* 清史稿 [Manuscripts of the history of Qing dynasty] (1929). I found most original Chinese texts I needed from this site. The original Chinese texts of these particular sentences are found on this website under *Shiji juan yibai ershiwu ningxing liezhuan di liushwu* 史記卷一百二十五 佞幸列傳 第六十五 [Records of the grand historian of China, volume 125, the biography of sycophants, number 65]. http://www.xysa.net/a200/h350/01shiji/t-125.htm (viewed on March 20, 2006).

44 This is one of the notable and influential studies on Chinese traditional drama.

45 This information conflicts with that of Chou Hui-ling’s study, which says: “men began to play female roles in the early Tang” (Chou 1997: 132).

46 Wang quotes the *Weishu Qiwang Fangji Peizhu yin Sima shi Feidi zou* 魏書.齊王芳紀 裴注引司馬師 廢帝奏 [Book of Wei dynasty (555 A.D.). Records of the Emperor Qi, Pei quotes Sima’s “Memorial to the Emperor Feidi”].

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roles in the drama *Liaodong yaofu* [Devil woman of Liaodong] for the court’s amusement (ibid.). Here, the term “favorites,” as suggested by Hinsch, refers to “men who had sexual relationships with the emperors” (1990: 7). This early document, according to Hinsch, suggests a link between male cross-dressing entertainment and homosexuality.

Several decades later, a poem written by the poet Zhang Han 張翰 in the Jin dynasty 晉 (265-420) depicts the beauty of the actor-prostitute Zhou Xiaoshi 周小史 and explicitly presents male homosexual love:

> The actor Zhou elegantly wanders,  
> the youthful boy is young and delicate.  
> Fifteen years old,  
> like the eastern sun.  
> Fragrant skin with vermilion cosmetics,  
> white touched with red,  
> In the pouf collar is his round cheeks,  
> lotus and hibiscus.  
> Your appearance is already pure,  
> your clothing is beautiful.  
> The chariot follows the wind,  
> flying after fog and currents of mist.

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47 The practice of favoritism at court could be dated as early as in the Zhou dynasty (1122-256 B.C.) (Hinsch 1990: 27).

48 Zhang’s dates of birth and death are unknown. However, in the historical document *Jinshu juan jiushier liezhuan di liushier wenyuan* 晉書 卷九十二 列傳第六十二 文苑 [Book of Jin dynasty, volume 92. Collected biographies, number 62. Collection of literature], it indicates that Zhan’s time overlapped with another famous poet Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210-263). See http://www.lingshidao.com/gushi/zhanghan.htm (viewed on April 15, 2007).

49 In his *Passions of the Cut Sleeves*, Hinsch writes that the poet of this particular poem entitled *Zhou Xiaoshi* is Zhang Hanbian, which is a mistake. I found the original Chinese poem in “Duanxiu Pian” 斷袖篇 [The cut sleeve compendium] (Wuxia Among ed. [1909] 1989). The name of this poem’s author should be Zhang Han. All Zhang Han’s poems, including this one, were compiled in *Gushi ku: Zhang Han quanji* 古詩庫: 張翰全集 [Repository of ancient poems: Zhang Han’s complete works]. See http://www.lingshidao.com/gushi/zhanghan.htm (viewed on April 15, 2007).
Inclined toward extravagance and festiveness, gazing around leisurely and beautiful. A pleasant expression delights in laughter, a handsome mouth delights in talking.  

翩翩周生，婉孌幼童。年十五，如日在東。香膚朱澤，素質参紅。團輔圓頤，菡萏芙蓉。


Although we do not know from this poem whether Zhou is a cross-dressing actor, these vivid descriptions give us glimpses to the early link between acting and homosexual prostitution. Poetic tropes like “elegant,” “young and delicate,” “fragrant skin,” “cosmetics,” “lotus and hibiscus” explicitly connect the actor Zhou with female beauty and further position him as an object of male sexual desire.  

The earliest document with a description of performing style relevant to cross-dressing, in which the actor combined singing and dancing to perform a story, is found in Cui Lingqin’s 崔令欽 (fl. 713-756) Jiaofang ji 教坊記 [An account of the music academy]. It contains a description about a play called Tayao niang 踏搖娘 [Stepping-singing woman], originated in the Northern Qi period (550-577):

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50 This is based on Hinsch’s translation (1990: 71-72) with a number of places altered to render the translation closer to the original.

51 Another poem written by Liu Zun 劉遵 (d. 535) in the Liang dynasty (502-556) also praises the appearance of Zhou by using similar poetic troupes with a sympathetic tone for the actor-prostitute. See Hinsch 1990 (72-73).
In the Northern Qi there was a man surnamed Su who had a red swollen nose, and who, although actually holding no official post, dubbed himself “government secretary.” He was overly fond of boozing, and would become ill-tempered in his cups and was always getting drunk and beating his wife. His wife would lament and complain to the neighbors. People at that time made a play on this. A man would dress up as a woman, who would come on stage with slow steps, singing as she [he] went. After every verse of her [his] song, bystanders would respond by singing in unison, “Come join in the stepping and singing, come join in the griefs of the stepping and singing woman!” It is because she [he] sang as she [he] stepped that it is called “stepping-singing,” and because she [he] voiced her grievances that it says “griefs.” When her husband came on, they portrayed him beating and fighting with her, this being taken as the occasion for laughter and merriment. (Translated in Dolby 1983a: 13)

北齊有人姓蘇，齁鼻，實不仕，而自號郎中。嗜飲酗酒，每醉，輒毆其妻，妻銜悲訴於鄰里。時人弄之：丈夫著婦人衣，徐步入場行歌。每一疊，旁人齊聲和之云：「踏謠和來，踏謠娘苦，和來。」以其且步且歌，故謂之踏謠；以其稱冤，故言苦。及其夫至，則作毆鬥之狀，以爲笑樂。(Cui [762] 1959: 18)

This type of slapstick drama continued to flourish through the Tang dynasty (617-908) until the early Song dynasty (960-1279); however, as Cui Lingqin recorded in his time, the character of the wife, originally played by a man, became performed by a woman in Tang dynasty. Cui further criticized this new theatrical act for having lost its old significance as comedy. This suggests that the earlier form of male cross-dressing performance was a type of travesty, in which men parodied women for the purpose of burlesque amusement.52 This type of male cross-dressing performance in mockery of the female gender later returned again in performance practice, and

52 A similar theatrical act is found in classical Greek comedies and other Western theatre. The feminist critic Alisa Solomon named this type of performance “misogynist drag,” in which the misogynist mockery “make[es] fun of the socially subservient class” through transvestism (Solomon 1993: 145).
persisted through the history. Today, this style continues to be seen in many theatrical
genres.

**Continuance—Tang and Song Dynasties (618-1279)**

Male cross-dressing performances continued to develop in the Tang and Song
dynasties. In his book *Shuo xiqu* 說戲曲 [On Chinese music drama], Tseng Yung-I
addresses that in *Yuefu zalu, Duanan jie* 樂府雜錄・段安節 [Miscellaneous notes on
*yuefu* songs, section “Duanan”] (Tang dynasty [618-907]), there is a description of
cross-dressing actors:

In the Xiantong period [869-874] there were three actors who were disguised as
women: Fan Chuankang, Shanguan Tangqing, and Lü Jingqian. In the Dazhong
period [847-859], there were Sun Qian and Liu Libing. Recently there are Guo
Waichun and Sun Youxiong. When Emperor Xi Zong visited Shu,\(^{53}\) there was an
actor called Liu Zhen, who was particularly outstanding [in disguising as a
woman]. Later, Liu went to Beijing with the emperor and registered in the music
bureau in the imperial court.

咸通以來即有范傳康、上官唐卿、呂敬遷等三人弄假婦人；大中以來有孫
乾、劉璃缾，近有郭外春、孫有熊。僖宗幸蜀時，戲中有劉真者，尤能。
後乃隨駕入京，籍於教坊。 (Quoted in Tseng 1983: 35)\(^{54}\)

Tseng continues to point out that in *Tang wumingshi yuquanzi zhenlu, shuofu juan*
sishi 唐 無名氏 玉泉子真錄・說郛 卷四十 [Tang dynasty, written by anonymous,
records of Yuquanzi, addressing the city, volume 40], the author writes:

\(^{53}\) Now Sichuan Province.

\(^{54}\) Throughout his *Shuo xiqu* [On Chinese music drama], Tseng Yung-I does not provide sufficient
bibliographical information on his quotations.
The boy actor [sold into the family] thinks that Madam Li is always jealous, therefore he makes several boy actors [sold into the family] wear female dresses and stand aside, and calls them “wife” and “concubines.”

僮以李氏妒忌, 邁以數僮衣婦人衣, 曰妻曰妾, 列於旁側。 (ibid.)

Regarding the practice of favoritism in the Tang, historical documents show that the Tang Prince Li Chengqian 李承乾 (619-644), who favored a male musical performer called Chengxin 稱心, irritated the emperor under the other heirs’ scheme, and was eventually exiled (Hinsch 1990: 78). Another account of court favoritism dealt with the Tang Emperor Xizong’s 僖宗 (874-889) preference for a male entertainer named Zhang Langgou 張浪狗, and indirectly suggests a sexual relationship between the two (Hinsch 1990: 78-79). However, neither references depict these entertainers’ physical appearance or disposition, nor were they described as cross-dressing entertainers.

In the Song period (960-1279), male cross-dressing performances, especially in zaju 雜劇 [variety plays] and nanxi 南戲 [southern drama], were commonly recorded. The term zhuangdan 妝旦/裝旦 was used to refer to male impersonating female roles. For example, in his book Wulin jishi 武林紀事 [Notes on the world of martial arts], the Song scholar Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1298) indicates that there is a female impersonator called Sun Zigui 孫子貴 performed in the zaju (Tseng 1983: 35).
Absence—Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368)

In the Yuan dynasty, both men and women practiced impersonation of the opposite sex on stage, and some troupes had mixed-sex casting (Chou 1997: 133). However, few sources documented male players in the Yuan dynasty, instead, there were sufficient sources depicting female players. As Li Siu Leung points out, “the first full-fledged Chinese theatre in the thirteenth century was distinguished by female cross-dressing, instead of male transvestism” (1995: 47).\(^5\) The important theatrical essay *Qinglou ji* 青樓集 [Records of a brothel] (1355) by Xia Tingzhi 夏庭芝 (fl. 1341-1368), gives an extensive description of the performance of female cross-dressers and their lives with less mentioning on male actors.\(^6\) As Xia describes, many actress in the Yuan period were good at both female and male role types, called *dan mo shuangquan* 旦末雙全 ([1355] 1990: 9). However, no direct description of male cross-dressing performance is found in this essay or in other theatrical writings referring to Yuan theatre.

The absence of female impersonators in Yuan may partially correspond to the socio-political climate during that period. Hinsch, who has done detailed research on (male) homosexuality in imperial China, suggests a decline in male favorites in the Song period, and states that “a rising intolerance of sexually passive men led authorities to prohibit male prostitution in a law dating from the early twelfth century” (1990: 93).

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\(^5\) “The first full-fledged Chinese theatre” refers to *zaju* 雜劇 [variety plays] in the Yuan period. Many Chinese scholars consider it the “real” music drama, distinct from “play-like” predecessors.

\(^6\) One-hundred-seventeen actresses and thirty five actors were included in *Qinglou ji* (Xia [1355] 1990: 7).
In 1428, the vice censor-in-chief Gu Zuo 魯佐 banned female entertainers to disencourage a growing social climate of luxury and entertainment. Gradually, young men replaced actresses to play female roles (Tseng 1976: 36). In volume twenty four of *Wanli yehuo bian* 萬歷野獲編 [Anecdotes of the Wanli period] (1573-1620), author Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578-1642) remarks that due to the ban on female entertainers, *luantong* 孫童 [young boys] were invited to sing at feasts. The practice of boys singing at feasts and holding a wine jar to offer a drink was called *xiao chang* 小唱 [little singing]. These boys would often *zhuang dan* [impersonate female role(s)] in theatrical performances (ibid.). This type of performance practice was very popular along the Southern part of the Yangtze River (ibid.). In volume twenty five of the same book, Shen continues to point out:

> 自北興劇，名男為正末，女為旦兒。...流傳至今，且皆以娼女充之，無則以優之少者假扮。(Quoted in Tseng 1976: 36-37)

Accordingly, the Ming period was the first time that boys took up cross-dressing performance as a profession. Late Ming governor Chen Maoren 陳懋仁 (c. 1606) of

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57 According to Tseng, the information is from the chapter *Xiao Chang* 小唱 [little singing] in volume twenty four.
For a *youtong* [boy performer] who is charming and delightful, rich families would not hesitate to pay high prices to possess him. These boy performers curled the hair on their temples and put powder on their faces in everyday life.

優童媚趣者，不吝高價，豪奢家攘而有之，螳鬢傅粉，日以爲常。([17th century] 1996: 858)

Also, in *Xijin-shi xiaolu* [Small record on the Xijin township] under chapter ten entitled *Youtong*, author Huang Yin 黃印 points out:

The gentry and rich family in the preceding Ming dynasty often kept boy performers….even prostitutes could not compete with their beauty…. Zhu Zhongyu’s beloved servant named Liujie [the sixth sister] is quite a famous enchanter, whose master is extremely licentious.

前明邑縉紳巨室，多蓄優童，…諸妓見之皆失顏色，…朱玉仲愛奴稱六姐，可爲名妖，而主人放逸極矣。([1752] 1983: 609)

These young male performers were treated as their owner’s property, occupying a role between entertainer, servant, and sexual slave. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, many court officials and rich merchants possessed their own private *jiaban* 家班 [“domestic troupe”—a theatrical troupe held by a particular family], that consisted of juvenile female impersonators who would perform during feasts, functioning as a form of social etiquette for their owners.

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*58* The year of its first version is not found. The earliest revised version is dated 1752.
The performance and practice of juvenile female impersonators were vividly depicted in some Ming novels. Although not an official document, the well-known late sixteenth-century novel *Jin ping mei* 金瓶梅 [The plum in the golden vase] suggests the existence of eroticized male cross-dressing. In the novel, the wealthy merchant Ximen Qing’s 西門慶 personal servant Shutong 書僮 cross-dresses as a woman to entertain his master’s guest, the new first laureate. In the thirty-fifth section of the novel, entitled “Ximen Qing Revenged His Favored Boy Servant, and Shutong Impersonated a Female Role to Seduce Guests” 西門慶為男寵報仇 書童兒作女妝媚客, the opening poem depicts Shutong’s bewitching cross-dressing performance:

The beautiful serving boy tied with sashes is enchanting like a femme fatale.  
Leaning against the *zheng* and *se* (Chinese long zithers), he sings.  
He dances seductively to express his charming figure.  
Some aristocrats are bewitched.  
They ride on carriages, competing with each other to gain his favor.  
The young gentle boy is cosseted, free for you to do anything to him.

娟娟游冶童，結束類妖姬。  
揚歌倚箏瑟，艷舞逞媚姿。  
貴人一蠱惑，飛騎爭相追。  
婉孌邀恩寵，百態隨所施。\(^{59}\)

In the following text, the author depicts in detail how Shutong dressed: a jade-colored jacket over a red skirt, a gold band around his waist, with hairpins and various kinds of feminine decorations on his head. Borrowing rouge from female servants, he puts on makeup and transforms himself into a beautiful young woman. He poured the

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\(^{59}\) All Chinese texts of *Jin ping mei* I quote in this chapter are retrieved from the online source: http://www.angelibrary.com/oldies/gold/gold.html (Viewed on January 22, 2006).
wine, clapped his hands, and sang a tune of *nanqu* 南曲 [southern song] for the guests. After hearing Shoutong’s singing, Ximen’s friend Ying Bojue 應伯爵 extols the performance:

> The sound that issues from his throat is that of a flute. Why talk of those women of the bawdy houses? We’ve heard all their songs. How could theirs be as luscious as his!

你看他這喉音，就是一管蕭。說那院里小娘兒便怎的，那些唱都聽熟了。怎生如他這等滋潤！

Indeed, the voice of Shoutong, together with his body and costume, act as a homoerotic stimulus for his male spectators.

Male cross-dressing performance in the Ming period was also found in theatrical scripts. The drama entitled *Nan wanghou* 男王后 [The male queen], written between the late Ming dynasty and early Qing dynasty, serves as another piece of clear evidence for the existence of cross-dressing plays. In the drama, the author Wang Jide 王驥德 (d. 1623) depicts a man dressed as a woman, who later is crowned as queen. The actor’s monologue again illustrates Chinese people’s infatuation with the power of male cross-dressing and sexual ambivalence in such a performance:

> Even though my body is that of a man, my features are like those of a woman…. If I were a woman, I would certainly make a match with a king…. I could be such a fox, I could bedazzle my man. Even if he were a man of iron, I could make half [of] his body go so soft it couldn’t move. It’s a pity I was a boy by mistake. (Wang [1629] 1958: 1b-2a, translated in Volpp 1996: 139-141)

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60 See note 59.
俺家身雖男子，貌似婦人，是個女人定配君王。也做得狐媚偏能惑主。饒他是鐵漢，也叫軟癱他半邊哩。可惜，也錯做箇男兒也呵。^{61}

Following economic decline and the growing instability of the socio-political condition, historical sources of the Ming period recorded that an influx of male singers, actors, and prostitutes poured into the northern cities from the south. Some families sold their children to pimps and troupes of actor-prostitutes in order to save themselves from poverty (Hinsch 1990: 106). This practice continued into the following dynasty and became a common phenomenon.

Not only the beautiful female role-types were impersonated by boy actors, but the comic role-type, called chou 丑 was also played by men in the Ming period. Some theatrical texts provide portrayals of such cross-dressing parody. For instance, in the kunju opera zhezixi [select-scene-play], the Yangdu 羊肚 [Lamb belly]. A chou actor, who usually plays male roles, takes the role of Mother Zhang (who is mistakenly poisoned to death) in this particular tragic drama, resulting in a parodic representation. Historical documents indicate that some chou actors were famous for their cross-dressing performance of this particular role. For example, Li Siu Leung’s Ph.D. dissertation entitled “Gender, Cross-Dressing and Chinese Theatre” points out that some theatrical writings in the late Ming period mentions that there was a chou

^{61} The Chinese texts are retrieved from the website Sheng Ming zaju 盛明雜劇 [Zaju drama of the high Ming]. http://www.caotang.net/index_Article_Content.asp?fID_ArticleContent=4398 (viewed on April 21, 2007)
actor named Ding Jizhi 丁繼之 (1585-c.1675), whose impersonation of Mother Zhang was considered to be “the best for a generation” (1995: 42-43).

**Summit—Qing Dynasty and Republic of China (1664 -1940s)**

Male cross-dressing performance as part of traditional Chinese theatrical arts reached its final summit and popularity in the Qing dynasty (1664-1911), in which period many young boys were trained in singing and acting in female roles. The pervasive development of female impersonations had largely resulted from Emperor Qianlong’s 乾隆 (1711-1799) ban on actresses from public theatrical stage (as well as female prostitutes) in Beijing in 1772 (Chou 1997: 131). Because of the lack of female actresses, as well as the deteriorating economic conditions in China, the purchase of boys in the south (mainly from the Jiangsu and Anhui provinces) for playing female roles became a common phenomenon in the nineteenth century. There were agencies, who specialized in such trade, searching for boys from families that were suffering from poverty. As a result, the practices of male juveniles and “domestic troupe” playing female roles became even more pervasive in the Qing dynasty.

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62 During this period, women who showed themselves on the public stage was considered immoral, which was connected with the fact that female entertainers were often involved in prostitution. Women were forced to disappear from the stage until the 1870s when the ban was gradually loosened. In 1870s Shanghai, Li Maoer 李毛兒 founded the first women’s Peking opera troupe. This type of theatrical performance by all-female troupes was called maoer-xi 毛兒戲/髦兒戲/貓兒戲 [Maoer theatre/fashionable theatre/cat theatre], popular in Shanghai from the 1870s to 1920s (Chou 1997: 132).

63 Only a small number of boys, who survived the harsh training process (including corporal punishment), reached a high standard of performance. Some of these boys did achieve fame and subsequently, acquired wealth.
The changing meaning of the term xianggong 相公 [a form of address for a young man] needs to be mentioned here. Originally used to refer to high government ministers, the term became a common title for addressing young men in many dynastic periods. In the Qing era, however, the term was particularly used for young male actors, or female impersonators, brought from the south to the north, and later, according to Hinsch, conveyed “sexual connotations as a synonym for a passive man” (1990: 154). For those juvenile male entertainers, they were called tongling xianggong 童伶相公, who would offer cross-dressing performance. The private residence of these xianggong was called xianggong tangzi 相公堂子, a place which was used by governors or rich men to entertain their guests. Because during the late Ming and early Qing period the government banned sex with prostitutes, male dan became the succedaneum. Some young male dan thus did not work hard on their performing techniques, but on beauty treatments instead.

Regarding the development of male cross-dressing performance in Peking opera, a female impersonator named Wei Changsheng 魏長生 (1744-1802) brought a theatrical troupe to Beijing in 1779, to take part in Emperor Qianlong’s seventieth birthday celebrations the following year. Wei’s troupe, as well as other such troupes, combined various regional operatic singing styles, including xipi 西皮 and erhuang 二簧,64 which would later form the stylistic basis for Peking opera. Wei Changsheng’s most memorable artistic “contribution” was perhaps his attributed

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64 Xipi and erhuang originated from the Anhui and Hubei provinces of China.
invention of *caiqiao* 踩蹺, which is “the false foot worn under the [actor’s] foot and tied to the leg with a cotton bandage, enabling the actor to imitate the gait of a woman’s bound feet” (Mackerras 1972: 97). At the time, some actors even had their feet bound to “complete” the effect of feminization (ibid.). In his 1858 book *Min zaji* 閩雜記 [*Miscellanies of the Min Region*], scholar Shi Hongbao 施鴻保 (1804-1871) states that in the Min region, Southern China, there was a so-called *qizi-ban* 七子班 theatre [“seven-boys” theatre] in which young boy actors also bound their feet:

*Qizi-ban*,…sings all kinds of obscene songs. Female impersonators have their ears pierced and faces powdered. Some have food-binding. When offstage, they still wear female dresses walking around the city. They are male cross-dressers.

七子班，…唱各種淫穢之曲；其旦穿耳傅粉，並有裹足者；即不演唱，亦作女子裝，往來市中；此假男為女者也。 ([1858] 1968: 99)

The contemporary Chinese scholar Wu Jieqiu 吳捷秋 points out that in the Min region, male *dan* in traditional *liyuan-xi* 梨園戲 [“pear orchard” theatre] adapted foot-binding walking techniques by walking on tiptoe wearing stilt shoes. Female impersonators could not stand still, but had to keep moving to keep their balance—in this way they also imitated women bearing a gracefully slender figure (1993: 48).

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65 Foot-binding was a custom practiced on females or even on some males for approximately one thousand years in China. It began in the tenth century and ended in the early twentieth century. See Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foot-binding (viewed on February 2, 2006). Some records show that the practice of foot-binding was also found among boy prostitutes for financial reasons, dating back as early as the Ming dynasty, and among some ordinary men for the reason of fashion in the Qing period (Levy 1966: 192, 195).

66 *Min* is the ancient name for the Fujian province in southern China.
As many Qing sources showed, Chinese literature not only viewed the feminization of actors as an artifact but also female impersonators as being (potentially) sexually available to elite men. In late-imperial Chinese society, homosexual eroticism became prevalent among male cross-dressing performers and the elite class, who might be their patrons. Among many examples of elite patrons, the poet-scholar Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716-1798), scholar-official Bi Yuan 畢沅 (1730-1797), and the powerful official He Shen 和珅 (1750-1799) are the most famous. Chen Sen 陳森 (c. 1805-1870), inspired by the love affair between Bi Yuan and the Suzhou actor Li Guiguan 李桂官, wrote the famous homosexual novel Pinhua baojian 品花寶鑑 [Precious mirror of ranking flowers] (1849) to depict transvestite actors’ lives beyond the stage. In fact, much before Pinhua baojian, Wu Changyuan 吳長元 (fl. 1770) had already compiled a collection of writings on female impersonators called Yanlan xiaopu 燕蘭小譜 [Manual of orchids] (1785). Both of these pieces are much like romantic novels, with a great deal of emphasis on eroticism and sexuality. These terms in the titles—flowers and orchids—refer to male actor-prostitutes and are identical with poetic descriptions of female prostitutes. The sharing of poetic tropes among male actors and female prostitutes showed the inextricable equation of the two in terms of aesthetic evaluation, social rank, and moral judgment. Furthermore, despite the artistic achievement of female

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67 Wu used Anle Shanqiao 安樂山樵 as his pen name for this particular book.
 impersonators, the general public more or less conceived of them as sexually passive men available for their patrons as homosexual prostitutes.

Although the Qing society showed a high degree of tolerance for homosexual behavior, the pervasiveness of such a practice seemed to irritate the authorities. While some officials themselves were homosexuals/bisexuals, others stood against such practices. For instance, when Wei Changsheng (the female impersonator who developed the stilted shoes) was on his way to visit his lover He Shen, a public inspector caught Wei and ordered him beaten (Hinsch 1990: 155). Although the powerful politician He Shen had once saved Wei’s life in 1785, the higher authorities eventually banned Wei, along with his troupe, from the stage and forced him to leave Beijing (Mackerras 1997: 4). Wei’s student Chen Yinguan 陳銀官, a lover of several wealthy men, also had a similar misfortune and later was forced to leave Beijing as well (ibid.).

In Peking opera, the most important performers in its early development, as well as in the first half of the twentieth century, were all female impersonators. They contributed immensely to the development and perfection of dramatized femininity in Chinese theatre. The most representative figures were the so-called *si da ming dan* 四大名旦 [Four Great female impersonators]: Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳 (1894-1961), Xun Huisheng 荀慧生 (1899-1968), Shang Xiaoyun 尚小雲 (1899-1976), and Cheng Yanqiu 程硯秋 (1904-1958). Among them, Mei Lanfang, the first of China’s great actors to perform in the West, was the most well-known female impersonator both domestically and overseas. Mei toured Japan (including Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagasaki)
in 1919 and 1924, The United States (New York) in 1930, and Europe (France, Germany, England, and Russia) during the 1920s-1930s (Cosdon 1995:170-172). Wherever his performances were, he drew tremendous crowds and numerous ecstatic reviews. In Shanghai, 270,000 admirers voted him the “Great King of Actors,” and even more impressive, the Qing Emperor Xuan Tong 宣統 68 glorified him as the “Foremost of the Pear Orchard”69 (ibid.). A commentary given by the critic Zhang Xiaocang 張肖俸 in 1918 reviewed Mei Lanfang’s performance:

Now that he is [an] adult, his face is gorgeous, his appearance fine and elegant. Those who watch him have the impression of seeing the concubine of Huan Wen70 in person and so, hearing him sing, they can not prevent themselves from being deeply moved; some cover their faces to hide their feelings. (Zhang [1916] 1974: 255, quoted in and translated by Duchesne 1994: 224-226)

The all-male casting in the early Peking opera tradition resulted in the creation of a composite, imaginary, and romanticized female character, and eventually created tremendous influence on the actress who later joined Peking opera performance. When the official ban of actresses was gradually loosened in the late nineteenth century, actresses in female roles who rejoined the theater world learned from male actors on performing proper femininity by imitating their movements, gestures, poses,

68 The reigning title of Pu Yi 溥儀 (1906-1967), the last emperor of the Qing dynasty.
69 “Pear Orchard” 梨園 is a poetic terminology used since the Tang period, referring to the world of Chinese traditional theatre.
70 Huan Wen 桓溫 (312-373) was said to be the greatest general of the Jin dynasty (265-420). There is a well-known story about the charm of Huan’s concubine Li 李氏. When Huan’s wife, the Princess Nankang 南康公主, learned that Huan took a new concubine Li, Nankang was extremely jealous and intended to kill Li. After meeting Li, however, Nankang exclaimed that even she was fascinated by Li’s beauty.
and vocal inflections. Following the lift on the ban of actresses in 1912, females were allowed to go to theatres and participate in theatrical plays. In the New Cultural Movement (1918) and the May Fourth Movement (1919), Western style dialogic plays were introduced (e.g., huaju 話劇), which promoted “gender-appropriate” casting, and had a tremendous effect on the decline of male cross-dressing performance later after the 1950s.

**Decline—the 1950s on**

While many in traditional Chinese society respect and highly value cross-dressing performance (especially female impersonations), others may link actors’ onstage lives to male prostitution, which had been comparatively tolerated and unsuppressed by Chinese society until the late Qing dynasty. This social climate gradually changed. By the end of WWII, Neo-Confucian rhetoric regarded family-line continuance as legitimate, and the influence of Christian Missionaries and Western moralists gained more importance (Hinsch 1990: 162-168). The Western idea of “gender-appropriate casting” together with left-wing socialism had strong influence on China’s cultural policy after the 1950s. For example, the Research Institute of Chinese Theatres 離京戲曲研究院, established in 1951 as the leading institute in traditional Chinese theatre research,71 abolished using and teaching the technique of “walking on tiptoe within stilt shoes” (caiqiao) in Chinese opera. Also, the institute did not encourage Peking opera teachers to train male dan. As a result,

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71 Its president was Mei Lanfang and vice-president was Cheng Yanqiu.
other theatrical schools, institutes, and troupes gradually followed this policy in the 1950s (Zhou 2002: 34-35).

Another major cause for the decline of male cross-dressing in traditional Chinese theatre was the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). During this period, traditional theatrical genres were forbidden and the *Yangban-xi* 樣板戯 [model plays], which emphasized realism in stage setting and gender-appropriate casting, were the only operas and ballets permitted. By the end of the Cultural Revolution, only the few male *dan*, who were trained before the 1950s, survived and continued to perform on stage. They included Wang Yingqiu 王吟秋 (1925-2001), Chen Yongling 陳永玲 (1929- ), Mei Baojiu 梅葆玖 (1934- ), Shen Fucun 沈福存 (1935- ), Song Changrong 宋長榮 (1935- ), Wen Ruhua 溫如華 (1947- ).

Although recently, a few younger actors have shown their talent and strong will in learning male *dan*, such as Wu Rujun 吳汝俊 (1963- ) and Hu Wenge (mentioned at the beginning of this chapter), the public showed less enthusiasm toward the male *dan*, compared to that of the Qing dynasty. Today, it would seem very difficult to revive traditional male cross-dressing performance. The tendency to associate male cross-dressing performance with homosexual behavior has not changed throughout the history. In modern China, at least up to 1991, homosexual behavior was considered criminal and required clinical treatment (Zha 1995: 97).

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72 Wen is the rare case for being trained as a male *dan* after 1950s. He originally was trained as a male role at The Academy of Chinese Theatre 中國戲曲學校 in the late 1950s. His talent of singing in female roles was discovered after he graduated (Zhou 2002: 44).
Also, by linking male *dan* with the notion of the old Chinese feudal society as backward and corrupt, modern intellectuals more or less accused male *dan* of “being against the spirit of modernity” (Chou 1997: 142). For example, in *Youling Kaoshu* (1980), a contemporary study on actors in traditional Chinese theatre, the author Sun Minji 孫民紀 asserts his opinion on male *dan*:

> It may not necessary to oppose a man who plays female characters, if viewed from the angle of theatrical performing arts. However, the consequence he brings, more or less, is unhealthy. Because [a female impersonator] has to experience [female roles], the long term practice could make the habit become his disposition. Therefore, quite a lot of female impersonators become feminine in their daily-life behaviors. Not only do these actors devaluate male esteem, but they also do harm to their own moral integrity. They even become gender disordered and abnormal.

男優裝旦，從戲劇表演藝術的角度來看，似乎也未嘗不可，但他引出的效果，多少有些不健康的成分，由於對角色的長期體驗，以致積習成性，從而使不少優伶在日常生活中的舉止也變的女性化，他既有損於男子的尊嚴，也傷害著優伶自身的人格，甚至產生性別倒錯，以致變態。(1980: 307)

The contemporary public considered male cross-dressing performance perverse, deviant in personal behavior, and harmful to society. In order to avoid the “abnormal” development of male cross-dressing in traditional Chinese theatre and to reverse the “corrupt” social climate, some post-1950s scholars and moralists demanded prohibition on the practice of male *dan* and thus facilitated its decline.
Male Cross-Dressing in Traditional Taiwanese Theatre

Male cross-dressing performance played a very important role in the early development of Taiwan’s traditional theaters. This section aims to piece together scraps of information, probe into, and reexamine the historiography of the male dan in Taiwan.\(^{73}\) I will firstly clarify what I mean by “Taiwan’s traditional theatres” and “traditional Taiwanese theatre,” and introduce in general the theatrical genres under the category of “traditional Taiwanese theatre.” Next, I will briefly introduce Taiwan’s immigration history, which influenced the pervasiveness of male cross-dressing performance in Taiwan. I will then move on to discuss in detail traditional Taiwanese theatrical genres that involve male cross-dressing performances in the chronological order of their appearances in Taiwan.

To trace the history of male cross-dressing performance in Taiwan’s traditional theatres, and in particular, in traditional Taiwanese theatre, we need to first define and understand the difference between such phrases as “Taiwan’s traditional theatres” and “traditional Taiwanese theatre.” Due to Taiwan’s immigration history and its close link with Chinese culture, terminologies such as “tradition,” “Taiwanese theatre,” and “Taiwanese music” remain particularly problematic and debatable.

Some scholars and musicologists seem to agree on the specific year of 1945—the end of WWII when the Chinese national army took over Taiwan from Japanese hands—as the beginning of a transition between “traditional” and “modern,” and

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73 Since here I focus on male cross-dressing performance in traditional theatres, some theatrical genres will inevitably be given more attention than others.
“Taiwanese” and “Chinese” (B. Lü 1979: 56; Dai 1997: 325-423; Mo 1999: xxi; Y. Lü 2003: 12-15). For example, Xu Changhui 許常惠, one of the foremost musicologists in Taiwan, in his *Taiwan yinyue shi chugao* 台灣音樂史初稿 [The manuscripts of the history of music in Taiwan] (1996), in the chapter entitled “Traditional Theaters and Music,” excludes theatrical genres that were introduced to Taiwan from China after 1945, such as Peking opera and other Chinese local theatrical forms. Based on this stream of thought, I view “Taiwan’s traditional theatres” as a more inclusive term referring to all traditional theatrical genres that were either introduced from China or indigenously formed in Taiwan earlier and later. As for “traditional Taiwanese theatre,” I refer to genres originated in Taiwan as well as Chinese theatrical genres introduced to and rooted in Taiwan before 1945. Generally based on Xu Changhui’s concept, Table 1.1 illustrates the scope of the theatres included in my usage of the term “traditional Taiwanese theatre.” Genres

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74 The use of the year 1945 as the time delimitation between the “traditional” and the “modern,” although controversial, is generally adopted by many leading musicologists in Taiwan.

75 Documents show that a considerable amount of Peking opera troupes visited Taiwan during Japanese colonial rule, and their performances influenced other theatrical forms in Taiwan, such as *beiguan* [northern wind] and *gezai-xi* [Taiwanese opera]. However, these visiting troupes stayed for short periods. Scholars agree that the formal establishment of Peking opera in Taiwan should be in the 1948 when Gu Zheng-qiu’s 顧正秋 (1929-) troupe visited the island and later could not return to China due to civil war. Besides Peking opera, more than ten Chinese regional theatrical genres were brought to Taiwan between 1945 to 1949, including, *yuju* 豫劇, *yueju* 越劇, *chaoju* 潮劇, *minju* 閔劇, *chuanju* 川劇, and *huju* 滬劇, etc. Female cross-dressing performance was commonly found among many of these traditional theatrical genres.

76 However, we also notice that there are different opinions in categorization of Taiwan’s traditional theatres. For instance, in her book *Taiwan yinyue shi* 台灣音樂史 [A history of Taiwanese music] (2003), musicologist Lü Yuxiu 呂鈺秀 uses the term *hanzu chuantong yinyue* 漢族傳統音樂 [Han traditional music] specifically to refer to all of those Han theatrical/musical genres either locally born in Taiwan or introduced from China to Taiwan before 1945.
listed here are Han Chinese theater either locally formed or brought to Taiwan between the seventeenth century and the end of WWII.77

Table 1.1 Traditional Taiwanese Theatre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period when the genre firstly appeared in Taiwan</th>
<th>Da-xi 大戲 [large drama: formal format]</th>
<th>Xiao-xi 小戲 [small drama: street-dancing- and-singing style]78</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Dutch rule and the first half of the Qing dynasty (1624-1795)</td>
<td>Nanguan-xi 南管戲 [southern wind/southern school opera], or Liyuan-xi 梨園戲 [“pear orchard” theatre], qizi-xi 七子戲 [“seven-boys” theatre]80</td>
<td>Song Jiang-zhen 宋江陣 (fighting and defending procession) Niuli-zhen 牛犁陣 [plough procession] Caicha-xi 採茶戲 [Hakkanese tea harvest operas] Chegu-xi 車鼓戲 [vehicle drum drama] Gaoqiao-zhen 高蹺陣 [stilts procession]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second half of the Qing dynasty (1796-1894)</td>
<td>Beiguan-xi 北管戲 [northern wind/northern school opera]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

77 Within the category of the theatre originated in China, there is also ou-xi 偶戲 [puppet theatre], which includes kuilei-xi 傀儡戲 [string puppetry], piying-xi 皮影戲 [shadow puppetry], and Budai-xi 布袋戲 [hand-held puppetry]. However, since puppet theatre does not involve cross-dressing performance, it falls outside the scope of my study, hence I have not included.

78 In temple fairs and funeral ceremonies, local people like to have a certain kind of religious parade called yizhen 藝陣 [artistic procession] including various types of small drama consisting of simple plots with song and dance. There are over thirty types of artistic processions which are still performed nowadays in Taiwan.

79 Liyuan opera uses the music genre called nanguan (also called nan-xi 南戲 [southern opera] or xianguan 行管 [string and wind] ) that was popular in the Quanzhou 泉州 and Xiamen 廈門 areas of the Chinese Southeast coast. After imported to Taiwan, Liyuan-xi was later called nanguan-xi due to its music style.

80 Qizi-xi, also called xiao liyuan 小梨園, is a type of liyuan-xi performed by juveniles.

81 It is also called jiujiao-xi 九角戲 [“nine roles” opera]. It originated in the Min 閩 region in southern China.

82 Originated in Jiangxi 江西, Northwest China, later spread to Fujian 福建, Southern China.

83 Gezai-xi is the only theatrical genre that originated in Taiwan.

84 It is a ceremonial performance held at a funeral by a professional troupe. It usually consists of a “red-helmeted” master/director and three female chanters.

85 There is also a troupe/ceremony called wunü-kumu 五女哭墓 [five daughters crying in front of the tomb], performed by women or male cross-dressing performers.
Like in China, male cross-dressing performance had a long tradition in Taiwan until the end of the Japanese rule. By searching through historical writings, poems, novels, early-day newspapers and fieldwork notes, I found a remarkable amount of descriptions of male cross-dressing, although generally these reports lack detailed and sufficient documentation. From this scattered information, however, one can safely draw a few conclusions. In the very beginning of Taiwan’s immigrant society from the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century, the entire theatrical world was formed and dominated by Han Chinese males. Also, this alluring and dynamic performance practice was not just an occasional embellishment existing in a few theatrical genres, but was prevalent in all theatrical genres in Taiwan before the twentieth century. With the exception of puppet theatre, the theatrical genres listed in Table 1.1 all involved male cross-dressing performance.

One may wonder, whether the socio-historical background made male cross-dressing a dominant performance practice in Taiwan before the twentieth century. How did socio-political factors shape the development of male cross-dressing in traditional Taiwanese theatre? What was the role of male cross-dressing performance in traditional Taiwanese theatre? What kinds of men became cross-dressing

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86 Historical documents show that Taiwan’s theatrical activities thrived and flourished between the seventeenth century and the mid twentieth century, however, few documents were preserved and few comments were written. This may be due to traditional intellectuals’ disdain for local theatrical activities (Qiu 1997: 16).

87 The historical development of Taiwanese aborigines is beyond the scope of this study.

88 Later in this section, this table will provide a good reference when I introduce theatrical genres that involved male cross-dressing performance.
performers? And, what caused the decline of the once-pervasive male cross-dressing performance after WWII?

To begin with, one should have a general look at Taiwan’s immigration history. Historical documents show that as early as the thirteenth century, Han Chinese began to immigrate to Taiwan. After 1661, when the Chinese General Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功 (1624-1662)\(^89\) recovered Taiwan from the Dutch colonial occupation, Chinese immigration significantly increased. Immigrants came mainly from the Fujian and Guangdong provinces in the southern coastal areas.

The second big wave of Chinese immigration to Taiwan occurred at the end of WWII, and this time, immigrants came from all different regions of China. In particular, when the civil war between the Communists and Nationalists ended in 1949, two million refugees (including many artists and members of the nationalist government, military, and business community) fled to Taiwan. During the process of immigration and escape, Han Chinese settlers brought various theatrical genres from their hometowns and rooted them in Taiwan. These genres that had originated in China later became enormously influential in the development of Taiwanese local theatrical genres. Regarding the ethnic population in Taiwan, over 84% are Taiwanese, (i.e., bensheng-ren 本省人 [local province people], referring to the Chinese immigrants who arrived in Taiwan before 1945, including the Hakkas, making up 10% to 15% of this group), 14% are Mainlanders (i.e., waisheng-ren 外省

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\(^89\) Zheng, a military leader at the end of Chinese Ming dynasty, fought against the Qing dynasty. In 1662, he took Taiwan from the Dutch and made the island into an effective base for the anti-Qing movement. In 1683, Zheng's grandson submitted to Qing court which then ruled Taiwan as a prefecture.
人 [people from other provinces], referring to the Mainland Chinese who arrived/fled to Taiwan in 1945), and only 2% of the population consider themselves as Aborigines, of Malay-Polynesian descent.

Since the seventeenth century, theatrical activities had become particularly important for Taiwanese immigrant society, not only for entertainment purposes, but also for religious functions in which people expressed their appreciation for blessings from the supreme beings. Immigrants enthusiastically participated in temple fairs, hoping that deities could give them shelter so that they could live in peace and enjoy their life in this new land. Furthermore, in local festivals, theatrical activities functioned as a form of socialization and as a site in which people could show off their prosperity. Theatrical plays, as part of religious rites, were performed throughout the year. Below, I will explore how and why male cross-dressing became the dominant performance practice of theatrical activities in Taiwan’s early immigrant society.

**Speculations—the Dutch Rule (1624-1662)**

During this period, no direct document mentions male cross-dressing performance, and very few historical writings are concerned with the theatrical activities of Han settlers. In his *Taiwan dianying xiju shi* 台灣電影戲劇史 [A history
of movies and theatres in Taiwan] (1961), Lü Sushang呂訴上 (1915-1970)\(^9\) points out that in the book *Taiwan waizhi houzhuan* 台灣外誌後傳 [A biography of records on Taiwan], a writing called *Pinghai fenji* 平海氛記 [Records on the smooth sea atmosphere] contains brief description of theatrical activity at a Han official’s house:\(^9\)

The leader of the Dutch garrison in Taiwan was named Dan Kuiyi (Frederick Coyett). He always consulted with the interpreter He Bin for all of his business. He Bin…has built two stages in his house, and asked someone to go to mainland China to buy him two groups of child performers who sing in *guan yin* [the official language], as well as some theatrical cases and costumes. When friends come to visit, He would offer a feast or *xiao chang* [little singing] for entertainment.

This document perhaps is the earliest information that indicates musical activities in the Dutch Rule period. From this writing, we know that juvenile performers were bought from mainland China during the transition from the Ming (1368-1644) to the Qing (1644-1912) dynasties. Although the document does not specify whether these children were boys or girls or if male cross-dressing performance was involved, based on contemporary historical sources in China, one could probably presume that the

\(^9\) Lü grew up in a theatrical family. His father was a theater owner and a leader of a *gezai-xi* troupe. Lü later studied arts and theatre at universities in Japan. His systematic studies on performing arts, theatres, and movies in Taiwan have provided valuable and important information that have been widely cited by Taiwanese theatre researchers. This particular book contains information on a variety of theatrical arts, their origins, and changes, including modern movies, broadcasting drama, Taiwanese opera, puppet theatres, *nanguan*, and Peking opera.

\(^9\) Lü does not provide a sufficient citation on the year and publication of the book.
children involved were all boys, and that male cross-dressing was a part of the performance practice. As mentioned in my discussion in the earlier part of this chapter, during this period the phenomenon of selling boys to theatrical troupes or individual rich families was rather common on the mainland. This information strikingly echoes the Ming document “Anecdotes of the Wanli period” written by the Chinese drama scholar Shen Defu 沈德符.\(^9^2\) Shen’s description of “little singing” (i.e., *xiao chang* 小唱) performed by young boys who often impersonated female roles further suggests that these boys who were bought from China to Taiwan also impersonated female roles in theatrical plays. The emergence of the “domestic troupes” in Taiwan was clearly a direct influence from China’s social practice in which family owned private troupes served the noble class and wealthy families by providing a crucial service for social events.

**Dominance—Zheng Chenggong and the Imperial Chinese Rule (1661-1895)**

The practice of “domestic troupes” on the island of Taiwan had been kept throughout the Qing dynasty.\(^9^3\) According to contemporary scholar Liu Meizhi’s 刘美枝 study, in the Qing period, high ranking officials and wealthy merchants in Taiwan often owned “domestic troupes” to show off their power and prosperity. The practice of “domestic troupes” in Taiwan gradually became distinct during the early Japanese rule.

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\(^9^2\) See my discussion in the previous section, “Male Cross-Dressing in Traditional Chinese Theatre,” under the subheading: “Presence—Ming Dynasty (1386-1644).”

\(^9^3\) The practice of “domestic troupes” in Taiwan gradually became distinct during the early Japanese rule.
Lin Family 林家 in the Wufeng 霧峰 township of Taizhong 台中 (middle Taiwan), and another Lin Family in the Longjing 龍井 township of Taizhong are two famous examples of wealthy families who owned private theatrical troupes (Liu 2000: 31).

Historical documents in this period, vividly recorded theatrical activities among the common folk. In what seems like a surprisingly short time, female impersonation had become a dominant performance practice, and male cross-dressing prevailed from the mid seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. This was the golden age of female impersonators; women were absolutely absent from the theatrical stage in public.

Such phenomenon, I would suggest, could be related to immigration law in Taiwan. In 1702, in order to more easily control Taiwan’s population, the Qing government made the following regulation: “For immigrants going to Taiwan, wives and children are not allowed to go. For those who are already there, the law also prohibits their families from joining them” (渡航臺灣者，不准攜伴家眷，既渡航者不得招致之 (Ino [1928] 1991: 409). In 1732, the Qing government lifted this ban for the first time. However, after seven years, the policy of banning women and children immigrants was reissued. Before the ban was lifted completely in 1790, this policy was switched back and forth three times (X. Qiu 1999: 14). As a result, eighteenth century Taiwanese society was mainly composed of single, strong young

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94 This was originally written in Japanese by Ino Kanori 伊能嘉矩. It was translated into Chinese by Jiang Qinglin 江慶林 and reprinted in 1991.
men who had emigrated from China. Under such strict immigration policy, it was nearly impossible for adult actresses to come to Taiwan, which is another explanation for the absence of female actresses in this period.

As mentioned above, male cross-dressing performances were found in almost all of traditional Taiwanese theatrical genres from the mid seventeenth until the end of the nineteenth century. In the next section, I will examine historical sources on male cross-dressing performance according to these different theatrical genres. I focus on three groups: 1. *nanguan-xi* 南管戲 [southern wind opera], 2. *beiguan-xi* 北管戲 [northern wind opera], and 3. *xiao-xi* 小戲 [small drama] and *yizhen* 藝陣 [artistic procession].

1. *Nanguan-xi* 南管戲 [southern wind/southern school opera] (originally called *liyuan-xi* 梨園戲 [“pear orchard” theatre], or *qizi-xi* 七子戲 [“seven-boys” theatre])

   *Nanguan-xi* (equivalent to *liyuan-xi* in mainland China)\(^\text{96}\) consists of two types of performance troupes: *da-liyuan* 大梨園 [big pear orchard] and *xiao-liyuan* 小梨園 [small pear orchard]. The former was performed by male adults who belonged to either professional or amateur troupes, and the latter was performed by juveniles. *Xiao-liyuan*, performed by so-called *qizi-ban* 七子班 [a seven-boys troupe], is called

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\(^{95}\) This immigration policy had a tremendous effect on the institution of marriage and there were frequent battles with weapons between groups of men because they had no family support or family life after work. Consequently, some immigrants chose to marry Taiwanese aboriginal women; others bought brides from women traffickers. It gradually became an established practice to buy/adopt a girl into a family as a daughter-in-law-to-be. The practice of “girl adoption” later became a trade in which traffickers made very high profits. Some girls were brought in as servants and many were sold to brothels (X. Qiu 1999: 16-18).

