Blurring Space Across Film, Theatre and Virtual Reality: *Zero-Calorie Restaurant* (2023)

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Introduction

In 2023, *Zero-Calorie Restaurant* (零卡餐厅) premiered as part of China Central Television's (CCTV) *Theatre for All* (众生戏) short film initiative, a programme designed to explore contemporary expressions of Chinese traditional theatre, or *xiqu* (戏曲), through cinematic forms. Directed by Siwei Zou, the short film stands out for its unique mediation of space – cinematic, theatrical, and virtual – within a highly stylised, speculative restaurant setting. At just under seven minutes, the film constructs a dining experience where food is consumed not materially but symbolically, performatively, or virtually, depending on the spatial register being evoked.

Theatre for All is a special initiative launched in 2023 by CCTV Xiqu Channel. According to the introduction of the special initiative on CCTV's official website, it is an innovative programme that uses short films to break down the boundaries between the space of *xiqu* and the space of reality; it is also produced to attract younger-generation Chinese audiences by presenting *xiqu* elements in a format with which they are more familiar: that of the short film. [1] As the highest-level state-owned television station, CCTV launched its Xiqu Channel as one of the largest and earliest *xiqu* television channels in China in 2001. [2] In the past couple of decades, CCTV Xiqu Channel has remediated *xiqu* from a traditional theatrical art form into television media formats, such as *xiqu* documentaries, *xiqu* films, and *xiqu* TV dramas.

[3] Not only does this reflect mediatory transformation, but as a state-owned television channel, CCTV Xiqu also plays a role in implementing the Chinese government's instructions and plans for cultural governance. [4] This project, *Theatre for All*, aimed to strengthen the connection between various media forms and *xiqu* in order to bring *xiqu* to more young audiences.

Zero-Calorie Restaurant, as the major feature of *Theatre for All*, reflects the implementation of this government political project. According to the introduction of the short film on CCTV's website, *Zero-Calorie Restaurant* is a creative and innovative work presenting the play *Mai Qingtan Chaofeng Chicai (*卖青炭·朝奉吃菜*)* from *Huju* (湖剧) opera, one of the hundreds of genres in *xiqu* and originating from Zhejiang Province.

This paper takes space as both an analytical category and a methodological focus, investigating how *Zero-Calorie Restaurant* produces different types of spatial experience through cinematic technique, theatrical embodiment, and digital simulation. Using Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality – specifically his three orders of simulacra – the analysis unpacks how the film constructs space in three distinct ways: first, as imitation through mise-en-scène (the order of counterfeit); second, as representation via theatrical suppositionality and the actor's "subjunctive body" (the order of production); and third, as a virtual environment that immerses diners in sensory illusion without physical referents (the order of simulation). [5] Beyond its theoretical application, the film poses a critical question about the evolving relationship between traditional culture and emerging technologies. In its closing montage, the film reflects on the dislocation of embodied cultural memory amid a culture of digital virtual consumption, suggesting a melancholic tension between historical continuity

and simulated experience. Through this case study, the paper offers a critical reflection on intermediary cinema in 21st-century China, highlighting how film not only mediates across theatrical and digital registers, but also articulates deeper anxieties about cultural authenticity, loss, and transformation in the age of simulation.

