

Panel 20
Intermedial Strategies and Reconstructions

Reconfiguring *Carmen*:
Tian Han's Leftist Intermedial Adaptation in 1930s Shanghai
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Tian Han's *Carmen* (1930), his first stage play after his "left turn," adapts Prosper Mérimée's novella into a politically charged theatrical form. Its revolutionary implications led to the closure of the Nanguo Society, making the play's troubled fate inseparable from its ideological stance. This paper examines *Carmen* not only as a political adaptation but also as part of a broader transmedial and global circulation. By tracing the dissemination and localization of *Carmen* in modern Shanghai across its novel, opera, and film forms, this study reveals Tian Han's rationale for adapting the novella into a leftist stage play and examines his adaptive strategies. Existing scholarship on *Carmen* has focused on its reception in Europe and the Americas, with little attention to its introduction and localization in China. This paper addresses that gap by exploring Tian Han's adaptive choices, which negotiated global representations of *Carmen*, local audience expectations, and his own ideological stance during his "left turn." Recasting *Carmen* as a revolutionary subject under racial and class oppression, Tian sought to fuse political ideology with romantic appeal. However, the tension between visual and auditory modes in theatre—where revolution is rendered as background noise while love occupies the stage—undermined this synthesis. By reconstructing the sensory experience of the 1930 premiere, this paper argues that Tian's effort to embed revolutionary meaning within a love story failed to fully resonate with petty-bourgeois audiences. This research sheds new light on Tian Han's early leftist aesthetics and highlights the challenges of aligning revolutionary narratives with theatrical form during the rise of China's left-wing theatre movement.

Biography

Yating Shen is a PhD student in Modern Chinese Literature at East China Normal University. Her research focuses on Chinese literature and film, with a special interest in intermedial adaptations. She completed her MA thesis on Eileen Chang's screenplays for MP & GI. Contact: shenyating163email@163.com