\(^{96}\) *Liyuan-xi* was introduced into Taiwan in the late seventeenth century from the areas of Quanzhou 泉州 and Xiamen 廈門.
Liuyan-xi was the earliest, and once the most popular theatrical genre (especially small liyuan) in Taiwan before the mid Qing dynasty. Yu Yonghe, who lived during the Qing dynasty, wrote in his poem Taihai zhuzhi-ci 台海竹枝詞 [Taiwan sea bamboo twig poetry] (1697),

Shoulders covered with long hair and ears decorated with earrings
Faces put make-up with red lips just like a young lady
Bustling gongs and drums with excitement in front of Mazu Temple
Young man sings the xianan-qiang [southern tunes of liyuan theatre]

He further self-notes: liyuan zidi [liyuan sons and brothers] have their hair long, ears pierced, and faces with make-up, exactly like women.

肩披鬢髮耳垂璫
粉面紅唇似女郞
馬祖宮前鑼鼓鬧
侏離唱出下南腔

自注：梨園子弟垂髻穴耳，傳粉施朱，儼然女士。([1697] 1999: 15)

From this early poem, one can note the indication that in the late seventeen century, there were young female impersonators (liyuan zidi) playing liyuan-xi in Mazu’s temple fairs.

The above information and depictions correspond to those of theatrical activities in the Fujian and Guangzhou provinces on the southeast coast of China, the

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**Note:**

97 Some scholars claim that qizi-xi consists of seven role models: young man 生, mature woman 旦, painted face 淨, old man 末, clown 丑, girl 貼, and other supporting roles 外. Others claim that qizi-xi consists more or less seven male juveniles. These xizi 戲子 [theatrical children] were sold to professional troupes by their parents under a contract, which would last until the end of their childhood. This practice was called bangxi 綁戲 [bound to the theatre]. Once these theatrical children entered adulthood, they would have to leave the troupe.

98 Mazu, the deity of sea and guardian of sailors/fishermen, is important among those who settled in Taiwan early on (before 1949).
birthplaces of these theatrical forms. Due to insufficient historical writings on female impersonation in Taiwan during this period, documents that depict female impersonation in Fujian and Guangzhou may give some indications of this practice.99

2. Beiguan-xi 北管戲 [northern wind/northern school opera] (or luantan-xi 亂彈戲 [messy plucks theatre] and zidi-xi 子弟戲 [junior theatre])

Beiguan opera, a type of traditional theatrical performance originated in northern China in the seventeenth century,100 was widespread in Taiwan during the eighteenth century. Performers of Beiguan theatre can be divided into two systems: the professional luantan-ban [messy plucks troupe] and the voluntary amateur zidi-ban [junior troupe]. Zidi-ban are distinctive from the professional luantan-ban (or called neihang-ban 內行班 [professional troupe]) in which the majority of members were purchased from poor families. While professional luantan troupes earned money from their performances, the amateur zidi troupes not only did not receive remuneration from their performances, but often needed to raise funds themselves. One important source for their financial support came from local rich gentry. The performance level and playing techniques of zidi troupes were actually no less professional than luantan troupes.

The purpose of establishing zidi-ban [junior troupes] in Taiwan in the Qing period was to prevent young men from loitering and getting into trouble, and to

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99 For example, Wu Jieqiu’s 吳捷秋 study on “seven-boys theatre” in southern China, as discussed earlier in this chapter, features helpful documents that suggest similar activities among liyuan actors in Taiwan.

100 The introduction of beiguan to Taiwan can be traced back to the transition between the Qianlong (1735-1796) and the Jiaqing period (1795-1820) (Qiu 1992: 151). Beiguan flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and declined after the mid-1970s.
provide after-work entertainment. Wealthy country gentry established music halls and invited teachers to teach their juniors, with food and shelter supplied. Therefore, *zidi-ban* in Taiwan’s early immigration history was formed by sons of the rich who had leisure time and spare money to participate and support the theatrical play. The traditional usage of the term *zidi-ban* in a broader sense referred to those voluntary amateur troupes that played music and/or theater of *beigun*, *nanguan*, *gaojia*, *gezai*, and Peking opera, etc. More narrowly, however, *zidi-ban* indicates that those troupes specifically played in *beiguan-xi*. *Zidi-xi*, accordingly, is defined as the theatrical genres (particularly *beiguan-xi*) these juniors played. Table 1.2 is a summary of the contrasting characteristics of *luantan-ban* and *zidi-ban*.

### Table 1.2 Contrasting characteristics of *luantan-ban* and *zidi-ban*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><em>Luantan-ban</em> [messy plucks troupe] or <em>neihang-ban</em> [professional troupe]</th>
<th><em>Zidi-ban</em> [juniors troupe]</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background of members</strong></td>
<td>Members mostly from poor families of the low social class, and were sold to the <em>tongling-ban</em> [child performing troupe]. There were two types of professional troupes: adult and child</td>
<td>Members can come from three sources: 1) Fellow villagers gathered to form an amateur community theater; 2) Members who have a clan association form a community theatre in order to be in charge of their ancestral ceremony; 3) Sometimes an association of a particular profession established their own <em>zidi-ban</em> to participate in their social activities (K. Qiu 1991: 169-170)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## Performance style and occasions

The activity is of a single form: act in a play (can be outdoor plays or indoor plays).

“Domestic troupe”—another type of professional troupe owned by rich or officers’ families, participated in their masters’ private feasts and celebrations.

The activity is multifarious: such as performing a band parade (so-called zhentou 陣頭 [head of the parade formation]),

102 singing at a temple fair (so-called paichang 排場 [display of splendor]),

103 and acting in a play (K. Qiu: 172-175)

## Stage design and costuming

Actors and musicians had minimal supplies of costumes and instruments. Their stage operation was rather simple and modest.

Their performance emphasizes heavy ostentation and extravagance with a luxurious stage set and numerous performers and musicians joining the play. The performance pace is relatively slow. Especially in the celestial play, the ceremonial performance is particularly complicated.

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A news report found in Taiwan ririxin bao 台灣日日新報 [Taiwan Daily New News] entitled “Playing the Zidi-xi” 演子弟戲 clearly depicts the nature of the zidi troupe distinguished from that of the luantan-ban:

On Xikou Street in Taipei, there is a zidi troupe good at singing, who recently ventured to perform on the public stage. Their performance is like a professional drama play, but they are unwilling to call it as such. Therefore, it is called zidi-xi. Yesterday the town of Xiejiang, Dapinglin, invited them to perform. They did not accept money for the commission, but only food and the travel fee—50 to 60 dollars104…. The troupe has about forty people. Everyone was in gorgeous dresses and wearing golden rings to indicate that they are zidi, not [professional] actors.

102 Zhentou is one of the performance types in the temple fair to display the corporations' high social statue and to show their prosperity. In the lineup, it reveals a “head flag” pennant and a lion flag to strengthen the outfit, followed by musicians dressed in uniform.

103 Paichang means singing at the temple fair without makeup, costume, and instrumental accompaniment.

104 In this chapter, there are two names of Taiwanese currency dollars. I use “dollar” to refer to the old currency used during the Japanese rule, and “NT dollar” (i.e., New Taiwan dollar) to refer to the new currency set up by the Nationalist government in 1951. The conversion rate between the old Taiwanese dollars and the “NT dollar” was ten thousand to one.
Regarding *xiao-xi* 小戲 [small drama] and *yizhen* 藝陣 [artistic procession],
dancing and/or singing “small drama” was often performed on the street during
temple fairs or festivals as an idolatrous parade. They were originally performed by
all males with cross-dressing, singing, and dancing. These small dramas included
*che-gu-xi* 車鼓戲 [vehicle-and-drum drama], *niuli-zhen* 牛犁陣 [plough drama], *Song
Jiang-zhen* 宋江陣 [Song Jiang military procession],
*caicha-xi* 採茶戲 [tea picking drama], and *gaoqiao-zhen* 高跷陣 [stilts procession].
According to musicologist
Zheng Ronggxing 鄭榮興 who specializes in Hakkanese opera, the “tea harvest
drama” (so-called *caicha-xi* or *sanjiao caicha* 三角採茶 [three characters picking
tea]) were brought in along with the Hakkanese immigrants from China to Taiwan.106
*Sanjiao* [three roles], including one clown and two *dans*, were all performed by males
in its early stage of development. Zheng Meizhu 鄭美珠, Zheng Rongxing’s
grandmother, was the first woman in Taiwan to learn the drama and became the most
famous actress of *caicha-xi* in the 1950s (Xie and Xu 2002: 168).

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105 Song Jiang is a legendary figure found in a Chinese popular fiction *Shui hu zhuan* 水滸傳 [All
men are brothers], written by Shi Naian 施耐庵 [1296-1372]. In the fiction, Song is famous for his
martial devices.
106 No later than the Qing Guagnxu period 清光緒 (1875~1908), the tea picking drama appeared in
Taiwan (Muo 1999: 84).
Song Jiang-zhen is a mixing of vaudeville and martial arts supported by local temples for the purpose of temple fairs. Members of Song Jiang-zhen could be anyone who was interested in such performance, except women. Women were forbidden in such religious ceremonies because they were considered “unclean” (referring to their menstrual periods) and this was insulting to the honorable deities (Wu 1998: 143).

**Pervasive Presence and Transition—Japanese Colonial Occupation (1895-1945)**

During the early colonial period (1895-1918), the Japanese government closely controlled the social conduct of the colonized and conquered any rebellious factions. However, for general traditional customs and conventions, the colonial government adopted a pacification policy to appease the public.\(^{107}\) Due to urbanization and economic prosperity, commercial theater halls were established and theatrical activities continued to be the major type of entertainment. Almost every village had their own zidi-ban, equivalent to today’s fashionable private clubs for theatrical singing and acting, and their membership was exclusively males. Female impersonation continued to be pervasive with only a few actresses becoming well

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\(^{107}\) It was not until toward the end of WWII that the Japanese government enforced the policy of forbidding music and theatre. However, many theatrical troupes still conducted performances secretly.
known. As Japanese official Sakura Magozo 佐倉孫三 depicts in his 1903 book *Taifeng zaji* 臺風雜記 [Miscellaneous records on the customs of Taiwan].

Taiwanese love drama play, just like the Japanese. Whenever there was a temple fair and harvest celebration they always put on a play for entertainment. Stories mostly came from the *Three Kingdoms*, *The Legend of Shuihu*, and *The Journey to the West*. Performers were all males, very few females. The stages were all temporarily built, not permanent. It is equivalent to our *Shinto gagaku* performance. People play on string instruments and gongs, making a deafening sound.

Various writings and newspapers from this period kept abundant information on male cross-dressing performance, including the names of famous male *dan*, the troupes they belonged to, their appearances, costumes, acting skills, performance dates, locations, audiences’ reactions, related social events, and criticisms.

In the period of the Japanese rule, documents show that both older traditional Taiwanese theatrical genres (e.g., *nanguan-xi* and *baiguan-xi*) and younger traditional Taiwanese theatrical genres (e.g., *gezai-xi* 歌仔戲 and *gaojia-xi* 高甲戲) intended to absorb females into their troupes. Here I will provide examples mainly concerning *gezai-xi* and *gaojia-xi* based on relevant newspaper reports, and put them together in a

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108 Sakura arrived Taiwan in 1895. This book was translated and reprinted in 1996.
109 These are famous and popular classic Chinese novels.
110 Famous male *dan* of the “messy plucks troupe” included Xiaohai-dan 小海旦 (Li Beihai 李北海), Ayu-dan 阿宇旦 (Huang Yu 黃宇), Yu Baoxian 玉寶先 (Chen Yian 陳炎), Tianchuang-dan 田幢旦 (He Qutong 何邱同), Jiangyang-dan 醬羊旦, Jinshu-dan 金樹旦, Qishi-dan 乞食旦 (Yang Qishi 楊乞食), Liu Lou 劉樓, Zhu Mujin 朱木金, and Apiao-dan 阿漂旦. (Liu 2000: 32).
socio-cultural context to illustrate the transformation from all-male troupe to male-and-female mixed troupe.

1. Gezai-xi 歌仔戲

In the late nineteenth century, based on the local folk tunes of Yilan 宜蘭 (a north-eastern city in Taiwan) and absorbing performing techniques from chaozhou-xi 潮州戲\textsuperscript{111} and other Chinese traditional operas,\textsuperscript{112} gezai-xi developed from an amateur song-and-dance form to a professional “big drama.” Within two decades (1911-1930), it had become the most popular entertainment in Taiwan. In its early stage of development, gezai-xi was exclusively performed by males of junior theatrical troupes. Famous female impersonators in this period included Huang Maolin 黃茂琳,\textsuperscript{113} Lin Mugen 林木根, Huomuzai-dan 火木仔旦, Jiang Wutong 蒋武

\textsuperscript{111} Chaozhou-xi is a traditional musical genre originated in the Guangdong Province, southern China. Its roots can be traced back to the seventeenth century.

\textsuperscript{112} For example, in its early development, gezai-xi absorbed some elements from “small drama” such as “vehicle-and-drums” and “tea picking” drama. It was originally a street singing-and-dancing style and performed outdoors at a plaza or in an idolatrous procession, called luodisao 落地掃 [fall and sweep]. Only two men play male and female roles respectively, accompanied by a two-stringed fiddle, a two-stringed lute, a vertical flute, and a horizontal flute.

\textsuperscript{113} Huang, also called Laopo Lin 老婆琳, is famous for his role as an old female clown, so-called laopo 老婆 or choupo 丑婆.
童 (1909-1987) and Chen Wangcong 陳旺欬 (1925-2006). Male dan, often the major focus of the play, were said to attract both male and female audiences.

According to the gezai-xi male dan Chen Wangcong, many plots in the early form of gezai-xi were frivolous and sensational, and very often caused social problems. In newspapers of the colonial period, one could find numerous critics of gezai-xi that claimed these gezai-xi were lascivious, vulgar, and the audience was pursuing a kind of sensational enjoyment. The critics questioned the practice of inviting this kind of theater to perform in front of the temple, and pointed out that the young male and female audience members indulged in the actors, resulting in fighting, elopement, adultery, and suicide. One example that deserves attention is from the Taiwan Daily New News, which depicts homosexual relationships between a female impersonator and a member of his male audience:

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114 Jiang’s parents were both Japanese. Because of the war, he was unable to go back to Japan with his parents. Jiang was capable in all kinds of role types, including young man, mature woman, painted face, old man, and clown. His wife and two daughters were famous male impersonators in gezai-xi. 115 Originally Chen Wancong was merely a gezai-xi goer. When a fellow villager, the male dan Lin Mugen was transferred to Southeast on military duty, the local zidi-ban lacked female impersonators. Due to his handsome face and slim figure, Chen was encouraged to learn the dan role and started performing in public in 1943. He excelled in playing the dignified lady, vivacious girl, and female clown. Chen was awarded a 1989 National Art Transmission Award 民族藝術薪傳獎 held by Ministry of Education in Taiwan.

116 Chen recalled that early on, the host’s daughter usually would take care of the cosmetics and costumes for the gezai-xi male dan. She offered them the best dresses and would stand closely to touch the male dan’s face by putting on powder and rouge on him. A love affair could occur in such conditions. Therefore, people often teased ladies who were enthusiastic about gezai-xi: “Are you infatuated with the play or the (male) dan?” (J. Chen 2000: 51).

117 Gezai-xi was banned several times during the Japanese rule for reasons of lascivious tunes, indecent acting, and member’s “despicable” personalities (K. Qiu 1992: 188-201; 208-209).

118 See Taiwan minbao 台灣民報 [Taiwan People’s News] (1929: 5, July 14; 1929: 6, October 20), also see Taiwan xin minbao 台灣新民報 [Taiwan New People’s News] (1930: 7, May 31).

119 Reports on such matters can be found in Taiwan People’s News (1928: 6, April 8; 1929: 7, May 19; 1929: 6-7, September 22; and 1930: 6, January 12).
In one of the Yilan theatrical troupes, there is a [male] dan named A-yan. He is coquettish when singing on the stage. Men who have the inclination of “cut sleeve” [referring to homosexuality] love to be in contact with him. Recently, there was a man called Wang Wulang who bought him a luxurious house, skirts, hairpins, and bracelets. Wang made A-yan dress in female clothes. The two behaved like a married couple. One wealthy, powerful man was jealous of them and had called a crowd of people to seize A-yan by force. Wang repented to death, and is preparing to gather people for taking the pearl [i.e., A-yan] back.

宜蘭某班。有花旦名阿艷。登臺演唱。嬌態百出。有斷袖癖者。多與之游。近有王姓五郎。貯以金屋。為購簪釧衣裙。使作女裝。儼然夫也婦者。有勢豪嫉之。紏眾拏去。王悔恨欲死。正欲募如古押衙其人者。為奪還掌珠也。(Taiwan Daily New News 1908: 5, June 23)

From this passage, it can be observed that the ideology of “cut sleeve” in ancient China was somehow imported into Taiwan and was practiced among the locals. At this point, social conditions and cultural practices in Taiwan were similar with that of Qing China, in which some female impersonators performed female roles even offstage. A beautiful male dan often received affection and expensive gifts from “her” fans, who could be male or female, or both.

Another report entitled “Record on Lujiang, A Male Dan’s Good Fortune in Love Affairs in the Jinfulian Troupe” records the interactions between a male dan and his female audiences:

There is a male dan, named Ni Ximing, a native of Min. He is twenty-something years old. His stature is thin and weak, and his singing is clear and melodious. He is good at lascivious plays. Although his appearance is not outstanding, his seductive charm surpasses the prostitute, therefore he is famed

120 However, another term, xianggong tangzi, 相公堂子 that was commonly used to refer to homosexual actors in China, was hardly found in Taiwan’s theatrical circles.
121 Lujiang [the Egret River] is an old name for Luzhou City, in northern Taiwan.
122 “Ximing” literally means “life” in the Fujian dialect.
for being coquettishly gorgeous. He is particularly popular with women, from whom he often receives presents (such as gold rings). Sometimes he is invited to the Chinese Tea Garden. When he performs at night, there are more female audience members than male. Women are eager asking him questions when he is on stage. He answers them unscrupulously with a smile, without any inhibit.

鷺江紀事・優伶艷福 金福連班。
有男旦。名倪細命者。閩人也。年二十許。身材瘦弱。歌聲清脆。善演淫齣。貌雖中姿。面妖媚則過於娼妓。以是大博艷名。婦女界尤歡迎焉。所至輒受餽遺。（如金戒指之類）有時應中華茶園之聘。入演夜戲。則是夜女客。每多於男客。其在舞台上也婦女顯然爭相問訊。彼亦含笑回答。絕無忌憚。（Taiwan Daily New News 1919: 4, April 21）

This passage conveys that, by 1919, female audiences were able to go out into public to enjoy theatrical plays at night. One reason for this new freedom was that the Japanese colonizer encouraged women to join production lines.123 As a result, women could participate in social enterprises and started to have their own personal allowances (Yong 1993: 206). Women’s lives had expended from the private domain to the public sphere. Correspondingly, during this period, the drama types and their performances directly reflected this change in gender roles and gender boundaries. Daytime performances, which often were organized around a memorial ceremony, were led mostly by men. The audiences in daytime were mostly men as well, since women were busy with house chords or handicrafts. As a result, the drama types in the daytime were mostly historical or military plays. After finishing their daytime work, in the evening women could go out to the theater with their children. With the increasing number of women and children audiences at night, night-time drama types were mostly “soft” types, moral plays or love stories. The increase of women in the

123 In the thirties and forties, Taiwan was transformed from an agricultural society to an industrial one.
audience also meant the increase of women’s ability to consume which therefore dictated their taste preferences in theatre.

Following Japan’s industrialization and Westernization of Taiwan at the turn of the twentieth century, the colonized Taiwan also was able to absorb Western culture and technology. The emergence of actresses making public appearances could be viewed as an indication of Taiwanese women moving out from traditional domesticity toward having a career life and professional jobs.

This new female force in the theatre was in fact made of girls from poor families, who were sold to professional theatrical troupes and received strict training: following the old practice of boy’s tongling-ban,¹²⁴ and the custom of the “adopted daughter.” When adopted daughters grew up, many of them were married to other male members of the troupe (either actors or musicians) or served their troupe leaders as concubines. As their children grew up and were trained in theatrical troupes, they naturally became professional actors/actresses and joined their parents’ (or relative’s) troupe—this structure was known as a “family troupe.” Numerous examples of family troupes are found particularly in luantan-ban and gezai-xi-ban.¹²⁵

The phenomenon of females learning theatre was gradually accepted and became more fashionable and later directly affected the decline of the male dan. For example,

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¹²⁴ Generally girls cost more than boys, and beautiful appearances cost more than the mediocre. Between 1920-1940, a girl cost three hundred dollars for four years, a boy about two hundred (K. Qiu 1992: 232-233).

¹²⁵ In gezai-xi circles, some famous examples of family troupes are Hong Zhenteng’s 洪真騰 Dazhengfeng Opera Troupe 大振豐歌劇團, Jiang Wutong’s 蔣武童 Baoan Opera Troupe 寶安歌劇團, Cai Jialu’s 蔡家祿 Taizhong Zhuyufeng Opera Troupe 台中珠玉鳳歌劇團, Liu Jimei’s 劉己妹 Jinyuji Opera Troupe 錦玉己歌劇團, and Chen Mingji’s 陳明吉 Minghuayuan Opera Troupe 明華園歌劇團.
the following is a performance review entitled “Little Notes on Yilan City 宜蘭,” in the *Taiwan Daily New News*:

Actresses Start to Perform

The Da-rong-sheng Troupe of Yilan has hired teachers of *waijiang-xi* [“outside river” opera] from the mainland to teach several actresses. Together with the original male troupe, there were more than thirty members. On fourth day of the first month in the lunar year, they performed program called “Ten Thousand Flowers offering good wishes” in the Tianhou Temple. All members participated with beautiful costumes shinning and dazzling. It was too multifarious and rich for the eyes to look at. Yang Ali, playing the part of “flower *dan*,” was charming and gentle. Lin Jinying played a young man. Her acting was distinguished and admirable. Along with her voice, she made a splendid performance. Li Awan played the old man role. Her attitude and songs were moving. Yuyan played the male role called “painted face.” Her voice was loud and her pace was also good. Together with famous actors, they all catch people’s attention. They attracted thousands of spectators. The audience applauded them without ceasing. In Yilan City, there had not been female performance in the theatre for over one hundred years. Now the troupe has begun this practice.

宜蘭零札‧女優開演
宜蘭大榮陞班。因客歲聘外江戲師來蘭。教習女角數名。合男班計有三十餘名。於舊曆正月四日。在天后宮開演萬花獻瑞。金[全]班齊出。衣服鮮麗。輝映炫觀。所謂五花八門。令人目不暇賞。扮花妲者。楊阿李。嬌態百出。姣媚溫柔。林金英為小生。舉趾風流。步騖聲音。俱臻絕妙。李阿罔為老生。態度曲白。色色動人。玉燕為淨。聲大而宏。步調亦佳。又有男優名角。皆能豁人心目。一時觀者如堵。數以千計。喝采之聲。幾不絕耳。蘭邑歷百餘年來。未曾有女戲。今次始行開演。&(1909: 4, February 02)

The troupe depicted in the above news report represented a typical process of the time: an all-male troupe started to have a few actresses taking turns in a play, and gradually developed into a male-and-female mixed troupe, which later became an all-

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126 Yilan, in the Northeast part of Taiwan, was the birthplace of *gezai-xi*.

127 Here *waijiang-xi* refers to Peking opera in Shanghai and Fuzhou. *Waijiang-xi* also called *Haipai-jingban* [the “ocean school” of Beijing troupe], which was influential in the development of Taiwanese local theatres. Numerous actors came to perform and teach in Taiwan, including male *dan*, such as Chen Delu 陳得祿, Gai Cisheng 蔡七省, and Zhou Huiqing 周惠卿, etc. (K. Qiu 1997: 167; and *Taiwan Daily New News* (1909: 5, September 21).
women troupe. From this passage, we also learn that some actresses impersonated male roles. Women, long time absent from the theatrical world, ironically headed to learn their first stage poses from male teachers under a patriarchal structure. It was the male assumption of female roles that guided women’s behaviors onstage. Nevertheless, mixed-sex troupes proclaimed the new notion of career women working side by side with men.

2. *Gaojia-xi 高甲戲*

Imported from the Min閩 area of the southern China around the nineteenth century, *gaojia-xi* later absorbed the delicate singing technique from *nanguan-xi* and the bustling percussion style of the northern music genres. Their members were originally from *qizi-xi 七子戲* [seven boys theatre] troupes, in which all members were male. In addition, when the audiences gradually lost interest in *liyuan-xi/qizi-xi* in the 1940s, some *liyuan-xi* actors began to play *gaojia-xi*. The 1928 government’s investigation of *gaojia-xi* reports that its performers in 1917-1918 were almost all male, and after this period, females gradually made their public appearance (Qiu1992: 148). For example, Xu Xiang 徐祥 (b.1896) and Chen jinlu 陳進祿, famous female impersonators of *liyuan-xi* troupes, began to play in *gaojia-xi* troupes and taught the

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128 The first all-female troupe appeared in the late 1910s (K. Qiu 1992: 227). The initial purpose of establishing the all-female troupe was for easier control of the performers in order to prevent scandals in mixed-sex troupes, which would receive broad social criticism.

129 This may be the reason why in Taiwan, *gaojia-xi* is sometimes called *nanguan-xi*, or is viewed as a branch of *nanguan-xi*. Comparing *liyuan-xi* with *gaojia-xi*, the former is more formalized, delicate, and strict in both posture and singing skills. The latter is louder, more vigorous, less polished, and has a stronger appeal to the audience.

130 When *qizi-xi* members became adults, they could no longer stay in boy troupes, so some of them formed their own troupe. See note 97.
troupe’s actors and actresses, which are further evidences on how actresses learned performing and singing techniques from male dan (Lin & Li 2000: 56-58).

The gaojia-xi troupe called Quanjun jinshanghua jutuan [The Flowers on Brocade Troupe of Quanjun] was the first troupe to include female performers.131 In the 1910s, the troupe started to train young girls and it gradually became a male-and-female combined troupe (Lin & Li 2000: 13). According to their performance records, although dan became performed by both actors and actresses, the majority of members were still males. Along with other innovations such as utilizing instruments from other theatrical genres, and rewriting several scripts, this troupe brought welcomed changes to traditional Taiwanese theatre (ibid.).

Another newspaper report provides yet another evidence of the loss of interest in all-male performance troupes:

Keelung Theatre…hires the New Theatre Little Phoenix Troupe from Zhongli to perform for about ten days in Keelung. The troupe has good actors and can play various repertoires. It was said their teachers were experienced Shanghai masters. However, all-male performance is not that attractive to the audience. It was said that in order to maintain the troupe’s presence, they plan to hire female actors from Taoyuan (northern Taiwan) and other places to perform together with the actors.

基隆戲館…聘中壢新劇小榮鳳班到基開演十餘日。班中角色頗佳。齣目亦甚多。聞為上海老戲師教成。然純為男角。不能博觀客十分興味。聞為維持永久計。將聘桃園及他處女角數名。到基合演。(Taiwan Daily New News 1916: 4, January 17)

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131 The troupe was established in 1906 in Xinzhu 新竹, Taiwan. Quanjun is in the Fujian province.
Without mentioning the specific type of theatrical genre that the troupe was going to play, this report nevertheless indicates an important change in taste in the 1910s.

Around the same period, some were of the opinion that actress should not perform with actors for reasons of “moral concern.” For example, in a thesis competition titled “A Talk About the Reformation of Theatre” 戲劇改良論, conducted by Chongwen-she in Zhanghua 彰化崇文社, the first place winner Yang Zhaojia 楊肇嘉 criticizes the morality of males and females performing on the same stage. He advocates male cross-dressing performance:

All of them are newly composed erotic tunes of theatrical songs. They are full of salacious words. Men and women even costar. They turn a performance into a real life event. Their eyebrows send messages of love to each other. They show indecent behavior. Although one needs not take theatrical performance too seriously, yet the plays really offend public decency. Someone who feels responsible to society may worry about the morals. However, acting in a play is for amusement, so it can't be prohibited. Yet, it is urgent to improve it. Despite the fact that dressing up as actors is considered shameful by Confucianists, and being an actor/actress is regarded as a low profession, when watching male cross-dressing performance, even I cannot help from loving her/him. It is said, just as there is no need to have a female body to make [a man] deeply in love. The situation becomes even worse when they put young girls playing with actors. It is really indecent.

無非新腔艷曲梨園談唱。盡是嫚語淫詞。甚而男女合演。將假作真。眉黛傳情。窮形盡相。雖云登場作戲。未可認真。而醜態畢呈。實傷風化。始也隱中乎人心。繼也貽憂於世道。有心人於此蓋愕然神傷矣。獨是演戲為娛樂機關。禁之固不可。而改良所宜亟也。優孟衣冠。儒者所恥。……優伶之出身。本屬微賤。而男扮女裝。尚有我見猶憐之感謂鍾情何必女兒身也。況以妙齡女子。充演其中。尤為穢褻之甚。(Taiwan Daily New News 1920: 5, July13)
The above report reveals social criticisms at that time on the morality of having men and women performing side by side in one group. This thinking against male-and-female mixed troupes seemed influential in the establishment of all-female theatrical groups.

**Decline and Remaining Traces—From 1945 on**

By the end of the Japanese rule, the traditional theatrical world, once exclusively dominated by male performers, was then replaced by females. In professional *gezai-xi*, the majority of its members were females, and almost without exception, the male protagonist was played by a female. Chen Mingji 陳明吉 (1911-1997), the former troupe leader of the famous *gezai-xi* troupe *Minghua yuan* 明華園 [Minghua Garden], talked about his establishment of an all-female troupe in his interview with scholar Chen Zhengzhi:

When my troupe performed *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai* [known as the “Butterfly Lovers” in English], I played Shanbo, and an actress played Yingtai. It is a well-known love story. Eventually, both of us were seriously into the play. At the end, a false thing became true. When I was singing out my true love, the music accompaniment was out of tune. I wondered what happened and turned my head to check the musician, I was shocked… The musician, the husband of the actress, was starring at us with fierce anger and jealousy…

當時劇團扮演梁山伯與祝英台，我粧山伯小旦粧英台，這是一出人人欽點的愛情戲，兩人置棚頂緊扮緊入戲，煞尾假戲真做，我正哀怨的訴出心肝內的愛情，那知樂聲攏變調，我真奇怪，越頭去看樂師，驚一跳…擔任後場樂師的丈夫，看得妒火中燒… (Z. Chen 1993: 281-282)
Chen Zhengzhi continued the story in his own account: “to prevent such an ‘accident,’ he [Chen Mingji] changed his members into an all-female troupe” (ibid.).

The decline of male cross-dressing in Taiwan was a direct result of the change of socio-economic structure in Taiwan. Following the transition to a Westernized educational system, urbanization and industrialization began in Taiwan in the early twentieth century. Vocational actors of the traditional theaters probably found other job opportunities to save themselves from the low caste, the so-called *xia-jiuliu* 下九流 [nine types of occupations in the lowest social statuses].\textsuperscript{132} The all-male professional troupe (i.e., *luantan-ban*) no longer existed.

The tradition of female impersonation has only been kept by a few amateur *zidi-ban* with privileged social status. Today, in Luodong 羅東 (on Taiwan’s east coast), a beiguan troupe *Fulan-she* 福蘭社 [Fortune Orchid Troupe] (established in 1861), has still kept the traditional-style *zidi-ban* performance, with men playing female roles. A *gezai-xi* troupe *Yilan Zhuangsan xinliang yuetuan* 宜蘭壯三新涼樂團 (the troupe that the male *dan* Chen Wangcong belonged to), was active until the 1990s. Nowadays, during some temple fairs held by villages or towns, it is not surprising to see men cross-dress to perform in local small dramas and artistic processions or *qianwang-gezhen* 牽亡歌陣 [soul guiding opera] at funeral ceremonies in rural areas.

Following the decline of all types of traditional theatre, as well as the growing variety of entertainment choices for male performers’ communities, the male *dan*

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\textsuperscript{132} In Taiwan’s traditional society, the nine lowest social statuses included prostitute, actor, witch, musician, pig breeder, barber, servant, masseur, and tomb digger.
tradition faced the difficulty of being passed on to the next generation. Nowadays, only a few young male dan have been academically trained.\textsuperscript{133} Interesting enough, female cross-dressing performance has gradually become pervasive in Taiwan’s traditional theatre, as seen in gezai-xi, Peking opera, and huangmei-dao 鄉梅調 [\textit{huanmei} tune].\textsuperscript{134}

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To conclude, the early development of all-male troupes in Taiwan was closely related to Chinese immigration and the traditional concept of women to be engaged exclusively with domestic duties. Familiarity with female impersonation increased along with early Han Chinese immigration into Taiwan in the seventeenth century, during which time there was a ban on the immigration of female spouses. Gradually, the concepts, practices, and aesthetics of male cross-dressing performance were shaped in local Taiwanese culture. Male cross-dressing performance was found in almost all genres of traditional Taiwanese theatre. During industrialization and modernization, females were encouraged to work in industry alongside men. As a result, females stepped outside of domestic boundaries into the public domain. Due to the emergence of female actresses, growing female audiences, and a general change in taste, male cross-dressing performance gradually fell out of favor in Taiwan.

\textsuperscript{133} For example, the gezai-xi male dan Lin Xianyuan 林顯源 (1971-), the Peking opera male dan 方安仁 (1961-), and also Peking opera male dan Zhou Xianggeng 周象耕 (1964-), who later became a member of Redtop Arts.

\textsuperscript{134} This originated in Huangmei 黃梅 County, Hubei 湖北, northern China. It later spread into Anhui 安徽, and became popular in the Anqin 安慶 area centered in Huaining 懷寧. It was introduced to Taiwan by Chinese immigrants in 1949 and made popular through television and movies.
CHAPTER II
MASS CULTURE, SHOW BUSINESS, AND
THE EMERGENCE OF REDTOP ARTS

In the previous chapter, I have reviewed male cross-dressing performance in China and Taiwan in the historical past; in this chapter, I will introduce the modern version of male cross-dressing performance in Taiwan, i.e., fanchuan show. While the emergence of the modern male cross-dressing show in Taiwan can certainly be understood as a recent revival of a deep-rooted cultural practice, I will suggest in this chapter that this modern revival needs to be examined in the context of modern mass media and popular culture. Specifically, the success of Redtop Arts in the 1990s Taiwan was closely related to the development of Taiwanese show business since the 1950s. In order to understand the emergence of Redtop Arts, one needs to investigate questions related to show business as mass culture in Taiwan, such as: How did show business arise? What role did show business play in people’s daily life in Taiwan? How and why did previous entertainment genres fall out of favor? What is the relationship between fanchuan show and other show genres?

Redtop Arts not only appropriated cultural elements from China and Taiwan’s traditional theatre, but also adapted various contemporary show-business genres. The performance style and content of the Redtop Arts were derived from various styles of Taiwan’s existing show business, such as the geting show 歌廳秀 [singing-hall show], gewu-tuan 歌舞團 [song-and-dance troupes], canting show 餐廳秀 [dinner
show], *gongdi show* 工地秀 [construction side show], *dianzi huache* 電子花車 [electronic float], and the *hongbao chang* 紅包場 [“red envelope” singing halls].

Each of these entertainment forms enjoyed popularity in Taiwan at various points in history. In this chapter, I will first examine the emergence of mass culture and show business in Taiwan and introduce the major show genres which shaped the structure and content of the *fanchuan show*. Then, I will discuss the process by which the Redtop troupe emerged, and explain how the founder of Redtop Arts navigated the mass media to create a successful commercial entertainment enterprise.135

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135 Up to now, there has been very little study on show business in Taiwan. The information that I present here is compiled from the oral accounts of two performers in show business: Tianxiong (a male backup dancer since the late 1970s), Manning (a male cross-dressing singer and dancer since the 1980s), as well as the internet-based information: [http://www.sinorama.com.tw/ch/show_issue.php3?id=200429302078C.TXT&page=1](http://www.sinorama.com.tw/ch/show_issue.php3?id=200429302078C.TXT&page=1) (viewed on October 20, 2005).
magazines. Along with the introduction of industrialization, commercialism, and capitalism, Japanese and Western popular music prevailed in the 1920s and 30s. It was during this development of mass culture that the concept of entertainment life was changed significantly. One obvious example is the change in social attitude toward entertainers (e.g., musicians and actors/actresses). Following the popularity of records, movies, and radio, singers and actors were promoted from one of the lowest social statuses to ming xing 明星 [bright stars]. Unlike performers in traditional music/theatre, ming xing often implied a better, more fashionable life and rapid economic success.

Yet, show business really began to take off in 1949, when the Nationalist government escaped to Taiwan along with over 1.5 million Chinese refugees, and began a military dictatorship. At that time, the main local entertainment forms for common Taiwanese people were gezai-xi 歌仔戲 [Taiwanese opera], zidi-xi 子弟戲 [junior theatre], budai-xi 布袋戲 [hand puppetry] (which were all performed in

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136 Movies were introduced to Taiwan in 1900 by the Japanese. Liao Huang 廖煌 was perhaps the earliest Taiwanese who made circuit of films. In 1903, he studied film projecting in Japan and brought some films back to Taiwan. He played movies and collected fees in cities including Miaoli 苗栗 and Taipei. The phonograph was introduced to Taiwan through the Japanese in 1910 and gradually became a more common commodity after 1925. In 1928 the Japanese Government Office in Taiwan established broadcasting in Taipei. After 1940, the major cities in Taiwan were all able to receive airwave transmissions (Taiwan Sheng Xingzheng Zhangguan Gongshu Bian 台灣省行政長官公署編 [The Office of the Taiwan Province Administrator, ed.] 1946: 1146).

137 See Chapter I, page 89-90.

138 Western music was introduced to Taiwan via the colonizer Japan in the early twentieth century. As early as the 1930s, some gezai-xi and budai-xi troupes started to include Western instruments for accompaniment, such as the violin, saxophone, trumpet, and various kinds of drums.
Taiwanese language), and Japanese *enka*. Singing ensembles called *nagashi* 流し [flow (a Japanese term)] were popular in more upscale venues, like wine shops and hot springs resorts.

Because of the language barrier, the Chinese mainlanders (who came to Taiwan after 1945) had little connection to these Taiwanese local genres and when they got homesick, they longed for other entertainments. However, at that time the war had just come to an end, and show business did not exist. As a result, the very early formation of singing halls did not appear until the early 1950s. They were originally established outdoors beside the dike of the Danshui River 淡水河 (in Taipei county), using a simple setting of some tables and chairs. Instead of buying an entrance ticket, the audience entered by paying a *chashui* 茶水 [tea fee], of one cup for 0.5 NT dollars, a cheap price that the general public could afford. Singers were dancing-and-singing girls from Shanghai who sang pop songs of the 1930s and

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139 “Taiwanese language” refers to Hokkien dialect, which is politically opposed to Mandarin that was the official language superimposed by the Nationalist government in Taiwan after 1949. See Chapter III.
140 This entertainment genre was introduced by Japan during the Japanese occupation. “*Nagashi*” in Japanese means “flow,” indicating that the nature of these performance troupes was mobile: they performed from place to place between hotels, bars, restaurants, and brothels. A *nagashi* troupe usually consisted of one drummer, one guitarist (or keyboardist), and a singer who was usually a female. Singers sang Japanese and Taiwanese popular songs. *Nagashi* was well-liked in Taiwan from the late Japanese colonial period to the 1980s.
141 After fifty years of Japanese occupation, during the early years of recovery, Taiwanese people spoke mainly Hokkienese and/or Japanese instead of Mandarin.
142 See Chapter I, note 104 for use of currencies.
143 Internet-based information, see note 1.
Later in 1955, indoor singing halls appeared and mainlanders were still the major patrons.

In the 1960s, a small-scale show genre called the “red envelope” singing hall emerged and aimed to attract elder mainlanders. Elder singers sang tunes that were popular in Shanghai twenty years ago for older mainland audiences. The administration of red envelope singing halls did not require a large investment of money: operators paid little or only a transportation allowance to the singers. They were allowed the opportunity to earn additional money during their performance by walking into the audience, greeting the elders, shaking their hands, and receiving red envelopes from them—the action by which the name of the genre was derived. *Hongbao chang*, like the early singing halls, consoled many of the old mainlanders.

The difference in leisure activities between local Taiwanese people and the mainlanders gradually changed after the government began promoting Mandarin in the public educational system. This created a consolidated notion of the motherland China as the ethnic-cultural origin and ultimate home of Taiwanese people. Under the political control of the Nationalist Party, textbooks only contained the history and geography of China and had little or no mention of Taiwan. The Taiwanese language and local traditional theater practices were suppressed. In general, the educational system before 1987 created an imagined China that increased a sense of diaspora among the mainlanders who came to Taiwan after 1945, and to which the Taiwanese people were told that they belonged, although many of them had never been there.

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144 However, people lived in the neighborhoods near outdoor singing halls were annoyed by the noise at night and reported it to the police, who eventually put a ban on outdoor singing activities.
After twenty years of economic development, the entertainment industry and mass media in Taiwan became prosperous. In the late 1960s, television became the center of people’s leisure time—free of charge (Zheng 1998: 286). Following the inauguration of Taiwan Television (TTV) in 1962, and the increasing popularity of movies, more stars were promoted and a unified mass entertainment industry was gradually formed. People in the 1960s were able to spend more time and money on entertainment, and both mainlanders and locals were eager to see live performances of their favorite stars from television and film. Singing halls, an extension of the collective experience of the mass media, became a favored place for those who wanted to worship the stars. Nostalgia, hence, was no longer the single reason for patrons to visit singing halls. Ticket prices for the singing halls were raised higher and higher, which once even caused the government in the late 1970s to prohibit public figures from going to singing halls for the reason of extravagance.

During the same time period, another type of mobile entertainment troupe emerged, called gewu-tuan [song-and-dance revue], that featured a splendid stage design and young and beautiful women who were well-trained in singing and dancing. Increasing industrialization, urbanization, and commercialization in the 1950s and 60s gradually changed the traditional modality of the labor division in Taiwan. More and more all-female theatrical and entertainment troupes, in both traditional and contemporary genres, were established in this period. As opposed to the singing hall, which had a fixed location and regular hours of performance, gewu-tuan toured the country and performed at different local theatres or on temporarily
constructed stages. The most well-known gewu-tuan troupes were Heimao gewu-tuan 黑貓歌舞團 [Black Cat Song-and-Dance Revue] (1952-1965) and Yixia gewu-tuan 藝霞歌舞團 [Artistic Rosy Clouds Song-and-Dance Revue] (1960-1984). Both were modeled after the Japanese song-and-dance revue including Shōchiku kagekidan 松竹歌劇団 [Shōchiku Revue] and Takarazuka kagekidan 宝塚歌劇団 [Takarazuka revue]. In the early development of gewu-tuan, performers signed contracts with one particular troupe and lived together with the members of that troupe, just like the traditional gezai-xi troupes. In the 1960s, there were about a hundred gewu-tuans in Taiwan.

During that time, because market competition and the introduction of the Western strip show, some troupes added a strip tease to attract audiences. Eventually, there appeared a type of song-and-dance troupe which performed purely strip dance, called niurou chang 牛肉場 [beef fair], which had a serious detrimental effect on the survival of the original song-and-dance troupes. Ironically, in the conservative social climate of 1960s Taiwan, pornographic performance within mass entertainment was extremely pervasive; it not only spread into song-and-dance troupes and singing halls, but also into some traditional theatres such as the gezai-xi.

For the purpose of gathering crowds, construction enterprises often invited show troupes, including strip dance, to perform at the inauguration of their new buildings.

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145 Some of the gewu-tuan artists later became TV stars.
146 Shochiku Revue, an all-female cross-dressing troupe, was established in 1929 in Tokyo and dismissed in 1996. It performed once in Taiwan in 1935.
147 Takarazuka Revue, also an all-female cross-dressing troupe, was established in 1935 in Osaka. It is still prosperous today.
This type of show is called a *gongdi show* 工地秀 [construction side show]. Unlike some restaurants, in which the show is their major solicitation for customers, and have permanent, fancily decorated stages for shows, in construction sites, temporary stages are built for the similar type of show for attracting prospective property/house buyers. Such types of shows were very popular in the 1970s and 80s.

The trend of strip dance could also be seen in the emergence of another mobile song and dance troupe, *dianzi huache* 電子花車 [electronic float] in the 1980s, in which semi-clothed female singers sang at the back carriage of a truck which was remodeled into a stage decorated with neon bulbs. The electronic float was employed at various important occasions, from wedding banquets and business advertisements, to funerals and temple pageants.\(^\text{148}\) The dividing lines between life, death, divinity, and carnality are mythically erased through the amusing aural and visual pleasures created by the electronic float. When I talked with elder people about the reasons for inviting the electronic float to participate in such important occasions, they simply replied: “*laole*” (in Taiwanese) or “*renao*” 熱鬧 (in Mandarin) which means “creating a scene of bustling.” For Taiwanese people, creating a noisy and exciting atmosphere during temple fairs and major events of one’s life-cycle is extremely important. The concept of entertaining both gods and people in ceremonies is still commonly seen today. Figure 2.1 shows a male cross-dressing show entertaining both gods and

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\(^{148}\) I witnessed the popularity of the electronic float in my childhood and teenage years. During the 1980s, it was common to see the electronic float performing a strip tease outdoors at wedding ceremonies despite the presence of the elder and under-age guests. Within the temple parade, the electronic float served as part of moving arrays, and its girls sang and performed semi strip, attracting a huge male crowd following after the truck.
audiences. The show was performed at the Zongsheng stage 宗聖台 across the Zongsheng Temple in Zhanghua, southern Taiwan. In Taiwan, across the temple, there is usually a stage designed for performance to entertain both gods and people. This photo was taken on such a temple stage behind the male cross-dressing actors, who were waiting to have a photo taken with members of the audience to earn some tips—one shot for one hundred NT dollars for those who used their own camera, and two hundred NT dollars if borrowing the troupe’s Polaroid.

Figure 2.1 Male cross-dressing show entertaining both gods and audiences. (Unless otherwise indicated, all photos are by the author).
Although there were sufficient information indicating the overlaps between male cross-dressing performance and electronic float, male cross-dressing performers themselves have been reluctant to admit this linkage. Manning, a former Redtop Arts member, used to cross-dress and perform in a nagashi ensemble and with the electronic float in his teens under the guise of female performer without notifying anybody about his true sex.149 He did know a few male cross-dressing friends who also participated in show business, including the electronic float, outdoor traditional theatre, singing halls, pubs, night clubs, and song-and-dance troupes in the 1980s. At that time, the term fanchuan show was not yet used and male cross-dressing performers did not like to expose their true sexual identity in public.

In 2003, a Taiwanese movie called Splendid Float 艳光四射歌舞團 was released, featuring a young man who is a Taoist priest during the day, and a drag queen on an electronic float at night. In some ways, this story echoes the life stories of people I interviewed. The movie addresses the subjects of Taoist funeral ceremonies, yin 陰 and yang 陽, traditional and modern, male cross-dressing performers, and homosexuality. The film did not shoot Redtop Arts, but they were mentioned during an interview with the director Zhou Meiling 周美玲. When

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149 According to Manning, his nagashi troupe consisted of one drummer, one keyboard player, and himself as the singer. Sometimes two or more male cross-dressers backup dancers would be added depending on the amount of payment. In the mid-1980s and early 90s, each performer received 1,000 NT dollars for one section (forty five minutes). Manning received about the same pay for an electronic float.
commenting on the Redtop, Zhou remarked on its denial of any link with homosexuality: “We cannot blame them, because the society is not healthy.”

In the 1970s and 80s, another important type of show, the *canting show* [“restaurant show” or dinner show], emerged and achieved notable success. During this time, Taiwan experienced its first economic upsurge, and with a higher living standard, people increased their expectations with regard to entertainment, while people in show business tried to find new ways to attract more audiences. Some entrepreneurs in the late 1970s combined the idea of singing halls and restaurants to create “restaurant shows.” Whole families could enjoy eating dinner and watching shows at the same time. The stage setting of a big restaurant show often included luxurious decorations, fancy lights, a large rising stage, dry ice, hi-fi acoustics, and comfortable audience seats. Restaurant shows gradually replaced singing halls and became one of the most popular entertainment genres in Taiwan in the early 1980s.

