

ASIAN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES 2018-2019 CHINESE LECTURE SERIES

I Married a Photograph: The Still Image Transfigured in Dazhaimen (The Grand Mansion Gate)



Judith Zeitlin (University of Chicago)

A megahit of the 2001 TV season in China, *Dazhaimen* 大宅门 is a multigenerational historical drama series, written and directed by Guo Baochang 郭宝昌. The series depicts the vicissitudes of the Bai 白 family, a fictionalized version of the famous Beijing pharmaceutical firm Tong Ren Tang 同仁堂, from 1880 to 1937. Professor Zeitlin will discuss one of the most interesting later story arcs—the unrequited love of Bai Yuting 白玉婷, a daughter of the family, for the Peking opera star Wan Xiaoju 万筱菊 (who is based on Mei Lanfang 梅兰芳). Eventually she decides to marry him unilaterally by wedding his photograph in a grand bridal ceremony. Professor Zeitlin argues that this ritual action and its consequences exhibits a logic reminiscent of a long-standing Chinese practice of posthumous spirit marriage (冥婚). Her talk focuses on two key elements that cinematically animate the illusion of a phantom bridegroom created to satisfy the desires of a living woman: the treatment of the photograph itself (which partly draws on its usage in funerary ritual) and the recurrent use of a scene performed from the Peking opera *Rainbow Pass* 虹霓关.

Thursday, April 18, 2019

4:30 - 6:00 PM

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