

1986电影《芙蓉镇》笔记

- 1986 is seven years after the Deng Xiaoping became the paramount leader of China and officially launched his Reform and Opening campaign 改革开放 in 1979, five years after Gu Hua's novel of the same title was published in 1981, and five years before the total collapse of the former Soviet Union (1991). This is in the historical and political contexts that the film director 谢晋 and the novelist 古华 are situated to historicize China's transition from a socialist planning economy to a market liberal economy.
- Keep in my that Xie Jin also directed the film *Red Brigade of Women* in 1961 that celebrates the violent overthrow of the nationalist government representing the rich.
- Hibiscus Town is not fiction; it is now a tourist town at the foot of ZhangJiaJie Mountain 张家界, one of many areas that witnessed the enormous changes social changes ever to take place in Chinese history.
- Structurally speaking, the story is a persecution text, just like White Haired Girl and Red Brigade of Women, in which accusations and charges are directed against people or institutions. The difference is in the previous Red Classics, it is the rich and powerful (黄世仁, 南霸天) that are being accused of a crime, whereas in this one, it is those fighting for the communist revolution that are identified as the criminal.
- The local CCP secretary Li Guoxiang 李国香 and the die-hard Maoist villager Wang 王秋赦 Qiushe are the villains in this story being exposed as political zealots who represent Mao's revolutionary excesses. As the functionaries of the proletarian dictatorship, they persecute hard-working people in the name of equality, such as Hu Yuyin 胡玉音, Li Guigui 黎桂桂 and Qin Shutian 秦书田.
- There is one scene where all the "black Five" 五类分子 members are summoned to receive orders, which even involved a 10 year-old to stand in the place of his grandfather as a landlord in the past. Hibiscus Town under the rule of Mao and the proletariat dictatorship is nothing less than a Nazi concentration camp. What Xie Jin does is to expose the inhumanity of Maoism during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) in which millions die as (1) landlords, (2) rich peasants, (3) counterrevolutionaries, (4) Rightists, and (5) bad elements. They are tarred and feathered simply because they want to make a better living
- The heroine Hu Yuyin endures many indignities for doing no more than opening a bean-curd shop. Her modest prosperity, her good look, and diligence incur jealousy and resentment from Li Guoxiang and Wang Qiushe who view sex and wealth as deadly sins.
- The film and novel also signal the beginning of China's pivot to capitalism and market economy. The vindication of Hu Yuyin and Qin Shutian at the end affirms the freedom and the entrepreneur spirit. The story dramatizes Hayek's theory against government interference of the market and the planning economy. It argues precisely the point Hayek

makes in his *Road to Serfdom* (1944) “economic planning, regulation and intervention pave the way to totalitarianism by building a power structure that will inevitably be seized by the most power-hungry and unscrupulous. ... Those who are willing to surrender their freedom for security have always demanded that if they give up their full freedom, it should also be taken from those not prepared to do so.”

"Within the known rules of the game the individual is free to pursue his personal ends and desires, certain that the powers of government will not be used deliberately to frustrate his efforts."

"It is one of the saddest spectacles of our time to see a great democratic movement support a policy which must lead to the destruction of democracy and which meanwhile can benefit only a minority of the masses who support it."

"It seems to be almost a law of human nature that it is easier for people to agree on a negative programme, on the hatred of an enemy, on the envy of those better off, than on any positive task."

"Economic control is not merely control of a sector of human life which can be separated from the rest; it is the control of the means for all our ends."