Because movies and television melodramas were available to all, actors/actresses were well received in dinner clubs, and modern male cross-dressing performers had made their first appearances there by 1983 as part of dinner shows. Dongfang Bili 東方比利 (or Wang-wang 汪汪, his other stage name) was one of the earliest and most famous actors who presented himself clearly as a male cross-dressing performer in Taiwanese show business. In 1988, another cross-dressing actor, Angela, achieved

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success in Japan without ever revealing his true sex.\textsuperscript{151} Both Dongfang and Angela were known for their wild and gaudy singing and dancing styles in the mid 80s. Dongfang’s luxurious costumes and choreography exemplified the notion that the visual excitement was sometimes considered more important for audiences than singing technique. In order to make the show more visually desirable, both professional and non-professional singers, including male cross-dressing performers, created dramatic costumes and showy choreography. In the most pervasive period of show business, some top singers owned personal dance troupes or musical groups.

Elder Tao, as a dance choreographer for singing halls and dinner clubs, formed his own dance troupes to satisfy market demands for show business. According to the backup dancers I interviewed, they received 1,400 to 3,000 NT dollars per day as payment, which was extremely high compared to the general salary of the time.\textsuperscript{152}

However, in the early 1990s, three major events caused a decrease in the popularity of show business. First, beginning in 1985, shows of singing halls and dinner clubs began to be recorded on videotape, so that people could rent the videos and enjoy them at home for a fraction of the cost of a live show. Secondly, underground society interfered with show business, in that gangsters fought for stars’ attention and favor, they battled for power, money, and influence. This kind of

\textsuperscript{151} Angela later established his own male cross-dressing troupe in Taiwan, called Top Artists. My interview with Angela will be further discussed in Chapter V and VI.

\textsuperscript{152} This Information comes from Huang Tianxiong, Ong Hongwen, and Shen Honglong, former backup dancers for many super stars (including the famous Cui Taiqing 崔苔青 and Ouyang Feifei 欧阳菲菲) and later members of Redtop Arts. The average annual income of Taiwanese people in the 1980s was 4,418 NT dollars per month (information from the Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, executive Yuan, Taiwan. http://www.dgbas.gov.tw/lp.asp?CtNode=2367&CtUnit=693&BaseDSD=28 [viewed on November 20, 2005]).
violence hindered people from going to shows, and large scale dinner shows were closed down one by one. Because of the violence surrounding dinner shows, the smaller-scale “red envelop” singing halls re-attracted retired older mainlanders and regained popularity for a short period of time. Its prosperity ended when the Taiwanese government ended martial law in 1987, and consequently the ban on traveling to the mainland was also lifted. Retired immigrants stopped spending their money on red-envelope singing halls or restaurant clubs, instead, they paid for their trips to China, and gave money to their families and relatives living in China. By the end of the 1990s, show business in Taiwan vanished, and as a result, large numbers of backup dancers lost their jobs. It was not until the establishment of the Redtop Arts in 1994 and other follow-up male cross-dressing troupes that the show business in Taiwan was brought back to life.

The Emergence of Redtop Arts

In the mid-1990s, when show business was suffering from low attendance and threatened to disappear, Redtop Arts appeared like a dark horse and took the Taiwanese entertainment industry by storm. With a well-planned marketing strategy and large scale media promotion, the troupe quickly drew public attention. In this section, I will first give an account of the establishment of the Redtop Arts, then I will talk about how the Tsai brothers, the founders of the Redtop, constructed the media image of Redtop Arts, and finally, I will introduce Redtop Arts’ internal policies.
**The Establishment of Redtop Arts**

In the early 1990s, Redtop Arts performed at a small restaurant/nightclub (like a Western cabaret) in Liutiaotong 六條通, a famous red-light district in Taipei. Although stigmatized for its involvement in prostitution, Liutiaotong nonetheless was a popular place among Japanese tourists. Beginning with twenty-five members, the Redtop rapidly expanded to more than forty members after two years of performing. Inside the restaurant where they performed, there was a small stage for performances, and audiences would sit at tables and watch the performance, while eating and drinking.

In 1995, in order to brush off the stigma of Liutiaotong and to expand their business, Redtop accumulated sufficient funds to rent the theatre within the President Hotel 統一飯店 (9 Dehwei Street 德惠街), which is located in the financial district in Taipei. They performed twice daily (7:20 pm and 9:20 pm), and tickets were sold for 1,200 and 1,500 NT dollars.\(^\text{153}\) Their cabaret style of performance was mostly maintained in their performances at the President Hotel, though with a larger stage and more audience seats. In their golden period performing at the Present Hotel, Taiwanese audiences had a hard time obtaining tickets because they were often sold out to Japanese, American, and European tourists. Through multimedia advertisements, however, the Redtop started to market their performances to local Taiwanese people, and achieved satisfying results.

\(^{153}\) Equivalent to forty to fifty US dollars.
The Tsai brothers were central figures in the rise of Redtop Arts. The troupe’s founder, the elder brother Tsai Tou, was a well-known TV actor and dance teacher/choreographer. He transplanted many ideas from show business into his Redtop Arts.\(^{154}\) Tsai Tou’s intimate link to the entertainment industry provided the troupe with information about current entertainment trends and access to suitable and talented performers. In order to devote himself completely to Redtop, Tsai Tou ended his TV career to become the choreographer and manager of the troupe. The younger brother, Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong,\(^{155}\) after receiving his BA in business administration in Taiwan, went to Japan for graduate study and obtained a Ph.D. in journalism. Tsai Shih-tsong combined his business experience, media savvy, and his connections in the entertainment industry to help establish what was claimed to be Taipei’s first-ever live male cross-dressing revue.

Before creating Redtop, elder Tsai had a dance company called *Taipei guoji gewu-tuan* 台北國際歌舞團 [International Taiwanese Song and Dance Troupe], which consisted of several sub troupes; together the dance company exceeded one-hundred members. In the company, men played male roles and women female roles, and they performed frequently at nightclubs and hotels in Japan, especially during the decline of show business in Taiwan in the late 1980s and early 90s. Even in such circumstances, elder Tsai was able to make enough profit to sustain the troupe in Japan. However, he had difficulty recruiting Taiwanese female dancers, because

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\(^{154}\) Tsai Tou sometimes performed in drag on television.
\(^{155}\) For the rest of this dissertation, I use the term “elder Tsai” to indicate the elder brother Tsai Tou, and “Dr. Tsai” the younger brother Tsai Shih-tsong.
Japanese men were infamous for their role in prostitution during that time. Many Taiwanese suspected that in Japan, female dancers might be forced to accompany guests in clubs, and be in danger of sexual exploitation. The other problem was that many female dancers who went with the troupe to Japan had love affairs with Japanese men during their stay, and after the troupe’s residency ended (usually six months), some female dancers would decide not to come back to Taiwan with the troupe. Elder Tsai then asked a member of his troupe, Ong Hongwen 翁紅文, to secretly impersonate a female dancer at one of their performances in Japan. After the performance, Ong revealed the fact that he was a cross-dressing dancer, and the audience reacted positively. After this experience in Japan, along with inspiration from transsexual shows in Thailand, elder Tsai came up with an idea for his future business: establishing an all-male cross-dressing troupe in Taipei.

In order to support the troupe, Tsai family sold two prime real estate properties to fund a year-long training session. Tsai brothers’ next step was to find investors. In the beginning, many people thought that investing in male cross-dressing show would be too much of a business risk, which encouraged Dr. Tsai to create a good media image for Redtop.

**Media Manipulation and the Construction of Media Image**

Dr. Tsai was clearly aware that the male cross-dressing show was unusual in its display of sexual ambiguity, yet had the ability to attract the Taiwanese media and the public’s attention, as well as foreign tourists. Dr. Tsai was successful in the early days
of Redtop in striking a delicate balance between respecting the limits of social
tolerance and exploiting sexual fascination. He stood on the edge of “committing a
breach of morality” in order to attract the public’s interest and curiosity. Already
highly experienced in show performance, Dr. Tsai knew that there was one
complexity that needed to be taken care of: the socio-political climate might not allow
for the presentation of gender ambiguity when linked with homosexuality.

In order to resolve this problem, Dr. Tsai, who had recently returned from Japan,
decided to lead the troupe and give it a more positive reputation. Because of Dr.
Tsai’s background in journalism, he knew how the media worked, how he could
manipulate it, and how, through the media, he could arouse public interest, construct
a “truth,” and advertise his troupe. From his personal experience in Japan, Dr. Tsai
perceived that Japanese society was more open to all kinds of performance, as long as
the performances were of high quality. He predicted that Japanese tourists’
acceptance and interest in Redtop would persuade Taiwanese audiences to validate
and enjoy it.

First, Dr. Tsai turned to his Japanese professors for some advice on establishing
the troupe, and his professors were quite surprised by his idea on Redtop. Yet, they
gave him many useful suggestions including how to utilize Japanese media and
tourism industry. Dr. Tsai’s professors had their journalism students call the Tourism
Bureau in Taiwan everyday, saying that there was a certain group called Redtop Arts
that had emerged with a new cultural form, and that they would like to obtain more
information about the troupe so that they could come to see the show while visiting
Taiwan. Because the function of Taiwan’s Tourism Bureau is to attract tourists, this strategy successfully won the attention of the Tourism Bureau who later provided tremendous support to Redtop. It later persuaded three leading travel agencies in Taiwan to invest large sums of money in the troupe for expansion.

Dr. Tsai openly accepted the label *Hongding shangren* 紅頂商人 [Redtop businessman] and did not avoid discussing his economic ambitions:

Redtop Arts surely can make a lot of money, and my ambition is very high. I expect to have our own theater and publisher in the future. Therefore, I want more investors who have the same vision and capable management to join us.\(^{156}\)

Dr. Tsai further invited several famous artists, college dance professors, television linkmen, and various community leaders to write positive remarks for the troupe’s brochures and to advocate their performances on television. These figures included Lou Mann-fei 羅曼菲 (former director of the Dance Department at National Institute of Arts), Chao Shou-po 趙守博 (former chairman of the Taiwan Province), Stanley Yen 嚴長壽 (chairman of the Taiwan Visitors Association), Liu Zhanwen 劉占文 (host of Mei Lanfang Memorial Hall), Yao Shin 姚欣 (president of the Association of Director and Editor of Chinese Traditional Opera on TV 中華戲曲電視編導協會), and Pamela Young (producer-director for KITV-ABC Hawaii), etc. On the Redtop Arts’ souvenir album, Mei Baojiu 梅葆玖, son of Mei Lanfang and a

\(^{156}\)In 1996, Dr. Tsai invited many entrepreneurs to watch the Redtop’s performance and persuaded them to invest in the troupe. This was Dr. Tsai’s spoken introduction at that performance. His talk and the programs were recorded onto a videotape which was sent to me by Dr. Tsai.
renowned Peking opera artist for his own female impersonation, wrote a remarkable preface for Redtop Arts:

Redtop Arts inherits the performing spirit of the Mei-school and combines together various types of dramas, literature, and music from every part of the world. In addition, it creates a variety of performing styles that embody our national heritage with modern quality. It is without doubt, a pioneer performance in promoting the Chinese art of “cross-dressing.” (Tsai 2000)

Dr. Tsai wanted to create something entertaining for both the locals and tourists, while at the same time being culturally representative. He transformed elder Tsai’s intention of establishing a profitable troupe to a more glorious idea. When speaking about the establishment of Redtop Arts, Dr. Tsai remarked: “In New York, there is Broadway; In Paris, there is Moulin Rouge; in Japan, there is kabuki. But, what do we have to represent the night in Taipei?” and, “When I brought my Japanese classmates to Taipei for a vacation, I was vexed by the lack of night-life options outside of bars, Karaoke, and KTVs [Karaoke TV]” (quoted in Yang 1995: 14, June 16). Yet, could male cross-dressing performance be culturally representative for Taiwan? As Dr. Tsai revealed to me in our interview, he had applied and utilized cultural materials to legitimize his commercial products by promoting male cross-dressing performance as Chinese and Taiwanese cultural heritage, as well as referring to Japanese cross-dressing cultures well received by Taiwanese people. To prove the legitimacy of his male cross-dressing troupe, Dr. Tsai claimed in the media that his establishment of

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157 Based on Dr. Tsai’s own translation with some minor changes in words’ choice. No page number is provided in this album.

158 Karaoke was imported to Taiwan from Japan in 1982. Later, the Taiwanese developed this idea and created KTV in which people could enjoy singing, chatting, and eating at private chambers equipped with a big TV screen showing scenery and song lyrics.
Redtop Arts was inspired by traditional Chinese opera, Taiwanese zidi-xi, Japanese kabuki (in which some actors are well known for their female impersonations), and Takarazuka (Japanese all-female revue, in which women represent men).

Dr. Tsai emphasized that cross-dressing impersonations, particularly female impersonation, had long traditions in Chinese and Taiwanese culture—Redtop claimed to “inherit” and “glorify” these traditions. Dr. Tsai guided the media to write reports centered on this perspective. In *China Times* 中國時報, under the title “Where to Go Tonight? Redtop Arts Dances to Represent the Essence of Traditional Culture and Arts” 今宵何處去 紅頂藝人 舞出傳統與文化藝術的菁華, the article reads:

Redtop Arts’ show is just like a modern version of traditional male/female cross-dressing in Peking opera. Although we are now a modern society and can not view with our own eyes the graceful appearance of the Peking opera artist Mei Lanfang, we can still experience this by watching Chen Hongliang, the leading female impersonator of Redtop Arts… (1996: 21, June 28)

Even though female impersonation was deeply rooted in traditional Taiwanese theatre, the contemporary social climate might not ready to re-embrace the modern version of male cross-dressing performance. To appease the social moralists, Dr. Tsai claimed in media that his show was not only entertaining, but “healthy” and artistic as well. In an interview, Dr. Tsai again made the explicit connection with Mei Lanfang to enhance the Redtop’s public image, and he articulated that what they were doing was culturally important to Taiwan: “Cross-dressing is a type of art, not salacity. One

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159 *China Times* is one of the four leading newspapers in Taiwan.
hundred years ago, Mei Lanfang became world famous. I believe we can follow his steps.” Dr. Tsai emphasized that fanchuan should be distinct from Western drag, which he believed was a type of sex show that capitalized on shock value and promoted same sex love. Tsai also distinguished Redtop from other types of tourist sex shows in places like Thailand, where many drag queens were injecting themselves with female hormones. For those who doubted the troupe’s morality, Dr. Tsai stated: “Facts are more convincing than eloquent theories. And the show itself presents my intention” (quoted in Yang 1995: 14, June 16). According to Redtop Arts’ public report, the administrators of the troupe did not accept homosexuals or overly effeminate men into the troupe so as to “maintain stability and morals,” and they emphasized, “We want this troupe to be a healthy, long-lasting arts group” (ibid.). In order to verify these stories, Dr. Tsai personally wrote many news reports and delivered them to the media for publishing. He revealed to me that up to 99% of media reports were written by him. One of the examples of these reports reads: “There was a candidate who concealed his homosexual inclination. During the training period, he was dismissed because his ‘real status’ was revealed.” During my interview with Dr. Tsai, he yet personally explained to me that:

In the early period, two thirds of our members were gay. Although the program of Redtop Arts was originally designed for Japanese tourists, if the name of Redtop Arts was equivalent to a gay community, we wouldn’t survive and our members wouldn’t be able to face their families… You know, ten years ago, a man who revealed himself as gay was sent to prison.

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160 News report montage provided by Dr. Tsai.
161 Phone interview on July 28, 2005.
162 Including both male and female roles.
163 Phone interview on July 30, 2005.
Besides making a clear distinction from Western drag queens, Thailand’s transsexual shows, and gay communities, Dr. Tsai actively led his troupe to participate in various kinds of charitable entertainment, as well as to cooperate with educational circles. Numerous news reports wrote about their free performances for old folks’ homes, convalescent hospitals, and handicap associations. In 1999, Redtop Arts accepted an invitation by Jianan Vocational High School (in Jiayi county, southern Taiwan) to open classes teaching make-up, attire, appearance, and deportment. Their curriculum was filmed to be part of the Redtop’s special series played on Formosa TV the same year. By making efforts to be attentive to disadvantaged minorities and noncommercial welfare, Dr. Tsai aimed to establish a good reputation for Redtop Arts.

Redtop Arts’ Internal Policies

Dr. Tsai aimed to make Redtop a highly disciplined troupe by exercising strict control on both members’ onstage performance and offstage lives. He believed that by doing so, Redtop would be a long-lasting business and be respected by the public. All members of Redtop were expected to live together and train together, which facilitated management and rehearsals. Troupe members were housed on the third and seventh floors; Dr. Tsai lived with his family on the fifth. Except on Saturday and Sunday, members were not allowed to go out or to sleep outside of dorm. Dr. Tsai referred his way of management was like the traditional professional theatrical
troupes, xibanzi 戲班子. In this way, he would understand every member more thoroughly, including their performing ability and personalities. He explained to all potential candidates that being a member of the troupe would not be just a job, but a way of life. He expected them to train as hard as ballet dancers, actors, or acrobats.

The daily routine of the Redtop members was as follows: sleeping in the morning, studying in the afternoon, performing in the evening, and rehearsing at night. Subjects they studied included ballet, jazz dance, Chinese traditional dance, acrobat, makeup, gait, stance, gesture, appearance, and deportment (Table 2.1). They ate only two meals a day: supper and a night snack. However, the members noted that their slim bodies were not the result of this eating regime, but of exhaustive training. According to the Tsai brothers, they had invested about 2,000,000 NT dollars in each member of the group for training, costumes, and accessories.

Table 2.1 Redtop Arts’ daily working routine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 pm – 5 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jazz</td>
<td>Ballet</td>
<td>Make-up</td>
<td>Appearance &amp;</td>
<td>Figure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 pm – 11 pm</td>
<td>Perform. &amp; night snack</td>
<td>Perform. &amp; night snack</td>
<td>Perform. &amp; night snack</td>
<td>Perform. &amp; night snack*</td>
<td>Perform. &amp; night snack</td>
<td>Perform. &amp; night snack</td>
<td>Perform. &amp; night snack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 am – 2 am</td>
<td>Rehearsing new program</td>
<td>Rehearsing new program</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Rehearsing new program</td>
<td>Video recording</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Every second and fourth Wednesday of each month was a general holiday.

The policies of Redtop not only governed the relationships among group members, but also guided the members in outside social activities. Members were not allowed to have extended social contact with the audience. Dr. Tsai said that there
were always people waiting at the gate after the show and asking performers out for the evening, but Dr. Tsai declined the invitations by explaining their policy. The fact that Redtop Arts needed such polices was an indication of the general social attitude toward male cross-dressing performers and homosexuality in Taiwan, and revealed the tension between social pressure and public interest. As Dr. Tsai explained to me, this was a necessary process for propaganda: “to create something mysterious that people are curious about, want to talk about, and are suspicious of.”

While the promiscuous impression of cross-dressing actors has remained present in modern-day Taiwanese society, Dr. Tsai did not want to have to fight against established moral codes because he wanted to ensure the troupe’s “long-lasting” future. Redtop members had to sign a contract with the troupe to promise that they would not do anything harmful to the reputation of the troupe. According to Dr. Tsai, no matter how you behaved behind closed doors, a Redtop member should act masculine when facing any of the public media. By setting up the strict rule against social contact with the audience and announcing that they rejected overly effeminate actors, Dr. Tsai attempted to protect his troupe from any potential accusations of homosexuality. For the general public, the boundary between male cross-dressing artists and homosexuals was made clear by an actor’s marriage. In the past, many cross-dressing actors often proved themselves to be “normal and healthy” by being married to women and having several children. Redtop Arts seemed to practice similar values. According to Dr. Tsai, members were encouraged to have girlfriends

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164 Phone interview on July 28, 2005.
or get married. At the wedding of a Redtop Arts member, Zhao Shengzhong (the first member to marry), elder Tsai talked to the media with delight: “I believe that other members will get married soon. This joyous occasion helped a lot for maintaining our ‘health’” (Taiwan Daily News 台灣日報, 1997: 22, June 9). In fact, this member played exclusively male roles and did not impersonate females, as described in a public report. The Redtop’s policy of submission to heteronormity is still remained in New Century, formed by some former Redtop members. Below is the New Century’s introductory remark at the beginning of each performance:

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the New Century Male Cross-Dressing Show. All unbelievable fantastic and beautiful women you see on the stage are all performed by true men, without injections or female hormones. They are a group of people who love performing arts and received years of hard training in dancing and acting from a young age. Many of them are married and have kids. . .

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The rise and fall of show genres and the emergence of Redtop Arts reflects a social, political, and economic shift in Taiwan as well as a change in Taiwanese peoples’ taste in entertainment from 1949 to the late 1990s. Show business in Taiwan has developed from a fixed pattern of singing one song after another (e.g., singing hall, the “red-envelope” singing hall) to miscellaneous ways of performance emphasizing visual effects (e.g., song-and-dance troupe, dinner club, “beef fair,” electronic float). Following the development of the mass media, show business emerged as mass culture, gradually replacing the traditional theatre and playing a significant role in people’s daily lives. After live performances of traditional and
modern entertainment genres fell out of favor in the early 1990s, Redtop Arts integrated and renewed these preexisting genres. It selected and fused theatrical elements to create a new genre of entertainment, which was not only culturally representative but also highly contentious, arousing curiosity and interest.

Redtop Arts’ cross-dressing shows raised a controversial issue: gender performance and members’ gender appropriation offstage. In order to prevent social criticism, the Tsai brothers utilized their relationships with academia, the media, and performance circles in Japan and Taiwan to construct a positive and glorious public image for Redtop Arts. In addition, male cross-dressing as a cultural tradition served as a channel for legitimizing the modern fanchuan show. After a great deal of effort was put into the construction of image, member training, and programming, one year after the troupe’s first public appearance in 1994, Redtop became the hottest showcase in Taiwan.
CHAPTER III
PERFORMING HYBRIDITY—
MUSIC AND VISUAL POLITICS

One hour of a Redtop show consists of thirteen to twenty skits; drama, dance, and music materials, selected from around the world, range from local to global, East to West, and traditional to contemporary. In a Redtop show, audiences hear Chinese opera excerpts, old Shanghai tunes, Japanese enka,165 Taiwanese folk songs, theme songs from Taiwanese melodramas, and various popular songs and movie soundtracks from Hong Kong, Taiwan, the U.S., and other Western countries. Such a variety of theatrical and musical settings illustrated Redtop’s enthusiasm for negotiating and conciliating indigenization and internationalization. Their hybridized programs formed a small quasi-global village, with the Taiwanese at the center. The aesthetic characteristics of Redtop’s fancuan show included pastiche and hybridity, and as Dr. Tsai proudly pointed out, “only in the Redtop Arts’ show can you hear various types of music ranging from the 1930s to the 1990s.”166

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165 A representative genre of Japanese popular songs. According to Wikipedia, “the term enka refers to two different styles of Japanese music. The first is a traditional type of music from both the Meiji period (1868-1912) and the Taisho Period (1912-1926). The second is a genre of melodramatic Japanese popular songs, which has been likened to American country music in terms of themes and audience. The term now usually refers to the latter” (retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enka, viewed on May 15, 2007).

166 Tsai avoided using any current popular songs, especially those sung by youth stars, for three reasons. First, Redtop’s programs aimed to attract an older audience (thirty or older). Second, their performers, who were on average twenty five years old, could hardly make a good imitation of youth idols. Third, copyright issues would be another consideration. Using old tunes (i.e., pre-90s) usually caused less copyright problems.
Despite its highly hybridized programs, in Redtop Arts’ early days, Dr. Tsai claimed the troupe to be the “revival of cultural tradition.” More remarkably, in 1996, Redtop Arts was awarded the Excellent Prize in the Fourth Global Chinese Cultural Transmission Awards 全球中華文化藝術薪傳獎 by the Republic of China Senior Jaycees Club 中華民國資深青商總會. One may ask: How could a program that was so culturally hybridized, be at the same time representative of traditional culture? How can one understand Redtop’s conscious contestation and negotiation with the notion of hybridity alongside their participation in the formation of national identity?

Before tackling these pressing questions, I should discuss a fundamental issue: Redtop’s elimination of live singing. The majority of Redtop performers exclusively lip-synched to pre-recorded music. According to Dr. Tsai, he did not want the performers’ rough voices to “destroy” the ready-made, beautiful female imagery. Since Redtop highly emphasized dance, drama, and visual effects (e.g., lighting and costumes), one may doubt that lip-synching to the original version is worthy of analysis. However, I argue that Redtop’s use of pre-recorded, original versions of songs points to important issues that deserve further investigation.

I suggest that Redtop’s use of pre-recorded music raises complex issues of collective memory, consumer capitalism, and global interaction. Most music that is selected to be played in Redtop performances was popular during certain time periods in Taiwan. These songs were produced by music industries (not limited to Taiwan) and were made popular by means of capitalism and commercialism in Taiwan. As commodities, these songs have accompanied the lives of many people who grew up
on the island of Taiwan. While male cross-dressing performers do not always visually present or recreate history in a faithful way, the chosen songs become effective signifiers indicating the subject matter with which the audience is familiar. Generally, popular music is listened to during one’s youth, and is thus associated with growth, family, schools, studies, love affairs, work, and political struggles, which are deeply rooted memories, conscious and unconscious (Zhang 2001).167 As a result, these songs became nostalgic representations of an individual’s past.

Not only do these songs trigger feelings of personal nostalgia, but they also arouse collective social memories. Each skit that represented specific eras were pieced together to form a sketch of an historical movement, including Taiwanese sociocultural activities and the formation of national identity. “Music,” as Mark Slobin remarks, “helps to orchestrate personal, local, regional, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and national identity” (1997: 3). These songs invoke in peoples’ minds stereotyped cultural sentiments and circumstances affiliated with a certain decade. People’s memories of particular song texts, melodies, and rhythms involve sensations of their life experiences; these memories are closely linked to the culture and society surrounding them. Even when society and the environment have changed, sounds of the past still connect people to specific moods, sentiments, and circumstances of a particular time and space.168 Certainly, “nostalgia” was one of the major sentiments that Redtop Arts aimed to evoke.

168 This “other space” resonates with my writing on heterotopias in Chapter V.
The sentiment of nostalgia, presented physically and ideologically in Redtop shows, is largely related to Taiwan’s experiences of diaspora and post-colonialism. The imagined past selected and reorganized by Redtop, further brought out complex issues of indigenization, national identity, and globalization. In order to understand such complexity, in this chapter, I examine both music and visual politics surrounding the Redtop show based on ethnomusicological and sociological points of view. The chapter is divided into six sections. In the first section, I briefly discuss cultural and political changes in Taiwan by returning to the discourse surrounding its colonial and immigration history. In the remaining five sections, “Diaspora and Imagined Nostalgia,” “Postcolonial Mimicry,” “Nation vs. State and Nation as narration,” “Constructing National Identity,” and “Globalization and Localization,” I will discuss songs performed by Redtop that have been selected from different historical periods: I will focus on the original and contemporary meanings of these songs.

An Historical Examination of Political and Cultural Change in Taiwan

From 1622 to 1662, the Dutch occupied the southern part of Taiwan. The Spaniards briefly took control of the northern part of Taiwan in 1626, but were driven out by the Dutch in 1642. From 1662 to 1683, Taiwan was ruled by the Chinese General Zheng Chenggong. From 1683 to 1895, the Qing government ruled Taiwan and made it a part of China’s Fujian province. After winning the first Sino-
Japanese War, Japan colonized Taiwan from 1895 until 1945 when Japanese lost the Second World War and the island was handed over to China’s Nationalist government. In 1947, while the Taiwanese people celebrated their freedom from Japanese colonization, many were killed for fighting against the semi-colonial Nationalist government from China.\(^{170}\)

When the Nationalist Party arrived in Taiwan in 1949, it created policies to build up a nationalistic political entity, and to homogenize Taiwan’s cultural variety. Through language policy (Mandarin as *guoyu* 国語 [the national language]), cultural policy (Peking opera as *guoju* 國劇 [national opera] and traditional Chinese music as *guoyue* 國樂 [national music]), and political policy (China as the motherland to which people hoped to return), the Nationalist government tried to form a solid, unifying national identity. At the same time, governmental authorities suppressed any resistance movements as well as indigenous Taiwanese culture and language. Local art forms, such as *gezai* opera, puppetry, and other local dramatic forms were discouraged or even suppressed before the lift of martial law in 1987,\(^{171}\) for they

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\(^{170}\) After two years of tyrannical rule by the Chinese Nationalist dictatorship, Taiwanese people were disappointed with the Chinese regime and thus protested against the Nationalist government for freedom. On February 28, 1947, the Chinese Nationalist dictatorship ordered their armies to massacre Taiwanese protesters, and over twenty-thousand Taiwanese were killed and tortured without due process. Under the dictatorship of the Nationalist Party, Taiwanese people were not allowed to talk about this event in public until martial law was lifted in 1987.

\(^{171}\) The Nationalist government in Taiwan enforced martial law from 1947 to 1987. The policy aimed to consolidate Nationalist authoritarian governorship in Taiwan, and at the same time to mobilize and to direct all resources to fight against communist China and other communist countries. Tight control of the political system and the media, however, did not hinder the Westernization and modernization of Taiwan.
evoked an association with a separate Taiwanese identity.\textsuperscript{172} However, all of these art forms continued to be practiced, first underground and later in public. Inside the Nationalist Party, political reform gradually took place. In the 1980s, President Chiang Ching-Kuo (1910-1988) facilitated democracy and Taiwanese indigenization. As a result, the underground Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), organized by political dissidents, became a legitimate oppositional party in 1986.

Since 1987, with the lifting of martial law and the following democratic movements (including presidential elections), Taiwan has undergone a transformation from a heavy-handed military dictatorship to a modern democratic society, and has acted as an independent state. The new form/shift in national identity became further solidified after the ban on travel to China was lifted in 1987. Joseph Bosco makes an astute observation: ironically, contact between Taiwan and China has turned “all residents of Taiwan, both mainlanders and native Taiwanese, into ‘Taiwanese’” ([1992]1994: 392). After forty years of separation, some felt satisfied with their trips “home” (to China), in terms of language, relatives, etc., but many felt alienated and disappointed. Taiwanese memory of the Mainland is in fact imaginary; it is non-existent. Bosco points out that in a narrow sense, being Taiwanese means Hokkien or Hakka speakers whose ancestors immigrated to Taiwan one hundred years ago mainly from the Fujian and Guangzhou provinces on the Southeast coast of China. While in a broader sense, Bosco continues, being Taiwanese means people reside in

\textsuperscript{172} For example, \textit{gezai} opera was banned from temple festivals during the 1950s, and was forced to cancel its show on TV in 1977 (Tsai 1993: 45).
Taiwan regardless of their ethnicity, and this ideology has gained more recognition with recent political and economic trends (ibid: 393-394).

Despite the increasing cultural contact and expanding economic links between China and Taiwan since the late 1980s, political relations between China and Taiwan nevertheless have continued to be tense. Over the years, the Nationalists have been one of the major enemies (and now imagined, since the majority of the political and military leaders who retreated to Taiwan in 1949 have retired or died) of the Chinese Communists. This animosity was intensified by the Nationalists’ early claims of anti-communism and mainland recovery. In 1990, those remaining Chinese parliament members\textsuperscript{173} in Taiwan were forced to retire, officially ending Taipei’s claim as the legitimate government of all China. Moreover, the Nationalist party’s failure in Taiwan’s 2000 Presidential Election marked the end of its fifty-year political rule in Taiwan, leading to an even more democratic cultural and political direction.\textsuperscript{174}

New political developments in Taiwan elevated the political tension between China and Taiwan. Ironically, the Nationalist’s “dream” of eventual national reunification was founded on a nationalist common ground with the Communists’ policy of “One China,” despite their opposite ideological and political intentions. Now that the Communists had suddenly lost their long-time enemy (i.e., Nationalist

\textsuperscript{173} The exiled Nationalist army in Taiwan designated some Chinese intellectuals as parliamentarians, who fled to Taiwan from different provinces all over China. During the parliament in Taiwan, each parliamentarian (symbolically) functioned as representative voice/vote from different provinces all over the Mainland China. By doing so, the Nationalist party claimed itself to be the legitimate government of all China.

\textsuperscript{174} After the communists took power in 1949, the party of Chinese nationalists, Kuomintang (KMT), fled from the Mainland to Taiwan and kept its dominate political power until the year 2000 when, during Taiwan’s 2000 Presidential Election, Chen Shui-bian 陳水扁 of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won the campaign.
China), they faced a different kind of crisis: a democratic Taiwan trying to claim its independence from China. Taiwan had begun acting as an independent nation-state and challenged Beijing’s political authority. In response to Beijing’s re-announcement of military threat and pursuit of their ideal of One China (which would define Taiwan as a province), Taiwan’s elected president Chen Shui-bian replied that “this is not acceptable to the vast majority of people in Taiwan. . . We prefer to see ‘One China’ as an issue that can be discussed [in talks]” (Weymouth 2000: 1-2).

The events in the recent twenty years have shown the people in Taiwan that the vision of returning to (not visiting) a lost homeland turned out to be an illusion. For many mainlanders in Taiwan, they had rooted in Taiwan, and the island had become their home (especially for those who were (re)married and had their families in Taiwan). Following the collapse of the grand narratives of “returning home” and the fading sensation of unity with China, localization has become a new direction for Taiwan’s cultural-political practice. The Hokkien dialect, which was linked with subordination, humiliation, and vulgarity, is now considered by many Taiwanese people as the “mother tongue/language,” as opposed to the official language of Mandarin. The search for traditional roots in Taiwan, as opposed to on the Mainland, has become pervasive, as seen in the following examples: abundant publications on Taiwan’s history and traditional culture, the preservation of Taiwanese traditional architecture, and the support of regional/indigenous art, theatre, and music. Media—movies, TV, radio, and publishing—have explored themes of Taiwanese social, cultural, and political experiences. While the “old” Nationalism was questioned,
challenged, and partially abandoned, Nativism has been assuming its place and becoming a kind of “new Nationalism.” However, one should bear in mind that the very nature of Nativism in Taiwan is neither a pure nor homogenous culture, but rather, an ongoing process of hybridization.

Such divergent historical memories have caused a nearly schizophrenic sentiment in the minds of many Taiwanese. In his article “A Torn Land: The Myth of Taiwanese Peoples’ Lost National Identity,” Ye Qizheng,\textsuperscript{175} expresses such cultural-political perplexity and anxiety:

The \textit{bensheng-ren} [local province people]\textsuperscript{176} of my parents’ generation [older than sixty] are disappointed by the Nationalist government’s rule. Neither did they accept that they are Chinese, nor Japanese. As a result, they give a new meaning and definition to “Taiwanese.” They had to take the cultural heritage that their ancestors brought from the Min region of southern China, mix it with Japanese colonial culture, and blend them with their unique way of life developed for one hundred years on this island. For them [my parents], Min culture originated in China, but has already turned into “Taiwanese” . . . (2004: 321)

It is common to see that within one Taiwanese family (including my own), members of three generations (the grandparents, parents, and children) grow up under different political regimes and experience changes of dynasties [Qing Chinese, Japanese, Nationalist, and the DPP]. Conflicting sentiments become dialogs that contest, complement, and adjoin one another. The constant struggles and negotiations between Chinese cultural inheritance and de-Chinalization, post-colonial sentiment and de-

\textsuperscript{175} Ye is a professor of sociology at National Taiwan University.

\textsuperscript{176} See Chapter I.
colonization are reflected in the organization, political aspects, and programs of the Redtop Arts, which I discuss below.

**Diaspora and Imagined Nostalgia**

Since the early 1980s, anthropology, culture theory, and history have all contributed to the analysis of the nature and concept of the modern nation. Benedict Anderson interprets “nation” as an organization of the idea of imagined political communities ([1983] 1991). Such “imagined communities,” built on the imagination of shared experiences of people who may not live in the same geographical space, helps to form the concept of “nation” as a unified territory. Arjun Appadurai offers this insight into the problems of the relationship between nation and state. He argues that this relationship is disjunctive, that one seeks to cannibalize the other: “while nations (or more properly groups with ideas about nationhood) seek to capture or co-opt states and state power, states simultaneously seek to capture and monopolize ideas about nationhood” (1996: 39).177 This theory of disjunctive relationships within the nation-state in many ways characterizes contemporary Taiwan’s search to create a nation of its own.

Interestingly, until the year 1999, part of Redtop’s program physically and ideologically illustrated Taiwan’s diasporic memory of China through the use of historical allusion. By giving a prominent role to Peking opera, Redtop asserted a strong attachment to Chinese tradition, which also corresponded to the Nationalist

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177 Appadurai also uses this disjunctive relationship as his interpretive mode of reading local and global cultural politics.
government’s long-time attempt to monopolize the idea of nationhood. In Redtop’s programs before 2000, the opening piece was almost always performed in Peking opera style. Figure 3.1 illustrates Redtop’s opening piece, which featured the music, dance, and acrobatics of Peking opera.

Figure 3.1 Redtop’s opening skit. Notice the huge backdrop with the portrayal of several Peking opera “painted faces.” (Photo courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)

The sound of *jingju luogu* 京剧鑼鼓 [Peking opera percussion] and *jinghu* 京胡 [the leading 2-stringed bowed instrument used in Peking opera] unmistakably highlighted the intension of the troupe leader: reviving and glorifying Chinese culture. The sound of Peking opera, as Nancy Guy remarks, “evoked memories of a nostalgic past that in turn reaffirmed identity with the Mainland and perpetuated a desire to return home”
(1995: 91). Figure 3.2 shows how Redtop used the image of Peking opera on the cover of their brochure.

Figure 3.2 A male cross-dressing performer in Peking opera dress on the cover of Redtop’s brochure. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)

The Peking opera theme emerged as an ancestral product, that is, the “tradition,” from which the Redtop Arts’ male cross-dressing performance was derived.

Yet, the opening piece that Redtop selected, called Chang lianpu 唱臉譜 [Singing the painted face], is not from traditional Peking opera, rather, it is a modern xige 戲歌 [theatrical song]. Xi ge is a fusion of popular song and the melodic and rhythmic elements of Chinese opera, and includes considerable Western instrumental accompaniment. Initiated by Yao Ming 姚明, a cross-over (traditional to pop) composer in China, xige made its first appearance in 1989 at a Chinese New Year’s
Party on Beijing’s television. The piece begins with the brass imitating Chinese wind instruments by playing an amusing, quick passage using a pentatonic scale. Western instruments add a thick texture (not found in traditional Chinese ensembles) to the melodic and rhythmic parts played by jinghu and luogu, the stylistic guomen [intermezzo] from Peking opera. The opening lyrics of Chang Lianpu are as follows:

[Section A (a general female chorus)]:
The foreigner calls jingju Peking opera
They have never seen the colorful painted faces
Sijitou [one typical rhythmic pattern of Peking opera] and liang xiang [striking a pose on the stage]
Wow….beautiful! Wonderful! Simply OK! Excellent!

[Jinghu intermezzo]

[Section B (a male painted face’s voice)]:\(^\text{178}\)
The blue painted face Dao Edun is the one who stole the royal horse
The Red painted face Guangong is the one who fought in Changsha
The Yellow painted face Dian Wei, the white painted face Cao Cao, and the black painted face Zhang Fei
Yell out!

Section A is sung by a female chorus in soft, plain voices, representing the voices of common people (outsiders) who look at this tradition with amazement. The passage

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\(^{178}\) Section B is repeated two times with different lyrics.
conveys a strong Chinese flavor by utilizing a pentatonic scale accompanied by sliding tones and ornamentation. In contrast, section B is sung by a rough male voice, resembling the voice of a jing 淨 role [painted face]. These sounds, as aural symbols, are capable of creating a “community of sentiment” [following Appadurai (1996: 8)], and provoke a sense of collective imagination of the motherland China.

Nevertheless, the use of xige rather than traditional Chinese opera demonstrates the postmodern commodity sensibility of the Redtop Arts, which has little to do with the representation of authenticity and depth of Chinese culture. Unlike the “red envelope singing halls,” Redtop Arts “sold” Chinese traditional culture not only to older Chinese immigrants, but to new audiences including tourists and local Taiwanese people whose memory of China was not formed by direct contact, but from the media and printed texts. While exoticism as a cultural product often functioned as a basis for touristic fantasy, the spectacles and sounds of traditional Chinese theatre aimed to evoke nostalgia from young local audiences who shared a collective imagination of Mainland China.

In what way was the nostalgic sentiment of younger Taiwanese audiences aroused by watching a Chinese theatrical program? What is the young Taiwanese generation’s view of Chinese culture? Why did Redtop adopt Chinese cultures (traditional and modern) as part of its cultural representation of Taiwan? And finally, how did Redtop participate in constructing national identity alongside the formation of a nation-state in Taiwan? To answer these questions, the construction of imagined nostalgia must be addressed.
Since 1949, when the Nationalist Party began its rule in Taiwan, the government had begun a process of creating a solid, unifying national identity: It tried to form China as the motherland where Taiwanese people would eventually return by any means. As a unique political entity—Taiwan, which has also been known as the Republic of China, Nationalist China, Free China, and “Island China”—the Nationalist government propagated Taiwan’s close relationship with China, both culturally and ethnically. Through years of advocacy on television and in other mass media, the image of Peking opera became a signifier of the remote motherland China. The sound of Peking opera became politically and culturally relevant to Taiwanese diaspora and collective imagination.

Redtop’s selection of Peking opera music to open their shows partially explained such ideology: the worship of cultural essence from the motherland. In the early period of Nationalist governorship, the authorities promoted and manipulated the ideology of guocui 國粹 [national essence]179 to assert their cultural superiority over the focal Taiwanese. According to Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, national identity springs from the very basis of “national essence,” meaning “a core of sentiments and symbols of the state” (1993: 18). The National government’s political manipulation of nostalgia and memory constructed an imaginary landscape through the modern media. Art forms such as Peking opera, traditional Chinese music, and traditional brush-painting, were bestowed honorable titles as National Opera, National Music, and National Painting. The government established Chinese opera

179 In the late nineteenth century, the Japanese created this concept for shaping a “new modern, indigenous national identity distinctive from others in the world” (Yeh 1995: 28).
troupes and training schools, and encouraged educational/academic institutions to organize traditional Chinese music ensembles/orchestras. The Nationalist government built up a nationalistic political entity, in order to homogenize cultural variety in Taiwan.

In Redtop Arts’ representation of Chinese culture, previously mentioned diasporic and nostalgic sensations were further accumulated through a series of songs which were either formerly popular in Shanghai between the 1930s and 40s (around the WWII period) or were movie soundtracks in China and Taiwan. Songs such as Heri jun zailai 何日君再來 [When will you come back to me] (1937), Meigui meigui wo ai ni 玫瑰玫瑰我愛你 [Rose, rose, I love you] (1940), Yie laixiang 夜來香 [Evening primrose] (1943), Fenghuang yufei 凤凰于飞 [Phoenix flies] (1944), and Yie Shanghai 夜上海 [Shanghai evening] (1945), were popular tunes that many older Japanese were familiar with during the period of Japanese occupation of China. Even today, young people in Taiwan are familiar with these songs because some pop singers have made their new renditions and composers still rearrange these tunes. Redtop Arts was certainly selling nostalgia; as Appadurai points out, “nostalgia is a central feature of modern merchandising” (1996: 76). Together with choreographed lighting, costuming, props, and stage design, Redtop aimed to rebuild the splendid

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180 Shanghai became the new center for urban media culture and popular music in early twentieth century China.
181 Teresa Yung’s 鄧麗君 (1953-1995), Taiwan’s pop star’s renditions of Yie Laixiang and Heri jun zailai are the most famous examples.
Shanghai dance-halls from the war-time period. Figure 3.3 shows Redtop’s recreation of Shanghai girls in the 1930s and 40s by placing the performer in a rickshaw.

Figure 3.3 The male cross-dressing performer Chen Hongliang rides in a rickshaw and sings “Evening Primrose.” (Photos courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)

Redtop’s program designer also intended to recreate the flamboyant lifestyle of old Shanghai. Within this type of program, each fanchuan actor would imitate a lady of Shanghai dance-halls (such as the famous Bai le men 百樂門 [Hundred happiness gate] dance-hall). The fanchuan actor would dress in a high-cut qipao, and sing (lip-synched) familiar haunting melodies of the 30s and 40s, accompanied (imitatively) by a Big Band dressed in navy uniforms in the rear part of the stage (Figure 3.4).
In this scene, one side of the stage was decorated with neon lights featuring the Chinese characters *Bai le men* on the top line and the performer’s stage name at the bottom—an effort to recreate the visual sensation of Shanghai dance-halls in order to advertise Redtop’s most popular singers. The melodic characteristics of these songs are soft and resplendent, called “decadent music” by the Nationalist government, featuring romantic themes about wind, flowers, snow, and moonlight. “Evening Primrose” is one of the most frequently performed songs in the Redtop program. As shown on the sheet music, this piece is a rumba with light and beautiful melodic lines, characterizing the Western ballroom music rhythm and dance style (Example 3.1).

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182 Depicted by Ong Hongwen (personal interview on August 22, 2005).
183 In the WWII period, the Nationalist government considered these types of songs to be a waste of money. Some of them (including *Yie laixiang* and *Heri jun zailai*) were banned.
Example 3.1 *Yie laixiang*¹⁸⁴

夜来香

音色：单簧管
节奏：伦巴 (Rhumba)
速度：\[ \frac{4}{4} \]

C G C Am

1. 那夜风花香满天，
   那夜风花香满天，

F G C D G7 C

2. 我爱你这夜花香，
   那夜风花香满天，

Dm Am Em F

爱为你歌唱，
夜来香，

G C C6 Em

我爱你那花香，
夜来香，

F G7 C G7 C

我爱你那花香，
夜来香，

Em Eb E Am (Ending)

夜来香，

The translated lyrics of *Yie laixiang* are:

The southern wind is blowing with coolness  
The nightingale is gently singing  
All flowers fall asleep under the moonlight  
Only the evening primrose is emitting fragrance  
I love the dim moonlight and the nightingale’s singing  
However, I love better the flowerlike dream  
that embraces and kisses the evening primrose  
Evening primrose, I sing for you  
Evening primrose, I think about you  
Oh, I sing for you…I think about you  
Evening primrose

There is no mention of the terror and pain caused by the ongoing Sino-Japanese War, instead, the song speaks of the pleasures of romance and love. For many people who lived through the war time period, these songs provided a mixture of comfort, escape, and hope.

The nostalgic sensation that Redtop tried to create was not limited to the mother China, but also to “old-time” Taiwan. Such nostalgic sensation of the native “old-time” Taiwan was constructed through famous film soundtracks (e.g., *Bu liao qing* 不了情 [*Farewell my love*] [1961]) and television melodramas made in the 1970s and 80s, plus various popular songs in different eras up to the 90s. A series of romantic theme songs from movies and melodramas in the 70s written by the famous novelist
Qiong Yao (1938-), aimed to trigger the audience’s nostalgic and romantic sensations. Qiong Yao’s works are exclusively love stories set in China and/or Taiwan, both ancient and modern. The lyrics of the theme songs in her productions were mostly written by herself. Cooperating with the foremost pop song composers of that time, Qiong Yao’s songs were big hits. Her songs which were performed in Redtop shows included *Wo shi yipian yun* 我是一片雲 [I am a piece of cloud] (1976), *Yue menglong niao menglong* 月朦朧鳥朦朧 [Dim moonlight and hazy bird] (1976), *Wennuan de qiutian* 溫暖的秋天 [The warm autumn] (1976), and *Jin zhan hua* 金盞花 [Pot marigold] (1978). Along with these familiar Qiong Yao songs, the collective imagination of romantic plot, scenery, and sentiment unceasingly flow and weave together the memories of romantic Qiong Yao films and people’s life experiences.

**Postcolonial Mimicry**

Homi Bhabha termed colonized people’s mimetic practice of royal signs, as “colonial mimicry”:

Mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is thus the sign of the double articulation; a complex

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185 Qiong Yao was born in Sichuan, China, and immigrated to Taiwan in 1949. Begun at the age of sixteen, Qiong Yao has since written sixty novels and fifty scripts for movie/television productions, in an extremely romantic style. Personas depicted in her novels are characterized as highly emotional and sensational, distinguished from ordinary speech and life. In 1967, she formed her own film company to make her novels into movies. Her works are so abundant and popular in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China (recently in Korea and Japan), that the general public in Taiwan uses her name to label her particular style of works, including Qiong Yao *xiaoshou* 瓊瑤小說 [novel], Qiong Yao *dianying* 瓊瑤電影 [movie], and Qiong Yao *dianshi-ju* 瓊瑤電視劇 [television melodrama]. Many actors and singers become famous because of their participation in Qiong Yao productions.
strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which ‘appropriated’ the other as it visualizes power. (1994: 86)

The “visualization of power” of the colonized is illustrated in Redtop Arts’ programs. Their representation of Japanese music and drama raises questions about Taiwan’s antagonism and ambivalence toward Japanese colonizers.