Hyperreality and the Three Orders of Simulacra

Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality refers to the creation of symbols or collections of signifiers that represent entities which do not exist, such as imagined or constructed spaces. [6] As Larasati Dinda Kusuma Wardani puts it, "hyperreality creates a state in which the distinction between genuine and artificial becomes blurred". [7] This blurring between genuine (original/real) and artificial (simulated/non-real) space has significant implications for theorising how cinema represents space. In particular, filmic realism, as elaborated by Siegfried Kracauer and André Bazin, and more recently by scholars like Ehsan Alirezaei and Chiao-I Tseng forms the groundwork for understanding how the screen reproduces spatial experience. [8] Filmic realism is an aesthetic category of cinema rooted in the tradition of artistic realism. It seeks not only to depict stories and characters convincingly, but also to construct a cinematic world and spatial environment that appear as real and immediate as the lived world. Within this framework, filmic space is designed to evoke a sense of authenticity, encouraging the audience to perceive it not as a stylised or dramatic representation, but as a believable extension of reality. While the progression from realism to hyperreality involves changes in how space is visually presented in film and how such visualisations shape our perception of the world, immersing audiences in visualised spaces simultaneously exclude them from the lived realities these spaces imitate. [9] To explore these questions, film studies scholarship often draws on Baudrillard's theory of the three orders of simulacra, a sub-theoretical component within his broader conceptualisation of hyperreality. [10] The primary

aim of the simulacrum, according to Baudrillard, is not to destroy reality but to "realise" it. [11] Yet, as Moya Goosen notes, the simulacrum ultimately unmasks the illusion of the real by presenting another illusion, a strategy that aligns with cinematic techniques used to reproduce space. [12] Baudrillard elaborates on this in his book *Simulations* in 1983, identifying three historical "orders of simulacra": the order of the counterfeit, the order of production, and the order of simulation. [13] Each corresponds to a particular historical epoch – Renaissance, industrialisation, and post-World War II consumerism – and reflects different dynamics between the signifier and the signified. [14] These distinctions serve as a useful lens for analysing the imitation, representation, and simulation of space in film.

The first order, the order of counterfeit, involves the imitation of real life. Baudrillard describes this as "a transubstantiation of all of nature into a unique substance, theatrical like social life unified under the sign of bourgeois values, beyond all differences in blood, rank, or of caste". [15] The representation of space in cinema that draws on theatricality or mimetic traditions often resonates with this order. Here, Baudrillard's use of the term "theatrical" refers primarily to performances mimicking real-life scenarios in theatre, especially in the context of the Renaissance – a period when realistic, human-driven imitation became closely intertwined with social life and was regarded as innovative, and an era where the technologies of film and cinema had not been invented. However, it is important to clarify that my use of the order of counterfeit in relation to filmic features is not intended to invoke Renaissance theatrical practices, but instead, I refer to an on-screen, make-believe style of imitation, as manifested through film's cinematic language. [16]

The second order, the order of production, marks a shift from imitation to mechanical reproduction. The production of identical objects in series rendered them into interchangeable simulacra. As Baudrillard observes: "In a series, objects become undefined simulacra one of the other". [17] Though no two things are ever truly identical, reproduction introduces a logic of standardisation and differentiation. This brings representational concerns to the fore: not just what is produced, but how it is mediated and perceived. [18] Baudrillard, referencing Walter Benjamin, contends that such representations act "not as a productive force but as medium as form and principle of a whole new generation of sense". [19] This is particularly pertinent to filmic space, where mechanical reproduction becomes aesthetic and semiotic.

The third order, the order of simulation is characterised by a "universe of structures". In this order, neither imitation nor reproduction is central. Instead, systems of signs proliferate independently of referents, resulting in a world where representation no longer refers to anything real. This is reinforced by developments in high technologies, such as the internet and genetic science (e.g. DNA), which reveal that all entities are structured and interlinked. Thus, the notion of an original collapses: "The real is not only what can be reproduced, but that which is already reproduced, the hyperreal". [20] Goosen suggests that in this third order, illusion paradoxically affirms originality by invoking the pretext of another reality, a tactical hallucination. [21] This hallucination signifies the collapse of representation: simulacra no longer refer to any external reality, only to themselves.

These three orders dissolve the boundaries between illusion and reality. As Goosen notes, "only models of the real remain where all other forms of reality flow according to regulated differences". [22] The following section will explore how these orders of simulacra inform

the imitation, representation, and simulation of space in *Zero Calorie Restaurant* as regulated differences.

