



Yongda Motion Pictures
Executive Producer:

Huang Pian-pian(黃翹翹)

Producer: Dai Chuan-li(戴傳李)

Director: Xin Qi / Hsin Chi
(辛奇)

Screenplay: Chen Xiao-pi
(陳小皮)

Cinematography: Chen
Rong-shu(陳榮樹)

Sound: Lin Kun (林焜圻)

Music: Yang San-lang(楊
三郎)

Lyrics: Ye Jun-lin (葉俊麟)

Editor: Nan Fang-ren (南
方仁)

Cast:

Jin Mei / Chin Mei (金玫)

Shi Jun (石軍)

He Yu-hua (何玉華)

1965

Black and White

113 minutes



Encounter at the Station

難忘的車站

Synopsis

Thsui-giok (Jin Mei/Chin Mei) is a young high-school student who one day meets Gok-liong (Shi Jun/Shih Chun) at Fengyang station and they quickly fall in love. Unfortunately, Thsui-giok's adoptive mother dies and her adoptive father sells her as a hostess to a club to repay his debts. Gok-liong finds her there and buys her back to install her at his parents' place. They get engaged and Gok-liong leaves to study in the US. One day, Thsui-giok is recognized by a former client and her future mother-in-law forces her to leave the house and pretend she has found a rich husband. She goes back to work as a hostess in Taichung. Sometime later, she meets Gok-liong, drunk and married to a woman, Hun-kiau, whom he neglects. They get back together and have a kid. Five years later, Hun-kiau discovers the existence of Thsui-giok and begs her to let her lover go back to his family. Thsui-giok agrees, but Gok-liong loses his mind. Will the two lovers finally reunite?

Commentary

Encounter at the Station (literally, *The Unforgettable Station*) is adapted from the 1959 Taiwanese novel *Human Fickleness* (*Leng nuan ren jian*) by the female writer, Jin Xing-zhi. Xin Qi removed all the anti-communist wartime aspects of the book to focus on a love triangle, or rather a square, as it involves two women and two men. The title suggests the movie belongs to "train films" (such as *First Train from Taipei*, *Last Train to Kaohsiung*), which revolve around stories of lovers being parted at stations, one leaving to work in the corrupted city, the other one being left behind.

Encounter is quite different. Indeed, the lovers must part, but not because of economic reasons. Furthermore, they circulate around Taiwan from Fengyang, to Taizhong and Changhua, and even the US and Japan, because they are hiding from another, and not because they are pushed by poverty. The train station is indeed the place they meet

and where the unhappy lover returns everyday in his madness, hoping for the return of the loved one. The station here is the symbol of innocence and sweet memories.

Concealment and lies are the two main dramatic resources in this film. The whole tragedy results from a series of lies that leads to misfortune, misery and even madness. The very first lie is unspoken: Thsui-Giok does not dare to tell her boy-friend that she has left school to work in the club, and then the two lovers conceal Thsui-Giok's past from his parents. When the mother discovers the truth she forces the young girl to leave her son and lie about the real reason. When Gok-liong meets Thsui-Giok again in a club in Taizhong where she is working to repay her debt to him, it triggers a fit of violence: he beats her before falling into her arms. Gok-liong lies to both his family and to Thsui-giok, who does not know he is married. Eventually, Gok-liong's wife discovers her husband's double life and begs Thsui-Giok to give him back to her. Thsui-Giok agrees but abandons her son to the wife, lying to him that she is going to buy a soda, before vanishing. The final big lie about Thsui-Giok's disappearance drives Gok-liong mad.

Unable to choose, to resist or even cope with grief, men are depicted as weak and shallow, whereas female characters are the strongest, whether good (the young women) or bad (the mother). They are the ones taking decisions while men, such as Gok-liong's father, who is more sympathetic but remains silent when his wife lies. Gok-liong is unable to remain cold-headed: he beats Thsui-Giok, neglects his wife Hun-kiau, and finally slips into madness to escape grief. The film presents both Thsui-Giok and Hun-kiau (the legitimate wife) positively; instead of hatred, there is solidarity as they try to save their happiness and give their kids a father.

The film thus undermines the usual virile and protective image of men promoted in Mandarin films. It also reverses the tradition of the Confucian family with the "mean" mother character and the perverse effects of the concept of face that leads to lies and concealment. Men are both the most central figures in the family, but also the most destructive. Without being openly feminist, the film is inscribed in the tradition of strong sacrificial, but also resilient, characters that become preeminent during the Taiwan New Wave.

Jin Mei/Chin Mei is one of the most famous stars of the *taiyupian* era, she collaborated with Xin Qi on *The Bride from Hell* in 1965 and the hilarious *Foolish Bride, Naïve Bridegroom* in 1968 with also her usual partner Shi Jun. She started in a vaudeville troupe before being hired by the film industry. *Encounter at the Station* somehow echoes her own romantic experiences at the time.

Shi Jun (Shih Jun) was, along with Yang Ming, the favourite actor of the era. In 1965, for example, he shot no less than nineteen movies. He started in the film industry as a script supervisor. Because of his height and delicate features, he often played romantic students, ready to die for love. After the collapse of the *taiyupian* industry, he moved into television.