While joyful and carnivalesque performances are major characteristics of show business, Redtop Arts’ program surprisingly included a piece that touches upon a war-time tragedy: the famous Japanese enka piece called *Ganpeki no haha* 岸壁の母 [The mother by the quay wall] (1954). This piece, from the post WWII era, depicts an old Japanese mother standing at the quay wall year after year, waiting for her son to return from the battlefield in Siberia. 186 When the prelude to *Ganpeki no haha* began, a slide show was played onstage to evoke memories of WWII. Several old filmstrips presented images including bomb-dropping warplanes, marching soldiers, and eventually a photo of a young man. Then, a hoary Japanese woman (acting as the mother of the young man in the photo), trembling and stooped over, moved slowly to the center of the stage. With tears in her eyes, she lip-synched the heartbreaking melody (Figure 3.5). 187

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186 Lyrics by Fujita Masato 藤田まさと and composition by Hinakawa Namiliu 平川浪竜. The song, originally sung by Kikuchi Akiko 菊池章子, sold over one million copies in 1954 in Japan. Futaba Yuriko’s 二葉百合子 rendition released by King Records in 1972, was also a smash hit (it sold three million copies). In 1976, it was made into a Japanese film of the same title, starring Tamao Nakamura 中村玉緒.

187 The song is in a pentatonic scale without semitones (the yō scale, consisting of major 2nds and minor 3rds), a common scale in Japanese folk music.
Toward the end of the song, accompanied by the sorrowful music, the actor, who impersonated the shivering old Japanese mother, walked into the audience and dramatically mistook someone in the audience as her son, an act that caused the audience to break out in laughter. This final twist brought up a disjuncture between the original song that was sad and tragic, and the present theatrical spectacle; the latter eventually cannibalizes the former. The program designer apparently wished to keep the show’s tone from becoming too heavy. Because Redtop Arts’ early programs were mainly designed for Japanese tourists, this ending may have avoided reminding the audience of cruel realities that the Japanese people had to face.
However, one may wonder about the Taiwanese audience’s reaction to this skit, as well as to other Japanese songs selected by Redtop Arts. According to Dr. Tsai, many older Taiwanese audiences favored this particularly sorrowful skit. Due to its popularity among an older crowd, Dr. Tsai made this piece a permanent part of their program, never to be replaced. Other famous *enka* pieces featured by Redtop included *Mizuwari* 水割り [Grog] (1976), *Miserarete* 魅せられて [The charm] (1979),\(^{188}\) *Sennen no koto* 千年の古都 [The ancient city of thousand years] (1983), *Naniwa bushi dayo jinsei wa* 浪花節だよ人生は [Life is like a song of spindrift] (1984), and *Kawano nagarenō youni* 川の流れのように [Just like the stream of river] (1989). As the old Shanghai tunes appealed to older Chinese immigrants, *enka* would attract older Taiwanese people who had experienced Japanese colonization.\(^{189}\) While historical texts clearly recorded Japanese cruel militarism and their exploitation of its colony Taiwan, Taiwanese people are nevertheless generally fond of Japanese culture. Figure 3.6 shows Redtop performers dressed in *kimono*, lip-synching an *enka* song.

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\(^{188}\) This song was performed by the Taiwanese star Judy Ong 翁倩玉 (Japanese name ジュディ・オング) (1950-), a famous singer, actress, woodblock-print artist, author, and dress designer. In the 1970s, she successfully expended her performance career in Japan. This particular song sold two million copies and won many major music awards in Japan, including the Japan Record Award 日本レコード大賞.

\(^{189}\) From 1940 to 1945 the Japanese government in Taiwan put a ban on Taiwanese songs and Han languages, and restricted cultural activities. After fifty years of Japanese colonization, many older Taiwanese people speak more Japanese than Mandarin.
Taiwanese peoples’ complex pro-Japan and anti-Japan sentiments are reflected in many ways in their daily lives.\textsuperscript{190} Evidence of such conflicting attitudes are seen everywhere in Taiwanese society.\textsuperscript{191} For older Taiwanese who had experienced Japanese colonization, many particularly enjoyed Japanese popular music of that time, especially \textit{enka}.\textsuperscript{192} When they listen to such music, there clearly exists a disjunctive acceptance and tolerance of Japanese militarism and the accompanying Japanese culture. While the Japanese lost their military power over Taiwan, Japanese

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3_6.png}
\caption{The Redtop leading performers Ong Hongwen (female gender specialist) and Shen Honglong (male gender specialist) sing \textit{Mizuwari} [Grog], a duet in chia-chia style. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{190} There are some detailed studies written on this subject from sociological and psychological viewpoints. Some research was performed with a large number of interviews with Taiwanese sixty-five years old or older who experienced Japanese rule (e.g., Tsuda [2004], Zhuang and Li [2003], and Y. He [2003]). However, little research touches upon Taiwanese people’s attitude toward Japanese music.\textsuperscript{191} A website http://www.wretch.cc/blog/coaaa entitled \textit{Taiwan xin to Riben qing 台湾心と日本情} [Taiwanese heart and Japanese sentiment] reports news related to the interflow between Japan and Taiwan. The information covered includes history, politics, culture, tourism, medication, marriage, etc. A more current phenomenon is that in the 1990s, there appeared a term \textit{ha-ri-zu 哈日族} [the clan who loves Japan], which refers to young people who are fond of Japanese pop culture, commercial products, and stars.\textsuperscript{192} It is very common to see older Taiwanese people gather and sing \textit{enka} with karaoke at KTV, parks, wedding ceremonies, and various kinds of parties. My parents, both in their sixties, also joined a local \textit{enka} singing club and sing daily at their neighborhood park.
cultural capitalism has been a strong influence. Perhaps, when one listens to these songs after the war, militarism was no longer so important; instead, the obscure, nostalgic sensation of crossing time and national boundaries is compelling.

In Redtop Arts’ skit *Kawano nagareno youni* 川の流れのように (1988)\(^{193}\) originally sung by Misora Hibari 美空ひばり [1937-1989]),\(^{194}\) the stage design was an imitation of a Japanese NHK television program on New Year’s Eve called *Kouhaku utagassen* 紅白歌合戦 [Red & White Year-End Song Festival] (Figure 3.7).\(^ {195}\)

Figure 3.7 *Kawano nagareno youni*. The performer Ong Hongwen imitated Misora’s style by wearing a Western evening dress instead of a kimono. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)

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\(^{193}\) Lyrics by Akimoto Yasushi 秋元康 and music by Midake Akira 見岳章.

\(^{194}\) When Misora visited Taiwan in 1965, thousands of fans gathered at the airport to see her (Huang 2005: 263). Many years after Misora had passed away, in 2006 there was a fan club of hers established in Taipei. Misora was said to be the only person who could express the greatest essence of *enka* without wearing a kimono.

\(^{195}\) The most popular singers of the year are invited to perform in this program. Performers are divided into two groups, Red and White, and compete against one another.
For many older Taiwanese, Misora Hibari’s voice accompanied their lives growing up. As for Taiwanese young people, many of them are familiar with this particular piece because the song was made into various new renditions by pop singers, both in Taiwanese and Mandarin, including Teresa Teng 鄧麗君, Fei Xiang 費翔, Yang Lie 楊烈, and Jiang Meiqi 江美琪.¹⁹⁶ On a Taiwanese website where the owner put up various renditions of Kawano nagareno youni, a visitor left a note: “(the music) made me forget the time, forget my vexation, and forget what I should forget….but at the same time, it sketched all my past joys and sorrows….just like entering a time spectrum, I am intoxicated.”¹⁹⁷ The lyrics are:

Unconsciously
I walked down this thin and long road
When I looked back, I could see my remote hometown
The road is winding and rough
It can’t be found on the map
Isn’t it just like life?

Ah, just like the stream of a river
flowing slowly
Time flies

Ah, just like the stream of a river
It never stops
The sky was dyed with twilight

Life is like a journey on an unending road
Raining and muddy

¹⁹⁶ This particular piece was selected as one of the most beloved popular songs in Japan in the late twentieth century. More remarkably, the world famous vocalist Jose Carreras sang it in Japanese and put it on his 2001 album Around the World. It was also rearranged into numerous instrumental pieces including a recent version performed by the Chinese ensemble Nüzi shier yuefang 女子12樂坊 [Twelve-ladies Chinese music ensemble].
I believe it will eventually clear up
If I have a lover to accompany me as I search for my dream

Ah, just like the stream of a river
Flowing and calming
I’d like to be like that

Ah, just like the stream of a river
When the seasons change
I wait for the snow to go
Listening to the blue river murmur forever

The colonized country’s acceptance and tolerance of the colonizer’s music is reflected in Redtop’s program. Their presentation of Japanese songs was not only
designed for attracting the Japanese audiences but also for the postcolonial nostalgia of local Taiwanese people. Such colonial mimicry seems to bring older Taiwanese people nostalgic melancholy, which is distinguished from the pain of colonization.

The influence of *enka* on the early development of Taiwanese popular songs was tremendous.\(^{198}\) On Redtop Arts’ program, there were *enka* songs that were set to Taiwanese lyrics, such as *Kuaile de chufan* 快樂的出帆 [Sailing out happily] (1958) (see Table 3.1) and *Neishan guniang yao chujia* 內山姑娘要出嫁 [An indigenous girl is getting married] (1965). These type of songs, called *hunxue-ge* 混血歌 [hybrid/bastard songs], were largely produced between 1934 and 1970 (Zhang 2002: 15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Japanese lyrics</th>
<th>Recomposed Taiwanese lyrics</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>初めての出航</td>
<td>快樂的出帆</td>
<td>Sailing out happily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>詞: 吉川静夫 曲: 丰田一雄</td>
<td>詞: 蜚聲 曲: 丰田一雄</td>
<td>Japanese Lyrics: Kikkawa Shizuo; Taiwanese Lyrics: Fei Sheng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music: Toyota Iichio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>今日は嬉しい出航日</td>
<td>今日是快樂的出帆日</td>
<td>Today is a happy day for sailing out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>綠色の地平線</td>
<td>The Green sky line</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>卡膜脈 卡膜脈 卡膜脈飛來</td>
<td>The horn is blown to send me off</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Today is the happy day for sailing out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The endless sea is also happy for me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to part from my dear friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad and mom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ll write letters to you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's just a temporary separation, don’t worry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gull, gull, a gull is flying toward me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gull, gull, a gull is flying toward me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m singing songs and sailing safely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m singing songs and sailing safely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{198}\) Also, since 1907 there were many Taiwanese musicians who went to study music in Japan (Zhang 2002: 13). Those returning musicians’ compositions (including popular songs and Western classical music) more or less showed the Japanese influence.
Even though there was a ban on *hunxue-ge* by the Nationalist government from 1946 to 1962 for nationalistic reasons, their popularity did not decline (Zhang 2002: 14). Since 2001, a TV program called the *Taiwan yange show* 台湾演歌秀 [Taiwan *enka* show] largely centers their programs on *hunxue-ge*, which are now called “Taiwan yange.”

**Nation vs. State and Nation as Narration**

While the cultural and artistic roots of Japanese popular songs were a permanent fixture in Redtop shows, Redtop’s claims to Peking opera and Mei Lanfang disappeared after 1999. Instead, Redtop turned to emphasize their roots in traditional Taiwanese all-male theatre (*zidi-xi*), and asserted through the media that they were following in the footsteps of their Taiwanese ancestors. In 2002, they designed a new opening skit called *Jingtian jizu* 敬天祭祖 [Paying respect to the god of heaven and holding a ceremony for ancestors] to replace the *xige* written by a Chinese composer.

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199 Also, in 1972, because Japan severed diplomatic relations with Taiwan and turned to China, the National government put a ban on Japanese movies, television programs, and songs.

200 *Taiwan yange show* is broadcast on the GTV (Gala Television) channel.
The new program highlighted Taiwanese temple music with the use of the double reed horn (suona 噗吶) of the traditional beiguan [northern wind] ensemble. Redtop’s modification of their cultural policy revealed a complex issue within the ideology of the nation-state. That is, their modification of cultural policy apparently indicated their awareness of the geopolitics and reflected the change of political power in Taiwan and the subsequent political movement of qu Zhongguo hua 去中國化 [“de-Chinalization”]201 in the late 1990s. Particularly after the Nationalist party’s failure in Taiwan’s 2000 Presidential Election, The DPP government put their ideology of an independent Taiwan into effect in the public educational system and in cultural policies.

One Redtop member clearly articulated that the troupe’s former political policy was mistaken: “Peking opera is representative of Chinese theatre. The praise of Peking opera is almost equivalent to the acceptance of Beijing’s political authority. Our government has advocated cultural localization, but Dr. Tsai kept linking our performance with Mei Lanfang. May be this is why our troupe never got formal support from the government.”202 Dr. Tsai explained to me that in fact, he was aware of the government’s policy of de-Chinalization, and wanted to stop presenting Redtop as a continuation of the cultural heritage of Peking opera. However, because of their ambition to open up the market for show business in China, they retained this policy

201 To certain degree, “de-Chinalization” should be understood as “de-centralizing” Chinese culture in Taiwan. Generally speaking, the movement of de-Chinalization means to oppose the Nationalist party’s coercion of putting Chinese culture at the core of Taiwanese culture. Instead, the participants argued that a construction of “Taiwanese culture” should be more multicultural, embracing the verity of cultural-political influences from Holland, China, Japan, and the U.S., as well as communal life experiences of Fujian people, Hakka people, aborigines, and new Chinese immigrants in Taiwan.

202 Personal Interview with Manning (October 8, 2005).
until 1999. That year, Dr. Tsai had planned to hold a retrospective show in Taiwan to celebrate Mei Lanfang’s centennial anniversary—another way to advertise Redtop Arts. He invited Mei Lanfang’s son Mei Baojiu (the official heir of Mei school), and Central TV reporters from China (twenty people) to Taiwan on September 25 and 26. He planned to have Redtop members wear Peking opera costumes to greet Mei and reporters at the airport. Dr. Tsai expected that by doing this, when he applied to perform in China, such positive media reports might help his application to be successful.

However, the serious 9/21 earthquake\textsuperscript{203} (7.3 degree) in Taiwan killed nearly 2,500 people, and Dr. Tsai had to cancel his plans. The media broadcasted this national disaster, and all entertainment programs on television were canceled—nobody cared about such frivolous things. The Redtop theatre, located high on the seventeenth floor of the Jinsha Building 金莎大樓, was closed down due to the threat of further quakes and consequently the Tsai brothers and their investors suffered a deficit. Because of these new circumstances, Redtop did not have the ability to expand their business to China.

Having given up the idea of performing in China and being aware of the government’s policy of de-Chinalization, Dr. Tsai made the switch from the cultural heritage of Peking opera to Taiwanese local culture. Redtop members then began to represent themselves in public as descendants of the cultural heritage of zidi-xi. Dr. Tsai also created a press release that stated that Redtop had invited Guo Meizhu 郭美

\textsuperscript{203} 9/21 earthquake happened in September 21, 1999, which the name derived from.
珠, a famous *gezai-xi* singer/actress, to teach Redtop’s members female deportment and singing techniques. Dr. Tsai also attempted to put hand-held puppetry (*budai-xi*) in the Redtop program.\(^{204}\) This change in representational direction, on the one hand could be viewed as a commercial strategy; on the other hand, it reflects Taiwan’s complex cultural-commercial connection with China and its own struggle for cultural identity.

Following the movement of de-Chinalization, the debate on whether the use of “national opera” was an appropriate title for Peking opera revealed disagreements between cultural policy and national identity. Scholars, officials, and musicians questioned the legitimacy of Peking opera as representative of all Chinese operatic forms. Scholar Qiu Kunliang’s\(^{205}\) comments on traditional Taiwanese theatre, pointing out the long lasting argument on the definition of Taiwanese theatre:

…after 1949 Peking opera was gradually formed as the orthodox “national theatre” [in Taiwan], as the oblation in the oracle. It has become entertainment for the military, government employees, teachers, and *waisheng-ren* [people from other provinces]. Later, an apparent phenomenon formed: “Taiwanese theatre” referred to the Taiwanese local theatre forms, such as *luantan-xi* [a theatrical genre of the northern type], *budai-xi* [hand-held puppetry], *gezai-xi* [Taiwanese opera], which were performed either outdoors for worshipping, or indoors in local theatres. As for Peking opera (or national opera), other Chinese local theatres and *huaju* 話劇 (modern stage plays), they are all theatrical activities among intellectual [new] Chinese immigrants, which belong to different cultural systems from that of “Taiwanese local theatre.” (Qiu 1997: 16)

These terminological debates echo the narrative issues discussed in Chapter I.

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\(^{204}\) Phone interview on August 25, 2005.

\(^{205}\) Dr. Qiu is the president of Taipei National University of the Arts.
The de-centralization of Chinese culture in Taiwan is clearly articulated in the DPP government’s narration of the China-Taiwan relationship. In public speeches, Taiwanese officials use indirect and metaphorical languages when speaking to the international media and to Beijing. Taiwan’s elected president Chen Shui-bian and vice-president Lü Xiu-lian 呂秀蓮 described China and Taiwan as xongdi jiemei 兄弟姊妹 [brothers and sisters] and yuanqin jinlin 遠親近鄰 [distant relatives and near neighbors], ingeniously replacing the old political ideology of zuguo 祖國 [motherland] or guxiang 故鄉 [homeland] promoted by Nationalists. Such ambivalent rhetoric on the one hand reasserts Taiwanese people’s cultural-genetic relationships with the Chinese. On the other hand, this rhetoric reaffirms the government’s self-determined efficiency to have sovereignty rights. It also implies the need to reassign a new meaning to the China-Taiwan political stance to reflect current historical-political realities. By suggesting a new relationship (not mother-to-child, or top-down), this rhetoric further generates a discursive formation saturated with state-to-state close cultural interchange and economic cooperation.

Redtop Arts’ cultural policy embodied Taiwan’s ambivalent attitude towards its ancestral homeland. While weakening the visual aspect of Peking opera, Redtop Arts still kept the old Shanghai popular songs and dance skits based on Chinese folk tales and history, which arguably, convey less political implications. In these later programs, Chinese culture was presented as a part of Taiwanese culture, not as the mother/origin. Redtop Arts’ centralizing of Taiwan refected Taiwan’s changing
political relationship with China, and echoed evolving issues in Taiwan’s political practice.

**Constructing National Identity**

The problem with changing and ambivalent notions of nation-state, as Homi Bhabha points out, lie in “its transitional history, its conceptual indeterminacy, its wavering between vocabularies” (1990: 2). Anthony Smith’s concept about nationalism largely echoes Bhabha’s views:

> [N]ationalists have a vital role to play in the construction of nations, not as culinary artists or social engineers, but as political archaeologists rediscovering and reinterpreting the communal past in order to regenerate the community. (1995: 19)

The formation of nationalism and ideologies of nation-state relies on the rediscovery and reinterpretation of the nation-state’s historical past. In other words, by searching the past and giving it new meanings, an imagined community will be able to (re)form its national imagination, and create a nation-state of its own (Chiu 1996: 11).

In examining Taiwan’s emerging new cultural identity, Redtop Arts looked back upon Taiwan’s past—local folk arts and music, including indigenous music and dance—to represent a new Taiwanese identity. Songs selected were composed by local Taiwanese musicians and were big hits in their times, such as *Wang chunfeng* [望春風 [The full moon and the blooming] (1933), *Sijihong* 四季紅 [The amusing four seasons (in Taiwan)] (1935), *Meili de baodao* 美麗的寶島 [Beautiful Formosa]*
(1953), and Baodao mambo 寶島曼波 [Formosa mambo] (1960s). Baodao, literally, “treasured island,” refers to Formosa, Taiwan. The skit Meili de baodao, Redtop’s closing piece, was the moment for Redtop to display its national identity and to claim that its programs were culturally representative.

The song Wang chunfeng (1933) has always been a hit in Taiwan and is generally perceived as the most favorite old Taiwanese song.206 This piece is one of the “Taiwanese composed folk songs” taught in public schools in Taiwan. The original lyrics were written in Hokkien by Li Linqiu 李臨秋 (1909-1979) and the music was composed by Deng Yuxian 鄧雨賢 (1906-1944).207 The song has been rearranged numerous times in various styles including for a classical symphony orchestra, jazz instrumentation, and pop. The rendition that Redtop adopted was a symphonic piece, and while the melodies were smoothly played to accompany the elegant dance skit, audience sang the lyrics to themselves silently. The original song applies the Hokkien language (tonal) to the melody, creating a particular Taiwanese intonation,208 and the song is in the traditional pentatonic mode.

206 In 2000, a musical activity called “Songs of One Hundred Years of Taiwan” 歌謠百年台灣 held by the Taiwanese government and public media, attracted over 220,000 people to participate. The song Wang chunfeng was elected to be the most favorite Taiwanese old (popular) song.

207 Deng studied composition in Japan during his twenties, and was one of the most influential Taiwanese popular song composers. His songs were produced by Columbia Records when he was at the age of twenty-eight. He composed about fifty popular songs with Taiwanese lyrics, including the previously mentioned Sijihong [The amusing four seasons].

208 The Hokkien language consists of seven tones plus two “light sounds.” Therefore, in the ears of local Taiwanese, when speaking the language, its intonation is just like singing a song.
Example 3.2 *Wang Chunfeng*\(^{209}\)

![Musical notation image]

The lyrics, according to Li Linqiu, were inspired by the famous Chinese novel *Xixiang-ji* [The story of the west chamber], in which the author describes the heroine’s desire to see the hero: “On the wall, the flowers’ shadow moves, I think maybe he is coming” 隔牆花影動，疑是玉人來. Following are the lyrics:

Sitting by the lamp in a lonely night
A fresh wind blows my face
As a spinster in my late teens
I am thinking of a young man
Who is handsome and has a fair complexion
Whose son is he?
I want to ask him but I am embarrassed
My mind is anxious

I plan to marry him
The love in my heart is waiting for him
Like a flower I’m in full bloom
I hear someone coming outside the door
So I open the door
The moon laughs at me
I’m so silly that I’m cheated by the wind

Redtop’s representation of indigenization is reflected in another skit: the Taiwanese aboriginal song-and-dance *Zhanzai gaogang shang* 站在高崗上 [Standing on the high hillock] (1956) (see Figure 3.8). This piece was originally a theme song of a movie *Alishan zhi ying* 阿里山之鶯 [The nightingale of Ali Mountain] (1957). The story behind the film is that a Taiwanese aboriginal girl commits suicide for love. Produced by Xinhua Film Co., Hong Kong 香港新華影業公司, the movie was shot at Ali Mountain, Taiwan, and the composer, Yao Min 姚敏.
(1917-1967) was born in Shanghai and immigrated to Hong Kong. Following the movie’s box-office success, its theme song *Zhanzai gaogang shang* has become popular. Gradually, people forgot the song’s origin and mistakenly recognized it as a Taiwanese aboriginal song. In 1998, the song was re-released by Cheung Huimei 張惠妹 (A-Mei 阿妹), a famous Taiwanese aboriginal pop singer, and was a smash hit in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China. Because of A-Mei’s ethnicity and her powerful way of singing (representative of Taiwanese aboriginal singing), her rendition of this piece has been widely recognized as authentic, yet modernized Taiwanese aboriginal singing.

Figure 3.8 Redtop Art’s Taiwanese aboriginal dance: *Zhanzai gaogang shang* [Standing on the high hillock]. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)

In another skit “Formosa Mambo,” the *yizhen* 藝陣 [artistic procession] from Taiwanese temple fair celebrations was represented on Redtop’s stage (see Figure
This carnivalesque, idolatrous parade, which was originally performed by all males, cross-dressing, singing, and dancing, was reinterpreted by Redtop artists. These folk art/music forms, once suppressed by the Nationalist government, became instrumental in forming an emerging Taiwanese national identity. The various folk art/music forms challenge the totalization and homogenization of previous cultural policies, dispute the superiority of Mainland culture, and provoke *Taiwan yishi* 台灣意識 [Taiwanese consciousness].

Figure 3.9 Redtop Arts’ “Formosa Mambo” is performed in the style of *yizhen*. On the left with a painted face is *bajiajiang* 八家將 [eight generals], the girls in the center with blue fans are *chegu-xi* 車鼓戲 [vehicle-and-drum drama], and standing behind them with big puppet heads are *shentong-tuan* 神童團 [celestial kid troupe]. The stage backdrop is a painting of a temple. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)

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210 See Chapter I for more detailed description on *yizhen*. 
Redtop’s intention to display representative Taiwanese culture also included featuring historical settings of Taiwanese immigration. On the Redtop Arts’ brochure, the program notes to “The Amusing Four Seasons” reads:

Try to remember
Try to remember the hard time when our ancestors immigrated to Taiwan without knowing anything about this island
The four seasons here in Taiwan are so beautiful and pleasant

思想起
祖先艱辛過台灣
不知台灣生做什麼款
台灣四季紅

By placing more weight on local art/music forms, the Redtop Arts’ change in cultural policy reflected Taiwan’s cultural-political and ideological shift—that is, toward the emphasis that Taiwan has departed from the Chinese culture of the past.

**Localization vs. Globalization**

Taiwanese people’s identity anxiety has been heightened as they have been persuaded to participate in global citizenship. The idea of global engagement as an eagerness to communicate with a broader public both domestic and overseas, is directly reflected and suggested by the Redtop Arts’ internationally inclusive programs. By juxtaposing diverse cultures with a fashion of pastiche, Taiwanese culture was further encouraged to define itself. In other words the more globalized Taiwan becomes, the more eagerly it searches for a national identity. When faced
with globalization, Taiwanese peoples still show their anxiety and fear of not knowing what course to take 無所適從，不知所終的焦慮與惶恐 (Wang 2004: 84).

Appadurai observes global-local relations, “[t]he central problem of today’s global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization” (1996: 32). He again interprets this relationship as “mutual cannibalization,” an extended version of nation-state:

…the central feature of global culture today is the politics of the mutual effort of sameness and difference to cannibalize one another and thereby proclaim their successful hijacking the twin Enlightenment ideas of the triumphantly universal and the resiliently particular. (ibid: 43)

He argues that through transnational commodity flow, locality becomes a fetish that is driven by global forces, by means of advertising technology, language hegemonies, and cultural economies, *et cetera* (ibid: 42).

Following policies of modernization since the 1940s, cultural-political confrontation and negotiation have become on-going experiences for the people on the island of Taiwan. Despite tight control of the political system and the media early on, the Taiwanese government never closed its doors to the outside world, especially to the so-called “advanced and developed” Western countries. The Taiwanese government’s active participation in the international cultural-economic arena has placed Taiwanese people in the constantly mobile processes of acculturation, cultural adaptation, and innovation. While some Taiwanese people may not put these dilemmas in absolute opposition, unconsciously absorbing other cultures, others intentionally practice mimetic appropriation, adoption, and adaptation for particular
political and/or cultural purposes. The consciousness and negotiation of local versus national and national versus global is embodied in the presentation of post/modern Taiwanese art—including painting, fiction, film, theatre, and music—in both avant-garde and popular culture. Along with other Western cultural forms, various types of Western ballroom dance music (such as go-go, mambo, cha-cha, disco, tango, lambada, waltz, etc.) have been introduced one after another and made popular in Taiwan since the 1960s.

In what way did Redtop Arts shape/construct the hybrid cultural identities of Taiwan? How did Redtop Arts approach such cultural-political battlegrounds? What does this signify in the representation of history? Redtop Arts’ programs demonstrated the strong tensions within cultural-political dilemmas and the negotiation of localization and globalization. The Redtop Arts’ selection of the songs Baodao mambo 寶島曼波 [Formosa mambo] (1960s) and Muzaipu ye gan qu 墓仔埔也敢去 [Dare to go to the graveyard] (1965) were earlier examples of how global realities took local form. The former piece was in mambo style (as shown in the title) and the latter was a go-go style tune; both had Taiwanese lyrics. Borrowing specific melodic and rhythmic characteristics of various international dance music,

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211 “Local versus national” has a double meaning here. By and large, it refers to Taiwanese people’s struggle with national identity: Taiwan is not merely a part of Chinese culture, but is a politically independent nation-state with its particular life style and artistic tastes with a strong Chinese cultural basis as well as influences from other cultures. It also refers to the political struggle between national identities (Taiwanese as a whole) and local identities of ethnic groups on the island.

212 Very often, with this dance music, the cross-dressing performer invited an audience member to dance with her. As an audience member, I witnessed some older people get very excited about this type of program. Some of them (both older men and women) were eager to show their dance skills on stage with the performer as a dancing partner. In Taiwan, it is very common to see older people gather in local parks to practice and enjoy ballroom dance.
Taiwanese composers wrote large numbers of songs to local meet large market needs. Numerous examples of these types of songs are found in Redtop Arts’ programs, such as *Wuchi* 舞池 [Dance floor] (in cha-cha rhythm), *Aiqing de cha-cha* 愛情的恰恰 [Cha-cha of love], *Aiqing mambo* 愛情曼波 [Love mambo], and *Aiqing tango* 愛情探戈 [Love tango]—all newly-composed melodies with Taiwanese lyrics. Interestingly, while many of these dance songs had Taiwanese lyrics, their melodic and singing styles are closer to that of Japanese *enka*—more evidence of postcolonialism and globalization.213

In 1965, when the U.S. entered the Vietnamese War, Taiwan became a “supply depot” for R & R (rest and relaxation) for American solders. Along with the prosperity of bars and dance-halls, as well as the establishment of the AFNT (Armed Forced Network Taiwan, a radio station), American popular music (Cash Box Top 100 and Billboard Hot 100) was broadcast and referred to by Taiwanese as “hot music”—*remen yinyue* 熱門音樂. In 1966, *qingchun zhi xing* 青春之星 [Youthful stars], Taiwan’s first local radio program focusing on the most current Western popular songs, was put on the air. The importation and influence of Western popular music was unceasing. Redtop Arts’ adoptions of the “Overture” from Barbara Streisand’s 1994 concert, “La Copa de la Vida” by Ricky Martin, “Color of the Wind” from *Pocahontas*, and “I Will Follow Him” from *Sister Act* were examples of this type of global consumption.

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213 During Japanese rule, various Western music and dance styles were introduced in Taiwan via the Japanese.
I would like to focus on Redtop Arts’ representation of Marilyn Monroe as another example in examining how the local acts on the global product. In the 1950s, Hollywood and Japanese films were the major entertainment in Taiwan (Zeng 1998: 275). In 1958, *The Prince and the Showgirl* (1957), featuring Marilyn Monroe, was imported into Taiwan and made quite a stir among conservative society. Marilyn Monroe was perhaps the first Western female icon introduced as a sex symbol. To many Taiwanese, Monroe’s name has been synonymous with the idea that Western women are sexually open and free.

During my fieldwork research, I was surprised to find that almost every cross-dressing troupe had a Monroe skit (see Figure 3.10, a-d). Watching the cross-dressing performer sporting the racy white dress that Monroe wore in the *Seven Year Itch* (1955) and lip-synching her “River of No Return” was always amusing to the audience. This amusement resulted from the reverse exoticisation of race, gender, and class: a “live,” sexy, white woman from the most powerful nation in the world is singing and entertaining people in a developing country. Through multiple channels—globalized capitalism, mass media, theatrical representation, and memory—imagined fantasies of the white woman aroused audiences’ erotic emotions. Like a cliché, the program reached its climax when “Marilyn’s” dress was blown up to her waist—the audience never seemed to be tired of this trick. The sexual excitement surrounding cross-dressing performance was increased because the voyeur could view the “the most prohibited spot” of the cross-dresser’s body.

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214 In 1947, not long after WWII, the American film *Cover Girl* (1944) was imported to Taiwan, and attracted huge crowds of people (Huang 2005: 259).
In Redtop Arts’ impersonation skit of Monroe, three identical Monroes took the stage, fighting for the place of the “real” Monroe and for the spotlight (see Figure 3.11). The notion is clear: Marilyn Monroe is reproducible and is a commodity. As Fredric Jameson states, “all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum” (1988: 18). The
ideological fragmentation of Monroe in Taiwan’s consumer society is the product of late-capitalism and the post-industrial age. Through endless duplication and utilization of a global product, each consumer obtains pleasure from consumption and the benefits go to local capitalist administrators.

Figure 3.11 Redtop’s skit of Marilyn Monore. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)

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The Redtop show interlaced rich realistic (using original soundtracks) and fictional (e.g., recreated visual effects) elements through local-display on the cosmopolitan stage. More significantly, Redtop’s use of historical material within their consideration of commercialism and global accessibility poses questions of vital interest to present-day Taiwan as it looks toward the future. Redtop Arts’ performances appropriated the cultural materials/sources and gave them new appearances/meanings—new forms of local Taiwanese, Chinese, Japanese, and
Western culture—which converge into one modern form of Taiwanese culture.215 Pastiche is manifested in aesthetic notions of Redtop shows: the reconfiguration of time and space, and the nostalgia for the past and present.216 However, Redtop Arts was not simply a practice of “grotesque mimicry” as in Homi Bhabha’s discussion of colonial discourse; rather, it was a practice of “indigenization,” or more precisely, “Taiwanization.”

Redtop Arts’ hybrid programs illustrated Taiwanese people’s (un)conscious contestation against and negotiation with the notion of hybridity. Its resultant performing hybridities, pastiche, and syncretic aesthetics are representations of new cultural identity, as well as illustrative examples of this contradictory struggle. Because Taiwan’s colonial past, its current political competition with China, and its acceptance of the influence of Western capitalism and other global forces, it has been difficult for Taiwanese to search for national and cultural identity. In Redtop Arts’ processes of indigenization and globalization, traditionalization and modernization, “China” became a fountainhead of their cultural heritage and diasporic nostalgia, while “Japan” was a source of postcolonial nostalgia, and the “West” gave access to the domain of internationalization.

The negotiative cultural process of Redtop Arts performance can be viewed as a process of “global localization,” to borrow from Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (1996: 5), which illustrates underlying cultural-political-economic transformation in

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215 I will give a full account of this idea in my conclusion.
216 “Past” here refers to Taiwan’s rich Chinese cultural tradition and colonial past, while “present” means Taiwan’s view of cultural internationalism and of being a developed, modern globalized country.
Taiwan from the Taiwanese perspective. Its hybrid cultural identities contest and oppose the notion of a single, unbroken idea of national entity, and at the same time, embody the ideology of Taiwan as a nation-state through the display of hybrid cultural characteristics. Redtop Arts—an alternative art/commercial performance—was controversial for its hybrid cultural display, and was the epitome of a cultural-political battleground filled with conscious and unconscious hybridization, yet did not directly engage with political tensions. Redtop Arts’ entertaining nature provided an escape from “real” political disputes: it transformed a political battleground into a bustling cultural one, an easy digestible commodity, for their pragmatic strategy involved the consideration of culture, commercial, and art. However, no matter how optimistic and light-hearted Redtop’s stage performance was, its struggles with tradition and modern, local and global, nativism and nationalism are not to be ignored. In its very purpose as an entertainment genre, it transformed a tragic, repressed, colonial, and politically isolated past, into a joyful, vigorous, democratic, internationally active present—a fantastical, nostalgic interpretation of reality.
CHAPTER IV
CREATING DREAM WOMEN ONSTAGE

In the previous chapter, I have analyzed Redtop programs from ethnomusicological viewpoint; in this chapter, I explore Redtop’s representation/recreation of the female image in light of gender studies. As Sue-Ellen Case points out, “Through the drag role, one can perceive how social constructs are inscribed on the body” (1984: 24). To begin, I will introduce two of Redtop Arts’ skits. These two skits were particularly designed to reveal the process of cross-dressing performance. The first, called “The Empress Dowager Cixi,” depicts the influential Empress Dowager of the Qing dynasty, Cixi 慈禧, and her favorite private servant, Xiao Lizi 小李子, a eunuch. The skit first portrayed the once-powerful Cixi’s lonely, dreary mindset in her old age with the accompaniment of Xiao Lizi. At one point in the performance, both actors, one portraying the Empress Dowager and the other the eunuch, then change their costumes on stage. They change their makeup, wigs, and shoes, then switching genders. When they pull off each other’s first costumes and explore their second costumes (the Empress Dowager now wears a tuxedo, and the eunuch wears a tight evening gown), they exhibit themselves with gender-coded movements to make a sharp contrast between the two opposite gender roles they play. The second skit, entitled “My Own Road,” features a lone ballet dancer first depicted as a man, standing in front of a mirror on the left side of the stage. While he applies makeup, puts on a bra, earrings, a wig, and slips into a full-
length gown, a slide show is projected center stage, presenting the dancer’s routine training including makeup application and rehearsing. Bipolar gender notions and self-dramatization are clearly articulated in this process. Such on-stage alternation of gender codes gives insight into the denaturalization of the body and the deconstruction of gender, it also displays Taiwanese society’s erasure of the possibility of gender diversity.

Questions that arise from these skits include: “Who constructed these gendered codes?” and “How are power relations embedded in the modeling of female roles within the social frameworks of gender and sexuality?” In the past, women who were historically documented were almost always represented by men who had the power to write, speak, and make judgments. Patriarchal society was a defining element resulting in inequalities between male and female sex and gender roles. Women, as individuals, were subjected to the given society’s views on sexuality. That is, they were to be the object of male desire following hetero-ideological presumptions of gender behavior and norms. Women’s images in traditional Chinese literature and theatre are often built upon women’s sexual availability to male subjects under the premise of patriarchal hegemony.217 I further suggest that sexual availability (of women to men) is a dominant factor involved in the production and organization of the modeling of female roles. Also, women’s sexual availability is closely related to their dictated gender roles, cultural practices, and social position in the Chinese

217 The contemporary Chinese scholar Kang Zhengguo states that classical Chinese poetry which portrays women can be categorized into two major types in accordance with men’s social and sexual requisitions: fèng sāo 風騷 [virtuous] and yàn qīng 艳情 [amorous] (1998). I will discuss Kang’s assertaion later in this chapter.
patriarchal system. In Redtop Arts’ programs, Taiwan’s gender culture was embodied through concrete characteristics (which are very often recognizable personas) to represent a particular integral socio-cultural theme.

The significance of *fanchuan show* in Taiwan is its embodiment of Taiwan’s gender culture and ideology through the reproduction/recreation of women’s images. While focusing on gender issues, in this chapter I discuss the hybrid formation of gender presentation in Redtop’s programs. I employ the interdisciplinary analyses of structuralism and feminism (Foucault 1986; Freedman 1988; Butler 1990; Case 1990; Russo 1995; Joseph 1997; Zhang 1998), associating those theories with culturally-specific socio-political contexts and concrete empirical situations of my inquiry to seek out explanations for Redtop’s representation of women. My data in this chapter are mostly based on Redtop’s programs, but I also include information from other *fanchuan show* troupes. This chapter is divided into three sections: in “Creating Cultural and Sexual Heterotopias,” I address Michel Foucault’s notion of heterotopias, which often has been applied by Taiwanese scholars in studies of cross-dressing performance and queer culture in Taiwan. In “Allegorical Masquerade and Reflective Mimicry,” I develop my own models of analysis based on Jacques Lacan’s notion of the Symbolic, Carole-Anne Tyler’s female masquerade and gender mimicry, and Steven Shaviro’s allegorical body. In “Male Cross-Dressing and Its Representation of Women,” I interpret Redtop’s program based on these analytical models.
Creating Cultural and Sexual Heterotopias

_Fanchuan show_, as a cultural and sexual fantasy, is no doubt troubling and problematic, even though in Redtop’s case, it is not intended to challenge social systems of gender/sex. Based on socially constructed gender codes, a cross-dressing performer disguises his “original” gender characteristics to assume those of the opposite sex. As pointed out in the Introduction Chapter, in Redtop, the female gender specialist is called the “nü [female] dancer,” and the male gender specialist is called the “nan [male] dancer.” The controversial nature and virtue of the nü dancer has drawn the most attention, but at the same time it has intrigued critics and socio-analysts for an ambiguous, “unnatural” performance of gender. On the one hand, _fanchuan show_ continuously repeats symbolic codes of hyper-femininity, which illustrates that gender notions do not naturally exist, but are socially constructed. On the other hand, changing male and female costumes and switching gender roles on stage under the public eye, deconstructs the formation of gender identity and partially subverts gender cognition.

Redtop’s reproduction of female images helps to explain the discourse of femininity and its relation to hierarchical society.²¹⁸ Redtop’s “gender code” and “gender ideology,” including attire, movements, and image presentation, reflected traditional notions of women’s social roles. In nearly twenty skits, women in different life stages, from different historical periods, and of different nationalities were depicted. Girls in love, brides, wives, pregnant women, young mothers, and old

²¹⁸ In the show, although both genders are depicted in the program, the focus is almost exclusively on the female role. Male-role players do acrobatics, accompaniment, or background scenes.
mothers are all stereotypical images easily recognizable within a woman’s life cycle in Taiwanese culture. Their characteristics were vividly portrayed by many Redtop stage characters: shyness, delicateness, passivity, gentleness, softness, elegance, passion, sexiness, wildness, and virago. The nationalities represented included Taiwanese, Chinese, Japanese, and stereotypical Westerners. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, each skit was accompanied by songs and music that depicted appropriate historical periods and personas.

Recent studies of queer culture, modern singing halls (Karaoke), and male cross dressing performances in Taiwan have utilized Foucault’s notion of heterotopia:

The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place, several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible…they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory…Or else, on the contrary their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. The latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner. (1986: 25, 27)

My operative understanding of heterotopia is particularly informed by Chang Aizhu (2000: 142) and Luo Chingyao (2005: 48-52). Chang notes that under the panoptical concept of the heterosexual apparatus, Chinese male cross-dressing theatre can be viewed as a heterotopia, where homophilia and gender transgression were temporarily permitted and legitimatized. In his study of queer culture in Taiwan, Luo explains how certain popular music can help to form an imagined queer community. By
constructing what he calls a “heterotopia of sexual dissent,” Luo highlights the distinguishing features of drag and camp in Taiwanese queer culture (2005: 51-52).

In *fanchuan show*, constructed women’s images from different space-times were presented like pictures on “trotting horse lamps,” creating a romanticized fantasy that fulfilled heterocentrist voyeurism. Redtop’s performance, in one real place in one single evening, provided numerous sites. These sites “have a function,” as Foucault explained above, that is to unfold “between two extreme poles.” In other words, under the force of heterosexual culture, *fanchuan* artists “create a space of illusion” in which various types of women, historical and legendary, western and eastern, ancient and modern, are juxtaposed in a single physical place and inscribed onto, “still more illusory” male bodies. Yet, paradoxically, within theatrical myth, spatiality, and darkness, *fanchuan show* also “create a space that is other, another real space,”—using Foucault’s description again—it communicates the undertone of, in Luo’s words, a “heterotopia of sexual dissent”—creating, transforming, and projecting homosexual fantasy.

Does the popularity of Redtop suggest that modern Taiwanese culture is reflected on stage where homophobia and homophilia ambivalently coexist? Or is it only under the “protection” of theatrical performance that these pendulous gender roles can possibly temporarily release/escape from heterosexual hegemony? At this stage, I prefer to keep these questions open-ended, and I will move on to discuss a

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219 Like a merry-go-round, a trotting horse lamp is a lantern adored with a revolving circle of paper painted with scenes from famous stories.
possible method of categorization for Redtop’s representation/recreation of female
images and their meanings.

**Allegorical Masquerade and Reflective Mimicry**

In her study of Lacan’s notion of sex, Lin Yu-ling discusses Lacan’s notion of
the “Phallus as a privileged signifier,” by which, according to Lin, Lacan meant that
the Symbolic (i.e., the law of the Father) “can effectively establish sexual
difference/division and determine a hierarchized and differentiated specular relation”
(Lacan 1977: 1-7; Lin 1997: 244). Lin further elaborates that in a patriarchal system,
woman, who “reflects man’s having (a phallus),” is subjected to domination, and is
forced to shape herself to benefit the privileged—pandering to patriarchal interests
(Lin 1997: 245). Here, I need to point out that male cross-dressing performers, in
contrast, because of having phalluses, know what types of women men would like,
and how a woman should attract and please men. Throughout Chinese history, men
created compulsory doctrines, which shaped and controlled women’s identity. Men
constructed female images that influenced women’s sense of self and became a
standard against which women judged themselves. In accordance with patriarchal
prescriptions, women rarely found equal positions with men. Redtop, as professional
producers of gender performance, claimed that “the most beautiful Asian woman is
here, played by a man,” i.e., only a man can create the perfect woman. Within
patriarchal logic, Redtop’s hyper-femininity thereby reveals that women constructed by
men are merely symbols and fantasies.
From a different point of entrance than Lacan’s general critique of the phallus as the Symbolic, Carole-Anne Tyler’s concepts of female masquerade and female mimicry (1989) present a useful particular viewpoint from which to begin an analysis of male cross-dressing performance. Tyler draws distinctions between female masquerade and female mimicry. According to her, female masquerade indicates women’s passive/unconscious flaunting of culturally determined images (signifiers) formed by patriarchal culture, while mimicry refers to the ironic flouting of those signifiers by either females or males. Female mimicry is the “conscious masking (mimicry) the masquerade of (woman’s) nature as nature” (ibid.: 21-22). Scrutinizing fanchuan show by using the models of female masquerade and mimicry, I can suggest that there are clear connections between fanchuan show and Tyler’s concepts. For example, like female masquerade/mimicry, fanchuan yiren “produce” female images through a performance of “unnatural act”: embodying, appropriating, or denaturalizing the patriarchal ideology on womanliness. However, in Tyler’s theory, consciousness/unconsciousness and flaunting/flouting are keys to the distinction between masquerade and mimicry. Yet, male cross-dressing performances always include conscious masking (distinguished from female masquerade) and their variations other than the dualistic flaunting/flouting in female masquerade/mimicry.

For a more sophisticated understanding of fanchuan show, I propose that its gender performance can be generally divided into four distinguished types: hyper-femininity, mythical characters, grotesque androgyny, and lifelike femininity, with the first as the dominant type and the latter three as interludes and comic relief. Here,
Tyler’s remarks can be helpful in analyzing two of the *fanchuan show*’s types comparatively: hyper-femininity is comparable to female masquerade because of its characteristic “flaunting” (though in *fanchuan* performances, this is self-conscious), and parody is comparable to mimicry in its “flouting.”

Moving toward a further complex picture, I now would like to modify and expand Tyler’s notion on masquerade and mimicry by proposing the term “allegorical masquerade,” which characterizes the first two types of gender performance in *fanchuan show*: the presentation of hyper-femininity and mythical characters, and the term “reflective mimicry,” which characterizes the latter two types of gender performance in *fanchuan show*: the presentation of grotesque androgyny and lifelike femininity.

Steven Shaviro defines allegory as follows:

…allegory always implies the loss or death of its object. An allegory is not a representation, but an overt materialization of the unbridgeable distance that representation seeks to cover over and efface... Allegory is then not just a mode of depiction, but an active means of subversive transformation. (1993: 86, 7)

In what I call “allegorical masquerade,” the presentation of both hyper-femininity and mythical characters includes the depiction of figures that are illusory or unreal. One important point to clarify here is that the hyper-femininity performativity should not simply be viewed as representing normative womanliness as a masquerade. Rather, it presents (and creates) the prototype of womanliness constructed by patriarchal ideology. This non-existent dream woman, as a cultural signifier, aims to make a real woman feel ashamed of her insufficient femininity and, ironically, to envy the
simulacrum (Volpp 1996: 145). This dream woman is a hybrid creature whose beauty surpasses that of a real woman; this may explain why, in Chinese literature, a skillful actor’s feminine charm is perceived as being more charming than that of an actress. Accordingly, allegorical masquerade emphasizes non-corporeality and non-existentiality, which distinguishes it from the performative nature of female masquerade and reflective mimicry.220

By “reflective mimicry,” I refer to the male cross-dressing performer’s conscious imitation of concrete female subjectivity, emphasizing its corporeality and existentiality, including grotesque androgyny and lifelike femininity (not necessarily flouting).221

For comparative purpose, in Table 4.1, I attempt to present Lacan’s notion of the Symbolic, Tyler’s female masquerade and female mimicry, Shaviro’s allegorical body, and my theoretical interpretation of Taiwan’s modern male cross-dressing show in a diagram.