Analysing Spaces in *Zero Calorie Restaurant* through the Three Orders of Simulacra

Zero Calorie Restaurant, although only 6 minutes and 59 seconds long, presents a visually rich and conceptually layered representation of dining space. The short film compellingly integrates Baudrillard's three orders of simulacra: the order of counterfeit (imitation), realised through strategic filmic mise-en-scène; the order of production (representation), expressed via the segmentation and embodiment of Chinese traditional theatre's suppositional space; and the order of simulation, brought to life through the evocation of virtual reality and immersive digital environments.

It begins with an elderly Chinese gentleman, Mr. Gao, entering a restaurant for dinner. However, instead of being served real food, he is asked to wear a pair of glasses that allow him to see and experience a virtual meal. Although he performs the actions of eating, no actual food is consumed. By the end of the dining experience, he has taken in zero calories. As he leaves the restaurant still hungry, he spots a street vendor passing by. Chasing after the vendor's mobile stall, he runs off in search of real food, and the film ends.

First, the film begins with a close-up of a dining space, rendered in the order of counterfeit through meticulously designed mise-en-scène. As an essential framework in film analysis, as defined by Gibbs, mise-en-scène includes the spatial arrangement of lighting, costume, décor, properties, and actors, all of which contribute to constructing filmic space. [23] Specifically, it considers the personal distance between performers, the imagined temporality of space, the

relationships enacted through gesture and proximity, and the visual patterns formed through blocking and movement. [24] At the start of the short film, a close-up reveals two pairs of hands holding knives and forks, with a blurred effect in the camera's foreground. These two pairs of hands indicate two customers dining in the restaurant, whilst behind them a woman is about to place a fork into her mouth. The visual emphasis on the cutlery, the realistic gestures of dining, and the symmetrical composition around a long table all contribute to the imitation of a luxury modern dining environment. This verisimilitude continues with a long take that shifts perspectives, revealing a fuller view of the space: on the left, diners are seated at tables; in the centre, Mr. Gao, in a red traditional Chinese jacket, walks toward the camera; in the background, a waitress moves behind a service bar. This spatial design visually evokes Baudrillard's vision of "a social life unified under the sign", a simulacra society organised through culturally recognisable codes. [25] Crucially, cinematic technique is used not only to imitate a real-world dining scenario, but also to establish character dynamics. Mr. Gao is placed in the centre of the frame and is the only character who directly faces the camera, marking him as the narrative focus. His vivid red costume sharply contrasts with the muted palette (black, grey, and white) of the set and other characters' outfits, directing the viewer's gaze toward him. The use of costume colour, spatial centrality, and camera orientation serve to reinforce character hierarchy and narrative importance within the counterfeit setting.

Second, the short film transitions into Baudrillard's order of production through Chinese theatrical suppositional performance on-screen to represent the practice of eating Chinese food. Suppositionality is a specific concept developed by Chinese dramatist Huang Zuolin in his work in 1962, which has since been widely accepted by scholars to unpack the aesthetics of traditional Chinese theatre, especially *Huju*. [26] It marks a shift from visual realism to the aesthetic of "absence", a defining feature of Chinese theatre, wherein the spatial world is

constructed through shared cultural conventions through actor's body rather than physical props. [27] In Bao Weihong's words, "suppositional theatre is predicated on the mutual recognition between the audience and the actor of the artificiality of theatre, a contractual knowledge further corroborated by stage conventions, particularly the actors' body". [28] This means that appreciating Chinese traditional theatre often requires the audience to possess some specialised knowledge of its conventions and symbolic gestures or movement through the presentation of body. For instance, *yunshou* (云手) is a symbolic hand movement in which the performer clasps their hands in front of the chest, creates a circle, then opens the arms in a sweeping arc above the head. This gesture can indicate a spatial shift, for example, if an actor makes a *yunshou*, it could signal a shift of the onstage space from a bedroom to a garden. In Chinese traditional theatre, there are over 200 regional genres, each of which has developed hundreds of stylised, suppositional performance techniques – which collectively shape the unique aesthetic of suppositionality. Thus, suppositional theatre depends on a shared understanding between performer and spectator, and an unfamiliar audience may struggle to follow the narrative.