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220 Chao Yanning’s article “Sex, Sexuality, and Body Construction—Forming the Body Aesthetics of Taiwanese Lesbians” (1997) helped inspire my conceptual development here.
221 Examples of these performative types will be given and discussed in the following section.
Table 4.1 Cultural signifiers of womanliness/femininity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural signifiers of womanliness/femininity</th>
<th>Constructed by patriarchal ideology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female masquerade</strong></td>
<td>Male cross-dressing allegorical masquerade (incl.: hyper-femininity &amp; mythical characters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phallus envy</td>
<td>Have a phallus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconsciously assume and internalize the signifiers</td>
<td>Continuous conscious masking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embody the ideology</td>
<td>Denaturalize the ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flaunt the signifiers</td>
<td>flaunting and creating → assume the prototype of the signifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppressed gender identity</td>
<td>visually entertaining &amp; potentially subversive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female mimicry</strong></td>
<td>Male cross-dressing reflective mimicry (incl.: grotesque androgyny and lifelike femininity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reveal phallus envy</td>
<td>Have a phallus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscious masking (mimicry) of female masquerade</td>
<td>Conscious masking (mimicry) of female masquerade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate the ideology ironically</td>
<td>Appropriate the ideology, ironically or not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flout female masquerade</td>
<td>May or may not flout female masquerade → create a “hierarchized and differentiated specular relation” with female masquerade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potentially playful</td>
<td>playful or sentimental style</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the top of the diagram, underlined by Lacan’s notion of “Phallus as a privileged signifier,” I put “Cultural signifiers of womanliness/femininity,” which means that female images in both “female masquerade/mimicry” and “male cross-dressing allegorical masquerade/reflective mimicry” are constructed based on patriarchal ideology. There are two columns side by side in the diagram: the left one, consisting of “female masquerade” and “female mimicry,” is based on Tyler’s notion. The right one, consisting of “male cross-dressing allegorical masquerade” and “male cross-dressing reflective mimicry,” is my expansion of Tyler’s concept. For comparative purpose, under each of these four subtitles, I have listed their corresponding characteristics. By juxtaposition these characteristics, it becomes clear...
that male cross-dressing, because of having phalluses, is a consciously masking of female images. In the category of “allegorical masquerade,” male cross-dressing performers assume the origin of prototype by denaturalizing the patriarchal ideology of gender, and flaunting and creating the signifiers. As for the category of “reflective mimicry,” male cross-dressing performers create a “hierarchized and differentiated specular relation” (using Lin’s words) with female masquerade by appropriating the patriarchal ideology, and imitating (may or may not flout) “female masquerade.”

Based on the categorization I suggest in this section, in the following section, I will interpret fanchuan show’s various types of female role modeling and performativity in their imposed historical and cultural contexts, focusing on sex/gender meanings.

Male Cross-Dressing and Its Representation of Women

What purpose do plays and stories that take place in the distant past serve for today’s audiences? How do we account for this “united female dreamland” in a cultural context? How is it constructed? What makes the basic structure of the narrative itself? What is the particular conjunction between male cross-dressing and its representation of women roles? Butler asserts that: “gender has cultural survival as its end. It is accompanied by social sanctions and taboos” (1990: 139-141). Fanchuan show, as a popular entertainment genre, acts out the collective memory and public imagination of femininity and sexuality in a changing society from ancient to the

222 I will further discuss these categories in more details in the following section by giving real examples selected from fanchuan show programs.
modern times. Extending from my previous discussion of allegorical masquerade and reflective mimicry, below, I will offer detailed descriptions on these four conceptual terms/types of women’s images as mentioned earlier:223

**Allegorical masquerade**
1. Hyper-femininity: the imagined beauty and the “artistic stunner”
2. Mythical characters: the powerful and seductive “Other”

**Reflective mimicry**
3. Grotesque androgyny: the distasteful and desexualized woman
4. Lifelike femininity: the decent and virtuous woman

### Hyper-Femininity: The Imagined Beauty and the “Artistic Stunner”

On stage, a *fanchuan yiren* appears in a form-fitting body suit, walking with his/her legs close together, shoulders relaxed, and arms swaying slightly and gliding. Moving over gaze closer, we notice the way the performer holds his hands—fingers outstretched, curving upwards, moving gracefully to make his hands appear long and delicate—all these small details reinforcing the sexual deception that is being performed. This hyper-femininity is depicted in *China News*’ reports on Redtop’s performance:

She’s holding the microphone delicately, signing gently as if she were whispering the words in her lover’s ear. Her long hair is tied carefully against the back of her head, although a few long strands have been left to roam free and frame her flawless face. Moving slowly around the stage, her hips sway gently in the *qipao* [Traditional Chinese female gown] that clings to her curvaceous figure…. Chen Hong-lien224 knocks ‘em dead with his/her rendition of “Evening Primrose,”… (Wester & Yang 1995: 2, June 16)

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223 There is no clear distinction between each of these types. Sometimes, a performer may switch from one type to the other for dramatic effect.

224 Redtop’s leading star Chen Hong-lien is praised as “the top Asian beauty” by various media.
In the media and in various promotional material, phrases such as “angel’s face with devil’s figure,” “golden ratio,” “the most beautiful long legs in Taiwan,” are usually associated with females, but are now boastfully assumed by men.

This type of fanchuan performance is in fact largely derived from the theatrical ideology of Peking opera, during which the traditional female impersonator emphasizes the recreation, rather than a representation, of femininity. As Mei Lanfang’s son Mei Shaowu 梅紹武 writes:

Mei Lanfang [did] not intend to imitate women. Rather, he [aimed] to discover and reproduce the rhythm of women’s movements and feelings: the essential characteristics of elegance, charm, animation, tenderness, and power of will, etc… He [played] the male dan only to express the female essence of elegance, deep emotion, tenderness, and rhythm of power. (Wu, Huang, and Mei 1984: 187)

Former Redtop member Zhou Xiang makes a remark that is in keeping with this performance ideology of the male dan. Zhou points out that what the fanchuan yiren attempts to do is to act out extreme femininity, but not the femininity of the real woman existing in the real world. In other words, she is a stunning dream imagined and created by men. According to Dr. Tsai, Redtop’s representations of women function neither to displace fashion nor to imitate a particular female idol (such as Madonna). Although cross-dressing is fake and delusory, the ultimate goal of the performer is to pass for a genuine woman.

225 If one’s lower-body length (from foot bottom to belly button) accounts for 0.618 of one’s height, it is considered the “perfect stature.”
226 Referring to Redtop star Hong Honghai, who plays both male and female roles.
227 Personal interview, April 22, 2005.
I suggest that the Chinese concepts of *se* 色 [appearance, charm] and *yi* 艺 [art, talent] could provide a deeper reading of hyper-femininity performance. In Chinese traditional theatre, *se* includes face and body appearance, as well as charming movements, while *yi* refers to artistic performance skills such as dancing, acting, poetizing, singing, and/or playing instruments. In Chinese literature and traditional theatre, a “stunner” (usually an actress, male *dan*, or courtesan) is often depicted as being endowed with both beauty and talent; he or she is praised as “possessing both appearance (*se*) and skill (*yi*), so-called *se yi shuang jue* 色藝雙絕 [an incomparable beauty and talent].”

Reviewing classical Chinese literature, one may find that in the past, an “artistic stunner” with hyper-femininity, often admired by literati, was capable of providing excellent entertainment for men, visually, spiritually, and often sexually. Women’s talents in feudal society were merely decorative—her main objective was to use her beauty/appearance to sexually attract men and serve them. A woman’s beauty and talent might bring her a good fortune, but they could also transform her into a plaything for rich men.

In *fanchuan* show, a dream-like stunner is the most representative type of female figure. While the media and the general public are mostly impressed and attracted by their *se*, some *fanchuan* yiren have enthusiastically put efforts into their dancing and acting skills to express their passion for performance and artistry. Together with charming facial expressions, a seductive sexual manner, and amorous glances, they transform themselves into hot Latin dancers, exotic Japanese ladies dressed in

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228 Regardless of his/her role type, a traditional opera performer must possess the skills of singing, recitation, acting, and dance/acrobatics 唱唸作打 in order to play the part of dramatic personae.
One of the most popular skits is *Xiaosa zou yihui* [To go with an easy grace] performed by Liu Hongji, who performed this skit in the Universal Show Queen competition held in Honolulu in 1998, and won second place and the prize for the most talented performer. With a Chinese pop song of the same title in the background, Lui performed a ribbon dance in a newly-designed costume that mixed Chinese and Thai cultural symbols, traditional and modern, as well as Eastern and Western on styles. This stunner as a sexual fantasy, constructed by patriarchy, only exists on stage and outside of a specific time frame or culture (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Redtop’s *Xiaosa zou yihui*. Liu Hongji’s ribbon dance aims to demonstrate his excellent charm and artistic skill. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)

In traditional Chinese literature, *youwu* [a stunner, siren], refers to an extremely beautiful and talented or smart woman, but it also carries the connotation of someone who causes disasters (Kang 1998: 42). An intriguing point is that a
stunner is sometimes linked with yao 妖 [demon, evil] in Chinese classical writing. As the Tang poet Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779~831) wrote in his novel Yingying Zhuan 鶯鶯傳 [The biography of Yingying], “For those born as stunners/sirens, if not making trouble [yao] for themselves, will cause disaster to others” 大凡天之所命尤物也，不妖其身，必妖於人. Here, Yuan uses yao as a verb to indicate the cause of disaster by a beauty.

Redtop’s adaptation of the famous Chinese novel Jin ping mei 金瓶梅 [The plum in the golden vase] articulates the Chinese concept of youwu. The heroine—the beautiful, seductive persona Pan Jinlian 潘金蓮—is often called a yinfu 淫婦 [nymphomaniac] or yaofu 妖婦 [evil seductive woman] for her acts of adultery and sexual aggression. Pan has the power to manage her own (love) affairs; she is able to make her own decisions. At the end of the story, the sexually liberated Pan is killed by her brother-in-law Wu Song, whom she truly desires, as punishment and revenge for his brother’s death (Figure 4.2). Pan’s story exemplifies that women's sexual liberation and their awakening of sexual sensitivity are the greatest threat to the male world and to feudal ethical norms. As Redtop’s program notes state: “Her [Pan Jinlian’s] death offers her a good opportunity to expiate her sins and maybe also to get rid of her shackles!”

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229 I will give an extensive discuss on the Chinese concept of yao in the next subsection.
230 For the original Chinese text, see http://www.ndnc.gov.cn/datalib/2003/Literature/DL/DL-459118 (viewed on May 18, 2007).
231 The story of Pan Jinlian is well-known and popular in China and Taiwan. It has been reproduced numerous times in traditional Peking opera, movies, and television dramas.
In Redtop’s rendition, after her death, Pan was lifted by four men signifying the force of destiny and she vanished into a big black cape/shadow representing fate. These men wore tight dancing suits, with white masks and bear feet, dancing in the anti-traditional style of Martha Graham to represent the timeless force of destiny, while Pan and other major personas articulated Peking opera movements in Chinese traditional theatrical clothes to indicate the time and locus of the story (though fictitious). Through the ideology of nihilism, Pan is merely a reconstructed fictitious character, and her life is a phantasmagoria. The death and non-existentiality of the sexually aggressive woman is again rendered to create a “satisfactory” ending to patriarchy, and the femephobia is again fulfilled.

Zhou Xiang makes it clear that in traditional theatre, the male dan emphasizes yi rather then se, while in fanchuan show the opposite occurs. One obvious example is that in traditional theatre, a sixty-year old male dan may still be able to impersonate a
teenage girl and successfully transform himself into a young woman. Through strictly encoded movements and years of training, a skillful female impersonator can transcend his age and appearance to create an illusionary female image onstage. In contrast, in fanchuan show, youth and appearance are very important requirements for female impersonators. One reason for this is that the method of putting on make-up for fanchuan yiren is unlike traditional face painting in Peking opera, which is almost like a mask, concealing flaws and winkle. Moreover, for some male cross-dressing performers who receive little or no systematic training like what Redtop provided for their members, and therefore cannot do well on yi, thus have to play the coquette in order to catch the audience’s eye.

This is often the case with many other fanchuan show, in which eroticism is their major focus. While Redtop emphasized the importance of both se and yi and claimed not to go beyond sexy and passionate expression, it is not uncommon for other troupes’ programs convey sexual implications, or even commercial pornography. The line between sexy and erotic is often unclear, though it may be distinguished by facial expression, body exposure, and type of physical movement. Figure 4.3 illustrates a fanchuan program that involves eroticism. In such performances, a fanchuan yiren sends silent messages through bewitching eye movement and flirtatious behavior. They ogle at the audience, and their body shape makes an exaggerated “S” when they walk, swinging their hips. Characters like powerful mistresses, dissolute women, licentious women, singers, and prostitutes are often portrayed in these kinds of shows.
The representation of licentious women is a negotiation between social taboo and fantasy. As the Redtop Arts’ deputy-leader Sheng Honglong points out:

If our programs were all about Chinese or Taiwanese traditional stuff, who would be interested? The audience would be limited. So, we have to follow the trends. But at the same time, we can’t be too fashionable. We don’t perform styles like Spice Girls and Madonna. The Redtop Arts did not allow these types of programs [referring to body exposure]. In fact, the Redtop Arts were very strict in selecting programs. However, in the government’s opinion, we were still overdoing it. They put a label on us: *shangfeng baisu* [injurious to society’s morals]. What could we do?²³²

No matter how they differentiate between sexy and pornographic, there is no doubt that *fanchuan show*’s inclusion of homoeroticism in their shows provides subversive

²³² Personal interview on May 18, 2005.
pleasure and is one of the major reasons for social criticism and government censorship.

Erotic male cross-dressing performance invites the audience to the utopia of sexual liberation and gender transgression; the regulation of gender and desire is temporarily hindered. The resulting pleasure leads to a questioning of heterosexuality as a legitimate standard sexual behavior. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s interpretation of Marcel Proust’s writings on sexuality provide insight into the pleasure of gender transgression: “We are statistically or molarily heterosexual, but personally homosexual, without knowing it or being fully aware of it, and finally we are transsexual in an elemental, molecular sense” (1983: 70).

Before moving on to discuss the next category of Redtop’s representation of female images, I would like to refer to contemporary scholar Kang Zhengguo’s study of female characters in traditional Chinese poems, for it overlaps with some of my analytical thinking. Kang asserts that classical Chinese poetry that portrays women can be categorized into two major types in accordance with men’s social and sexual requisitions: *feng sao* 風騷 [virtuous] and *yan qing* 艳情 [amorous] (1988: 3-4, 24-51, 147-161). The poems of the *feng sao* type advocate the virtues of “decent” women, for the purposes of maintaining moral and social decency. Poems of the *yan qing* type are non-moralistic, flowery, and sexy, for the purposes of fulfilling men’s desire of love and sex.

Kang points out that in traditional Chinese society, men’s physical and psychological requisitions for erotic/sexual desire have been relegated to the
subconscious state. Traditional female virtues (such as chastity and sexual restraint), are in conflict with men’s free requisition of sexual desire. This complexity has thus resulted in two major types of female images that are represented in classic Chinese poetry: the moral type (so-called ideal wife and/or mother) and the amusement type (using se and yi to serve men). In the patriarchal society both types exist to exemplify men’s requisition of women. These two types grossly correspond to my categorization of female images/types in fanchuan show as lifelike femininity (which I will discuss later) and hyper-femininity (discussed here). In the following subsection, I will move on to discuss the second type of women’s images under the category “allegorical masquerade,” that is, ‘mythical characters.’

**Mythical Characters: The Powerful and Seductive “Other”**

In this type, figures such as ghosts, demons, and deities from well-known legends or novels are depicted in fanchuan show. These supernatural characters may be extremely beautiful, fearful, or a combination of the two, with super powers that are not under human control (or more precisely, male control). I would like to begin my analysis by discussing the Chinese word “yao” 妖 [demon, evil] to link together Chinese concepts of women, male cross-dressing, androgyny, and homosexuals. The word yao has several connotations: evil, fraudulent, pretty, seductive, and coquettish. Further, yao is often combined with other Chinese characters to depict women who are beautiful and seductive. Each of these words connotes “evil” to a greater or lesser degree: yaojing 妖精 [evil spirit; coquette; alluring woman], yaoji 妖姬 [seductive
woman], *yaomei* 妖媚 [seductive], *yaoyan* 妖豔 [pretty and coquettish], *yaoyie* 妖冶 [pretty and indecent], and *yaorao* 妖嬈 / *yaojiao* 妖嬌 [enchanting, fascinating].

In one popular Redtop skit, *Qiannü youhun* 倩女幽魂 [Beautiful ghost], a favorite ghost story from a collection of short novels called *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異 [Collections of bizarre stories] (written in 1680 by Pu Songling 蒲松齡 [1640-1715])\(^{233}\) depicts battle and love between men, ghosts, and *yao*. On stage, the powerful wicked tree spirit *Lao Lao* 姥姥 (a *yao*), symbolizes a male tree spirit and takes the form of an old woman, and thus is androgynous. S/he uses his/her powerful witchcraft to force the beautiful ghost Nie Xiaoqian 聶小倩 to kill young men and absorb their *yang* spirits (the *yin-yang* concept) for s/he. Nie’s persona is complex; she is weak, victimized, and controlled (by Lao Lao), yet she is sexually active and aggressive. Her identity as a ghost allows her to have both a virginal appearance and display unconventional/ transgressive behaviors. The figure of Nie could be viewed as the embodiment of male physical and psychological requisition for erotic sexual desire, which was suppressed and transformed into the subconscious due to society’s advocacy of “moral values.” In other words, only when Nie is dead, she is rationalized and “allowed” to take sexual initiatives. An innocent young man, Ning Caichen 甯采臣, later realizes that Nie Xiaoqian is a ghost, but still falls in love with her and tries to help her to be rid of Lao’s control. Lao, who is impersonated by a *nan*

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\(^{233}\) This story has been reproduced numerous times on television (melodrama) and films in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The 1987 version by a Hong Kong film producer was considered the most classic rendition, and Redtop rearranged it into another popular dance-drama.
dancer who usually does not do cross-dressing performance,\textsuperscript{234} wears a traditional red female undergarment with mysterious black tulle to deliver his transgendered character. His dance/martial art movements are masculine and fierce. Ning Caichen wears a white Chinese goliard robe to imply his innocence and rightfulness, while Nie Xiaoqian wears white (and later pink)\textsuperscript{235} gossamer with long sleeves to express her frailness, unworldliness, ethereality, and non-existentiality. Figure 4.4 shows the dance-drama \textit{Beautiful Ghost}, reproduced by post-Redtop members who formed the troupe New Century Cross-Dressing Beauty Show.

Figure 4.4 The dance-drama \textit{Beautiful Ghost} presented by the New Century. From left to right: Lao Lao, Ning Caichen, Nie Xiaoqian.

Each figure (as signifiers), Lao, Ning, and Nie, conveys complex denotations and connotations: androgyny (demon, myth, not-man-not-woman, evil), man (living,

\textsuperscript{234} Refers to male back-up dancers for female impersonators.
\textsuperscript{235} After developing a sexual relationship with Ning, Nie wears pink to imply her womanliness.
unmasked, existentiality, bravery), and woman (death, myth, non-existentiality, concealment, the Other). The background music to the dance-drama is the original movie soundtrack sung by Leslie Cheung (1956-2003), a bisexual artist from Hong Kong, who played the role of Ning Caichen in the 1987 Hong Kong film of the same title. Cheung is internationally recognized for his cross-dressing performance in another film, *Farwell My Concubine* (1993). The skit creates a bizarre, hybrid atmosphere, akin to entering a heterotopia in which life, death, *yin*, *yang*, androgyny, demon, human, homosexuals, heterosexuals, male cross-dressing, present, and past, mingle and are juxtaposed. In the dance-drama, only Ning is depicted as “normal” and licit, in contrast to Lao and Nie, Ning’s character functions as a symbolic mirror reflecting the legitimacy and supreme position of man.

Return to the word *yao* at a deeper level, there is another combined term, *fuyao*服妖 [“dressing freakishly”], found in historical writings, that indicates male cross-dressing behavior. For example, the *Jinshu* 晉書 [the History of the Jin dynasty (265-420)] (written in 646 A.D.) notes that the handsome minister He Yan 何晏 (190-249), who was married to the princess of Wei, loved to wear female clothes (*fuyao*尚書何 晏好服婦人之服). He was later killed by his rival during a fight for power and

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236 Leslie Cheung is a well-known Hong Kong singer and movie star. In the early 1990s, the media revealed that he was a homosexual having intimate relationship with Mr. Tang Hede. However, he identified himself as bisexual in a 2001 magazine interview. Cheung gives the public impression of androgyny, as Tommy Tse puts: “Leslie Cheung – on the stage, on the screen, in our remembrance – he is the soul of fe/male bodies, completely, and forever” (2005: 10).

237 Redtop also rearranged this story into another dance skit.
hegemony at the Kingdom Wei (220-265) in the late Three Kingdom Period. The poet Fu Xuan 傅玄 (217-278) imputed He’s death to his fuyao behavior:

…that is why there is a national system of proper clothes for upper and lower, inside and outside... If one does not follow this rule, it means the law of the land has failed. If one dresses freakishly, he/she will be destroyed consequently… He Yan wore female clothes, and this caused his family to be ruined.238

…夫衣裳之制所以定上下，殊內外也。… 若內外不殊，王制失敗，服妖既作，身隨之亡…何晏服婦人之服，亦亡其家其咎均也。

Throughout Chinese history, cross-dressers, androgyny, eunuchs, and homosexuals were linked with the word renyao 人妖 [“human freak,” gender bender].239 The earliest usage of renyao appeared in chapter forty five of the “Biography of Cui Huijing” 崔慧景傳 in Nanshi 南史 [The History of Nan dynasty (420-589 AD)] written by Li Yianshou 李延壽 in the Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.):

A lady, Lou Cheng from Dongyang240 of the Southern Qi [479-502 AD], cross-dressed to disguise herself as a man… [Her original sex] was revealed when she became an official in Yan City. [As a result], the emperor Ming ordered her to return to her hometown, that’s when she started wearing women’s clothes. [Lou] sighed: “How regrettable that with my capacity, I have to return to live as an old lady.” Other officials spoke of [Lou’s behavior]: “this is called renyao. Yin turns into yang, which is not allowed.”

238 The original Chinese texts come from Wikisource Website: http://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/%E6%99%89%E6%9B%B8/%E5%8D%B7027 (viewed on May 6, 2007)
239 Hung Daoming’s study traces historically the usage of the stigmatic terms for homosexuals (2000: 111-129).
240 In the Zhejiang Province.
Later in some famous novels, the term *renyao* was commonly used, but mostly limited in reference to non-performing cross-dressing men. For example, *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異 [Collections of bizarre stories] (1680) and the well-known collection of short stories *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言 [Eternal advice],²⁴² depict stories of men cross-dress to seduce maidens. In the middle part of the Chapter Ten in *Xingshi Hengyan*, the author Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) comments on male disguising themselves as females:

> The Ministry of Penalty considers that *renyao* to be harmful to society’s morals. The law does not specify [such behavior]. [I suggest] to set up a severe punishment by dismembering [*renyao*’s] bodies. [We] should not wait for any longer.

²⁴² Written between the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century.

Again here, the discriminative word *yao* was closely related to male cross-dressing behavior, which was often associated with crime and was condemned by moralists.

Nowadays, the term *renyao*, commonly used for TS in Thailand, still carries the traditional connotation of human freak, and is perhaps the most humiliating term for


²⁴³ The original Chinese texts are retrieved from http://www.millionbook.net/gd/f/fengmenglong/xshy/010.htm (viewed on October 16, 2006).
homosexuals and *fanchuan yiren*. In 1971, on *People Daily News* 大眾日報, a report uses the term *renyao* to indicate homosexual behavior:

In the New Park (in Taipei), the problem of *renyao* is again getting more and more serious. Every evening, you often see some *renyao* who wear “not this, not that” being active near the museum and musical stage. They make eyes when they see others and act out some behaviors that are “not man, not woman.” This is really disgusting. As the story goes, for those who have “the passions of the cut sleeve,” this is the place where sexual trade offs take place…. The police should completely cure such shady morbidity…. (August 14, 1971, quoted in Hung 2000: 118)

In an autobiography entitled *Yaojiao Nanzi* 妖嬌男子 [enchanting man] written by a former Redtop member known as Penghu Sao 澎湖嫂, the author expresses his abomination toward the term *renyao* under the chapter “Please Don’t Call Me *Renyao*”:

When I go to the show, I often see written on the poster “the peerless *yaoji* opens fight with *renyao show.*” For me, I hate these terms. I think this is against human rights and is extremely disrespectful. How can you call somebody *renyao*? Does *renyao* refer to a human or a freak? I don’t think there is anyone who would like to be called *renyao*. I believe that the moral integrity and noble thoughts of many of these marginalized members of society are perhaps better than the general public. Once, on my way to a performance, I was checked by police because I was wearing female clothes. Sometimes, people gesticulated at me and said: “This person is a *renyao.*” Whenever I hear this, I can’t stand it and yell back at them: “Your mother is a true *renyao!*” (1997: 168-169)

*Yao* seems to imply that if a person is not “my type” (i.e., a heterosexual man), then s/he is a demon/freak. Yet, if *yao* is so morally wrong, why are men still fascinated with it? It seems apparent that it is *yao’s* display of gender ambiguity and ambivalence that makes it so enchanting. *Yao* is very often referred to as a creature of
gender hybridity that appropriates both sexes and assumes astounding super-natural power. In Chinese novels, martial arts fictions, and legends, powerful characters who excel in military skill are often women, castrated men, androgynies, or eunuchs, while the most beautiful woman could be a man in disguise.\textsuperscript{244} \textit{Yao}, as a mythical/fictional characters and the “Other,” is the path to the unknown region such as death and dream. These “abnormal” figures and behaviors signify a transgression and escape from the rigid realistic world. This Otherness is captivating and powerful. Its unknown heterogeneous nature is both irritating and threatening; it often provokes a certain level of censure, control, or punishment from moralists or government institutes. This may explain the synchronization of femephobia, homophobia, and homophilia within Chinese/Taiwanese society, as well as the popularity of androgyny fiction in Taiwanese popular culture.

Male cross-dressing performance temporarily fulfills the ambivalent psyche of fear and love toward the “unknown” region. Homi Bhabha argues that “cultural production is always most productive where it is most ambivalent.”\textsuperscript{245} Similarly, I argue that male cross-dressing performance is most powerful where it is most ambivalent. Powerful androgynous performance and ambivalent sentiment toward life

\textsuperscript{244} For example, the well-known historical story \textit{Hua Mulan} 花木蘭 [Hua Mulan, the name of the heroine] depicts a girl of the same name as a female warrior, defeating all enemies and becoming a general. The martial arts fiction book \textit{Dongfang Bubai} 東方不敗 [The East never fails] is about a man named Dongfang Bubai who castrates himself to practice a particular way/style of martial arts and becomes invincible. Another contemporary popular martial arts fiction book \textit{Luding-ji} 鹿鼎記 also depicts two personas who have the most supreme fighting skill: a queen and a eunuch. Besides the historic novel \textit{Nan Wanghou} 男王后 [Male queen] mentioned in Chapter I, the most recent national collective memory of the “most beautiful woman” was created by the artistry of Mei Lanfang’s cross-dressing performance.

\textsuperscript{245} Information obtained from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homi_Bhabha (viewed on December 12, 2006).
and death, love and fear, yin and yang, are found in another Redtop skit *Borderless Dhyana* 禪無國界 in which the deity is a signifier of androgynous nature. The program notes read:

Through the colorful performance of the *Borderless Dhyana*, please deeply comprehend the mercy and wisdom of the goddess Bodhisattva and enjoy the trans-gender performance of Redtop.

According to a Chinese saying, the divine, merciful goddess Bodhisattva originally had a male body but was transformed into a female. Redtop took this implication and made it correspond with *fanchuan yiren*’s cross-dressing performativity. Bodhisattva, as a hybrid character of a male god and a female human, is represented by androgynous cross-dressing performers.

The skit *Borderless Dhyana* was inspired by a pop song of the same name (1994) whose lyrics are a mixture of several languages including Tibetan, Mandarin, Kazakhstan, Uighur, Spanish, French, and Mongolian. The music is too of montage and pastiche: Tibetan music is the major influence, mingled with various folk music elements from different nations, resulting in a New Age style similar to that of the group Enigma. The lyrics read:

*From desire you become desireless*  
*From willfulness you discover compliance*  
*From color you enter blankness*  
*From affection/sentiment you learn the dao [road]*

隨慾而無慾  
任性而滅性
Figure 4.5 shows that, in the center, Bodhisattva’s numerous hands indicate his/her borderless spirit and boundless power, and the female deity (with prominent breasts) impersonated by male cross-dressing dancers implies the trans-boundary of sex and sexuality.

Figure 4.5 Redtop’s *Borderless Dhyana*. An androgynous fantasy/legend. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)

The androgynous images of the Buddha and male cross-dressing performance ingenuously overlap, echoing Tommy Tse’s poetized remark on the ideology of androgyny: “He and she are synchronized and juxtaposed, are neither plural nor singular; are neither male nor female; are both mental and somatic; are queer and not
queer; are androgynous and hermaphroditic” (2005: 8). The following type I would like to discuss is another androgynous type, yet embedded with different gender meanings through different way of performance.

**Grotesque Androgyny: The Distasteful and Desexualized Woman**

In *fanchuan show*, carnivalesque travesty is used to liven up the atmosphere and to bring on excitement. Such programs are similar to the farce, parody, or drag show known in Western theatre, and the performers in this type of program are equivalent to “macho queens” of the drag show. Despite the fact that the performance nature of grotesque androgyny in *fanchuan show* is similar to drag and queer performances in Western society, grotesque androgyny does not intend to challenge or undermine established gender ideology and heteronormity.

Instead of the “tasteful” aesthetics of handsome girl or beautiful boy, grotesque realism is applied to a combination of male and female. Figure 4.6 shows Redtop’s typical clown-type actor who provides grotesque performances.
In patriarchal society, women are objects of male gaze and “proper” femininity is expected; women are to be beautiful, exquisite, soft, and silent. Women who depart from these established practices (those who are ugly, act in a ludicrous manner, display ill-favored behaviors like those who gossip or those who are physically powerful), are nightmarish to men and are sexually detested.\textsuperscript{246} This type of deviant performance, departing from the patriarchal, classical notion of female righteousness, is aggressive, threatening to male audiences, and suggests impotence. My

\textsuperscript{246} Mary Russo has defined this deviance performed by female artists as “female grotesque”: “The images of the grotesque body are precisely those which are objected from the bodily canons of classical aesthetics” (1995: 8).
interpretation of such deviant performance is inspired by Bakhtin’s notions of
carnivalization, the grotesque body imagery, ritual inversion, and eroticism in his
study of Rabelais’ *Gargantua and Pantaruel* (1984b: 158, 274). The clown role,
which I classify as “grotesque androgyny,” acts insanely, running through the stage
and into the audience. “S/he,” is sexually aggressive to male audiences by using
sexually suggestive gestures. Figure 4.7 shows a grotesque androgynous character
interacting with male audience members.

Figure 4.7 Male audience members are struck but entertained by grotesque androgyny.
(Photo courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)

Grotesque androgyny is distinguished from the androgynous type of supernatural
legendary characters mentioned earlier in this chapter. A grotesque androgynous
character often plays matchmaker, virago, aggressive blabbermouth, or vulgar
housewife. Within one entire Redtop program, there were two to three skits
performed by a grotesque androgynous character. The arrangement of grotesque
performance, systematically organized within the show, functions as a release from
the erotic tension and ambivalent uneasiness accumulated in previous hyper-feminine programs. During this performance, the audience is invited to truly let go of the psychological supervision of morals, to break out in laughter, and to join the performers’ insane acts. One popular character in such programs is the buxom Yang Guifei 楊貴妃 (719-756), the favorite concubine of the emperor Xuanzong (685-762) of the Tang dynasty, who holds a plate of fruit, particularly grapes and bananas, and invites the audience to have a bite (Figures 4.8 and 4.9). Sexual implications are portrayed through the symbolic eating of grapes and bananas, implying the sex organs of female (nipples) and male (penis).

Figure 4.8 Redtop’s production Yang Guifei. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)
Among *fanchuan show* programs, grotesque androgyny is the only type that challenges (not purposely) ethics, disciplined rites, and hypocritical governmental and/or religious worlds. Paradoxically, though it is only because the performers are obviously not real women, that such grotesque cross-dressing performance could achieve presenting a simulacrum that could temporarily liberate the audience’s sexual desire from morality. Because the grotesque androgynous character’s biological sex as a male is confirmed, he is legitimized as a sexual activist. This may also explain why the grotesque androgynous characters (popular on many TV shows in Taiwan) are never censored by any governmental apparatus.

Unlike the above three types which are fantastical, unreal, and/or unearthly, Redtop programs also portrayed ordinary women, the type that I call “lifelike femininity.” In the next section, I will discuss how the Redtop represents traditional Chinese women who were forced to live in the way(s) that patriarchal society requires
them to. Like the grotesque androgyny mentioned here, lifelike femininity is also insipid to men, but on a different level and with more intensity.

**Lifelike Femininity: The Decent and Virtuous Woman**

The ideal type of womanhood, which includes the characteristics of chastity, decency, modesty, dignity, and obedience, is highly advocated in Redtop’s programs. However, due to its performance and entertainment nature, this “lifelike” woman type is distinguished from women of the real world; it is always dramatized and mediated through theatre. Numerous skits depict virgins (waiting in the boudoir to be betrothed), a dignified and elegant bride, an understanding wife, a mother-to-be, or a loving mother. Such womanhood, equivalent to the type depicted in the poems of *feng sao*, bears the social requisition for having a son to carry on the family name. In the skit entitled *Wang chunfeng*, two young girls shyly express their dreams of love with graceful and composed movements. Only the female impersonators’ eyes reveal their longing for love and marriage (Figure 4.10).
The social constructs of female roles results largely from the dynamics of heteronarrative hierarchy. Women’s desirable behaviors (obedience and passivity) and inferior social status are closely linked to a hierarchical family structure. In Redtop Arts’ programs, traditional Asian women are depicted as bashful, delicate, passive, gentle, soft, and elegant to represent the fulfillment of the social expectation to help the husband and teach the children—i.e., *xianqi liangmu* 賢妻良母 [a dutiful wife and loving mother]. As the lyrics of *Wang chunfeng* express: “I’m too shy to ask him [to marry me],” women had no power to pursue true love in traditional society.

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247 See Chapter III for complete lyrics.
Women remained powerless from their teens, throughout maturity, and after becoming a bride.

In traditional society, (senior) men are in control of procreation and marriage; they make decisions to approve (or disapprove) matches for their kin. Also, having a wife and/or concubines does not necessarily lead to romance or even sexual excitement. Redtop’s representation of traditional marriage was indeed a romanticization, and purposely ignored exploitation, procreation, and household duties of women in the real world. Figure 4.11 is Redtop’s representation of a bustling traditional wedding ceremony.

Figure 4.11 Redtop’s reproduction of a traditional Chinese wedding. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)

Woman’s social duties and responsibilities were more directly portrayed in the skit Xingan baobei 心肝寶貝 My dear sweetheart.248 This skit depicted an elegant

248 The song was composed in 1990.
mother-to-be in the nineteenth century, and her love for, expectation of, and cultivation of her baby (Figure 4.12). This skit indicated the traditional ideal type of womanhood as a “dutiful wife and loving mother.”

Figure 4.12 Redtop’s Xingan baobei, a portrayal of motherhood as experienced by a typical decent woman. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)

To be a model of this type, a woman often had to make many sacrifices. Through cultural re-creation and re-enforcement of the “dutiful wife and loving mother,” patriarchal society imposed this ideology and women were forced to meet these standards. Praise of motherhood was further highlighted in the skit Ganpeki no haha [The mother by the quay wall]. On the surface, both skits highlighted magnificent maternal love. However, they insinuated the subordinate position of women; only when they had children, could their lives become meaningful. The lyrics from My

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249 See Chapter III.
Dear Sweetheart show this idea: “You are my hope and blessedness. I carefully cultivate you, and bring you up.”

To further understand women’s social status and their relationships with their fathers, husbands, and sons in Chinese feudal society, it is useful to consult the influential book *Liji* [The book of rites]. The Chapter *Jiaotesheng* [Sacrifices offered to gods or ancestors] clearly states women’s subordinate position:

男帥女. 女從男. 夫婦之義. 由此始也. 婦人從人者也. 幼從父兄. 嫁從夫. 夫死從子…故婦人無爵. 從夫之爵。([1970]: 1456)

This dogma in ancient China was known as the “three obediences” of women, who were as men’s property with no rights. In the Chapter *Hunyi* [The meaning of marriage], the meaning of marriage is defined as “to serve the ancestral temple, and to carry on the family lineage” 以上事宗廟，而下以繼後世 (Gao 1998: 88). People in contemporary Taiwan are still familiar with Confucius’ teaching: “There are three types of behavior that are not in accordance with filial duty. The worst one is having no descendants” 不孝有三，無後為大.

250 Written and compiled by Confucius (551-479 BD) and his disciples, *Liji* is an important work regarding social rites, morals, and rules with the objective of keeping the state in order. This book had been highly valued by all the past dynasties.
To a certain extent, a “dutiful wife and loving mother” also implies that a lack of female charm and/or sexual attraction, and this notion is reflected in the *fanchuan show*. The moral woman type wears loose dresses which do not expose her body shape. In traditional Chinese society, a moral woman should also be sexually passive, which results in an insipid relationship between a man and his wife. The social environment and discipline have made a man treat his wife with an insipid relationship.

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To summarize, based on preexisting socio-historical symbols and codes for women, a female impersonator reconstructs “ideal” (or imagined) female images, dramatizes a character, and articulates this using his talent as an actor. Ideal images of women are conceptualized, constructed, and embodied by male cross-dressing performers. Physical and psychological notions of womanhood are romanticized and aestheticized, and the *fanchuan show’s* represented/recreated “women” are unreal dramatized characters existing only in an imagined world. On stage, by utilizing the male body as an agent, impersonators transform themselves into artistic stunners, seductive “Others,” virtuous women, and grotesque androgynous characters.

In the case of hyper-femininity, mythical characters, and parody in particular, easily a form of empowerment is present according to Foucault’s notion of power. In hyper-femininity, male cross-dressing prototypicality as beauty—transportation from the male to the female body—looks down on females, and haughtily flaunts its temporary supremacy (as a visualization of power) conquering the audience. Mythical
characters, creatures of the unknown world (from death and dream states), are often the most threatening, yet at the same time are bewitching and powerful. The parody type masks the female body through grotesque representation. Such grotesque androgyny is antihierarchical: directly or indirectly deconstructing traditional ideologies of body, gender, and sex. When a *fanchuan yiren* performs without being misrecognized his “original” gender, his extremely deviant behavior is empowering.

In Redtop’s presentation/creation of women, lifelike femininity is the type that confirms to the patriarchal expectation of a dutiful woman. Unlike the “powerful” hyper femininity, mythical characters, and grotesque androgyny, lifelike femininity is the representation of “secondary gender” in the real world: the powerlessness. Through reassertion of feudal code of ethics, Redtop’s policy of portraying decent and virtuous women intended to obtain support and positive commentary from moralists and general public.
CHAPTER V
UNDER THE MAKEUP

Cross-dressing is a true masquerading, an anatomy of oneself, an emersion of one’s heart, and double sides of a unity.

--Lin Chilong, the stage designer of SWET (2006)

Bodies and minds are not two distinct substances or two kinds of attributes of a single substance but somewhere in between these two alternatives.

--Elizabeth Grosz *Bolatile Bodies* (1994: xii)

Entering the greenroom backstage at the New Century Male Cross-Dressing Beauty show, I found the room filled with wigs, adornments, costumes, high heels, bras, cosmetics, and props. Cross-dressing performers were busy preparing for the show: sewing evening gowns, stylizing wigs, putting props in order; or putting on corsets, stockings, and make up. Watching the actors’ preparation for gender performance, I was amazed by how they drifted across multiple boundaries—man and woman, cultural and sexual, body and mind, inside and outside, East and West, and traditional and modern. I wondered how these actors altered their bodies and minds to construct onstage female images and identities, and what kinds of physical and psychological manipulations were involved?

*Fanchuan yiren*’s sexual anatomy, social gender, and performance strategies largely corresponded to Judith Butler’s assertion about gender performativity, which argues for the constructed nature of gender under a specific social power system.
(1990: 139). However, political parody and displays of subversive power found in the Western drag and lesbian/gay culture did not appear in *fanchuan show*. With the exception of the clown role, most *fanchuan yiren* did not view their performance as mockery or sarcasm for the purposes of humor or shock value. Even though many of them admitted their homosexual inclinations, they did not identify themselves as “queer” or “camp,” and remained not to “come out.” They did not intend to act on the Western notion of “camp,” nor did they consciously convey political messages in their shows. Being aware of such discrepancies, I critically adopt Western queer theories as correlative insight and interrogative reference, which provides dialogical and reflective analysis.

In this chapter, I investigate *fanchuan show* from a perspective based on ethnographic data collected from live performances and personal interviews with performers, administrators, and relevant institutions. I examine the differences between individual performers, including their psychological factors, personal background, and sexual orientation. I use this narrative to uncover the true lives and emotions of male cross-dressing performers. Through their story telling and my backstage and offstage observations, I explore how cross-dressing actors manipulate their bodies and minds to construct onstage female images and identities.

In order to obtain a systematic and comparative understanding of *fanchuan yiren*’s personal lives and the actors’ coping strategies for dealing with conventional social norms, I designed a set of interview questions for performers (see Appendix
These interview questions helped to form the following three major lines of inquiry in this chapter:  
1. Personal profile—physicality, sexuality, cultural and social backgrounds,  
2. Backstage preparation—denaturalizing the body and constructing dream women, and  

Through analyzing my ethnographic data, I deconstruct the elements of gender and demonstrate the fluidity of gender identities in order to gain an understanding of the process of constructing femininity and performativity in contemporary Taiwanese culture.

**Personal Profile—Physicality, Sexuality, Cultural and Social Backgrounds**

In this section, I will introduce life stories of two *fanchuan yiren*—Black Pearl and Manning. These two particular cases are significant because they demonstrate the shift in mass entertainment from traditional theatre to popular culture.

Black Pearl grew up in a *gezai-xi* family troupe, where he learned theatrical posture and acrobatics from a young age. When his mother became ill, he stood in for her role and cross-dressed to perform in local theaters including *gezai-xi* and the “soul guiding opera” (i.e., *qianwang-gezheng* 牽亡歌陣 and *wunü-kumu* 五女哭墓).  

When *fanchuan show* became pervasive in the mid-1990s, Black Pearl joined Redtop

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251 Actual questions delivered/articulated are flexible on the spot, adjusted to different persons interviewed and their responses.

252 A fourth line of inquiry is about the performers’ interaction with audiences, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

253 Information taken from Black Pearls’ autobiography, which was transcribed by Huang Huo (1998: 154, 174) from an oral account.
Arts for a short period of time. Later, he published an autobiography, entitled

\textit{Fanchuan yiren Hei Zhenzhu} 反串藝人黑珍珠 [The male cross-dressing performer Black Pearl] (Huang 1998), revealing his homosexual inclination and erotic life stories. Perhaps due to his explicit declaration on his homosexual identification and his lascivious performance style, he was forced to leave Redtop. He then became a third-sex barmaid working alternatively in Japan and Taiwan.

The other \textit{fanchuan yiren}, Manning, began his career in cross-dressing performance when he was in elementary school (in the mid-1980s). He recalled his cultural activities in a military village where he grew up.\(^{254}\) He often saw his father and other male elders from the village singing female roles in Peking opera. According to Manning, it was customary for his family to watch male cross-gender singing, and later this experience brought the family’s acceptance of his profession as a \textit{fanchuan yiren}.\(^{255}\) In his teenage years, he disguised himself as a girl performing in a \textit{nagashi} troupe and in an electronic entertainment float performed on the street. Before becoming a Redtop member, he had ten years of cross-dressing performance experience in restaurants, hotels, wedding ceremonies, funerals, show business, and red-envelope singing halls. Manning identifies himself as a gay. He declares that inside of his body lives a female soul.\(^{256}\)

\(^{254}\) When the Nationalist Party and army lost the civil war and fled to Taiwan in 1949, military men and their dependents built up their home villages and communities throughout the Island.

\(^{255}\) His family runs a \textit{teppanyaki} restaurant. Manning reported to me that he does not like to smell the cooking oil and smoke, but prefers to dress up and put on make up as a lady to perform. This job simply is less toilsome compared to restaurant work.

\(^{256}\) In gay circles in Taiwan, a person who has a male body but with a female soul is not considered gay. However, here I simply follow my interviewees’ self-declaration/identification.
Black Pearl and Manning both had backgrounds in the male cross-dressing tradition in traditional Taiwanese theatre. Their life stories reflect the sweeping change of Taiwan’s mass entertainment from traditional theatre to modern show business. Besides, both Black Pearl and Manning expressed their female inner state and homosexual inclinations that preexisted way before they took up the cross-dressing profession. They pointed out the interweaving relationship between fancuan yiren, gays, and the more current nightclub business, the third-sex barmaids.

In addition to the two cases mentioned above, fancuan yiren are from a variety of backgrounds. As indicated in Chapter II, due to the decline of show business in restaurants and construction sites, many backup dancers lost their jobs and later chose to become fancuan yiren. Other backgrounds included former actors, workers of architectural shuttering, hairdressers, cosmeticians, model trainers, style designers, jewelry sellers, and some college graduates majored in dance, theatre, or arts. Among them, hairdressers, cosmeticians, model trainers, and style designers were already acquainted themselves with female fashion due to their former jobs involving frequent contact with female customers. One interesting point is the fact that these types of jobs have a high percentage of gay practice.

The fancuan yiren I interviewed included nine actors from Redtop Arts, eight from Xinshiji fancuan meiren show 新世紀反串美人秀 [New Century Cross-dressing Beauty Show] (in Zhanghua), four from Huali bianshen 華麗變身 [Top

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257 In Taiwan, some restaurant owners and constructors may invite television or movie stars to give a show of singing and dancing to enhance their business. See Chapter II for details.

258 A county located in mid-southern Taiwan.
Arts Entertainment] (in Taichung), three from Hongpai yiren 紅牌藝人 [Top Artists] (in Taipei), three from Tiantang-niao 天堂鳥 [The Bird of Paradise] (in Taichung), two from Baixue zongyi jutuan 白雪綜藝劇團 [Snow White Entertaining Troupe] (in Taipei), and one from Jinling hongfen juyi gongzuo fang 金陵紅粉劇藝工作坊 [Blushing Diva Troupe] (in Taipei). The age of those interviewed ranged from twenty-four to forty-two years old.

Table 5.1 Some Fanchuan yiren’s personal profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage name</th>
<th>Birth Year</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation other than cross-dressing performance</th>
<th>Height &amp; Weight</th>
<th>Distinguishing feature in Performance</th>
<th>Gender/sexual ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-xiong 阿妹/阿雄</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>Backup dancer, dance instructor</td>
<td>174 cm/60 kg</td>
<td>Male dancer; old woman; androgyny</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Tsai Qin 小蔡琴</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>Minor singer</td>
<td>168/60</td>
<td>Professional singer in woman’s tone quality</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niu-Niu 妞妞</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>Backup dancer</td>
<td>168/60-70</td>
<td>grotesque androgyny</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhou Xiang 周红瑄/周湘</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>MA (major in Chinese music and theatre)</td>
<td>Male dan; manager for actors</td>
<td>165/50</td>
<td>Well trained in singing and acting in traditional Chinese operas; hyper-femininity</td>
<td>No answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

259 A city located in mid Taiwan.
260 This table is a list of effective cases who have accepted my extensive interview. From them, I also gathered other fanchuan yiren’s personal information, which expands my discussion base. Except for Jinmei, who had a complete sex change, got married, and retired from fanchuan show, all of them listed here are still performing on stage.
261 This is the interviewee’s self-identification regarding gender and sexual orientation.
262 HS stands for High school.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Height/Weight</th>
<th>Appearance / Style</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheng Honglong</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>HS (Violinist)</td>
<td>TV backup dancer</td>
<td>170/60</td>
<td>Life-like femininity</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(impersonates old women); the only “male star” in the Redtop 263</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ong Hongwen</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>HS (dance)</td>
<td>TV backup dancer &amp; dance teacher</td>
<td>174/55</td>
<td>Hyper-femininity (elegant style)</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela 安琪拉</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>Troupe leader of the Top Artists, actor, singer, and dancer</td>
<td>163/50</td>
<td>Live singing; Hyper-femininity</td>
<td>straight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinmei 晉梅</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>Third-sex barmaid; now housewife</td>
<td>165/52</td>
<td>Hyper-femininity (elegant style)</td>
<td>Post-op TS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manning 曼寧</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>BA (accounting)</td>
<td>Singer &amp; dancer</td>
<td>167/52</td>
<td>Hyper-femininity (traditional Chinese lady)</td>
<td>Id. w/ F 264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria 馬利亞</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>HS (AD design)</td>
<td>Embroiderer</td>
<td>175/87</td>
<td>Marilyn Monroe; parody</td>
<td>Id. w/ F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SongtianWanzi 松田丸子</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>MA (theatre)</td>
<td>Broadcasting DJ, SWET troupe leader</td>
<td>165/52</td>
<td>Hyper-femininity (angle like: mixture of lovely &amp; sexy)</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bai Bingbing 白冰冰</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>HS (dancing)</td>
<td>Backup dancer</td>
<td>171/75</td>
<td>grotesque androgyny</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romansa 羅曼莎</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Third-sex barmaid</td>
<td>175/65</td>
<td>Hyper-femininity (elegant style)</td>
<td>Bisexual → Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lai Weijiong 賴維勇</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>BA (dress design)</td>
<td>Dress designer, member of Jinling hongfen juyi gongzuo fang [Blushing Diva Troupe] and SWET</td>
<td>172/70-80</td>
<td>grotesque androgyny</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>Performer</td>
<td>167/56</td>
<td>Hyper-femininity (sexy style)</td>
<td>Inter-sexual TS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Gui 林紅貴</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>HS (major in singing)</td>
<td>Singer &amp; backup dancer</td>
<td>176/65</td>
<td>Hyper-femininity and grotesque androgyny</td>
<td>Gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yalan 陳亞蘭</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>HS (TV)</td>
<td>Baker; porter</td>
<td>173/61</td>
<td>Hyper-femininity</td>
<td>Id. w/ F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin Yilian 林德麗</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Third-sex barmaid, headwaiter</td>
<td>170/57</td>
<td>Hyper-femininity (traditional Chinese lady)</td>
<td>Id. w/ F → gay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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263 In a fanchuan show, the female impersonator is always the focus of gaze and applause, and male dancers are supporting roles. Hong is well-known for his impersonation of old women, including the Qing Empress Dowager Cixi and an old Japanese woman who had experienced the vicissitudes of life in the WWII period, and was waiting for her military son to return. In order to make a sharp contrasting effect (woman/man; old/young; weak/powerful—all performed by the same person), Tsai Tou designed a program to show off Hong’s manfully energetic dancing skills, immediately following Hong’s old woman skit. This skit was the only one in which a male dancer plays the main role.