According to Baudrillard, the second order focuses on the logic of reproduction and symbolic social production rather than strict mimetic realism. [29] Here, representation becomes an interpretive act involving the viewer's cultural knowledge and imagination of space. In the short film, Mr. Gao orders two Chinese dishes: boiled chicken with sesame oil sauce (油蘸白切鸡) and steamed bass with cured pork (清蒸鲫鱼嵌肉). The two dishes are closely linked with specific Chinese culture as they are traditional Zhejiang cuisine in China. They also feature in *Mai Qingtan Chaofeng Chicai,* known for its use of expressive gesture to depict eating these two dishes. In the original *Huju* opera, the two dishes centre the suppositional

performance, not only because they are assumed to be familiar to both the audience and the actor in their real lives, but also the actor's performing body is used to trigger audiences' imagination and experience of eating the dishes. This scene in the short film also draws on a classic theatrical staging technique, where the story unfolds in a shared space between performers and then suddenly shifts as a spotlight isolates one of the characters, transporting them into an imaginative, internal world. In the short film, this is represented through a montage that transitions the screen into darkness, with a spotlight illuminating Mr. Gao at the centre. This visual shift marks the creation of a theatrical suppositional space, where Mr. Gao eats alone, with all other characters and the external environment fading away, signifying a move into his inner experience. In this suppositional dark space on-screen, the actor's body becomes what Bao calls a "subjunctive body", which generates meaning through physical suggestion rather than material realism such as real food, or props such as forks and knives. [30] This transformation into the suppositional dark space is also marked sonically by the introduction of traditional Chinese opera music (more specifically, melody from *Mai Qingtan Chaofeng Chicai*), signalling a shift in a different spatial mode. On one level, it anchors the suppositional space firmly within the tradition of Chinese *xiqu*, where music typically precedes singing and movement in accordance with the core convention of the Gong and Drum Principle (锣鼓经). The musical cue also immediately resonates with audience members familiar with the original *Huju* production, reinforcing cultural memory through sonic recognition. At this point, Mr. Gao begins operatic singing, enacting a performance of eating with stylised gestures and facial expressions. First, he mimes eating a chicken leg: gripping the invisible object tightly, he exaggerates the effort of chewing, squeezing his facial muscles to represent the toughness of the meat. Next, he performs the act of eating fish (often not deboned when served in Chinese cuisine), by performing the discomfort of a bone stuck in his throat. His mouth tightens, his eyes widen, and he coughs, tensing his entire body to

convey physical distress. The realism of his movement elicited strong resonance among online viewers, with many comments on the video of the short film on BiliBili, (one of China's largest online streaming and video-sharing platforms aimed at younger audiences) noting how accurately the gestures captured shared cultural memories of eating fish. [31]

This sequence illustrates how the actor's body constructs spatial orientation and focus: the mouth and face signal the moment food enters, the throat becomes the axis of tension during choking, and the actor's entire body posture responds to crisis. The viewer's understanding of space in this scene is entirely mediated by the shifting energy of the performer's body, which serves as both the locus and producer of the represented space. As there are minimal realist elements on-screen, the audience is drawn into the scene by interpreting culturally coded bodily signs, thus activating the collective imagination central to Chinese traditional theatre aesthetics that is known as *chengshi hua* (程式化) or conventionalisation. Through *chengshi hua*, many everyday actions and practices have been transformed into fixed acting formulas, which over time became established conventions of the art form. [32] These stylised expressions often go beyond realism, with minimal use of props. For example, in the *Huju* section of the short film, there is no real chicken or fish on-screen, but the actions and movement (of the suppositional body) are legible and understandable to the audience. Through conventionalised performance, audiences can recall cultural memories of shared experiences, such as the Chinese culinary tradition of cooking and eating deboned fish.

Third, the short film enters Baudrillard's order of simulation by constructing a hyperreal dining environment through visual references to VR. In *Zero Calorie Restaurant*, simulation is rendered through the creation of a hybridised space that resembles both a kitchen and a VR

production studio. The mise-en-scène includes staff in chef uniforms, but instead of traditional cooking tools, they are surrounded by computer monitors and keyboards. The cooking process is represented as a digital activity: chefs appear to be coding, typing, or manipulating abstract data rather than preparing physical food. Woks are empty, and no ingredients are visible; only layers of symbolic signs suggesting a synthetic environment. This setting exemplifies the third order of simulacra, where space is "not only what can be reproduced, but that which is already reproduced, the hyperreal". [33] The immersive aspect of this simulation is heightened when diners are shown eating while wearing glasses symbolising VR headsets. This detail encapsulates the central premise of the film: the food is not real, yet the act of eating is convincingly experienced as a VR immersive experience. These diners are immersed in a sensory illusion, participating in a gastronomic simulation with no physical consumption involved. The glasses, standing in for VR technology, frame the eating experience entirely within a digital construct. In this context, the dining experience becomes a "tactical hallucination", severed from any requirement for cultural interpretation or symbolic literacy. [34] Unlike the suppositional performance of eating the two dishes, which relies on audience knowledge and performative conventions, the VR simulation presents itself as self-contained. This contrast between suppositional and simulated space draws attention to differing modes of spatial production in *Zero-Calorie Restaurant*. For the short film, representation of the second order depends on an actor-audience contract rooted in shared traditions and performative codes. In the third order, however, simulated experience is immediate, immersive, and does not require knowledge of specific traditional or theatrical contexts. It is visually and affectively convincing, yet entirely constructed, offering a compelling commentary on contemporary media environments where reality and illusion are no longer distinguishable. These three spatial regimes – the counterfeit, the represented, and the simulated – structure the film's layered engagement with how space is imagined,

performed, and technologized. *Zero Calorie Restaurant* thus becomes a cinematic case study in the logic of hyperreality, using performance, cultural codes, and digital design to visualise the evolution of space in the age of simulation.

By the end of *Zero-Calorie Restaurant*, the short film raises compelling questions about the tension and interplay between theatre, film, and virtual reality – not simply as aesthetic forms, but as cultural technologies that mediate, transform, and at times displace tradition. This concern is most poignantly expressed in the film's closing sequence. After completing a richly stylised and digitally enhanced dining experience, the protagonist, Mr. Gao, taps his belly to indicate that he is still hungry and leaves the extravagant, futuristic restaurant. He then sees a passing food stall selling roasted sweet potatoes and runs after it. The scene then shifts to a view of a traditional Chinese building, evoking a sense of historical continuity that now appears fragmented or displaced.

This final sequence highlights a critical reflection by the film's director, Siwei Zou, a former traditional theatre performer turned filmmaker and VR creator. The stark contrast between the high-tech dining illusion and the grounded, sensory experience of street food reflects a deeper anxiety: that the growing emphasis on digital spectacle may marginalise or overshadow the embodied, affective, and communal aspects of Chinese cultural heritage. This tension between technological innovation and cultural preservation is not unique to *Zero-Calorie Restaurant* but appears across Zou's creative practice. His animation *Dramaholic (戏瘾江湖)* in 2018, the Apple commercial *The Crossroads (三岔口)* in 2022, and his work on the Netflix animation *The Monkey King (美猴王)* in 2023 all demonstrate his interest in reimagining traditional theatre in digital forms, while also expressing unease over

what might be lost in the process. These works, collectively, reveal Zou's ambivalent position – engaging with technological change while critically questioning its cultural consequences.