264 “Id w/ F” means psychologically identified with female, psychological TS (transsexual), but not willing to have a sex reassignment surgery.
What made these men become cross-dressing performers? According to my survey, there are basically four major factors:266

a. Economic need
b. Wider fame
c. Psychological fulfillment (expressing hidden characteristics; A conscious alternative personality)
d. Personal interest, art, and commercialism

An actor usually has more than one motivation for taking up cross-dressing and one factor may weigh in more than others, depending on individual situations and personal need. Below I give a detailed discussion on these factors.

**Economic Need**

According to a governmental survey reported in Scoop Weekly Taiwan, men who take up cross-dressing performance as their profession do so for purely economic reasons (Hong 1998: 67). On a website constructed for gay users, a viewer chats about his impression of *fanchuan yiren*: “I believe that if not for the sake of money,

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265 Shuqi and Lin Yilian identified with females earlier in their careers, however, they now identify themselves as gay.
266 In Zhou Xianggeng’s Master’s thesis on the study of Chinese traditional male *dan*, he sums up four mindsets for male *dan* devoting themselves to the profession (2002: 70). The result of my own survey on the modern *fanchuan yiren* shows a telling correspondence with Zhou’s finding, yet with nuances of differences.
why would anyone (man) wear make-up like this? In modern times, if a *fanchuan yiren* denies any homosexual inclination (like the members of Redtop Arts), then the general public tends to find other reasons (usually economic ones) to rationalize their behavior. Such surveys and reports reveal that the general public’s impression of male cross-dressing performers has not changed much from the distant past when the majority of male *dan* were either born into theatrical family troupes or bought from poor families. The assumption of monetary incentives denies the possibility of transgender inclination, simplifies the multi-fluidity of desire, and ignores diversified transgender subjectivities. It further indicates that the general public’s hegemonic interpretation of cross-dressing is based on rigid heteronormativity which creates unfavorable environment for transgender communities.

According to my surveys, the families of *fanchuan yiren* are not limited to the poor or lower-middle classes; rather, they are spread widely among lower-middle, upper-middle, and well-to-do social classes. Some *fanchuan yiren*, along with the changing of socio-economic contexts (the introduction of capitalism particularly after WWII), have received a good education (college graduates or higher) and their families are fairly prosperous. Quite a few come from elite families and hold Master’s degrees.

Nevertheless, monetary incentives present an important, though not exclusive, factor in the decision to become a cross-dressing performer, which conveys a deeper meaning for male cross-dressing actors. For them, to possess economic mobility often

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means having the power of independence and self-autonomy. A crucial reason for 
fanchuan yiren’s economic need lies in their “atypical” sexual identity (see Table 5.1 
under the category of “Personal gender and sexual ID”). 268 While the traditional 
concept of family (to have a son to carry on the family name) remains, many 
homosexuals choose to break away or move out from their families in order to 
conceal their sexual orientation or get rid of the pressure from their families (Luo 
2002: 109). Economic independence also means to have the ability to make 
individual decisions about sexual preference. For those in poverty or without a 
college education, fanchuan is a good option for making money. These fanchuan 
yiren from lower-middle class families told me that their families disliked their 
occupation, but later acquiesced for two major reasons: at least the job is not stealing 
or robbery (not doing real “bad” things), and the actors contribute a large portion of 
their salary to support their families.

**Wider Fame**

Before becoming a fanchuan yiren, the majority of the performers had either 
received theatrical/performance training or had years of performing experience in 
show business. 269 Many of them graduated from arts high schools and majoring in 
singing, dancing, theatre, television, or cinema. Some felt that it was too hard to 
achieve success in such competitive circumstances, and considered fanchuan a good

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268 More information will be discussed in the later subsection “Private and Offstage Domain—
Fanchuan Yiren and Power Relations.”

269 A few actors, on account of their outstanding appearance (suitable for cross-dressing), had their 
performance training after entering the troupe.
way to gain fame and money. After evaluating themselves on many of their physical aspects (ideally having a slim and slender body mass and soft facial shape), they decided to enter this profession because it was relatively easier to become well-known.

Angela, one of the earliest modern fanchuan yiren, originally played supporting roles in movies when he was a high school student. He recalled: “my appearance is not good enough. I am too short to be a top actor. In Taiwan’s show business, they don’t want such mediocre, unknown actors like me.”270 When Angela studied in Japan, he took a part-time job washing dishes to pay for his tuition. Due to his performance background, a schoolmate introduced him to a cross-dressing nightclub, which began his cross-dressing career. Song Hongxun, a college graduate majored in theater and a television actor, said: “Because of stagnation in show business, there is not much opportunity to advance. I treat cross-dressing performance as one type of acting, which is just a job for me” (quoted in Wang 1998: 91).271 Sun Hongyi, a former backup dancer and later a popular Redtop fanchuan yiren known for his wild and sexy dance style, remarked: “I was in a supporting role, but now a leading role. I feel very good about this” (ibid.).272

270 Personal interview on June 17, 2005.
271 Song was known in his former acting career for his role as police officer. He learned dance from Tsai Tou, who persuaded him to be pursue fanchuan yiren.
272 Sun comes from an elite family, as his father and brothers are medical doctors. Sun is multi talented—he was once a successful interior designer. Information about Sun is from an interview with fanchuan yiren Ong Hongwen and A-gui.
Psychological Fulfillment

Sun’s “good feeling” is not simply the result of gaining adoration and fame; it also involves certain levels of psychological satisfaction. According to other Redtop members, Sun is a transsexual (TS)—a female soul within a male body who has a strong desire to undergo a sex change.\(^{273}\) About seven years ago, Sun decided to have sexual reassignment surgery (SRS), one of a few fanchuan yiren who have undergone this procedure. Many fanchuan yiren, although psychologically identify themselves as female (see Figure 5.1 under the category “Gender/sexual ID”), they are not willing to have SRS for various reasons. Many of them particularly enjoy “doing” (or “being”) a woman on stage and in private (without costume), while the rest of the time, they prefer their physical body to function as a male.\(^{274}\) For many of them, cross-dressing performance is a way to express their hidden, but self-conscious characteristics. This is similar to Charlotte Suthrell’s study on cross-dressing culture in the UK and India, that cross-dressing is “an outlet for emotions which they [transvestites] perceive to be inapplicable to their own male life and character” (2004: 4).

\(^{273}\) This is an extreme example, but not rare to find among fanchuan yiren. Sun’s Redtop colleague A-gui recalled: “Sun was unhappy about his hairy legs. He disliked and was angry about his man thing (penis). Backstage, most of us walked around with only underpants. Sun did not. He felt that he was a woman” (personal interview on January 12, 2006). Upon the end of my fieldwork, (to my knowledge) there were four namable fanchuan yiren who had completed SRS.

\(^{274}\) There is an overlapping area between the definitions of transsexual (TS), transgender (TG), cross-dresser (CD), and fanchuan yiren. In practice, sometimes the distinction is blurry. For example, there are some TS who refuse to have SRS and some CD who take female hormones. Therefore, self-identification among fanchuan circles varies. I will discuss these distinctions later in the section on “Offstage Life.”
Fanchuan yiren Yalan and Manning disputed Scoop Weekly Taiwan’s report on their financial reasons for joining the profession: “Cross-dressing performance is our interest and we enjoy doing it. They [the public and the reporter] obviously do not understand us.” Almost all the fanchuan yiren I interviewed stated that they had both male and female personalities and inner states (to differing degrees). As fanchuan yiren Songtian Wanzi put it: “Banzhuang [cross-dressing] is a flavor enlivening my life from time to time, and it lets my soul have a fling” 扮裝是生活偶爾的調劑，靈魂過癮的放縱. 275 When asked if cross-dressing has had an influence on his psychological development in terms of gender, Songtian states:

This question should be asked reversely. It should say that because I have characteristics of both [binary] genders, I cross-dress and learn theatrical plays. Due to such a preexisting psychological state, I do cross-dressing performance. It is not because fanchuan show has become popular, and I want to do it for the money. If you want to earn money, you have many other choices. 276

Personal Interest, Art, and Commercialism

Similar to the case of Black Pearl mentioned above, who received traditional theatrical training in female impersonation through local theatre, Zhou Xiang obtained systematic training in male dan from the academia. Zhou grew up in a wealthy family; his parents are both Peking opera lovers and amateur performers. 277

Because of his own interest and the support of this family, Zhou continued to learn

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275 Quoted from his 2006 stage production Drag Queen.
276 Personal interview on April 6, 2006.
277 When he was in elementary school, he joined the Peking opera community and learned to play the role of xiaosheng 小生 [civilized young man]. At his graduation ceremony from elementary school, a girl who played the role of mature lady was unable to perform. The instructor assigned Zhou the female role to replace her.
female impersonation (qingyi 青衣 [mature lady] and huadan 花旦 [vigorous young lady]) from leading dan masters in Taiwan. He joined the Redtop Arts to extend his performing interests and to partake in another type of stage experience. Having witnessed the withering of traditional drama, the art of male dan in particular, Zhou intended to create an entertainment genre that combined artistic elements with commercialism so that traditional theatre could attract a wider audience through the enhancement of show business.

For the past ten years, fanchuan show has not been limited to the theatrical domain, it has extended its performance to other commercial activities. Many enterprises of different occupations have invited fanchuan yiren to enhance their sales/business and to entertain their customers and employees. SWET leader Songtian Wanzi remarked on the collaboration between art circle and enterprise: “We help the enterprise in its business and the enterprise supports us in our economics. This is a win-win deal.” In order to give a successful fanchuan show to achieve the variety of purposes mentioned above, cross-dressing actors have to go through a complex process of gender transformation, which I will discuss in the following section.

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278 Zhou’s interest is not limited to Peking opera. He is also familiar with female singing/acting techniques of other local Chinese theatres, including chuan-ju 川劇, kun-qu 昆曲, huangmei-diao 黃梅調, yue-ju 越劇, and gezai-xi 戲劇. He performed male dan on Taiwan’s TV programs and abroad by the invitation of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Government Information Office, and Council for Cultural Affairs Taiwan. Besides his academic training from the Chinese Theatre Department of Chinese Culture University, Zhou plays several traditional Chinese instruments such as the qin [the 7-stringed Chinese zither], zheng [the 21-stringed Chinese zither] and pipa [the 4-stringed Chinese lute].

279 Personal interview on April 7, 2005.

280 Personal interview on May 13, 2006.
Backstage Preparation—Denaturalizing the Body and Constructing Dream Women

…two small children in a museum [are] standing in front of a painting of Adam and Eve. One child asks the other, “which is the man and which is the lady?” The other child answers, “I can’t tell—they don’t have any clothes on.” (Shapiro 1991: 248)

This story illustrates social structuralists’ view of gender that what we perceive as the category of sex is not a static condition of the body; rather, it is assembled in heterogeneous corporal forms presented at different times and spaces depending on multilevel factors or forces (ibid.). As Lin Yulin states: “the body is a locus of the dialectical process of interpreting (or experiencing) a new historical set of conventions which have already informed corporeal style” (1997: 250).

Without clothes, the body-self is neutral and ungendered, until the moment it is embodied with psyches/minds to put on gendered clothes and act out gendered movement.

In a similar view, the fanchuan show’s collective identities of female images are constructed with a series of complex symbolic elements. To illustrate this, I will discuss five crucial constituents: 1) body and face shape; 2) make-up; 3) attire; 4) movements; and 5) voice.281 These symbolic elements (signifiers) are further encoded through the representation of lighting, music, and sound effects, to convey specific meaning (signification).

281 Kimberly J. Devlin’s article “Pretending in ‘Penelope’: Masquerade, Mimicry, and Molly Bloom” has a major impact on the following section. My lists of signifiers are mostly inspired by her analysis on Molly Bloom’s femininities: appellative, verbal, sartorial, proprietorial, and gestural (1991: 72).
Body and Face Shape

For male cross-dressers, body shape is the first area to consider before putting on any type of costume or accessories. Contrary to the previous story of undressed Adam and Eve (in which body shape does not matter), for fanchuan yiren, a heavy or slim Adam does make different stories. Basically, within female gender specialist (i.e., nü dancers) there are two female role types: the general female role and the clown. One fanchuan show troupe usually has only one or two people who play the comic role. A fanchuan yiren who plays the general female role needs to keep his body mass slim and slender without conspicuous muscles, in order to “have more sexual attraction.” In contrast to the general female role, a clown-type fanchuan yiren partially allows stocky or heavyset builds with some muscles. He does not aim to “pass” as a woman, but to create androgynous style which is comical and grotesque. Figure 5.1 illustrates six fanchuan yiren before and after make-up. Other than the one in 5.1 f, who is the comic role, the rest are in general female role types.

See Chapter IV for discussion on “nü [female] dancer” and “nan [male] dancer.”
Figure 5.1 Six fuanchuan yiren: before make-up and after make-up with their stage posts

a. Original appearance
Taiwanese singer of the 70s

b. Original appearance
Moulin Rouge style

c. Original appearance
Peacock “lady”
To be a *fanchuan yiren* usually requires the following physical characteristics: a handsome/beautiful face (oval shape is preferred), a small chin, a lack of facial
hair, a clear complexion, good physical fitness, and young age—overall, one should give a healthy and youthful impression. Height also matters—tall men with slim figures are preferred in the fanchuan “market” for their good body ratio, long/thin legs, and prominent stage appearance. For fat or masculine cross-dressing performers—who can never transform into Venus—the comic role is their only choice.

During the years when cross-dressing show was most pervasive, the field was very competitive in terms of facial/body appearance. While many cross-dressing performers insisted on keeping their original bodies, some decided to permanently modify their bodies through cosmetic surgery in order to create better images on stage. According to my interviewees, around fifty percent of fanchuan yiren have undergone some type of plastic surgery. Persons interviewed revealed that double eyelid folds (to create large, widely spaced eyes) were the most common procedure; other surgeries like abdominal lipectomies, liposuction, cheek implants, augmented rhinoplasties, and chin lifts, were also present among the fanchuan community. Other common treatments include orthodontic treatment, teeth whitening, and salon crystal-nail design. An article posted on a website entitled “Have a facelift—Men are crazy about it too” written by the Director of the Cosmetic Surgical Association of Taiwan, indicated an increasing number of men who have facelifts: “It shows that the

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283 Too much facial hair will be difficult to put on make-up.
284 Former Redtop members Ong, Shuqi and Manning reported to me that there are about five out of ten members who had double eyelid fold surgery.
number of men who have facelifts has obviously increased. Among them, many were young men; others include the third-sex barmaids and gays.\textsuperscript{285}

According to my survey, \textit{fanchuan yiren} have contributed greatly to this trend. A recent news broadcast (June 9, 2006) reported that the Redtop Arts’ administrator, elder Tsai, encouraged his members to have plastic surgery.\textsuperscript{286} As a matter of fact, Redtop Arts’ members have become live advertisements for the plastic surgery clinic where they had their facelifts. Shuqi, the former Redtop female impersonator, showed me his pictures before having cosmetic surgery: “I was once very fat (70 kg) but my face was still too thin to disguise as a beauty. I decided to have an abdominal lipectomy and transplant the lipid/fat into my cheek and chin. The results were quite satisfactory.”\textsuperscript{287}

In order to have more delicate skin, a small portion of \textit{fanchuan yiren} took female hormones which, in time, produced an effect on their first sex characteristics as well as on their mindsets. The behavior of taking female hormones and practice of facelift should not be simply interpreted as a result of hostile competition in the \textit{fanchuan} circle or unusual ill conduct. As Butler remarks on the cultural constructed corporeal styles:

\begin{quote}
The body is a material ground of cultural meanings both received and innovated. The choice to assume a certain kind of body, to live or wear one’s body a certain way, implies a world of already established corporeal styles. To choose a gender is to interpret received gender norms in a way that reproduces and organizes
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{286} See \url{http://www.bg1.com.tw/news_content.asp?id=26} (viewed on July 18, 2006).
\textsuperscript{287} Personal interview on November 11, 2005.
them anew. Less a radical act of creation, gender is a tacit project to renew a cultural history in one’s own corporeal terms. (1991a: 131)

For a *fanchuan yiren*, the body-self is a canvas upon which s/he can present his/her feelings, thoughts, imagination, and experiences—a powerful expression of body politics and body autonomy, and an indirect challenge to the socially prescribed idea of gender. *Fanchuan yiren*’s ways of reinscribing/remodeling their bodies suggest that a sexed fe/male body (physical body), neither natural nor real, is an apparatus that reflects the social sex/gender system, as well as a particular state of mind in a specific time period. Thus *fanchuan yiren* manage their flesh and blood, so to speak, to silently express, inscribe, and embody an unmentionable identity.

**Make-up**

Make-up and attire, imposed by various socio-cultural systems, are perhaps the most significant signifiers of sex/gender norms. Well-delineated eyebrows, long dark-thick lashes, thick-vivid lips, and rouged cheeks are considered to be the most important facial features to represent female roles.

Similar to the traditional male *dan* performance, making seductive eyes to woo the audience is an important acting technique. Many *fanchuan yiren* commented on the importance of it: “We cannot live without artificial eyelashes on stage.” Songtian Wanzi agrees: “Artificial eyelashes are a great help for my eye expression.” For a better stage effect, many *fanchuan yiren* make their own exaggerated long and thick eyelashes.

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288 Personal interview on May 13, 2006.
eyelashes which can be distinguished from ordinary sets bought in the market. A-gui, a former Redtop member and now the troupe leader of the New Century, also emphasizes the need for sexy lips: “We paint our lips filled out round and thick like a sexy cherry/apple which invites you to have a bite.” The hyper-feminine make-up applied by male cross-dressing performers suggests that men materialize women and fetishize them as objects of desire.

**Attire**

As John Money points out, “Since dressing is traditionally gender-coded almost everywhere on earth, cross dressing is one highly specific act of gender cross coding” (1988: 102). *Fanchuan yiren*’s attire is often designed to suit specific performance types and body shapes—various stylish wigs, customized stuffed-bras, and two to three pairs of pantyhose are the most fundamental. Wigs, often long, are decorated with shining pins: various types of updo or free hanging hair (curled or straight) fall around the shoulders or down to the waist. Their wigs (one often owns several sets) are made out of real hair that can be cleaned and arranged into various styles.

The next important step is to hide what they call their “thing” (penis). They pull their penises backwards between their thighs and then wear tight underpants. For some sexy animated skits, performers need to wear bodysuit-like costumes; in such cases, the performers do not wear underpants but two to three pairs of pantyhose which are tight enough to hold their penises backwards. Afterwards, they put on

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289 Personal interview on October 16, 2005.
customized stuffed bras to create prominent breasts (not necessarily very large, depending on the type of skits they are going to play). Some performers wear foundation garments to shape their bodies prior to the suits/costumes tailored for individual *fanchuan yiren*. For a *fanchuan yiren*, the best costume designer is able to make their bodies look like in “perfect” physical proportion: from an original ratio of 5:5 or 4:6 (upper torso: waist to heel; the general male figure) into the ideal 3:7. Other details, including polished nails, high heels, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and dress gloves, are essential symbols/icons that eroticize the female body. These visible and representable symbols constructed by male cross-dressing performers not only reconstruct female identities, but also create a type of substitute form for male sexual desire. Finally, any scar, acne or tattoo, that may “ruin” the purity and flawlessness of “perfect” femininity, should be concealed. Figure 5.2 shows the general process of male cross-dressing.
Figure 5.2 Denaturalizing the body/physical and constructing dream women: the male cross-dressing process.

290 I have photographed many *fanchuan yiren*’s disguise processes which are slightly different from person to person. The model presented in this photo series has never taken any female hormones nor undergone any cosmetic surgery.
g. Wig (thick & healthy), necklace

h. Earrings, pins, concealed tattoo

i. Pantyhose, dress gloves

j. Zipping up the costume

k. Back: without underpants to emphasize round, reproductive hips

l. Dream woman in bodysuit & high-heeled boots to give the appearance of long, thin legs
**Movements (Gesture, Poses, and Actions)**

Movements are considered to be the most important techniques (and signifiers) to successfully “pass” as a “realistic” character. *Fanchuan yiren*’s elegant flowing arms, graceful pelvic movements, and lovely tilted heads, all approximate the feminine and have enhanced the erotic fascination of their spectators. Dynamic body language is converted into sequential symbols that are essential signifiers to a display of meanings. In most cases, *fanchuan yiren* are not acting out a conventional/ordinary womanliness, but extreme femininities which are dramatized yet internalized within the cultural convention. Dr. Tsai remarked that the “refined” artistic representations of the female and the importance of feminine movements are essential to the success of a *fanchuan yiren*:

We don’t take people who are overly feminine, for many of them carry the femininity they were born with into their stage performance. Yet, this “gifted” femininity very often becomes an obstacle to a further improved refined femininity. Moreover, even when some candidates are very pretty after putting on make-up and a costume, if they do not have the talent to act and dance, they cannot transform into a real beauty on stage; they are merely dolls.²⁹¹

Elder Tsai thought that being a gay or an effeminate man did not necessarily suggest a good grasp of cross-dressing performance. Hence, Dr. Tsai made it clear that ultimate femininity was essentially illustrative (not inborn), and was constantly duplicated through conscious learning, training, and practicing.

²⁹¹ Phone interview on July 23, 2005.
Redtop members learned about female body language from videotapes documenting female acting and dancing, as well as live training from dance/model teachers. As I pointed out earlier, many *fanchuan yiren* were backup dancers for (female) singing stars or their dance teachers. These dancers were already familiar with feminine gestures, poses, expressions, and actions. Ong Hongwen, the dance teacher and top star of Redtop, trained Redtop members how to walk elegantly with high heels day and night even when eating meals.\(^{292}\) When Redtop shows started, new members who had not yet had a chance to perform on stage, practiced applying make-up and walking with high heels backstage.

**Voice**

Voice is direct expressions of feeling, meaning, and intention on stage. Developing a female voice can be the most difficult skill for a male cross-dressing performer to obtain. One can easily imagine how difficult it is to train a twenty-year old male to sing/speak artistically in a stereotypical high-pitched female voice,\(^{293}\) even if he was born with a high-register voice. Among *fanchuan yiren* I interviewed, Zhou Xiang, Angela, and Small Tsai Qin were the few who could speak and sing in female voices, and together with their *fanchuan* techniques, they could “pass for” females with no obvious, detectable evidence otherwise. As I mentioned earlier, Zhou was trained to sing the role of the male *dan* at a young age; as a result, Zhou made

\(^{292}\) He had taken lessons from female model at a professional training institute.

\(^{293}\) Female impersonators in Peking opera performance usually started their training at a very young age.
easy progress, ultimately singing contemporary popular songs in high registers with specific soft intonations and articulation. His female singing technique makes his female impersonation even more convincing:

On stage, Zhou Hongxuan (Zhou Xiang’s stage name) wears gipao of the 40s, curvaceously walking forward to sing the song called Jiaodao [Outskirt route], and the audience starts to become restless: somebody suspects that he is lip-synching. Nobody believes that a man could so skillfully impersonate a woman. Some doubt his male sexuality and suspect that he may be bisexual or a female who imitates fanchuan yiren. Later it is proven that 1) He is truly singing live; 2) He is a real man. However, if a man cross-dresses to be more beautiful than a real woman, and if his voice is also completely feminine, people will unavoidably put him under suspicion of being a renyao [human freak]. However, if we consider this suspicion seriously, then we may equally come to humiliate Mei Lanfang… (Zheng 1995: 17)

Voice, as a non-corporeal gender signifier which indicates “nature” and “reality,” is a domain that external forces (including surgery) cannot easily touch upon or change. Accordingly, voice is often a strong/powerful element that conveys gender meaning and gender identity.

Voice is often related to power: the right to speak is often followed by the gaining of power. As I discussed in Chapter III, except for a few “gifted” or well trained fanchuan yiren who are able to speak and sing in female voice, the majority of fanchuan yiren use recorded music exclusively and lip-synch. In Redtop’s early policy, their members were not allowed to speak in public whenever they appeared with make-up and female dress, weather on stage, the media, or television programs.

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294 A popular song of the 1940s in Taiwan.
295 I was surprised to hear fanchuan yiren talking with feminine intonation and articulation in backstage. This seems to indicate that they are into their female roles even backstage. But outside of the performance area, I seldom observe this phenomenon.
This “speechless policy” purposefully corresponds to Redtop *fanchuan yiren*’s concealment of their true identity in public interviews or talk shows, including their names, personal background, and sexual identities. Here, a comparison can be made between *fanchuan yiren* and women regarding the right of speech. Women, traditionally treated as the secondary sex in almost all societies, were often deprived of speech rights in public and in historical writings. To consolidate men’s power over women meant to keep women silent. Similarly, *fanchuan yiren*—another minority group who appropriate women’s role—are obliged to be silent.

Recently, the New Century Cross-Dressing Beauty Show designed a new skit in which a performer expressed femininity at the beginning, then later proceeded to talk in a low voice with male-identified manners to re-announce his “original” sex and “normality.” By doing so, the performer aimed to bring audiences back to “reality” and to remind them of gender dualism. In this skit, voice, as part of gender performance, implies that in the patriarchal society, a feminine voice can only exist as a fantasy; marginal voices are silenced and erased, and only (heterosexual) male voices are legitimate. During the time when *fanchuan yiren* became frequent guests on television talk shows, one noticed that this type of program was presented in a rigid binary frame: linkman vs. disclosers; mainstream vs. marginal groups; and heteronormativity vs. homosexuals/sexual deviants. For Redtop members in particular, even their latter policy allowed their female impersonators to talk on TV programs, their personal stories were very often crafted for the purpose of maintaining the troupe’s “good” reputation.
The significance of *fanchuan yiren*’s “speechless policy” is twofold: it consolidates the orthodoxy of binary gender classification—disallowing any discrepancy between voice and appearance. Further, it reveals the symbolic violence of heterosexual hegemony—muffling other “noise” from gender disadvantaged minorities. The suppression of the Otherness is not limited within performance associated areas; it extends to *fanchuan yiren*’s offstage life, which I present below.

**Offstage Life—Revealing Gender Identity and Confronting Heteronormity**

*Behind the Mask*

Human and the animal are alike,  
When dealing with different environments,  
both have their own protective coloration.  
Behind the magnificent smile, there is a true feeling buried deeply in the heart.  
There is a secret base that so deep no one can reach,  
Only in the serene night, like a wound that is torn,  
Cannot staunch the bleeding,  
but look at blood constantly flowing out from the body,  
It is a kind of pain that nobody can understand,  
This already becomes a habit to him.  
Such are helplessness and sadness behind the mask…

Romansa

296Romansa’s poem put in his own website named *Huali de maoxian* 華麗的冒險 [Splendid adventure]:
What is his secret? Why can he not reveal it? Why does this secret cause pain? What is behind the mask/masquerade? Is it yet another mask? The psychological dimension of a *fanchuan yiren* is often hidden—they prevent outsiders from entering. Romansa, one of my major informants, originally told me that he is a heterosexual and “maybe” a bisexual. He reacted to my survey question about sexual identity by asserting that to label him as a homosexual is to humiliate him. After we gradually built a friendship, Romansa and I were able to speak openly as friends in the context of interviewer and interviewee. No longer in the confrontational position of investigator and observed object, he willingly revealed his true sexual orientation and shared his love story with me.²⁹⁷ Beginning with Romansa’s struggle with his sexual orientation, the remainder of this section will focus on the link between *fanchuan yiren* and homosexuality, sexual politics, psychological constituents, and the “phantom kinship system” in Taiwan.

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²⁹⁷ I attended his performances, took photos, and gave him my feedback. At the time of having interview with Romansa, he was a college student. As a university lecturer, I gave him advice on his college career. Through in-person contact and frequent email exchange, I gradually built up our friendship and his trust in me.
**Fanchuan Yiren and Homosexuality**

From the public media, people have learned that *fanchuan yiren* are no different from other “ordinary” (heterosexual) men who have girlfriends and get married. In order to “prove” that they are “normal” and “healthy,” many cross-dressing actors announce that they are married and have several children so as to fit an oversimplified black-and-white social delineation. In an article researching relationships between homosexuals, male cross-dressing performers, and third-sex publicists, Hong Bitang, the governmental officer of social affairs, writes:

Reruits of *fanchuan yiren* have to submit physical examination reports to prove that they are healthy men….According to some academic research, only 1% or 2% of male cross-dressing performers are homosexuals. (1998: 67)

My study, however, indicates that the “required physical examination report” does not exist and the majority of *fanchuan yiren* are, in fact, gay. To my question on *fanchuan yiren*’s sexual identities, my interviewees’ replies included: “Out of one hundred *fanchuan yiren*, one hundred and one are gay!” “Men who do *fanchuan* are all gay.” “The majority are gay.” “In my fifteen years of cross-dressing performance life, all *fanchuan yiren* I know are all gay.” Romansa’s early reaction to my

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298 This assertion/report has been accepted by other scholars without question.
299 During my interview, I tried to urge my interviewees to recall if any *fanchuan yiren* they know are heterosexual, and there was only one interviewee who could provide me a specific name. Upon the end of my fieldwork, there are only three namable *fanchuan yiren* who are married (to females), and among them only one is still involved in cross-dressing performance. However, some interviewees reminded me that even if you see one or two *fanchuan yiren* get married, it does not mean they are heterosexual. They may do it just to fulfill the expectations of their family and society—for the purpose of having a son to carry on the family name.
previous interviews may explain why Hong’s research results turned out as they did.300

In the theatricalized world, subjectivity is continuously transforming and altering, and masks are thus fluid and changing. The stage is a magical place that can rationalize the unusual, unreal, and irrational, and it is also a “safe” place to escape for all types of deviant performance. It is only in the protection of the theatre and the stage that cross-dressing performers can legitimately transgress the gender boundary. In other words, only through the repetition of stage performance, in the guise of being a heterosexual man, can the male she safely embody constructed female images in public. Gender reinvention and reproduction, on the one hand, are a way to call sex and gender systems into question. On the other hand, they advance homosexuality secretly through the institutions of heterosexual culture.

Contrary to the magic stage, the homosexual’s private life in the real world is often considered a secret story in the shadow of society. Male cross-dressing performers are in a “doubly marginalized” situation: in society, some assume that they are freaks, outcasts, or troubled individuals with weird fetishes; in the gay communities, their decision to act out femininity is looked down upon. As Small Caiqin points out:

Within the gay community, we fanchuan yiren are totally rejected. They think we are hypocritical [referring to their denial of being homosexuals in the media]. If they know you are a Redtop member, they won’t further develop love or

300 According to some of my interviewees, they have ill feelings toward interviewers from the media as well as academia for their stigmatizing and aggressive tactics of representation and depriving fanchuan yiren of their dignity and privacy.
companionship with you, but merely friendship….What it means to be “homosexual” is that we are attracted to people of the same sex. It is only in relationships that are founded on deep love that we can survive these conditions.301

Accordingly, fanchuan yiren will usually not want other gay to know their occupation in the first place. Yalan expressed that fanchuan yiren had no chance for love relationships in the gay community. He recalled that his former lover became angry after seeing his performance. He asked him to take off his costume and make-up immediately after the program was over. Although his former lover understood that it was just a job, he still reacted to it in an uneasy way and even felt ashamed of having a lover who was acting as a female. Ironically, some homosexual social movements fight against all kinds of sexual oppression and discrimination, and yet, here exists very strong effeminophobia and transphobia directed against male cross-dressing performers and effeminate gay.

**Fanchuan Yiren and Sexual Politics**

Interestingly enough, sexual orientation and identification of fanchuan yiren play important roles in cross-dressing performativity, as well as power distribution within their community. Here, I will carefully investigate various sexual identifications of fanchuan yiren, and then show that there are diversity and difference within their

301 Personal interview on August 23, 2005.
community. The following categorization of self-identified sexual orientation is based on my survey among *fanchuan yiren*.302

Table 5.2 A possible categorization for male cross-dressing performers’ sexual orientations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Original Chinese character</th>
<th>Roman script transliteration</th>
<th>Literal English translation</th>
<th>Colloquial English translation</th>
<th>Percentage303</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masculine Gay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Gay</td>
<td></td>
<td>biaozhun de tongzhi /shuang xie–kie yi kie ling</td>
<td>Standard gay/double major (can be either number 1 or number 0)</td>
<td>Either sexually dominant or submissive</td>
<td>Approximately 20% of the community304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effeminate Gay</td>
<td></td>
<td>ling hao/ niangniang qiang</td>
<td>Number 0/ girlish speech</td>
<td>Submissive sexual role/effeminate man</td>
<td>Approximately 80% of the community305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight Men</td>
<td></td>
<td>yixing lian</td>
<td>Heterosexuals</td>
<td>Heterosexuals</td>
<td>Rarely exist in the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the community, the “standard gay” and the “effeminate gay” are the most pervasive types of sexual orientation. These two types consist of different levels of female inclination in terms of sexual orientation, self-recognition, appearance, and

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302 On the survey form, I also give free space to my interviewees for the possibility of refusing to identify themselves with any type (de-identify). Except one, all of them consciously gave me clear answers on their gender/sexual identification.

303 Percentage measured here is based on the information provided by A-gui, the former member of Redtop troupe and currently the troupe leader of New Century Cross-Dressing Show. Most of the performers I interviewed (twenty people) tended to agree with this assertion.

304 In the “standard gay” type, to be sexually dominant or submissive is flexible depending on the particular sexual situation/position with which he feels more comfortable. In other words, if his counterpart is stronger or more masculine, then he will be the submissive and vice versa. Among Taiwan’s gay community this type is called “double major” (here I call it Standard Gay Type) to distinguish it from the “masculine gay” type (gays who prefer to be in the dominant sexual role) and “effeminate gay” type (gays who prefer to be sexually submissive).

305 In the gay community, effeminate gays are rejected and some even think they should not be included in the community.
manner. In other words, each individual finds the coexistence of both genders, with varying degrees of outward appearance, inward determination, and self-identification. The “effeminate gay” includes those who are either clearly feminine, sexually submissive, or identify themselves as females with no intention to undergo sex reassignment surgery. For example, apart from Sun Hongyi, whom I mentioned above, there is one other interviewee who also insists to wear a Turkish towel to cover his/her breasts backstage. The “masculine gay” type and straight men are rarely seen in the community. If the “effeminate gay” is the most common gender orientation in the fanchuan circle, one finds that the transsexual type (including pre-operative and post-operative transsexual) to be the major gender type in third-sex nightclubs.

The above categorization should not be considered rigid or static. Rather it exists in a fluid and changeable gender/sexual spectrum. Within one single type of “standard gay” and “effeminate gay,” there exist nuances and gender variances. Data I have collected also show that a man may switch from one type to the other. For example, Yilian regarded herself as a female since childhood, but later changed his mind and appearance in his twenties--the situation I mark as “Id w/F→gay” in Table

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306 As the Redtop Arts’ deputy-leader Shen Honglong points out: “as a fanchuan yiren, if he does not have certain level of female identification, and only ‘auto-hypnotizes’ to be a woman, then his performance won’t be successful.” However, these fanchuan yiren are asked to show a “male disposition,” when facing the media.

307 A large portion of this group had thought about having SRS, but most of them gave up because of difficult circumstances and various considerations, such as family, cost, older age, and post SRS syndrome.

308 Because of his gender identification, he had a painful experience during compulsory army duty. He told me that up to now, he still could not take off his towel in front of other men or take a shower or sauna with other men like other gays love to do.
5.1, under the category “Gender/Sexual ID.” Yilian’s life story well exemplifies the fluidity and agency of gender in the mind:

The reason that I changed is for the sake of love. Before, when I was totally like a girl, my boyfriends were mostly heterosexuals. However, they truly loved “real” girls, so my love affairs were all very short. Gradually, I have realized that what I really want is the feeling of a “man-and-man together,” rather than a “man-and-woman relationship.” This is the real gay’s state of mind. Hence, the first step is to change my appearance, because a gay won’t want to love someone who has a feminine look. If so, he would rather choose a real woman.\footnote{Interviewed on February 20, 2006. Similar to Yilian’s personal experience, Shuqi also switched from Effeminate Type to Standard Type (both psychologically and physically) for the same reason of being a “real gay” in order to gain “true love” in the gay community. They grew up in families that did not condemn their “feminine games” during their childhood. Out of curiosity and for economic reasons, they were once third-sex barmaids in high school. Both Shuqi and Yilian described their previous appearance as “a beautiful woman without breast”: slim with long hair, thin eyebrow, make-up, skirt, and high heels. Shuqi even took female hormone to have better feminine look. When the general business of third-sex bars and fanchuan show turned down, both Shuqi and Yilian started to reconsider their profession and life styles. They turned for other jobs and later figured out that they would like to have the “man-man” relationship rather than “woman-man” type with their lover. They started to adjust their mind, gain fat, have butch haircuts, and not trim their eyebrows. Shuqi even went to have swimming lesson to gain some muscle. But he told me that perhaps because of the female hormones he took when he was young, his breasts are still soft now. Luckily, Shuqi’s family knew his sexual orientation and did not blame him for it. Yilian still keeps this secret from his family.}

An intriguing point is that male cross-dressing performers’ sexual orientation and identification play an important role in the power distribution within their community. There seems to be a tendency for the “standard gay” to be in charge of administrative work and they are often the top stars, while the “effeminate gay” are more frequently followers in supporting roles. Redtop Arts members who were selected to be presented to the media in their male dress were often “standard gay,” those who did not give an overly effeminate impression to the public, but instead could express a “healthy,” manly image to conform to gender dualism and
heteronormativity. Figure 5.3 illustrates these particular actors who could present a sharp contrast between their original manly appearance and post-make-up femininity. The “effeminate gay,” on the contrary, were usually made to appear in the media in their female impersonation attire.

Figure 5.3 For advertising their 2002 Singapore performance, four Redtop members have photos taken to demonstrate a sharp contrast between their original (a) and post-make-up (b) appearances. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Tsai Shih-tsong)

Male cross-dressing is a process that is both disempowering and empowering. Following Lacan’s notion of sex, we may read male cross-dressing performers assuming the feminine sex (on stage) as a practice of “symbolic castration” (1977: 1-7). The revelation that most of fanchuan yiren are homosexuals and willing to self-castrate
would make the heterosexual patriarchy anxious and provoke a dispute. However, Redtop members’ claiming to cross-dress as a profession (not as sexual inclination or practice) and deny any link to homosexual behavior (making alliances with heterosexual hegemony) somehow constitutes a safeguard against social condemnation and escape from contempt for their symbolic castration. Knowing the true meaning of their false public declarations, we come to understand why male cross-dressing is only allowed on stage. If a *fanchuan yiren* claims himself to be a “sissy,” always bearing the stigma of symbolic castration, he can never gain power through cross-dressing performance. His play then becomes no different from a female masquerade.\(^{310}\)

To the Tsai brothers, *fanchuan yiren*, who psychologically identify themselves as females, comparatively may have less performance potential to improve their female impersonating techniques. This presumption of gender related performance ability also corresponds to the notion of “allegorical masquerade” in the previous chapter: *fanchuan yiren* are not representing an original female; natural born femininity is not the prime essence of their ultimate aesthetic concern. A-gui (standard type), the third generation of Redtop and a frontline star, still maintains this presumption when he recruits for his own troupe:

> There was a mother who brought her son to me. She asked me if I could train her son to be a performer for this reason: “People who love to perform won’t become degenerates.” I then examined the young man and felt that he was not suitable for this profession. I was told that he liked to wear female dresses on the street in daily life. This kind of mindset is not right because performance is

\(^{310}\) See Chapter IV for my discussion on female masquerade, female mimicry, male cross-dressing allegorical masquerade, and male cross-dressing reflective mimicry.
different from having the psyche of being a female. If he is an “ordinary boy” with a delicate and pretty figure, then he will advance greatly in performance. If he loves to be the female part and has done it since he was young, then no.  

Not too surprisingly, cross-dressing performers’ psychological state and sexual politics directly reflect on their appearance. One obvious example of this gender embodiment is hair treatment—another gender signifier. While many *fanchuan yiren* of the “standard gay” type refuse to trim their eyebrows (see figure 5.1 a.b.f) and armpit hair so that they can keep their manly appearance, those of the “effeminate gay” type may like to have thin, trimmed eyebrows (see figure 5.1 c.d.e) and some of them keep their hair long and looking feminine. Manning, who identified himself as a female and sexually subdominant in the gay community, describes his position in the troupe:

I was assigned to make my public appearance on the third day of entering Redtop due to my previous cross-dressing performing experience. However, I played a servant girl in the beginning and had remained at the same rank through the end [of the Redtop]. Leading roles require tall man, so that they can be more visible to the audience. I am much sought after for third-sex cabaret, but not on the stage. Dr. Tsai likes manly types who can make great contrast after putting on make-up: a manly man transforms himself into a charming and gorgeous woman. When confronted with decision/policy making, we need someone who is stronger and can stand out and speak for us. If I were in charge of this, I would panic when someone tries to exploit us.  

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311 Emphasis put by the author.
312 Personal interview on June 5, 2005.
313 Personal interview on February 7, 2006. The “manly type” Manning mentions here again refers to both outlook and behavior conforming to the gender dualistic norm. But one should not ignore the fact that several performers who are hyper-effeminate or even TS also have excellent performance skills. Many of them do not agree that their sexual identification would impede their professional success.
Within the all-male cross-dressing community, there exists a profound hierarchy of power relations and power manipulation. A-gui’s use of term “ordinary boy” in his talk to distinguish himself (standard gay type) from the “feminine gay type” exemplifies this idea. This constantly dividing process of power suggests modalities that, surprisingly, are nearly identical with those of a heteronormative society. Can this, as a nearly-identical phenomenon, suggest the very nature of power and people’s instinctive need for it? It at least suggests that the Tsai brothers’ presumptions and politics exemplify how a heterosexual hegemony and prejudice are maintained, penetrate, and affect the doubly marginalized group of people.

**Psychological Constituents**

What kind of psychological process does a male cross-dresser go through from his/her “primary gender” to his/her “secondary gender”? Fanchuan performances are made of repeated gender codes and conventions, as well as deeply-rooted psychological activities which one cannot distance him from. Most fanchuan yiren agree that, perhaps because of their homosexual inclinations, their personalities are generally more sensitive than those of straight men. Besides their “gay nature,” all of them agree that stage acting more-or-less has affected their movements and attitudes in daily life, even on a psychological level. Clearly, gender is not like an article of clothing that they are free to take off or put on.

Following the previous categorization of fanchuan yiren’s sexual identifications and based on Butler’s concept of gender performativity, I would suggest that the
innate psychological processes of \textit{fanchuan yiren}'s cross-dressing could be generally divided into two types with slight differences from person to person. For the “standard gay” type and “straight men” type, they could “enter” their assigned secondary (or stage) sex from the symbolic domain through the self-imaginary process of being a woman (or, castration on a psychological level). For them, cross-dressing is “doing” (which is distinguished from “being”), as a kind of performance, and requires certain psychological adjustments. Shen Honglong, who belonged to the “standard gay” type and used to be a male dancer in the Redtop, had difficulty in playing female roles. He recalled that the first time Tsai Tou invited him to impersonate the Qing Empress Dowager Cixi, Tsai teased him: “you look like a T!” Shen remarked: “The toughest part was not imitating the look, but capturing the inner spirit of women. It’s difficult to express innate femininity.” A-Gui, also the “standard gay” type, describes his psychological “switch” as linked to the attire:

After I complete my \textit{fanchuan} process, there are two characteristics within me. After complete facial make-up, I still cannot enter the female character. We still talk loudly with our legs wide open and smoke like men. Only at the point when I put on my costume and high heels do I feel that I have transformed into an elegant lady.

However, not every male cross-dressing performer has this sense of transgender identity. Among the “effeminate gay” type, many think that they are not “doing” (or acting) the female role, rather, they “are” truly female. Only on the public stage can

\begin{footnotes}
\item[314] “T” stands for tomboy, referring to masculine lesbian. (Personal interview on June 10, 2005).
\item[315] Ibid.
\item[316] Personal interview on September 14, 2005.
\end{footnotes}
they enjoy temporarily “being” themselves or expressing another side of their inner selves. After the performance, they have to put back on the clothes that are suitable to their biological sex. When asked “During what stage in the process of your female construction do you feel that you are switching into a female role?” Manning responds with:

I have difficulty answering this question. It is because I always consider myself female. Since I was little, I have been a girl [psychologically] both onstage and offstage. I’m always a sissy, feminine, and my eyes are watery and shining—my inside and outside are all female.317

Many male cross-dressing performers do not consider themselves as imitating females or specific female characters. They just express and/or present what is inside their mind, as Tianli puts it: “When I’m performing, I feel I’m presenting myself. I’m not a ‘wannabe’ trying to imitate anyone; instead I am expressing the part inside of myself.”318

The Phantom Kinship System

For most fanchuan yiren, family—a microcosm paralleling the macrocosm of society and state as an embodiment of the kinship system—is the first social existence with which they must battle. To allow their family to accept their cross-dressing profession is already a difficult task, even more so when including their gender orientation. Some of the “effeminate gay” types had clear memories of their

317 Personal interview on September 29, 2005.
318 Personal interview on September 29, 2005.
childhood that had already shown their gender inclination and most of them were forced to erase, or “stamp out” such behaviors and thought. Tianli recalled:

I have two sisters: one is a T and the other is normal.319 I remember that when my parents took us to a toy shop, I picked up a Barbie doll and my T sister took a super robot. I did not have a second thought about this, but my parents told me it was abnormal. I grew up in a traditional family, within which I seldom talked about myself, especially to my father. Later, my parents got divorced. Perhaps because of this event my mother was more willing to listen and communicate with us. Little by little, I revealed and explained my sexual identification and my profession to her. She understood, but still could not completely accept this situation. She even tried to push me into marriage: “you are quite old already; you should get married. I’ve prepared three hundred thousand dollars for you to get a bride,320 so that you can fulfill your duties to our ancestors.”

Some fanchuan yiren still do not dare let their parents find out about their occupation. Yalan, the only son of his family, feels anxious about revealing his occupation and gender orientation to his father (a retired soldier), who always gets annoyed and curses whenever he sees male cross-dressing performance on television. Yalan figured out his true gender orientation when he was transferred to a high school in Taipei. At a party at a gay bar, he unexpectedly learned that a man could transform into a beautiful female to attract the male gaze: “when I see the male audience gaze expressing ‘you are so beautiful,’ this fulfills the part of me that is unfulfilled….I am satisfied.” He secretly started his cross-dressing career by joining the New Century Cross-dressing Beauty Show. He had deeply thought through his situation and the way to justify it to his parents:

319 He uses the term “normal” to refer to heterosexual without a second thought.
320 Here his mother means to “buy” a woman from a Southeast Asian country. This kind of “trade bride” has become a common practice in Taiwan for the past twenty years among lower-middle classes, or men who are old or physically disable.
321 Personal interview on October 13, 2005.
Before, there were many television programs that interviewed cross-dressing performers. I hid myself and avoided talking. I was afraid that my family would recognize me. Now I’ve prepared what to say if my parents find out: 1) in the past, female roles were performed by men in the theatre; 2) I’m not stealing or robbing; 3) I’m born to be a homosexual, and you are the person who gave me the personality and sexual/gender inclination—If I do not complain to you, how can you blame me for this? 4) Every month I send money home; I contribute to my family the most; 5) If you tell me you are afraid of neighbors recognizing your son as a cross-dressing performer, I’m even more afraid than you to let others know my job; 6) What’s wrong with male cross-dressing performance? I’m merely performing it. I don’t behave the same way offstage. I’m still healthy; my thing [penis] is still there; 7) Do you know the mercy Buddha whom you pray to everyday, is originally a male? You think he is a female? No! He is also doing the same thing that I’m doing now—playing the female role [transforming into a female image].