At the same time, the institutional context of the film's production must be acknowledged. As a project under CCTV's *Theatre for All* initiative, the short film aligns with state policy goals, particularly the promotion of VR in Chinese traditional theatre as part of cultural innovation strategies. Since 2016, VR has been actively supported by the Chinese government, particularly through initiatives such as the "VR + Culture" policy in the 13th and 14th Five-Year Plans. Projects such as *VR Chunri Yan (*VR 春日宴*)* in 2016 by the Beijing Jingju Theatre Company and *VR Tiao Hua Che* (VR 挑华车*)* in 2017 by the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts exemplify this direction.

The interplay between state-led cultural agendas and an artist's individual voice is central to *Zero-Calorie Restaurant*. As Anthony Fung, Xiaoxiao Zhang, and Luzhou Li argue, expressions of freedom or contradiction in Chinese media are often permitted only within carefully controlled boundaries. [35] The main narrative of the short film appears to embrace the integration of traditional theatre and emerging technologies without overt resistance. Yet, in its closing scene, the film subtly shifts tone. The physicality and immediacy of Mr. Gao's hunger, juxtaposed with the artificial satisfaction offered by virtual consumption, hints at a deeper reflection: does technological mediation genuinely sustain cultural tradition, or does it merely simulate them in a hollow form? This cautious and ambivalent mode of expression reflects a strategic approach adopted by many Chinese artists to convey underlying concerns while avoiding direct confrontation with censorship. Rather than explicitly stating a critical

stance, artists like Zou create interpretative space for audiences to reflect on broader tensions, especially within a tightly regulated media environment governed by strong state control.

Conclusion

This article has examined the cinematic construction and interpretation of space through the lens of Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality, focusing in particular on his concept of the three orders of simulacra. Using the short film *Zero Calorie Restaurant* as a case study, it has explored how different spatial regimes – filmic, theatrical, and virtual – are enacted through corresponding cinematic and performative strategies. The first order of simulacra, the counterfeit, is realised through carefully crafted mise-en-scène that imitates familiar dining settings. The second order, the productive, is expressed through the representation of suppositional space as constructed by the actor's subjunctive body and operatic performance, grounded in the aesthetic logic of Chinese traditional theatre. The third order, the simulation, manifests in the depiction of virtual reality dining environments, where the illusion of eating is created through technological immersion without any referent to material reality. Yet, beyond theoretical application and spatial typology, the film opens up a critical dialogue about the cultural implications of mediated space. Rather than overt critique, the film leaves space for audience reflection, inviting viewers to question the impact of technological innovation on tradition. In doing so, *Zero-Calorie Restaurant* not only demonstrates a layered reconfiguration of space but also reveals how mediated cultural production navigates the boundaries between state ideology, personal expression, and the future of Chinese traditional theatre.

Notes:

[1] CCTV, "Theatre for All Introductory", *CCTV*, (2023).

https://tv.cctv.com/2023/06/21/VIDActmN01vgY4mv3Taut69p230621.shtml

[2] Yan Yang & Lin Dong "Zhongguo Dianshi Xiqu Lanmu Fazhan Xianzhuang Yu Fenxi 中国电视戏曲栏目的发展现状与分析" *Xian Dai Chuan Bo 现代传播* 186, no.1 (2012), 73

[3] Xun Chen "Zhonyang Guangbo Dianshi Zongtai Xiqu Pindao Kaibo 20 Zhounian 中央广播电视总台戏曲频道开播 20 周年," *Ju Tan Ju Jiao 菊坛聚焦* 1, no.1 (2021), 91

[4] Anthony Y. H. Fung, Xiaoxiao Zhang, and Luzhou Li, "Independence within the Boundaries: State Control and Strategies of Chinese Television for Freedom," in *Media Independence: Working with Freedom or Working for Free?* (London: Routledge, 2014), 244

[5] Weihong Bao, "The Politics of Remediation: Mise-en-Scène and the Subjunctive Body in Chinese Opera Film." *The Opera Quarterly* 26, no. 2–3 (2010): 257.

[6] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 184.

[7] Larasati Dinda Kusma Wardani, "Simulacra and Hyperreality in Lorcan Finnegan's *Vivarium* (2019)." *Litera Kultura: Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (2023):76.