This passage speaks for many *fanchuan yiren*. Regarding the previous story of a mother bringing her son to learn cross-dressing performance, A-gui goes on to say:

If the mother knows that male cross-dressing performers are all homosexuals, she won’t ask me to train her son. I even heard parents who said, “If my son does this type of occupation, I’ll kill him.” Until now, my mother only knows that I’m a *fanchuan yiren*, but doesn’t know that I’m gay. I knew my sexual orientation since I was in kindergarten. It’s my fate; it is not Redtop that made me gay.

The former Redtop Arts’ member Yilian makes a simple but clear assertion about why a heterosexual man cannot take up the male cross-dressing profession:

Men who can become *fanchuan yiren* are gay with almost no exceptions. There should be no ordinary [heterosexual] men within this circle. We gays are free. Ordinary men need women and need to have kids. They have a traditional path to follow. It’s impossible for them to take up the profession. Even for economic

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322 Personal interview on June 16, 2005.
323 Personal interview on June 5, 2005.
need, it could not possibly last long. In those years [ten years ago], the family of his girlfriend or wife would not be happy to see him in such an occupation.324

It is true that in modern Taiwan, family is still considered to be the most important social structure. Single mature men and women are usually under pressure to form their own families. In fact, this is the most difficult situation that homosexuals have to confront.

While most of fanchuan yiren have expressed firmly that they will not marry [a woman], there are still a few who may submit to the socially established practice and to their family’s expectations. There is one performer who indicates that in a couple of years, if his parents are still alive, he may consider getting married to make them happy. The inter-sexual TS Linda [half-way of SRS] also mentioned that if his parents were still alive, s/he would not have gone through with SRS. This unbearable “family phantom” hovering over the transgender (including fanchuan) community is found in another unusual example. Jinmei, a former fanchuan yiren of the Paradise Bird Troupe, experienced being a third-sex barmaid, post-operative TS, and is now a married woman.325 Since her parents did not agree with her sexual identification and plans for surgery, she had to find a quick way to earn money—to be financially independent and to be able to fulfill her dream. After she completed her SRS when

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324 Personal interview on November 3, 2005.
325 Jinmei’s husband is a heterosexual office clerk. They met each other at a friend’s tea party, before Jinmei had undergone surgery. Therefore, her husband knew everything about her transsexual past, but avoided mentioning it after they got married.
she was twenty years old, her parents silently accepted her sexual reality. However, marrying into another family means to walk away from one type of pressure to another: her mother-in-law suspected her original sex and questioned her about menstruation. Her mother-in-law forced Jinmei to make notes on it in order to track her ovulation. Ironically, the mother-in-law, who once was the oppressed object as a daughter-in-law in a traditional Taiwanese family when she was young, here holds a phallic scepter to assume the (pseudo) power of patriarchy and practices sexual oppression upon her daughter-in-law (a “pseudo woman”). Jinmei’s lack of menstrual blood, which is often regarded as “filth” and “odor” by patriarchal society, facilitated her mother-in-law’s sexual oppression. Under the converging attacks of patriarchy and hierarchically structured family politics, the transsexual’s social status is well below that of an ordinary woman.

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Through personal profile documentation, and back- and off-stage observations, I have explored why some men are willing to take cross-dressing performance as profession, and how fanchuan yiren managed their bodies and minds to construct onstage female images and identities. My ethnographic data shows that economic need, wider fame, psychological fulfillment, and personal interest are the major

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326 In Taiwan, SRS is expensive, involving complicated requests and strict preclinical/psychological examinations. Moreover, both parents (if alive) need to sign a letter of consent regardless of the patient’s age. In order to have the surgery done, many TS simply go to Thailand to have the surgery and return to Taiwan to have a physical diagnosis and get their ID changed. Jinmei had her “lower part” done in Thailand and “upper part” in Taiwan, which cost two hundred and twenty thousand NT dollars in total.

327 Even though she plans to adopt children, government policy states that only female-to-male post-op transsexuals can adopt children.
factors for some men to become cross-dressing performers. *Fanchuan yiren’s* complex process of gender transformation is a socio-cultural, physical, psychological, and power struggle. Their backstage preparations illustrate the performativity and the constructedness of gender, and the fluidity of gender identities. Their offstage lives further embody the battleground between government authorities, mass media’s reports, and the performers’ “real-life” experiences with gender ambiguity and issues of homosexuality. *Fanchuan yiren’s* life stories reveal that compulsory heterosexuality was produced by the kinship system (an historical social mechanism), which consists of particular sex and/or gender norms. In order to insure marriage and offspring (patriarchical modes of reproduction), every member in society is further engendered and forced to behave heterosexually. Women and sexual minorities are thus manipulated by the same sources of sexual oppression for the purposes of satisfying social mechanisms.
CHAPTER VI
UPSURGE AND EBBING TIDE

In the previous chapters, I had introduced how fanchuan show emerged and male cross-dressing performers’ onstage performance and backstage lives. In this chapter, I will end the story of fanchuan show by giving a full account of its upsurge and ebbing tide, centering again on the Redtop Arts. As I pointed out earlier, the fanchuan show had an enormous vogue in the late 1990s and early 2000s. It was frequently performed in different kinds of public spheres in Taiwan, including amusement parks, enterprise parties, wedding ceremonies, charitable fairs, night markets, nightclubs, restaurants, television programs, movies, gay bars, third-sex cabarets, and even election campaigns. According to the male cross-dressing actor Penghu Sao, as well as other actors I interviewed, when fanchuan show was the most pervasive, there were four- to five-hundred men working as cross-dressing performers, when including third-sex barmaids, this number would exceed over one-thousand (1987: 187-188). Especially following the emergence of the Redtop Arts, this marginal group suddenly became a central focus in Taiwanese society in the late 1990s. Distinguishing itself from the mocking style of earlier drag shows on television, the fanchuan show created a novel spectacle which appealed to modern tastes.

However, because of the consistent battles in the fanchuan show circles, government censorship of fanchuan show on TV in 1998, natural/financial disasters of the same year, the dismantling of the newly-built Redtop Arts theatre in 2002, and
the introduction of foreign entertainment troupes, *fanchuan show* gradually fell into decline. In this chapter, I will introduce *fanchuan show* in fashion in its time in more details and address major factors that caused the decline of *fanchuan show*. I also remark the possible impact of the *fanchuan show* on Taiwanese society. Finally, a survey of the *fanchuan show* audiences will be discussed.

**Tangled Warfare**

It was said by the media that during the late twentieth century, it was the “war time” period of *fanchuan show*: within Redtop Arts, there was severe internal strife, and other *fanchuan* groups established themselves one after another, wanting a piece of the pie. Beside Redtop, other famous troupes were *Hongpai yiren* 紅牌藝人 [Top Artists], *Huali bianshen* 華麗變身 [Top Arts Entertainment], *Baixue zongyi jutuan* 白雪綜藝劇團 [Snow White Entertaining Troupe], *Jinling hongfen juyi gongzuo fang* 金陵紅粉劇藝工作坊 [Blushing Diva Troupe], *Tiantang-niao gewu jutuan* 天堂鳥歌舞劇團 [The Bird of Paradise], *Xinshiji fanchuan meiren show* 新世紀反串美人秀 [New Century Cross-dressing Beauty Show], *Shamo yaoji* 沙漠妖姬 [Drama Queen], and *Hongling yiren* 紅伶藝人 [Beautiful Artist].

In 1996, when Redtop Arts reached its first success both in terms of fame and wealth, there was a clash within the troupe. Three foremost leading characters, Chen

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328 Members of these troupes were overlapped. At the height of *fanchuan show*, Redtop Arts had about forty members, Top Artists Entertainment had around twenty members, Paradise Bird also had around twenty, and the average age of performers was twenty-five.
Hongliang, Zhou Hongxuan (later Zhou Xiang), and Penghu Sao left the Redtop Arts. Chen was recognized for his unusual beauty. He obtained a title “the most beautiful ‘woman’ in Asia.” Zhou was famous for his traditional training in male dan. As one of few young male dan in Taiwan, his artistic rendition of Farwell My Concubine for fanchuan show was a classic. Penghu was known for his female impersonation of the comic role, particularly his mock-Marilyn Monroe. They cooperated with Angela, one of the earliest fanchuan actors who performed in Japan and China, to form another male cross-dressing troupe called Hongpai yiren 紅牌藝人 [Top Artists], which performed at a restaurant club, called Taiyang cheng 太陽城 [Sun City] in Taipei. Figure 6.1 is the poster of Top Artists’ cross-dressing show at Sun City. The line on the top reads “Spend the same amount of money [as for the Redtop show], enjoy unlimited delight and delicate meals with excellent performances presented in front of your eyes.” This performance style is a typical combination of restaurant clubs, singing halls, and nightclubs.

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329 Earlier than the establishment of Redtop Arts, Angela had joined The Bird of Paradise as a cross-dressing performer and barnstormed in Japan and China since 1988. Her manager Ye Muren 夜牧人, thus, declared that his troupe was the very first professional male cross-dressing troupe in Taiwan. 330 Ye Qitian 葉啟田 (1948-) was the person who financially supported the Top Artists. Ye is a famous singer of Taiwanese popular songs. He began performing at age seventeen and since then has made numerous big hits, including “An Indigenous Lady Getting Married” (1965) and “Dare To Go To the Graveyard” (1965), mentioned in Chapter IV. In the 1980s, when gangsters got involved in the “restaurant show” (as mentioned in Chapter III), he was also threatened. In a negotiation, one gangster was killed and another was seriously injured by him and his followers. After serving a term of imprisonment, he continued to sing and regained popularity. He was elected to the legislature in Taiwan for two terms. As a well-liked star in show business, his invitations to former members of the Redtop Arts were for the hope of reviving show business in Taiwan (Penghu 1997: 74). For Ye’s life story, see http://blog.yam.com/tw_poem/article/5313525 (viewed on January 9, 2006).
Tsai Tou went to court and brought in an indictment against them for misappropriating the name "Redtop Arts." Tsai told the media that the Top Artist troupe misled the public by dishonestly using Redtop Arts’ reputation. Zhou, having a solid background in male dan training, replied: It’s Tsai who misled the public by dishonestly using the reputation of us as the male dan.

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331 In Chinese characters, there is only a one-word difference between the names of the two troupes.
332 In 1997 and 1998, Tsai Tou was busy suing other troupes, individuals, and businesses for misappropriation.
The major reason for this conflict was a disagreement about wages, competition, and jealousy. Because these leading actors were pioneers in their field and had contributed greatly to Redtop’s success, they thought that they deserved a higher wage. At that time, leading actors of the Redtop received sixty thousand NTD monthly (~two thousand USD). Dr. Tsai explained that sixty thousand NTD was much higher than the average income of the average Taiwanese worker. The Redtop deputy-leader Shen Honglong justified Dr. Tsai’s assertion by pointing out that Redtop provided their actors with meals, dorms, and performance lessons. Apprentices received fifteen thousand NTD monthly (~five hundred USD), and once they were able to perform, their wage was raised to at least twenty thousand dollars (~seven hundred USD). For leading actors, Tsai later raised the pay from sixty thousand NTD to one hundred thousand NTD per month (~three-thousand three-hundred USD). The troupe also provided each dancer with a wig, costumes, high-heels, and stage props. But according to Zhou Xiang, this amount of money was yet not enough to pay for costly cosmetics and extra ornaments. In order to have better

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333 Plus tips and other commissions, a Redtop top star could earn one hundred sixty thousand to one hundred eighty thousand NTD per month (~five-thousand three-hundred USD to six-thousand USD) (Ong, personal interview on August 29, 2005). Angela told me that when he took commissions without consulting with any manager, he could earn three-hundred thousand NTD (~ten-thousand USD) or more per month. Yet, he had to spend large amounts of money on costumes and other ornaments. This income was sky high compared to the average income of a general officer in Taiwan: thirty-thousand to forty-thousand NTD per month (~one-thousand to one-thousand three-hundred USD).

334 Most fanchuans spent money on their own costumes in case they had personal commissions. These costumes could cost from five thousand to fifty-thousand NTD. Putting on thick make-up also made their cosmetics run out quickly. According to Niu-Niu, a pair of female stockings usually costs only one-hundred NTD. However, because they split easily during performance, they used a stronger type which was imported from America, and costs one thousand dollars per pair (personal interviewed on February 18, 2006).
looks on stage, many cross-dressing actors spent large amounts of money on luxury jewelry, extra costumes, wigs, and crystal nails to enhance their competitive power.

As a result of the lawsuit filed by Redtop, the Top Artists were prohibited from performing for over a year and their show at Sun City only lasted for less than two months.\(^{335}\) After Penghu Sao’s accidental death in 1997, Angela and Zhou Hongxuan joined another newly established fanchuan troupe named Huali bianshen 華麗變身 [Top Arts Entertainment], formed by Dong Chengying 董成瑩, another famous dance teacher from show business.

The third-sex nightclubs, which provided fanchuan show on the weekend, also joined this war.\(^{336}\) By 1995, third-sex nightclubs sprouted like bamboo shoots after a spring rain. This kind of male cross-dressing in bars and dance halls was a novelty at that time. It appealed to bar-goers and to those who liked adventure or new experiences. In Taipei, there was Xiangjiao xin leiyuan 香蕉新樂園 [New Banana Paradise], Cixiong lian 雌雄戀 [Fe/male Love Affair], Yemaozu 夜貓族 [Night Cat Club], Dongjing 東京 [Tokyo] and Dian jita 電吉他 [Electric Guitar]. In Jiayi there was Dongfang bubai 東方不敗 [the East Never Fails] and Redaiyu 熱帶魚 [Tropical

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\(^{335}\) According to Penghu Sao, because he broke the agreement with the Redtop, he had five hundred thousand NTD of debt to pay back. The Tsai brothers spread a false rumor that Penghu Sao had accompanied guests in gay bars. Penghu Sao in turn accused the Tsai brothers of slander that led to the closure of Sun City (1997: 81). The real tragedy happened in December 1996 when the Top Artists were invited to perform at an inauguration ceremony of a temple in Penghu, an off-shore island of Taiwan, and Penghu Sao’s hometown. Being a well-known performer, Penghu Sao felt happy to return to his hometown. However, on his way home, Penghu Sao fell into the sea in a car accident. His book Yaojiao nanzi 妖嬌男子 [Coquettish Men], talking about the author and other cross-dressing performers’ life stories, was published after his death.

\(^{336}\) Their performance was mostly improvisational. Later, because some fanchuan actors joined them, some of their programs were choreographed.
There were some tangled interrelationship between *fanchuan yiren*, *di san xing gongguan* [third-sex barmaids], and *fanchuan gongguan* [cross-dressing public relation “ladies”]. Originally, a *fanchuan yiren* referred to a professional male cross-dressing performer who does not use female hormones or has not had transsexual surgery. A third-sex barmaid referred to a biological male who takes female hormones or has partial (incomplete) transsexual surgery. In the beginning, professional male cross-dressing performers, perceived themselves as artists, and drew a clear distinction between themselves and third-sex barmaids. However, boundaries became blurry later when some *fanchuan* actors performed at the third-sex nightclubs for higher pay. A new occupation called *fanchuan gongguan* emerged, referring to a cross-dressing performer who works at third-sex nightclubs. Some cross-dressing performers started to take hormones (mainly to improve their skin condition) because they had closer contact with their customers. At the same time,

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337 Information obtained from Manning (personal interview on May 6 2005).
338 “Third-sex” may also be called “inter-sexual TS,” or is on half-way of SRS. Some third-sex have female breast either by surgery or taking female hormones, while keeping their male “lower part” unchanged. According to Manning, cross-dresser with breast could earn more money in third-sex nightclubs (personal interview March 4, 2006).
340 According to former Redtop member Tianli, he earned double when working as a third-sex barmaid after the Redtop Arts theatre was dismantled. However, he prefers to perform rather than being a “barmaid” who has to drink alcohol and to deal with drinkers (personal interview in September 29, 2005).
some third-sex barmaids, who did not like dealing with heavy drinkers, became \textit{fanchuan} performers. Some third-sex barmaids joined cross-dressing troupes and received training in performance, while some were independent individual performers. Without any formal training, many gave performance of a lower quality.\footnote{Their selling point was their gender ambiguity and cheaper price.} As a result, the Taiwanese society’s impression of \textit{fanchuan} actors became unfavorable because of their link with third-sex barmaids. Figure 6.2 shows the Electric Guitar, a third-sex nightclub, located in the red light district of Taipei, while Figure 6.3 illustrates a \textit{fanchuan gongguan} singing for her/his guests.

Figure 6.2 Inside the Electric Guitar, there is a big KTV screen at the back, and a small stage for singing and performance.
The fact that some fanchuan yiren accompanied drinking guests and performed sexual services was nearly identical with that of male cross-dressing entertainers (i.e., xianggong) in the Qing era of the late eighteenth century. Some cross-dressing performers did not put much effort into their performance skills but into maintaining a good appearance and a seductive figure to earn quick money. Such performances had a profound effect on public opinions of fanchuan show. The old Chinese saying changyou bufen [there is no distinction between a prostitute and an actress/actor] comes back to haunt modern cross-dressing performers.

342 See Chapter I for more details.
Meanwhile, the cross-dressing performance was all the rage among collegiate circles. In 1995, a cross-dressing beauty contest was held by the National Taipei Institution of Arts (NTIA) 台北藝術學院. This activity was a new undertaking in academia at that time, thus major mass media all came to report on this event. On September 29, 1996, a *China Times* news report, entitled “The Storm of Cross-dressing Rolled Up Taiwan” reporting a cross-dressing party show at Eslite Bookstore 誠品書店, Dunnan Branch, Taipei. The performers included student theatrical organizations from the NTIA, National Taiwan University 台灣大學, and alumni of Jianguo High school 建國中學. The shows attracted over a thousand people.

Songtian Wanzi 松田丸子, a theatre major and junior at NTIA, learned techniques of make-up application and cross-dressing performance from lessons at his school. He was crowned queen at the 1995 contest at NTIA. The next day, his photo in drag was posted on the front page of *China Times*. As a college student, he had already established the SWET, consisting of NTIA students and graduates. In February of 1996, SWET was invited by the Democratic Progressive Party to perform at the campaign of the presidential election. Since then, SWET has made a good profit by taking commissions from enterprises and political parties. Each year, they perform more than one hundred plays. This means that on average, they perform every three days. Except for a few administrative staff, members are paid per performance without a contract.

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343 Information about SWET comes from my interview with the troupe leader Songtian Wanzi on May 13, 2006.
344 Each year, they perform more than one hundred plays. This means that on average, they perform every three days. Except for a few administrative staff, members are paid per performance without a contract.
well-known for its *fanchuan show*.\(^{345}\) Their performance style largely depended on the request of each commission. In their commercial performances, they highlight products that the enterprise wants to sell, while enhancing the atmosphere. In their 2005 annual theatrical production *Drag Queen*, SWET raised issues of gender, sex, and sexuality by performing the life stories of cross-dressing performers.

Besides SWET, another academic *fanchuan* troupe named Blushing Diva Troupe emerged in 1996. It was formed by male students of National Taiwan University, NTIA, Fu Jen Catholic University 輔仁大學, National Chengchi University 政治大學, and Guoguang Art School 國光藝校.\(^{346}\) Their theatrical productions sharply touched upon issues of queers, queens, effeminate gays, and AIDS. Their representative works include *Lysistrata-the More Queen the More Beautiful* (1996),\(^{347}\) *Love in the Splendid Starry Night* (1998), and *The Trouble All Caused by Sissy Guys* (1998). Their performance was clearly influenced by Western queer theory and ideologies/politics of drag and camp in the 1990s. The actors apply bodily inscription to confront the relationship between the body, sex, gender, and power.\(^{348}\) Cross-dressing performances, accordingly, have been presented in various ways and served different functions in Taiwanese society since mid-1990s. However, since 1998, *fanchuan* troupes had suffered a series of natural/financial misfortunes which now I will present below.

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\(^{345}\) Now, SWET is no longer a pure male cross-dressing troupe. It consists of female dancers as well (also from NTIA).

\(^{346}\) Most of them were graduates of Jianguo High school, also the best (all-male) high school in Taiwan.

\(^{347}\) Originally written by Aristophanes in 411 B.C.

\(^{348}\) See Luo Chingyao (2005) for detailed analysis on these three productions by Blushing Diva Troupe.
Natural/Financial Disasters

In June 1998, Dong Chengying led his Top Arts Entertainment with great vigor and ambition to perform at the Guam Hilton. Taiwan’s major media reported on this Taiwanese male cross-dressing troupe as the first ever fanchuan group performing abroad. Figure 6.4 is the poster of Top Arts Entertainment for its show at the Guam Hilton. The figure on the front left is Angela and on the right is Zhou Xian. The poster shows that their programs were cultural variety shows, including Korean (upper left), Japanese (lower left), Okinawa (lower right), Hollywood (upper middle) and Chinese (upper right and lower center).

Figure 6.4 Poster of Top Arts Entertainment for its show at the Guam Hilton. (Photo courtesy of Angela)

[Image]

349 There were nineteen actors in total, including thirteen fanchuan dancers and six male roles. General members received fifty thousand NTD monthly; for leading actors, sixty thousand and up.
Unfortunately, the number of tourists to Guam dwindled, largely due to the Asian financial meltdown in the same year (which particularly affected Korea, Japan, and South-East Asia) and a Korean Airliner crash in Guam on August 6 of the same year. Originally, Top Arts Entertainment had a one-year contract, but due to poor sales at the box office, they performed for only three months. Afterward, Angela took over the troupe from Dong, and arranged performances at resorts, amusement parks, and beer bars around Taiwan, similar to previous Taiwanese song-and-dance troupes.\(^{350}\)

As for Redtop Arts, after their contract with the President Hotel had ended in May 1998, it also drifted and performed from place to place like Top Arts Entertainment.\(^{351}\) They performed at resorts, wedding gown enterprises, and election campaigns. Since then, *fanchuan show* had evolved from a static (indoor) theatrical performance, to mobile (sometimes outdoor) locales. This arrangement made it easier for people to see live performance close to their homes.

After several months of life on the move, Redtop Arts, aiming to recreate their golden age at the President Hotel, decided to move to Taizhong and established residency at the Jinsha Building on the Christmas Eve in 1998. However, while television programs featuring male cross-dressing shows received very high audience ratings, Redtop Arts had very poor box office sales and eventually had to close down

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\(^{350}\) Aware of the difficulty in developing a show business career in Taiwan, Dong went to China to increase his success.

\(^{351}\) The owner of the hotel decided to demolish the building and remodel it for business use.
one year later. Even after they cut ticket price in half, they did not make up their lost sales. The 1998 Asian financial meltdown may have explained Redtop Arts’ poor sales in Taizhong. Although the financial meltdown was said to have a mild effect on Taiwan, nearly twenty middle-to-large sized enterprises were in crisis and the unemployment rate rose to the highest point that year. People did not seem willing to pay extra for a live show when they could enjoy watching a similar show at home.

In order to enhance their business, the Redtop Arts cooperated with Formosa Television (FTV) and created a special program to promote themselves. The program introduced the life stories of the leaders and members and their training. The troupe then presented a grand reopening at Jinsha in September 1999. Meanwhile, Dr. Tsai, also aware of the difficulty of developing a show business in Taiwan, planned to expend their business to China by making some artistic connections with Peking opera circles there. He invited the famous Chinese male dan Mei Baojiu to Taiwan for promoting Redtop’s spirit of reviving Chinese male cross-dressing culture. However, a few days later after their reopening, the “9/21 earthquake” occurred in Taizhong. Merely a month later, there was another “10/22 earthquake.” After the

352 During their one year performance at Jinsha Theatre, members received half pay for six months.
354 To avoid the decline of show business in Taiwan, Angela toured in Japan.
355 The program presented was like a fiction, which was based on some truths with some made-up stories.
356 See Chapter III for details.
357 See Chapter III for details.
earthquakes, no one dared to go into tall buildings, and unfortunately, the Redtop Arts’ theatre was located on the seventeenth floor. These disasters terminated Redtop’s performance at Jinsha.\textsuperscript{358} The effects of the earthquakes and economic depression after 1998 were widely seen at resorts, scenic areas, and amusement parks. Business in these areas was very poor, and in order to improve their business, entrepreneurs came up with the idea of cooperating with \textit{fanchuan} troupes, as I present below.

\section*{Fanchuan as a Variety Show}

In order to attract families, groups, and individuals of different ages and tastes, some amusement parks hired various performing troupes including magicians, acrobats, and \textit{fanchuan yiren} to provide a variety of entertainment. This “variety show” model proved to be successful. After 2000, Redtop Arts and other male cross-dressing troupes performed at several amusement parks and restaurants in middle and southern Taiwan including the Grand Jiayi Thematic Amusement Park, Jiayi Chinese Folklore Village, and Taizhong Yuemei Sugar Factory. After having performed a few weeks at the Jiayi Chinese Folklore Village, Redtop was asked to perform six times per day and the theatre

\textsuperscript{358} Such a failure forced the Tsai brothers to change their policy of operation. See Chapter III for details.
The Tsai brothers thus asked to renew the contract for overtime pay and price markup for their success in helping the box office. While members were happy about their new found success, managers bargained over price and business negotiations failed. Since then, the Tsai brothers had kept switching their co-operative associations and performance places, and disagreement in payment for performance seemed to be the major reason for it.

Because their performances in middle and southern Taiwan were well-received, the Tsai brothers were encouraged and decided to restart their business in Taipei at the Dinghao Theatre. Their first-rate actors (Troupe A) were all called up to Taipei, and the second-rate actors (or “local style” actors) (Troupe B) stayed in Jiayi Chinese Folklore Village. However, Troup A did not make good sales in Taipei and had to close down after seven months. With their failure in Taipei, and success in Jiayi, and together with other previous experiences, the Tsai brothers made several decisions: ending their vagrant performance life and to build up their own theatre in Jiayi by cooperating with restaurants and wedding enterprises. Meanwhile, The Tsai brothers tested the overseas market. In September 2002, eighteen Redtop

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359 When I attended a performance at the Jiayi Chinese Folklore Village in January 2001, the theatre was so crowded that I barely had a place to stand; all seats were occupied, and I was pushed against the side wall by the crowd.

360 Redtop Arts policy also exposed ethnic conflict in Taiwan. Immigrant “mainlanders” are mostly residents in Northern Taiwan, particularly in the Taipei area, and the language they usually speak is Mandarin. As for people who live in middle and southern Taiwan, the majority are local Taiwanese (or early immigrants), and Fukienese is their mother tongue. Redtop Arts’ use of the term “local style,” with more or less a connotation of inferiority, means those actors who usually performed (lip-synched) songs with Taiwanese lyrics. “First-rate” actors usually perform songs in Mandarin, Japanese, or English.

361 As I pointed out earlier, many people in Taiwan like to feature entertainment at wedding banquets to enhance the atmosphere.
members performed in Singapore for three days (twice a day) and the performance was sold out. They later contacted show managers and a Chinese language television station in San Francisco, and their ambitions to open up the big market of China rose up again.

The Fall of Fanchuan Show

In 2002, the Redtop Arts merged with a syndicate of local business enterprises in Jiayi, named Wei Shi Deng 威士登, to build a plaza consisting of several banquet halls and a theatre. In the media, the Tsai brothers declared that in building this plaza they aspired to attract more tourists and would create more jobs in their hometown, Jiayi. The Jiayi City government officials, including the mayor, came to welcome them, and the Tsai brothers built up a good relationship with them.

On December 18, 2002, the day of their grand opening, Redtop received the shocking news that the newly-built plaza was to be knocked down by the Jiayi City Government because it was a “building constructed without licenses.” According to Dr. Tsai, this disastrous outcome was caused by a faulty application process and their total reliance on the troupe’s executive chairman. Assuming that he had “good connections” with government officials who showed friendliness toward him, the executive chairman of the Redtop Arts cut many corners during procedural paper work. In this case, the fame of the Redtop Arts, on the one hand, granted them certain

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362 The Tsai brothers, the media, and invited distinguished personage within political, business, and cultural circles were stunned. On the television news, the Redtop’s executive chairman desperately climbed to the second floor of the building and threatened the director of the Public Works of the Jiayi City Government with suicide.
level of convenience. On the other hand, they were examined by the public under a magnifying glass. Figure 6.5 is a China Times news report indicating that the Redtop Arts Performance Plaza was to be dismantled. The title is written: “Redtop Arts Performance Plaza is to be dismantled today,” with the subtitle: “Originally planned to have a grand opening tonight; the Public Works of [Jiayi] City Government criticized the business entrepreneur for ignoring the ordinance and building without licenses; like an anarchist” (China Times, December 18, 2002).

Figure 6.5 A China Times news report, indicating that the Redtop Arts Performance Plaza was to be dismantled.

Originally, the land was registered as agricultural land on which there was to be no constructions for commercial purposes. If the land owner wanted to change this, he/she would have had to apply to the government and wait for approval before beginning construction. The procedure of changing the utilization of land is complicated and a long-term project. Many people thus try to find some “short cut” by manipulating and finding loopholes in the law. Redtop Arts did start to build their theatre before getting the government permission. The Redtop’s executive chairman optimistically believed that there would not be a problem, even though the Public Works sent official communications nine times to warn the chairman of being unlawful. Busy in overseas business and performances, the Tsai brothers were kept completely in the dark until the last moment.
Losing both money and their newly built theatre, the Redtop Arts went to perform at a movie theatre and a nightclub in southern Taiwan, but with poor results. Elder Tsai decided to return to Taipei to rehearse for performances in China. Unfortunately, the SARS epidemic was getting serious in China in May 2003, and Elder Tsai eventually advised his members to find other jobs. Redtop members were destitute for a long time; while some still performed individually in small occasional shows at construction sites, red envelope singing halls, museums, and amusement parks, others worked at gay bars, third-sex nightclubs, or became formative artists/designers. The tide of *fanchuan show* in Taiwan seemed to have completely receded. Elder Tsai was in debt and returned to his career as a television actor.

In 2004, there came another chance for renewed business for Redtop, yet it stirred up competition between the Tsai brothers and Redtop members. A representative of the Taiwan Folklore Village at Zhanghua County (彰化台灣民俗村) invited them to perform long-term at their village. According to Dr. Tsai, Redtop Arts usually asked 1,500,000 to 2,000,000 NTD per month (~50,000 USD to 67,000 USD) for providing a group of six to eight performers. After haggling over prices, the price might drop to 1,200,000 NTD (~40,000 USD). The foreman of the amusement park thought that Dr. Tsai’s price was too high, and secretly consulted with a Redtop member, A-gui, with the hopes of convincing some Redtop performers to work for him for a cheaper price.

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364 Phone interview on August 8, 2005.
Having worked at gay bars for a long period after Redtop disbanded, A-gui yearned for stage life and decided to “double-cross” his former bosses and teachers, the Tsai brothers. To avoid the copyright problem, A-gui did not use a title similar to the Redtop Arts. Instead, he gathered other former Redtop colleagues and some 
fanchuan friends to form his own troupe. A-gui undercut Dr. Tsai’s price and signed a contract with the Taiwan Folklore Village. Dr. Tsai expressed his annoyance and disappointment:

Redtop Arts had its fame, but there is no longer a market for it. If I were the entrepreneur [at Taiwan Folklore Village], I would do the same [to save money]. If I could get the same group of people [i.e., Redtop members] to work for me, why should I pay more? In fact, many of our members did perform individually outside of Redtop to earn extra money. But they asked me for my approval in advance. If this were the case, I would have been happy and would have even provided them with costumes. My only request of them is not to use the title “Redtop Arts,” since I built the troupe’s reputation. I’m only asking this out of respect and ethical considerations.

In December 2004, elder Tsai brought several Redtop members to perform in San Francisco. Their program was well-received. Yet, Tsai held back the possibility of long-term performances in America because the Chinese market there was limited and members would have to make large adjustments to lifestyle and language. At the time of writing this study, Redtop Arts was hoping to revive the market for Chinese tourists. Learning that the Taiwan Government would lift the ban on Chinese tourists

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365 His troupe consists of eight members; six are former Redtop members.
366 According to A-gui, he was afraid of losing the performing opportunity again since the Tsai brother’s business negotiations had been very often unsuccessful. He accepted the price 350,000 NTD per months for providing a small-scale fanchuan show (performed by eight actors.)
367 Phone interview on August 8, 2005.
in the end of 2006, Redtop Arts reopened its business on June 8, 2006, at a singing hall in Ximen Ding 西門町, Taipei.

The asking price for performance was getting lower and lower as managers/bosses of amusement parks began to hire cheaper performance troupes from Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Russia. To some managers of amusement parks, Thai transsexual shows and fanhuan show although with a different approach, they were all “transgender shows,” and should be able to achieve the same goal (entertainment). For example, the Yidu Performance Village in Jiayi 嘉義藝都表演村, originally hiring fanhuan show troupes (including Redtop, Top Artists, and Top Artist Entertainment) to entertain their park visitors, eventually decided to invite a transsexual troupe from Thailand, which cost much less. The manager of Yidu, who was on good terms with a few Redtop members, secretly hired one of them to teach the Thai troupe some of Redtop’s popular skits. Figure 6.6 shows the result of this “trade”: a Thai transsexual troupe performs “Standing on the high hillock,” once the Redtop’s popular skit that expressed the beauty of Taiwanese aboriginal dance.
Figure 6.6 “Standing on the high hillock,” performed by the Thai transsexual troupe at Yidu Performance Village in Jiayi, with the same music soundtrack by the Taiwanese aboriginal pop singer A-Mei.

Thai transsexual troupes in Taiwan usually presented sex shows, in which performers are nearly naked and very often deliver sexual implications to attract male audiences. Redtop Arts or other fanchuan troupes have never put on this type of show (Figure 6.7).
Figure 6.7 Sex show, performed by the Thai transsexual troupe, at Yidu Performance Village in Jiayi.

_Fanchuan_ troupe hence, had to lower their prices in order to compete with these foreign performance groups. Dr. Tsai expresses the irony of this situation: “we [Redtop] were defeated by the Thai _renyao_ [human freak], who were trained by my own people”\(^{368}\) The narrow market and low pay made it even harder for _fanchuan_ troupes to survive, and their performance quality got worse. In amusement parks, they presented flowery and showy but unsubstantial and ostentatious _fanchuan show_ , which were performed on a humble stage. Figure 6.8 and 6.9 illustrate this type of setting.

\(^{368}\) Phone interview on August 4, 2005.
Figure 6.8 Top Artist Entertainment performs at Tongxiao Beach Resort 通霄海水浴場, Miaoli 苗栗.

Figure 6.9 Preparations for performance in a temporarily-built backstage.
Government Censorship, Society’s Reaction, and the Impact of Fanchuan Show on Society

In 1995, when fanchuan show emerged as a new entertainment genre, the programming department of Chinese Television System 中華電視公司 (CTS) almost canceled the broadcast of a Redtop Arts show. 369 According to Dr. Tsai, the program was accused of “violating the gentle social behaviors” and “the content being suspicious for self-advertisement [for commercial purpose]” 370 違反善良風俗，單元內容涉嫌廣告化. 371 An intriguing point is that CTS, a governmental apparatus, made every effort to promote Peking opera and other traditional Chinese theatrical genres. For example, fanchuan yiren Zhou Xiang, who performed female impersonations in various traditional Chinese operas, made his appearance as a male dan in many CTS programs.

Nevertheless, the marginal subculture of fanchuan show soon occupied mainstream media via television. Especially in 1998, fanchuan show created mass fervor on television, and male cross-dressing performers were frequent guests on talk shows.

369 CTS is considered by the general public to be the most conservative television station in Taiwan in terms of politics and program selection.
370 In Taiwan, TV programs are not allowed to promote or advertise any specific product/manufacturer. Instead, companies have to pay advertising fee and present their products in time spot.
371 Phone interview on August 20, 2005.
and written about in journalistic reports.\textsuperscript{372} On television, cross-dressing actors were mostly presented from the angle of the voyeur and from a perspective of heterosexual normality (Lin 2003: 194-195). In 1998, two particular television programs named \textit{Taiwan hong bu rang} 台灣紅不讓 (The hottest topic in Taiwan) and \textit{Tiancai bang bang} 天才 bang bang bang [Genius, bang, bang, bang] featured male cross-dressing shows and received very high audience ratings.\textsuperscript{373} These programs were conceived as competitions, for men who were interested in impersonating well-known female characters. Despite their popularity, both programs were fined ninety thousand NTD by the Government Information Office. This was the first time that the government made judgment on \textit{fanchuan show}:

Cross-dressing performance is one way of performance. However, this abnormal way of performance, shown regularly on wireless television stations, will have a harmful effect on children’s development, psychologically and personally. It is unsuitable to program these shows before 9:30 PM, and they should be given a rating for “parental guidance.” According to program regulations, [\textit{fanchuan show}] should be shown after 11:00 PM. (Zhang 1998: 26)\textsuperscript{374}

\textsuperscript{372} Various journalistic television programs gave reports on transsexuals, third-sex barmaids, and male cross-dressing performers, including the CTS Journalism 華視新聞雜誌, the Headline Secret in Taiwan 台灣頭條秘辛 (StarTV), and STV Investigation Reports 超市調查報告 (STV). Television shows framing such gender-crossing minorities include Joyous Number One 歡樂一級棒 (CTV), Handout for Love Affairs 戀愛講義 (CTS), Flying Over Sunday 飛越星期天 (CTV), LKK Don’t Watch LKK 不要看 (FTV), Spicy Police Station 麻辣派出所 (STV), Happy Five Lucky Stars 歡樂五福星 (GTV), and Jacky Show (ETTV).

\textsuperscript{373} These types of \textit{fanchuan show}, called “show ins,” were different from professional troupes like Redtop Arts. The performers were individual male applicants who participated in the program to compete with each other. They often imitated well-known pop singers such as Madonna, Whitney Houston, etc.

\textsuperscript{374} Because of complications due to scheduling and harsh criticism, the producer of \textit{Taiwan hong bu rang} decided to end the program. Other stations followed the suit, which ended broadcasting \textit{fanchuan} competitions on television (Ling 2003: 173).
Although *fanchuan* groups continued to receive invitations to perform for cultural and political occasions, conservative voices against them were always strong among political and social moralists. Dr. Tsai revealed to me that in 1998, Redtop Arts was originally invited to perform for politicians at the Lai Lai Sheraton Hotel. The show was canceled perhaps because of the pressure from conservative attendees.\(^{375}\) After learning this news, Redtop members beat their breast and stamped their feet in deep grief (ibid.). In the same year, the Taiwanese police raided the performances of the so-called *tezhong hangye* 特種行業 [“special professions”] (including bars, pubs, nightclubs, dance halls, massage parlors, spa houses, and KTV/MTV). The police closed down nightclubs and pubs presenting *fanchuan show* or third-sex barmaids for the reason of “disturbing the social order” 擾亂社會秩序 (Hong 1998: 59).

The “problem” of cross-gender groups was brought to the government’s attention. On April 2 1998, a legislative member brought two third-sex barmaids to Taiwan’s parliament, to push through legislation for putting them under surveillance. Director Wang Yifei of the Department of Public Safety in Taiwan Provincial Government refused to shake hands with the two third-sex barmaids because he was “not used to it” (Hong 1998: 58-59). After parliament finished that day, the Department of Public Safety brought about measures of cancellations and bans. Chief Chi Yaotang of the Sanitation Division indicated that if third-sex barmaids were willing to accept help, medical institutions could provide psychological assistance.

\(^{375}\) Phone interview on August 19, 2005.
and physical examinations for individual cases. Chief Tong Qiming of the Social Division pointed out that the government organization had the responsibility of caring the minority groups, and started collecting data on homosexuals, male cross-dressing performers, and third-sex barmaids (ibid.).

Ironically, because of conservative attitudes towards fanchuan show, the practice of male cross-dressing gained exposure in political circles in the late 1990s. While male cross-dressing performance was generally viewed as a vulgar subculture by the government and was under censorship, male cross-dressing performance was often used by politicians as part of their political strategy. Fanchuan show were frequently performed at campaigns to attract attention, and there was even a practice of cross-dressing and “cosplay” among some male politicians.376 On the television news, these politicians would cross-dress to impersonate well-known historical or legendary characters to attract attention for their political views.

It was not until very recently that some politicians began to speak for disadvantaged gender minorities, including lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender people (LBGT). In 2005, in order to advocate gender equality in the workplace, the male legislator Zheng Yunpeng 鄭運鵬 called a press conference. Several legislators and representatives of associations (including LBGT, feminist, and human rights) cross-dressed or wore gender-neutral clothing. Zheng himself wore a wig, a female

376 “Cosplay” is a contraction of the English word “costume play.” It is a Japanese subculture, in which people dress as well-known characters from video games, anime, legends, etc.
dress, and high heels to emphasize the fight against gender discrimination and for equal opportunities.377

Since the governmental sanction on television-sponsored *fanchuan show*, there has been a series of discussions among academic circles. Ling Yuling, for example, points out that in many television programs, male actors often mock females, and these types of programs were never censored. She calls into question government censorship of male cross-dressing competitions on television: why, in this particular context, is cross-dressing considered “abnormal”? (2003: 173)

While the popularity of *fanchuan show* gradually faded, the series of social movements fighting for disadvantaged gender groups seemed to be making progress. He Chunrui (Josephine Ho), one of the foremost scholars in (trans)gender studies and a feminist movement leader in Taiwan, published numerous articles and books on the study of transgendered people, transsexuals, transvestites, and cross-dressing performers. Since her establishment of the Center for the Study of Sexualities at National Central University in Taiwan, Ho had fought for the freedom, emancipation, and equality of disadvantaged gender kinds. Recently, the section on gender equality in the Ministry of Education in Taiwan conducted a program to educate elementary and junior high school students. Videotapes of *fanchuan show* and *gezai-xi* (within which actresses play male roles) were shown in class as teaching material for gender

377 The television news was broadcasted on ETToday, on April 30, 2005.
equality. The class then discussed the debate surrounding *fanchuan show*, and reexamined society’s tendency to judge males and females differently.  

To claim that *fanchuan show* engendered a more open view of gender, sex, and sexuality is maybe an overstatement. However, I suggest that the popularity of *fanchuan show* and pervasion of third-sex nightclubs brought certain issues to the public’s attention: human rights, gender diversity, and gender discrimination. Public exposures of these marginalized gender groups, to a certain degree, may have facilitated society’s acceptance and tolerance of the “Other.” For some of these “Others,” who might be still confused about their gender identity or want to hide their sexual orientation, through media reports and public conferences on *fanchuan show*, they may realize that they are not alone, and may seek out a like-minded community. As Dr. Tsai pointed out, in Taiwan, it might take more than twenty years for these gender minorities to gain rights, but the establishment of Redtop Arts had facilitated the process.

### Audience Survey

Who attends *fanchuan show*? Besides curiosity, what would be their motivation for attending a show? The former Redtop actor Penghu Sao remarked that in the early stage of development of Redtop, they presumed gay would be their major source of audience. Thus, their earliest program was designed for the gay community and they only put their posters up in gay bars. However, for their first two performances, only

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379 Phone interview on August 23, 2005.
the media and a few people showed up. Penghu asserted that this type of performance
did not seem to be attractive to gay (Penghu 1997: 68-69). After getting support from
the Tourism Bureau, Redtop Arts then focused on Japanese tourists, and later it was
opened to local Taiwanese people.

Dr. Tsai surveyed Taiwanese audiences at Redtop shows, and they were mostly
females, thirty to sixty years old. According to the fan chuan yiren that I interviewed,
they also asserted that the majority of the audiences were mature females. As for
those fan chuan yiren who were also working (or once worked) at third-sex
nightclubs, they expressed to me that the majority of third-sex nightclub goers were
career minded females in their thirties.

As discussed in the Introduction Chapter, during my fieldwork period fan chuan
show were often presented as entertainment at amusement parks. People who attended
the shows often had to rush to their next activity. This type of audience may not have
intended to see a fan chuan show but came upon the opportunity during their visit to
the amusement park. Under such circumstances, it was nearly impossible to conduct
an audience survey. However, during my fieldwork at the amusement park in
Zhanghua, I had opportunities to observe audiences and had short conversations with
many people. In addition, I interviewed fan chuan yiren about their interactions with
audience members.

I also conducted an audience (anonymous) survey at SWET’s 2006 annual
performance in Taipei. The play was entitled Banzhung tianhou 扮裝天后 [drag
queen], and it was a three day performance on May 19, 20 and 21.\textsuperscript{380} The performance styles of Redtop and SWET were similar in some level. Yet their aesthetics and political struggles were distinct from each other. Unlike the Redtop Arts’ program which did not intend to challenge the social gender/sex system, SWET’s program often invited audiences to rethink and question conventional gender ideology.

To further distinguish the characteristics of Redtop Arts and SWET, I would like to compare these two modern \textit{fanchuan} troupes with traditional all-male theatrical troupes in terms of professional and amateur. If the Redtop Arts is comparable with \textit{luantan-ban} (a professional troupe), then SWET could be equivalent to \textit{zidi-ban} (a voluntary amateur troupe). The male cross-dressing troupe SWET was originally formed by students of National Institute of Arts; all of their members are university graduates. Just like \textit{zidi-xi} members in the distant past, almost all male cross-dressing actors in SWET use outside occupations as their major sources of income. Cross-dressing performance for them is a flavor added to their ordinary lives. Yet, like \textit{zidi-ban}, SWET’s performance quality is by no means less professional. This comparison further explains that while a professional troupe like Redtop Arts is sometimes stigmatized, SWET enjoys comparatively more respect from the general public, from business owners, politics, and academics.

My purpose in conducting the audience survey on SWET-goers was to cross-analyze the two different sources of audiences for \textit{fanchuan show}. I believe that by

\textsuperscript{380} The duration of the program was two hours and one ticket costed six hundred NTD. My questionnaires were distributed during the last two days of their performance.
doing this, I can present a more complete social profile of fanchuan show. Below I firstly examine my audience survey on SWET’s Drag Queen. Next, I will center my discussion on audiences’ reactions that I collected from the fanchuan community, and cross-compare these stories with the statistics that I obtained from the Drag Queen.

**SWET’s Drag Queen**

In Drag Queen, a song-and-dance drama, the necessity of gender labels was questioned and the possibility of dis-identification and dis-genderization was posed as a challenge to socially constructed gender norms. The performance raised a fundamental question: why must a person be identified as either male or female? The drama asserted that if a person is considered charming, it is simply because s/he is a unique individual. In addition to their in-depth content, SWET set current pop songs to breathtaking choreography, which was popular among the younger generation, especially students. Accordingly, through different modes of presentation, this fanchuan show attracted people of a different generation and different background.

For Drag Queen, I designed twelve questions (see Appendix B). Two-hundred and fifty-six copies were distributed and I received one-hundred and ninety-five back. According to my results, 30% of the audience was male and 70% was female. Like Redtop Arts shows, female audience members outnumbered males. The age of the audience was mostly twenty to twenty-nine years old (55%) and many were students.

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Songtian Wanzi used Drag Queen to complete his MA degree at National Taiwan University of Arts (NTUA) where I was teaching. Therefore, a part of the audience was from academic circles. If I recognized any one as a professor at NTUA, I did not distribute the questionnaire to them, since they probably did not come to the show out of their own will, but were given free tickets.
(32%). Other occupations of audience members included teachers, engineers, businessmen/women, secretaries, bankers, sales men/girls, emcees, DJs, vice managers, reporters, AE of marketing communications, interior designers, government officials, performers, and housewives. Regarding the audiences’ educational background, about half had a B.A. (this includes students) (51%).

The result of my survey on the audience’s gender identity is:

- heterosexual (81%)
- homosexual (7%, including gay 5% and Lesbian 2%)
- bisexual (4%)
- trans-gender (2%)
- other (5%)

According to this survey, the percentage of gender minorities is not very high, suggesting that fanchuan show may attract people of all different gender identities, not exclusively homosexuals.

To summarize this information, the major component of the audiences was heterosexual young career women. This suggests that the male cross-dressing show no longer attracts male audiences like the male dan did two-hundred years ago. Housewives, a major component of Takarazuka fans, only accounted for 4% of the audiences for Drag Queen.