[8] Ehsan Alirezaei, "An Analytical Study of Reproduction of Reality in Cinema." *Journal of Ecohumanism* 4, no. 4 (2025): 631–637; André Bazin, *What Is Cinema? Vol. 1.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Chiao-I Tseng, "Film Space as Theatrical Performing Space: A Multimodal Discourse Approach to Transmedial Analysis," in *Mapping Multimodal Performance Studies* (London: Routledge, 2016), 139–165.

[9] Randy Laist, "Bullet-Time in Simulation City: Revisiting Baudrillard and *The Matrix* by Way of the 'Real 1999'," *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, no. 2 (2011): 1–15.

[10] Ibid.; Moya Goosen, "Reflective Conversations: Baudrillard's Orders of the Simulacrum," *South African Journal of Art History* 29, no. 4 (2014): 96–111; Larasati Dinda Kusma Wardani, "Simulacra and Hyperreality in Lorcan Finnegan's *Vivarium* (2019)," *Litera Kultura: Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (2023): 75–82; Redan Yohanes, Amir Johar and Agussalim Aj Andi, "Decoding Digital Dystopia: Simulacra, Hyperreality, and Control in *The Matrix* Franchise Film Series as a Critique of Contemporary Society," *Bahasa: Jurnal Keilmuan Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia* 7, no. 1 (2025): 18–38.

[11] Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 184.

[12] Goosen, "Reflective Conversations," 100.

[13] Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 1983.

[14] Goosen, "Reflective Conversations," 97.

[15] Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 87.

[16] Paul, Woodruff, *The Necessity of Theater: The Art of Watching and Being Watched* (New York: Oxford Academic, 1983), 124; Lindsey, Fiorelli. "A new defense of cinematic realism." *Film and Philosophy*, no.19 (2015): 54

[17] Ibid, 97.

[18] Goosen, "Reflective Conversations", 96–111; Wardani, "Simulacra and Hyperreality," 75–82.

[19] Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 99.

[20] Ibid, 146.

[21] Goosen, "Reflective Conversations," 105.

[22] Ibid, 105.

[23] John Gibbs, *Mise-en-Scène: Film Style and Interpretation*. (London: Wallflower Press, 2002), 1.

[24] Ibid, 17.

[25] Baudrillard, 99.

[26] Zuolin Huang, "Mantan Xijuguan 漫谈戏剧观", *Ren Min Ri Bao 人民日报* April 25 (1962).

[27] Jason McGrath, "Suppositionality, Virtuality, and Chinese Cinema." *boundary 2* 49, no. 1 (2022): 263–292.

[28] Weihong Bao, "The Politics of Remediation," 257.

[29] Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 96; Wardani, "Simulacra and Hyperreality," 78.

[30] Bao, "The Politics of Remediation," 262.

[31] Rui Wang, "Community Building on Bilibili: The Social Impact of Danmu Comments," *Media and Communication* 10, no. 2 (2022): 54.

[32] Ashley Thorpe, "Style, experimentation and Jingju (Beijing Opera) as a decentred multiplicity," *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 31 no.3 (2011), 275-291.

[33] Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 146.

[34] Goosen, "Reflective Conversations," 105.

[35] Anthony Y. H. Fung, Xiaoxiao Zhang, and Luzhou Li, "Independence within the Boundaries: State Control and Strategies of Chinese Television for Freedom," in *Media Independence: Working with Freedom or Working for Free?* (London: Routledge, 2014), 244.

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Biography

Dr. Xunnan Li is a Lecturer in Performance and Cultural Industries at the University of
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understanding of Chinese theatrical traditions with an academic focus on neoliberal economic
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manager at the Leeds Confucius Institute and as the Artistic Director and Editor of The
Theatre Times and the IOTF Theatre Festival. Currently, Dr. Li is the Deputy Director of the
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to contemporary Chinese literature and arts.