Why, then is fanchuan show so popular among females? The growing percentage of educated women and career women and their ability to spend money is a convenient explanation for this phenomenon. However, this leads to claim about

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382 Among these students, some were Songtian Wanzi’s schoolmates.
383 For detailed statistics, see Appendix B.
384 Fifteen people skipped this question.
385 Takarazuka revue is an all-female Japanese cross-dressing troupe.
power relations. Women, usually objects of the male gaze, were traditionally in a passive position. In the modern *fanchuan show*, female spectators now have the ability to consume, to become the gazers, and to shed their passivity. But are “liberation of female gaze” and “gazing as empowerment” the major reasons why females attend the show? In my questionnaire: question #6 reads “What made you come to this show?” (You may choose more than one answer):

1. Curiosity.
2. A drag show is a type of art. I enjoy music and dance performance.
3. I particularly love to watch *fanchuan show*.
4. I want to see how men “lower their status” to interpret women.
5. To relax.
6. I like a particular performer(s) (□ Songtian Wanzi □ Rose) □ Others

I purposely put “lower their status” (*jiang zun* 降尊) in choice #4 to ascertain if female audiences have the feeling of empowering by watching a *fanchuan show*. Only 9% of the audience chose this reason (twelve females and five males), and there were six subjects who made notes on the questionnaire sheet criticizing this sentence by stating that “men and women are equal.” One audience member pointed out that this particular sentence conflicted with the message that the drama conveyed. Accordingly, “gazing as empowerment” seemed not to be the major reason for female goers.

The choice #6 “I like a particular performer(s)” got the highest score (53%). “A drag show is a type of art. I enjoy music and dance performance” got the second highest score (51%), followed by “Curiosity” (22%), “I want to see how men ‘lower
their status’ to interpret women” (9%), “I particularly love to watch fan-chuan show” (8%), and finally “To relax” (3%). These statistics suggest that the personal charm of the actors and the excellence of the cross-dressing performance were major reasons for people to attend the show.

Interestingly, the percentage of “Curiosity” (22%) corresponded to that of “people who had never seen a fan-chuan show before” (22%). The choice #3 “I particularly love to watch fan-chuan show” (8%) got low percentage. This result may reflect that after the popularity of fan-chuan show began to fade, people were asking quality performances, not simply male cross-dressing shows.

When I distributed the questionnaires, one woman came to talk to me, explaining that she and her mother were fans of the Redtop Arts. Because the Redtop Arts was disbanded, she and her mother came to watch this play. The part she enjoyed the most was the beauty of these fan-chuan yiren. She, as a true woman, wondered why fan-chuan yiren did not look like her (a “real” woman), but could be so beautiful. For most female audiences, fan-chuan show is not viewed as offensive. Rather, these similar, but “surrogate species” functioned as a simulacrum beauty that surpassed, in their eyes, that of real women.

In my questionnaire #10, I ask “Which part of the fan-chuan show are you attracted by?”

1. The actor himself: 23 (12%)
2. The female role he impersonates: 58 (30%)

386 By chance, this woman and her mother sat right next to me. When I saw her write down on the questionnaire that she was a fan of the Redtop Arts, I asked her more about her opinion of the fan-chuan show.
3. Gender ambiguity and ambiguous atmosphere: 79 (41%)
4. The character he plays: 64 (32%)
5. Dance, light, stage design and costumes: 63 (32%)
6. Others: __________

41% selected “gender ambiguity and ambiguous atmosphere,” the most popular answer to this question. The second highest were “The character he plays” (32%) and “Dance, light, stage design and costumes” (32%), then, “The female role he impersonates” (30%), and finally “The actor himself” (12%). If combine this result with that of the previous question #6, one may set forth that the people who came to Drag Queen were mainly for particular cross-dressing performer(s), and their gender ambiguity and the ambiguous atmosphere as the whole were the most attractive for the goers. “The actor himself” got a low percentage, which indicates that if the male cross-dressing actor did not impersonate a female role, he would be less popular/attractive.

Above, I have presented who are the major goers of Drag Queen and why people are attracted by the show. In the next subsection, I will now present the audience’ stories/reactions that I gathered from the fanchuan community and cross-compare them with the statistics I obtained from the Drag Queen.

**Writing the Audience**

Female audiences seem to be bent on beautiful male cross-dressing performers, to be bewitched by their gender ambiguity, and to view them as fantasy/ideal women.
There is a female fan of former Redtop member Chen Hongliang who posts notes on her website to express her fascination toward Chen’s extraordinary:

In fact I always fancy some men who are beautiful in a feminine way. Certainly, transsexuals do not conform to my standard of appreciative criteria. His name is Chen Hongliang. He is from Taiwan. He has not had transsexual or cosmetic surgery. He is a one-hundred-percent man; he is also more beautiful than a real woman. He is the only person I have ever heard of to be called “national beauty and heavenly fragrance” 国色天香. 387

This remark corresponds to my question #7 on the audience’s opinions of drag queens/fanchuan yiren. The choice “Drag queen is the ideal woman and the embodiment of romantic love in a fantasy world” got the highest score (42%).

During my fieldwork, female audiences’ excitement and fascination toward beautiful fanchuan yiren was commonly found. For example, at the Taiwan Folklore Village in Zhanghua County, when I waited outside of the dressing/make-up room backstage, there were often old women who came backstage to greet the performers. When I asked them their opinion of the show, they simply got excited about the beauty of the performers. They waited backstage to get their favorite actors’ signatures and to take pictures of them. One old woman joked that she wished to make them her “daughters-in-law.” Dr. Tsai told me that there was once an old woman who came to say thanks for an excellent performance, saying that she had never been so pleased, more pleased than when her children got married. This praise impressed and encouraged Dr. Tsai very much.

Most fanchuan yiren I interviewed did not want to have close connections with their audiences. They kept their distance to create a mysterious impression and more importantly, to prevent their true sexual orientation from being exposed.\footnote{This also explains why the Redtop Arts could not develop a fan club like other stars.} However, several former Redtop members recalled how warm they felt when some audience members came to greet them backstage, and later came to watch the show again and again and bringing homemade food or local appetizers to the performers. In these cases, performers would welcome their presence. During one of my visits, I met a fashionable woman whom A-gui called “godmother.” Living in the hotel at the same amusement park, the godmother came to visit A-gui and wanted to take care of him for one week. She told me that she was originally his fan and later became his good friends. She, as a divorced woman and mother of a lesbian, understood that these young men were gay and she had strong sympathy for them.

Not all stories were bright, warm, and encouraging. A small number of people who came to fanchuan show were “judgmental,” “unfriendly,” “unconventional,” “inadmissible,” or “abnormal,” as described by fanchuan yiren I interviewed. During my fieldwork at the Taiwan Folklore Village, I heard a few people say that they were “not used to seeing this kind of performance,” and some left during the performance. A-gui recalled that there was once a person who yelled out at the entrance of the theatre “come to see the renyao [human freak] fanchuan show.” A-gui walked up to the man and said: “Sir, we are not renyao. We are men who cross-dress only for performance.” The man replied: “I bet you one thousand dollars, if you dare to take
off your shirt to prove that you did not take female hormones, you win the money.”
A-gui won the bet.

Several *fanchuan yiren* revealed that they had taken some unusual private commissions. They were asked to assist male clients in transforming into females; which included helping them cross-dress and put on make-up. Many of their clients had high social statuses and good jobs. Ong Hongwen was once contacted by a manager of a bank, who was a married man with kids. After helping him cross-dress in the manager’s private place, Ong was asked to watch him perform [like a cross-dressing performer]. Ong received a large amount of payment for this task. Ong interpreted the manager’s behavior as a way to release tension and stress. Can watching a *fanchuan show* also relieve tension? According to my statistics, a small portion of people came to watch the show for this reason (3%). Ong pointed out that after the emergence of *fanchuan show*, several studios established cross-dressing services. They provided a photo salon and assistance with cross-dressing.389

There were also some people who admired the cross-dressing profession and wanted to be part of it. According to Dr. Tsai and A-gui, after their shows, a few cross-dressed men approached them, asking to join the group. In addition, there was a cross-dressing actress from *gezai-xi* invited Ong to perform together to present a “double” cross-dressing play.

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389 For example, Zhou Xiang opened a studio and asked about 10,000 NTD per person. According to Ong Hongwen, nowadays this service costs only 3,000 dollars per person (phone interview on August 27, 2005).
While some people are fascinated by *fanchuan* performance, others may worry about its influence on children, regarding gender recognition. Redtop *fanchuan yiren* Ong Hongwen, recalled that when their troupe performed in San Francisco in 2004, they made an appearance on a local Chinese television station, on which audiences could call in. After a half-hour of their performance, they received phone calls full of praise and welcome. Yet, a father called in expressing his annoyance and complained: “Why do you put *fanchuan show* on television? It will mislead my children.”^390^ Ong was surprised to learn that even in the U.S., known for its openness and liberal nature, there still existed such conservative Chinese immigrants. Another example, in 2005, *Matsu News* 馬祖日報 solicited articles concerning local peoples’ aspiration for the Year of Education, Culture, and Tourism in Matsu 「教育、文化、觀光年」，鄉親有何願景. A reader wrote a letter to the editor:

> Regarding the impetus to program cultural activities, I hope that the cultural department can be more careful in selecting performing groups and pay attention to their content and quality. Please do not invite performers like the *renyao* *fanchuan show*. The content is too vulgar, and would affect the value judgment of young children. (March 19, 2005)^391^

However, regarding my question for *Drag Queen* goers, “What kind of influence do you think *fanchuan show* would have on gender education and our society?” 89% selected “Good: It subverts the gender duality and presents a diverse and opened gender culture.” In response to my question: “Do you think the *fanchuan show* is unsuitable for children to watch,” one female audience wrote:

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^390^ Reported by Ong, phone interview on August 25, 2005.

It is arbitrary to assert that the *fanchuan show* has a good or bad influence on children. It really depends on the parents’ attitudes, how they educate their kids, as well as the degree of the kids’ maturity.

This note and statistics reflect audiences’ maturity and open mind toward gender reversal performance. Another male audience’s reaction to the show marked the subversive power of *fanchuan show*: “After tonight, my confidence toward my own self [gender] identity was shaken. At least part of it was disturbed and subverted.”

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Since their establishment, the Redtop Arts and their *fanchuan show* have been controversial, and Redtop experienced dramatic rises and falls in popularity. Its popularity reflected the general public’s vital interest in the crossing of gender boundaries, the pleasure of temporary transgression, and the increasingly diverse entertainment industry in postmodern Taiwan. However, vicious competition between *fanchuan* troupes, economic deflation, uncontrollable disasters, moralist criticism, government censorship, and the introduction of less expensive foreign entertainment troupes all contributed the decline of Redtop and *fanchuan show* as a whole.

Regarding *fanchuan show* goers, my survey shows that *fanchuan show* is well received among females. Lacan’s notion of the Symbolic (discussed in Chapter IV), may partially explain such a phenomenon. Female audience members, compare themselves to these “beautiful” men, and consider that what they have and what they don’t have, and finally submit themselves to the “privileged” “beautiful” men—acknowledging allegiance to patriarchal interests. At the same time these “beautiful”
men provide an image of soft, sensational, attentive, understanding, caring, and violence free, the quality that may not easily found in real world men.

Although *fanchuan show* has fallen into decay in recent years, my survey in 2006 shows that many young audiences had strong opinions about gender equality, gender criticism, gender identity, and gender autonomy. One subject remarked to my question about gender identity: “Labels are not important. The important thing is that it’s your own choice.” I view this remark as a late resonance to a Redtop’s early skit entitled “My Own Road.” The selection of the popular song “My Own Road” as the background music appropriately expresses the central idea of this skit and brings the audience into the performer’s state of mind. The lyrics read:

This is my own choice, my own road.
I don’t ask for the result, but effort.
At least, I have convinced myself.

This is my own choice, my own road.
Perhaps it’s full of frustrations, but not toilsome.
At least, I have convinced myself.

This is my own road.393
This is the reason I don’t complain
This is my own choice, my own road.

這是我自己選擇的路
不問結果 卻只想付出
至少我已經說服我自己

這是我自己選擇的路
也許坎坷 卻不算辛苦
至少我已經說服我自己

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392 This is a skit of a dancer’s self-dramatization, which I have introduced in Chapter IV.
393 The following three lines of lyrics are in English, so no original Chinese lyrics.
The message of gender autonomy is clear, and my survey suggests that the public is moving toward the direction of a more tolerant and understanding environment for gender minorities. Although the emergence of *fanchuan show* was certainly not a direct challenge to rigid social gender norms, it opened up an opportunity for the public to rethink, reflect, and redress the miscarriage of injustice to the “Others.”
CONCLUSION

*Fanchuan show* is a Taiwanese popular entertainment genre that emerged in the mid-1990s. In the previous chapters, I have examined six aspects of *fanchuan show*: the history of male cross-dressing performance in China and Taiwan; the emergence of modern Taiwanese show business; the meaning of the music presented in *fanchuan show*, especially in Redtop Art’s programs; *fanchuan yiren* on- and offstage; and the significance of *fanchuan show* in Taiwanese society. By closely analyzing Redtop Arts’ programs, its administrative policies, and its members’ life stories, I have presented cultural-political transformations in Taiwan, discussed the Taiwanese struggle with national identity, addressed the social values of gender, and uncovered the strategies of negotiation that *fanchuan yiren* used to survive in compulsory social and family systems.

While the history of male cross-dressing in China and Taiwan has served as a channel for legitimizing the modern *fanchuan show* and shaped the nature of its performance, there are fundamental differences between traditional theatrical male cross-dressing in the distant past and *fanchuan show* as popular culture in the present. My analysis of the re-emergence of male cross-dressing performance suggests that in Taiwan, contemporary male cross-dressing engages and is engaged in conveying contemporary socio-political values and ideas. While it shares some characteristics with the theatrical tradition of the male *dan*, the modern *fanchuan show* has created its own distinct identity through the establishment of new characters and roles.
Since its emergence, the *fanchuan show* has aroused public interest and triggered moral condemnation and government censorship. Its popularity has often existed in direct ratio to moral and public criticism. While Redtop Arts did not allow its performance styles to exceed that of censored eroticism and pornography, other *fanchuan* groups have crossed the line, “setting off an alarm” in order to attract audiences in a competitive market. Like *xianggong tangzi* [the private residence used by male cross-dressers to serve and entertain governors or rich men] in late eighteenth-century China, in modern times, some *fanchuan yiren*’s cross-dressing habits have extended into their off-stage lives. The widely established third-sex nightclubs, for example, have often involved salacity and prostitution, and as a result, the public’s opinion of *fanchuan show* has become more negative.

Despite controversial criticism, *fanchuan show* troupes function similarly to the traditional *luantan-xi* and *zidi-xi*, as well as modern song-and-dance troupes and more recent entertainment genres in Taiwan. The traditional concept of creating excitement for important life events is still present in modern day Taiwan. *Fanchuan show* performances help to gather a crowd, enhance the atmosphere, entertain both people and deities, and stimulate commercialism. They headline various types of ceremonies and parties—religious, commercial, political, or domestic. Ironically, *fanchuan show* has been viewed as a kind of “hip” music activity that helped to commemorate modern Taiwanese communal life, accompany social rituals, and advertise public events.
One key theoretical concept in my study is hybridity, as discussed in Chapter III. Taiwan’s leading fanchuan show troupe, Redtop Arts, can be described as a “mixture of mixtures.” Redtop adopted the historical and cultural legacy of male cross-dressing performance and incorporated traditional theatrical elements in order to create their own niche in modern show business. The practice of “consuming nostalgia,” found previously in singing halls in Taiwan, was magnified in Redtop Arts’ programs. As I suggest in my analysis, Redtop Arts melded diverse modalities of hybridity, including diasporic assimilation, postcolonial mimicry, global cultural pastiche, and cross-gender ambiguity.

The musical selections performed in fanchuan show reflect political, social, and cultural changes that took place in Taiwan from 1949 until the early 2000s. Redtop’s programs in particular, epitomized Taiwan’s cultural-political struggle with identity through long-practiced, conscious and unconscious hybridization. Their performances and policies also reflected Taiwanese peoples’ constant struggle with and negotiation between Chinese cultural inheritance and de-Chinalization, postcolonial sentiment and decolonization, as well as localization and globalization. Redtop’s citation of various cultural elements gave further insight into the complexity, or even impossibility, of Taiwanese cultural and national identity. By taking into consideration global accessibility and commercialism, Redtop’s programs posed questions of vital interest to present-day Taiwan as it looks toward the future.

Regarding Redtop’s onstage presentation of female images and gender roles, most of their programs reinforced and consolidated the orthodoxy of binary gender
classification. Redtop Arts thus served as an active agent in the maintenance of rigid female categories that were historically and socially constructed. Paradoxically, Redtop performers’ gender-reassignment processes at the same time revealed the constructed nature of femininity. That is, while Redtop reaffirmed traditional gender conformity, its display of gender reversal highlighted the performativity of gender and sex, demonstrating that they both can be socially constructed through the repetition of codes.

I have classified the female images produced by Redtop Arts into two major categories, and each category consists of two subtypes: allegorical masquerade (including hyper-femininity and mythical characters) and reflective mimicry (including grotesque androgyny and lifelike femininity). These representative images reflect both male sexual fantasy and women’s expected roles in patriarchal society. The growth and decline of sexual availability and sexual activity is akin to a swing of the pendulum of power relations between men and women. My research suggests that while the artistic stunner, the seductive “Other,” and the androgynous are sexually active and psychologically mythical (and thus seize power), virtuous women are expected to be sexually passive and socially subordinate, thus affirming patriarchal power.

My study of male cross-dressing performers’ backstage preparations illustrates that a sexed physical body is an apparatus that reflects the social sex/gender system. The way cross-dressing actors denaturalize and utilize their bodies highlights the illusory nature of female masquerade, which is constructed and controlled by
patriarchal society. It is under such patriarchy as well as ideals of heteronormity, that.
Redtop Arts and its successors have not only continued to avoid challenging
traditional gender codes, but have also reinforced traditional gender conformity to
meet social expectations.

The majority of male cross-dressing performers identify themselves as gay.
Cross-dressing actors’ struggle with identity offstage was an undertone in their
performing lives. My ethnographic data, on the one hand, show that the “standard
gay” and the “effeminate gay” are the most pervasive types of sexual orientation in
the fanchuan community. On the other hand, my data demonstrate the fluidity of the
gender identities of fanchuan yiren. Their complex process of gender identification
and transformation represents a myriad of socio-cultural, physical, psychological and
power struggles. Furthermore, male cross-dressing performers’ sexual orientation and
identification impacted their onstage performance as well as the distribution of power
within their communities offstage. There exists a profound hierarchy of power
relations and manipulation within the fanchuan community. Such phenomenon may
suggest that heterosexual hegemony has extended its influence on homosexual
subcultures to further suppress doubly marginalized gender minorities.

In my study of fanchuan yiren’s’ offstage lives, I have identified four major
factors that come into play when choosing fanchuan yiren as a profession: economic
need, wider fame, psychological fulfillment, and personal interest. My data indicate
that fanchuan actors’ family backgrounds are spread widely among lower-middle,
upper-middle, and well-to-do social classes. Studying male cross-dressers’ offstage
lives also reveals that their subculture is not necessarily free from the dominant culture’s rigid gender identification and sexual preference norms. *Fanchuan* performers’ real-life experiences represent a struggle between government authorities and gender ambiguity, and between the mass media and homosexuality. Their body politics and body autonomy serve as indirect challenges to socially constructed ideas of gender. It is under the protection of theatre that these cross-dressing actors in Taiwan manage their physical bodies while silently expressing, inscribing, and embodying unmentionable truths. Members of Redtop were forced to publicly present themselves as sexually “normal;” they could only reveal their true life stories to an inconspicuous female scholar.

Another important part of my study is the reception analysis of selected *fanchuan show* performances. The results of my investigations echo Dr. Tsai’s previous claim that people who attend *fanchuan show* are mainly career women with disposable income. However, while mature career women were the major component of Redtop’s audiences, they were not the type of woman that Redtop Arts frequently depicted on stage. Images of modern career women almost never appear on the *fanchuan show* stage, because modernized career women who have obtained economic and sexual independence (and thus have gained power) are threatening to men. Redtop Arts’ programs reflected patriarchy’s incomplete modernity and its culture of resistance by ignoring progressive changes and refusing to link modernity with women. As Robert J. C. Young points out:

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394 The only type of career woman Redtop Arts ever depicted was an airhostess, generally recognized in Taiwan as a high-paid or high-class maid.
Cultural nationalists tended to define themselves not against modernity in terms of technology, but against its implications for women. Women are often taken to represent the mainstay of the cultural identity of the nation, retrieved for the present from the society of the past. (2003: 97)

Could watching *fanchuan show* be an outlet for suppressed collective libido female? How were these male-constructed images of women understood and interpreted by female audiences? In addition, the interchange of sexual desire and power relations between male cross-dressing performers and female spectators would be another topic for future study.

The rise and fall of *fanchuan show* as a mass cultural entertainment genre in Taiwan represents a close connection with socio-economic shifts as well as a change in Taiwanese peoples’ taste in entertainment. The decline of *fanchuan show* largely resulted from consistent battles within *fanchuan show* circles, government censorship of *fanchuan show* on TV, natural/financial disasters, and the hiring of less expensive performance troupes from Southeast Asia and Russia. Intriguing questions that can be raised here include: what is the significance of the replacement of *fanchuan show* by transsexual shows from Thailand? Is there a difference in audience perception between Redtop Art’s representation of Taiwanese aboriginal dance and the Thai representation of Redtop’s Taiwanese aboriginal dance? The factors of market competition and audience interest, as well as the phenomenon of cultural mimicry should be viewed in a corresponding socio-cultural context. This context would include the introduction of foreign laborers, brides, and entertainers to Taiwan in the
past twenty years, which resulted in further hybridization, another topic for future study.

By observing the pervasiveness of *fanchuan show* over the past ten years, it is clear that Taiwanese society’s attitude toward gender-disadvantaged minorities has changed. The high frequency of exposure of *fanchuan yiren* in the media and as a result of governmental sanctions has raised awareness among the general public, politicians, scholars, and specialists regarding compulsory heterosexuality, promoted discussions of gender and sex, and encouraged efforts to be put into the battle for gender equality.

In closing, I would like to raise a few important issues regarding the significance of my study, as well as its problematic aspects—especially how it fits into the field of ethnomusicology. Since the subject of my study involves music performances, and fieldwork has been my primary research method, one could say that my work belongs to the ethnomusicological tradition. Yet, the subject of my study—*fanchuan yiren* and their relationships with the music they perform—sets my work apart from other ethnomusicological studies. My dissertation is not a study of music making per se; *fanchuan yiren* do not produce music—the majority of *fanchuan* actors lip-synch to pre-recorded music, and thus are not considered musicians. The music used in *fanchuan show* reflects only the partial identity of *fanchuan yiren* (as Taiwanese), and *fanchuan yiren* do not identify themselves with the music they perform. In the case of Redtop Arts, performers did not choose the music; instead, administrators selected the music that they thought to be the most
representative of Taiwanese (mass) culture, the most appealing to the general public, and the most suitable for their skits. Therefore, music played in Redtop shows was not a direct reflection of fanchuan actors’ gender-related lives and struggles. Accordingly, Redtop fanchuan actors merely functioned as tools, or mediums, for acting out stories and capturing the interest of mainstream patriarchal society. The music-making activities and complex idea/behavior/process in fanchuan show are different from that of gender minorities (LBGT) in Western societies, where studies of music in these communities present a certain connection between gender-defined minorities’ lives, struggles, and/or identities, with the music they make, use, and enjoy.

As Bruno Nettl points out:

Ethnomusicology does not seem to have come up with a general theory of what a variety of gender-determined identities and relationships, such as homosexuality, bisexuality, or the transgendered, have to do with music. This is surely related to the difficulty of finding interculturally valid and acceptable terminologies and taxonomies of identities. (2006: 421)

I have addressed this issue in my study by introducing theoretical approaches that do not appear in canonical ethnomusicological works. At this point, it may be too early to create a general theory of the ethnomusicological study of gender-defined minorities, but my intention is that my approaches to this type of research can contribute to the construction of such discourse.

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395 A Redtop skit called “My Own Road” is perhaps the only one piece that was designed to depict cross-dressing performers’ training. Yet, the song was not originally composed for gender minorities, and the lyrics have nothing to do with gender struggle and identity. See the beginning of Chapter IV for a depiction of the play, and the end of Chapter VI for the lyrics.
As mentioned above, I have pondered the question of bringing my experience and background as an ethnomusicologist to a study of musical activity that has been unexplored by scholars in my field. Throughout this study, as a member of Taiwanese culture, I have been continuously aware of agendas behind my research. A critical concern of mine has been that I am a Western-trained ethnomusicologist studying the “neglected other,” yet this “other” is part of my own Taiwanese culture. In what ways have I influenced the Western and local traditions that I have studied? Have I intervened in the transmission of these traditions?

In order to understand the vast complexities surrounding *fanchuan show*, I have drawn upon a range of theories, both indigenous Taiwanese and of the Western canon. I have employed traditional Taiwanese historical, theatrical, and literary approaches, as well as Western postcolonial theory, cultural studies, and queer and feminist theory. I have devoted each chapter to a central issue, concept, or a group of principle questions about *fanchuan show* for fulfill the purpose of a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon of postmodern Taiwan. Abundant archival research and ethnographic data have both verified and challenged contemporary studies on *fanchuan show* and *fanchuan yiren*. In doing so, my intention is to encourage further discussion of gender-based ethnomusicological research, and to develop a more systematic theoretical approach to these studies.

I would also like to suggest a future direction in considering *fanchuan show* a microcosm of Taiwanese social/gender culture in terms of constructing Taiwanese national identity. As pointed out above, Redtop’s programs were originally designed
to represent Taiwanese cultural identity rather than to reflect *fanchuan* performers’
gender identity. However, in what way did the Redtop Arts’ *fanchuan show*
legitimately represent Taiwan and Taiwanese identity? Could there be a connection
between the two? Perhaps Taiwan’s ambivalent national identity and its marginalized
international position post a comparative link to *fanchuan* actors’ ambiguous gender
identity and marginalized status. Taiwan’s ambiguous diplomatic language toward
China is comparable to *fanchuan* actors’ masking practice toward heterosexual
society. In order not to offend the Beijing regime, the Taiwanese government avoids
claiming their sovereignty when speaking to Beijing authorities. In a similar way,
*fanchuan yiren* choose not to reveal their real identities and sexual orientations when
confronting heteronormative patriarchy. Both Taiwan and *fanchuan* actors have been
forced not to speak/act as who they truly are (or want to be) under the imposing
hegemony. The overlapping characteristics of Taiwanese national identity and
*fanchuan yiren*’s gendered body politics—i.e., masking and surviving,
marginalization and otherness, ambiguity and negotiation—raise fascinating issues
that merit further exploration.

It is the nature of *fanchuan show*—conveying notions of ambivalence,
ambiguity, and otherness—that prompted me as an ethnomusicologist to carry out my
investigations. I have examined the significance of Redtop Art’s intriguing and
complex performance practices, of which music plays an integral part. It is my hope
that this study of Taiwanese *fanchuan show* and *fanchuan yiren* will enrich the field
of ethnomusicology, expand existing intellectual boundaries, and broaden the subject matter of Chinese and Taiwanese studies of music and culture.
GLOSSARY

Aiqing de chia-chia 愛情的恰恰
Aiqing mambo 愛情曼波
Aiqing tango 愛情探戈
Akimoto Yasushi 秋元康
Anhui 安徽
Anle Shanqiao 安樂山樵
Apiao-dan 阿漂旦
Ayu-dan 阿宇旦 (Huang Yu 黃宇)
Baixue zongyi jutuan 白雪綜藝劇團
bangxi 綁戲
banzhuang 扮裝
banzhuang huanghou 扮裝皇后
banzhuang biaoyan 扮裝表演
banzhuang tianhou 扮裝天后
Baoan gejutuan 寶安歌劇團
Baodao mambo 寶島曼波
beiguan luantan 北管亂彈
bensheng-ren 本省人
biantai 變態
Bi Yuan 畢沅
budai-xi 布袋戲
Cai Jialu 蔡家祿
caiqiao 踩蹺
canjun xi 參軍戲
caihaxi 採茶戲 or sanjiao caicha 三腳採茶
Chang lianpu 唱臉譜
chaoju 潮劇
chaozhou-xi 潮州戲
chashui 茶水
che guxi 車鼓戲 or chegunong 車鼓弄
Chen Chengsan 陳澄三
Chen Delue 陳得祿
Chen jinlu 陳進祿
Chen Maoren 陳懋仁
Chen Minji 陳明吉
Chen Shuibian 陳水扁
Chen Wangceng 陳旺樅
Chen Yinguan 陳銀官
Chen Yongling 陳永玲
Cheng Yanqiu 程碗秋
Chengxin 稱心 (樂伎)
Cixi 慈禧
chou 丑
chou jiaou 丑角
chou po 丑婆
chuanju 川劇
Cixiong lian 雉雄戀
cixiong nanbian 雉雄難辨
Cui Huijing 崔惠景
Cui Lingqin 崔令欽
Cui Taiqing 崔苔青
daliyuan 大梨園
danghong huadan 當紅花旦
dangjia huadan 當家花旦
Danshui 淡水
da xi 大戲
Dazhengfeng gejutuan 大振豐歌劇團
Deng Yuxian 鄧雨賢
Dian jita 電吉他
dianzi huache 電子花車
Dinghao Theatre 頂好劇場
Ding Jizhi 丁繼之
Dongfang Bili 東方比利 (Wangwang 汪汪)
Dongfang Bubai 東方不敗
Dongjing 江京
Dou ‘e yuan 童娥冤 [Injustice to Dou’e]
Duanxiu pian 斷袖篇
Emperor Hui 惠帝
Emperor Qianlong 乾隆帝
Emperor Xizong 僖宗
enka 演歌
erhuang 二簧
fanchuan 反串
fanchuan gongguan 反串公關
fanchuan rechao 反串熱潮
fan mujian 放目箭
Fang Xuanling 房玄齡
Fei 廢帝
Fei Xiang 費翔
Feng Monglong 馮夢龍
feng sào 風騷
Fulan-she 福蘭社
Futaba Yuriko 二葉百合子
fùyáo 服妖
Gai Qisheng 蓋七省
Gaoqiao-zhen 高蹺陣
Gezai-xi 歌仔戲
gongdi show 工地秀
Gong-yue She 拱月社
Gu Zheng-qiu 顧正秋
Guo Huai 郭懷
Guo Meizhu 郭美珠
gewu-tuan 歌舞團
guoci 國粹
guoju 國劇
guoyu 國語
guoyue 國樂
Gu Zuo 顧佐
He Shen 和珅
He Yan 何晏
Hinakawa Namiliu 平川浪竜
Huangmei 黃梅
huadan 花旦
Hua Mulan 花木蘭
Huaying 懷寧
huaju 話劇
Huali de maoxian 華麗的冒險
Huidi 惠帝
hujia 滬劇
hong tou yun ding 紅透雲頂
hunxue-ge 混血歌
Huomingzai-dan 火木仔旦
I Ching 易經
Jiaofang ji 教坊記
Jiaosizhi 郊祀志
jiaban 家班
Jiang Meiqi 江美琪
Jiang Wutong 蔣武童
jiang zun 降尊
Jianguo High school 建國中學
Jiao Xun 焦循
Jingju 京劇
jinghu 京胡
Jinling hongfen juyi gongzuo fang 金陵紅粉劇藝工作坊
Jinsha Building 金莎大樓
Jinshu-dan 金樹旦
Jin ping mei 金瓶梅
Jinshu 晋書
Jinyuyi gejutuan 錦玉已歌劇團
jiujiao-xi 九角戲
Jushuo 劇說
Kang Zhengguo 康正果
Kawano nagareno youni 川の流れのように
Kikuchi Akiko 菊池章子
Kouhaku Utagassen 紅白歌合戦
Kunju 昆劇
Kunsheng 坤生
Kunju yanchu shigao 昆劇演出史稿
Laopo Lin 老婆琳
Lan, Dingyuan 藍鼎元
Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingta 丐山泊與祝英台
liangxian 亮相
Liao Huang 廖煌
Liaozhai zhiyi 聊齋志異
Li Beihai 李北海
Li Chengqian 李承乾
Li Guiguan 李桂官
Li Linqiu 李臨秋
Li Maoer 李髦兒
Li Shansheng 李延壽
Lin Mugen 林木根
Ling Po 凌波
Liu Lou 劉樓
Liu Zun 劉遵
Longjing 龍井
Lü Xiulian 呂秀蓮
Lu Eting 魯萼庭
Lu Xun 魯迅
Lü Yuxiu 呂鈺秀
Luzhou 蘆洲
Mei Baojiu 梅葆玖
Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳
Mei Lanjiao 梅蘭嬌
Meili de baodao 美麗的寶島
Mei Shaowu 梅紹武
Midake Akira 見岳章
Min 閔
ming xin 明星
Minghua yuan gejutuan 明華園歌劇團
minju 門劇
Min zaji 門雜記
Minzhu 前進
Miserarete 使せられて
Misorafendi 美受害 (美空之雛)
Mizu Shigai 水割り
Muzaipu ye gan qu 墓仔埔也敢去
nakasi なかし
nan 男
nanchong 男寵 [male favorites]
nandan 男旦
nanguan 南管
nannü-ban 男女班
Nanshi 南史
Naniwa bushi dayo jinsei wa 浪花節
ta yo jinsei wa
nanrendan 男人旦
Nan wanghou 男王后
nanxi 南西
neihang-ban 內行班
Naniwa Bushi Dayo Jinsei Wa 浪花節
ta yo jinsei wa
niulizhen 牛犁陣 (or shilizhen 駛犁陣)
niurou chang 牛肉場
nong jia furen 弄假婦人
nii 女
Oak yinyue jiuba 歐克音樂酒吧
Ong Hongwen 翁紅文
Ouyang Feifei 歐陽菲菲
Piaoyou 票友
Pinghai fenji 平海氛記
Pinhua baojian 品花寶鑑
Pu Songling 蒲松齡
Qianwang-gezhen 牽亡歌陣
Qiandan 乾旦
Qiannü youhun 倩女幽魂
Qianwang-gezhen 牽亡歌陣
Qing 清朝
Qing Guanxu 清光緒
Qinglou ji 青樓集
qinqiang 秦腔
qingyi 青衣
Qishi-dan 乞食旦(Yang Qishi 楊乞食)
qizi-xi 七子戲
Qiong Yao dianshi-ju 瑤瑤電視劇
Qiong Yao dianying 瑤瑤電影
Qiong Yao xiaoshuo 瑤瑤小說
qu Zhongguo hua 去中國化
Quanzhou 泉州
Quanjun jinshanghua jutuan 泉郡錦上
Quanzhou 泉州
Quan-nan zazhi 泉南雜志
Redaiyu 熱帶魚
remen yinyue 熱門音樂
renao 熱鬧
renyao 人妖 [human prodigy]
ruijia sizhen 如假似真
Sakura Magozo 竹原直三
Sennen no koto 千年古都
se yi shuang jue 色藝雙絕
Shang Xiaoyun 尚小雲
Shamo yaoji 沙漠妖姬
shangjiuliou 上九流
Shaoxing xi 紹興戲 [Shaoxing opera]
Shen Defu 沈德符
Shen Fucun 沈福存
sheng 生
Shochiku 松竹
Shutong 書僮
Siceng xiangshi 似曾相識
Sijihong 四季紅
Sijitou 四擊頭
Song Changrong 宋長榮
Song Jiang-zhen 宋江陣
Songtian Wanzi 松田丸子
Sima Qian 司馬遷
Suzhou 蘇州
Taifeng zaji 臺風雜記
Taihai Zhuzhi-ci 台海竹枝詞
Taipei guoji gewu-tuan 台北國際歌舞團
Taiwan yange show 台灣演歌秀
Taiwan yishi 台灣意識
Taiyang Cheng 太陽城
Taizhong zhuyufeng gejutuan 台中珠玉風歌劇團
Takarazuka 宝塚
Tamao Nakamura 中村玉緒
Tayao niang 踏搖娘 [Stepping-singing woman]
Yilian 宜蘭
Yilan Zhuangsan xinliang yuetuan 宜蘭壯三新涼樂團
Ying Bojue 應伯爵
Yixia gewu-tuan 藝霞歌舞團
yizhuang 易裝
you ling 優伶
youtong 優童
youwu 尤物
Yu Baoxian 玉寶先(Chen Yian 陳炎)
Yu Huai 于懷
Yu Shenxing 于慎行
Yu Yonghe 郁永河
Yuan Mei 袁枚
Yuan Xin 袁信
Yuan Zhen 元稹
yueju 越劇
yuju 豫劇
zaju 雜劇
Zhang Han 張翰
zhezixi 折子戲 [select-scene-play]
Zheng Langgou 鄭浪狗
Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功
Zheng Meizhu 鄭美珠
Zheng Rongxing 鄭榮興
Zheng Yunpeng 鄭運鵬
zhentouxi 陣頭戲
Zhongguo gudian xiju lunshu jicheng 中國古代戲劇論述集成
Zhou Huiqing 周惠卿
Zhou Xiaoshi 周小史
Zhu Mujin 朱木金
Zhuzhi-ci 竹枝詞
Zongsheng stage 宗聖台
APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-DRESSING PERFORMERS^396

Part I
Personal Profile: Physicality, Cultural and Social Inscription

1. Your stage name__________  Real name (optional)__________
2. Year of birth____________
3. Height______ cm  Weight______ kg
4. Describe your physical self____________________________
5. Where are you from?
6. Your educational background?
7. What was your occupation before becoming a cross-dressing performer?
8. What is your economic situation?
9. What are your long-term plans?
10. When did you start to cross-dress? Why?
    a. Was it associated with anything in particular?
    b. How often do you cross-dress?
    c. Do you cross-dress in public or private spaces or both?
11. When did you become a professional cross-dressing performer?
    a. How often do you perform?
    b. For what occasions?
12. If your goal is not to be a cross-dressing performer, what is it that you want to be?
13. At what age do you think you have to end your career as a cross-dressing
    performer?
14. What is your approximate income as a cross-dressing performer?
15. What is the meaning of cross-dressing in your life?
16. Do you think that the desire to be “cross-gender” exists in all human beings?
17. Do you think that the general public still has a negative view of male cross-
    dressing performance?
18. If the answer is “yes”, how do you feel about performing in such an unfriendly
    environment?
19. How does your family react to your profession?
20. How do you deal with criticism and pressure from society and/or your family?
21. Have you talked to your cross-dressing friends about their motives? Are thy the
    same as yours?
22. With what kind of groups do you identify yourself? Which of these terms applies
    to you, and which term(s) do you dislike or think are insulting?
    a. Performer

^396 This questionnaire is influenced by the work of Charlotte Suthrell (2004: 185-189).
b. **banzhuang gongzuozhe 扮裝工作者** [person who works on cross-dressing]
c. **onnagata 女形** [female impersonator, term used in Kabuki theatre]
d. **qiandan 乾旦** [female impersonator, term used in Beijing opera]
e. **fanchuan yiren 反串藝人** [cross-dressing performer]
f. CD (cross-dresser)
g. TG (transgender)
h. TS (transsexual)
i. TV (transvestite)
j. Drag queen
k. **xinbie yilei 性別異類** [gender alien]
l. Gender illusionist
m. **bu nan bu nu 不男不女** [neither man nor woman]
n. **cixong tongti 雌雄同體** [androgynous]
o. **tongxin lien 同性戀** [homosexual]
p. **yixin lien 異性戀** [heterosexual]
q. **mei nanzi 美男子** [beautiful man]
r. **nannanqiang 娘娘腔** [sissy]
s. **第三性公關** [the third-sex barmaid]
t. None of the above, I refuse to be categorized
u. None of the above, I think I am ___________

23. Do you have a lover? Male? Female? What is his/her occupation?
24. Are you married?
25. Does your lover know your occupation? How does your lover react to it?
26. Does this job cause you any trouble? Does it make you happy? How does it affect your life career plan?
27. Do you know how many cross-dressing performers there were during its heyday (1996-2000)? How about now, as it declines?
28. Do you think the cross-dressing show has any influence on cultural and social ideologies of gender? Is it possible to break down strict gender codes to give cross-gender people a wider living and performance space?

**Part II**

The Public Domain: Training, Performing, and Aesthetic Concerns

29. What kind of training did you have before you appeared on stage?
30. How long did the training last?
31. How did you learn performance and makeup application techniques?
32. What type(s) of woman have you portrayed?
   a. Traditional types (in traditional costumes): young lady, pregnant woman, mother, old lady, match maker, aboriginal woman, dan, beauty dressed in chi pao, beauty dressed in kimono, queen or maids of the royal household.

33. Are there any differences between the women you play on stage and women in the real world?

34. Which is your favorite type? Why?

35. Do you like your lover to dress as the same type?

36. Does your lover like to watch your cross-dressing performance?

37. How do you put on makeup? Is it tedious for you?

38. Which kind of makeup you think is the most important in representing female roles?
   a. Eyebrows
   b. Eyelashes
   c. Eyelids
   d. cheeks
   e. lips

39. Which of these is part of your costume?
   a. Nail polish
   b. Wig
   c. Underwear
   d. Shoes/high heels
   e. Silk stockings
   f. Jewelry
   g. tattoos

40. Which part of your body do you like to emphasize when you cross-dress?

41. Do you choose the style of the costume? Or is it chosen by a specialist?

42. Do you buy makeup and accessories yourself? Where?

43. How do you act as a woman? (from inner self to outer self, or vice versa?)

44. Do you think you are “doing” or “being” a female role?

45. How are your body movements different in a female role in contrast to male one?

46. In your experience, what is the essence of being a successful female impersonator?

47. Describe the aesthetic and artistic style of Redtop, compared to other cross-dressing groups in the same stage.

Part III

Private Domains: Psychological Factors and Gender Identity

48. Do you think you have both masculine and feminine traits in terms of your physique and your mentality? If so, which part is stronger?

49. Do you think cross-dressing performance allows you to express your feminine side?

50. Do you think that being a cross-dressing performer is the best way out of the closet for homosexuals and CDs?

51. Are there any particular characters, actresses, onnagata (female impersonator in
52. What do you perceive as the relationship between a “female’s heart” and “cross-dress to female”.

53. Dose a cross-dressing career make real the possibility of being dual gendered?

54. Have you ever wished you had been born female?

55. Have you ever thought about having SRS?

56. Regarding a psychological analysis of the process of cross-dressing:
   a. Do you feel that you need psychological adjustment before or after cross-dressing?
   b. In what stage of the process of dressing/putting on make-up do you begin to have the feeling/idea of a gender switch?

57. Frame of mind on and off stage:
   a. What is your state of mind on stage
   b. What is your state of mind off stage

58. Do you agree with the following reasons?
   a. Against the cultural norm, and disrupting the gender division.
   b. Breaking down the strict control of gender barriers, and re-piecing together the “perfect gender”.
   c. To be one’s own master of one’s physical body.

59. The Renaissance Transgender Association points out that there are possible reasons for male to female cross-dressing. Do you agree with any of the items below?
   a. Erotic arousal/fetishism.
   b. Relief from tension.
   c. Expressing hidden personality characteristics.
   d. The Androgyne Hypothesis.
   f. Envy of women.
   g. Fooling the world.
   h. A conscious alternative personality.
   g. Creativity.

60. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
   a. When I wear women's clothing I do not consider it “cross-dressing” because my true gender is feminine (or mostly feminine.)
   b. While in the feminine role, I feel I am expressing my "true self," not putting on an act.
   c. If I am wearing a sexy dress, I sometimes feel more attracted to men.
   d. I believe I am a “woman in a man's body.”
   e. I can enjoy being a woman, but at other times I enjoy functioning like a man.

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397 See http://www.ren.org/rbp02.html (viewed on February 20, 2005).
398 Answers presented under this question are retrieved from cross-gender questionnaires written by Richard E. Doctor and James S. Fleming for their research on TV and TS identities: http://www.geocities.com/~rainbowgyrl/NFNJ/NFNJ-RDoctor.htm (viewed on February 20, 2005).
f. I have talked to a physician about obtaining female hormones (whether obtained or not).
g. If it were possible, I'd choose to live my life as a woman (or I now do so.)
f. I have discussed with a physician possible (or actual) cosmetic surgery to improve my feminine appearance.
i. I have received a small amount (or more) of cosmetic surgery to improve my feminine appearance.
k. When in the feminine role, I am attracted to both men and women (not necessarily equally).
l. Even when not on the stage playing the feminine role I reveal some feminine mannerisms offstage?

Part IV
Interaction with Audiences

61. Do you have any fans? Male and/or female? Ages?
62. To your knowledge, how do audiences react to your performances? Positively? Negatively?
63. Redtop has successfully created great popularity of cross-dressing performance. Why you think that people love their performance?
a. Relief from tension.
b. The desire to be cross-gender actually exists in everyone.
c. Homosexual desire exists in everyone.
d. A male cross-dressing performer is the ideal woman or the embodiment of romantic love in the fantastical world.
e. Others ________________________________.
64. Do you love to watch cross-dressing?
65. Describe the interaction between you and the audience.
66. Has any audience member tried to talk to you, make friends with you, or express their feelings about the performance to you?
67. Regarding praise, do you have same perception of applause from men and from women? From which do you prefer?
68. What kind of reaction do you receive from the audience?
69. Is there any particular incident that has influenced or effected on your personal life?
70. How do you act to attract audiences?
APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR AUDIENCES

Banzhung tianhou [drag queen]
performed by SWET on May 20 and 21
(with Statistical Results)

Anonymous, Total: 195

1. Sex: □ M: 58 (30%) □ F: 137 (70%)

2. Age:
   20-29: 107 (55%)
   30-39: 42 (22%)
   40 and up: 28 (14%)
   19 and under: 11 (6%)

3. Occupation:
   Students: 55 (32%)
   The remaining 68% is composed of the following professions: teacher designer,
   engineer, businessman/woman, secretary, banking, sales, emcee, DJ, vice manager,
   reporter, AE of marketing communications, interior designer, governor, performer,
   and housewife (23 people skip this question) 117 (68%)

4. Highest education achived:
   BA: 93 (51%)
   MA: 23 (13%)
   High school graduates: 15 (8%)
   Junior high school graduates: 2 (1%)
   PhD: 1 (0.5%)
   (13 people skip this question)

5. Have you ever seen a cross-dressing/drag show?
   □ No: 43 (22%)
   □ Yes (you may choose more than one answer): 152 (78%)
   □ TV □ amusement park □ theatre hall □ business exhibition
   □ party □ show business □ electric float □ gay bar
   □ wedding/funeral ceremony □ third-sex nightclub □ night market
   □ movie theatre (which film? _______) □ other

6. What made you come to this show? (you may choose more than one answer)
Curiosity: 44 (22%)
A drag show is a type of art. I enjoy music and dance performance: 100 (51%)
I particularly love to watch *fanchuan show*: 15 (8%)
I want to see how men “lower their status” to interpret women: 17 (9%)
To relax: 5 (3%)
I like a particular performer(s) 104 (53%) (Songtian Wanzi Rose)
Other

7. What is your opinions of drag queens/fanchuan yiren? (you many choose more than one answer)
They look so real, that I can hardly distinguish them from real women: 65 (33%)
A drag queen is the ideal woman and the embodiment of romantic love in a fantasy world: 82 (42%)
I appreciate the special atmosphere of cross-gender excitement and aesthetics: 76 (39%)
I can only accept cross-gender performance on stage. In real life, they should properly follow the social norms that are constructed for their biological (male) sex: 9 (5%)
I guess that because they have the desire to be cross-gender, they can successfully impersonate their opposite sex: 18 (9%)
I guess they are probably gays: 16 (8%)
Even if cross-dressing performers are gay, I can still respect them because they should have the same human rights: 80 (41%)
I don’t think that they should be equated with gays: 53 (27%)
I think that they are professionally trained artists, and should be encouraged: 92 (47%)
I think they are doing this only for money: 4 (2%)
Other

8. Does cross-dressing performance arouse you?
No: 150 (83%)
Yes: 30 (17%)
(15 people skip this question)

9. Do you think you have cross-gender desire?
No: 147 (84%)
Yes: 29 (16%)
(19 skip this question)
10. Which part of the *fanchuan show* attracts you most? (you may chose more than one answer)
   - The actor himself: 23 (12%)
   - The female role type he impersonates: 58 (30%)
   - Gender ambiguity and the ambiguous atmosphere: 79 (41%)
   - The character he plays: 64 (32%)
   - Dance, light, stage design and costumes: 63 (32%)
   - Other: answers written on the questionnaire including: the meaning conveyed by the story, the show as a whole.

11. Do you think *fanchuan show* a good or bad influence on gender education and our society?
   - Good: It subverts gender duality and presents a diverse and open gender culture: 157 (89%)
   - Bad: It disturbs the social order and gender norm: 0
   - Unsuitable for children to watch: 13 (7%)
   - Other: 6 (3%)
   (19 people skip this question)

12. Your gender identity and sexual orientation:
   - heterosexual: 145 (81%)
   - gay/lesbian: 13 (7%) (Gay: 9, Lesbian: 4)
   - bisexual: 8 (4%)
   - transgender: 5 (2%)
   - others: 9 (5%)
   (15 people skip this question)
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