

CHINESE SOAP OPERAS IN THE REFORM ERA

TELENOVELAS CHINAS EN LA ERA DE LAS REFORMAS

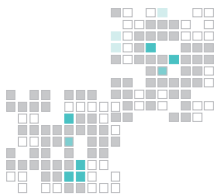
NOVELAS CHINESAS NA ERA DAS REFORMAS

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to investigate the impact of the emergence of television soap operas during the 1980s and 1990s in the People's Republic of China, with an emphasis on *Yearnings* (渴望, 1990) and *Year after Year* (一年又一年, 1998). This period comprises the first two decades of “reform and opening up” (Gaige kaifang 改革开放), when the country underwent a series of radical changes leading to market economy. As I will discuss, both soap operas employ a similar structure by presenting family sagas as a vehicle for the articulation of China's transformations through decades of history – including the introduction of television and other media.

KEYWORDS: TELEVISION; SOAP OPERAS; CHINA; INTERMEDIALITY.

RESUMEN

Este artículo pretende investigar el impacto de la aparición de las telenovelas durante las décadas de 1980 y 1990 en la República Popular China, con especial atención a *Yearnings* (渴望, 1990) y *Year after Year* (一年又一年, 1998). Este periodo comprende las dos primeras décadas de «reforma y apertura» (Gaige kaifang 改革开放), cuando el país experimentó una serie de cambios radicales que condujeron a la economía de mercado. Como expondré, ambas telenovelas emplean una estructura similar al presentar sagas familiares como vehículo para la articulación de las transformaciones de China a lo largo de décadas de historia, incluida la introducción de la televisión y otros medios de comunicación.

PALABRAS CLAVE: TELEVISIÓN; TELENÓVELAS; CHINA; INTERMEDIALIDAD.

RESUMO

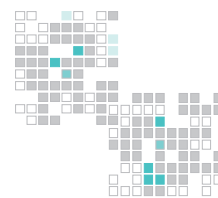
Este artigo tem como objetivo investigar o impacto do surgimento de telenovelas durante as décadas de 1980 e 1990 na República Popular da China, com ênfase em *Aspirações* (渴望, 1990) e *Ano após ano* (一年又一年, 1998). Esse período compreende as duas primeiras décadas de “reforma e abertura” (Gaige kaifang 改革开放), quando o país atravessou uma série de mudanças radicais que levaram à economia de mercado. Como discutirei, ambas as novelas empregam uma estrutura semelhante, apresentando sagas familiares como veículo para a articulação das transformações da China ao longo de décadas de história - incluindo a introdução da televisão e de outras mídias.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: TELEVISÃO; NOVELAS; CHINA; INTERMIDIALIDADE

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This article aims to investigate the impact of the emergence of television soap operas during the 1980s and 1990s in the People's Republic of China, with an emphasis on *Yearnings* (渴望, 1990) and *Year after Year* (一年又一年, 1998). This period comprises the first two decades of “reform and opening up” (*Gaige kaifang* 改革开放), when the country underwent a series of radical reforms, launched by Deng Xiaoping, which led it towards a market economy. As I will discuss, both soap operas employ a similar structure by presenting family sagas as a vehicle for the articulation of China's transformations through decades of history – including the introduction of television and other media. This article considers the impact of Brazilian *telenovela* *Escrava Isaura* (女奴) on Chinese television, which led to the adoption of the long-serialised format inaugurated by *Yearnings* in 1990. It then proposes a close reading of *Year after Year*, emphasizing their use of different media both formally and narratively. Here, I resort to the notion of intermediality, deriving inspiration mainly from Irina Rajewsky (2010) and Ágnes Pethő's (2020) ground-breaking studies in the field, as well as to Bolter and Grusin's (2000) notion of remediation – understood as the process that informs the genealogy of media through history. If the emergence of the television medium can be seen as a process of remediating other media such as film, vaudeville and the radio, in China, the process of remediation leading to the development of soap operas had a considerable transnational and intermedial aspect, symptoms of the country's opening-up as well as of its persistent desire for unity and consensus.

1. TV drama and the emergence of soap operas¹ in China

In China, television only began to play a major role in society from the 1980s onwards, when the country began opening to the world's economic system. The emergence of television drama can be traced back to the 15th of June 1958², when a thirty-minute play, *A Veggie Cake* (Yikou cai bingzi 一口菜饼子), was produced and aired live on Beijing Television. It was not until the 1980s and 1990s, however, that the soap opera – a form of serialised television drama – emerged and became popular in the country. Writing in the year 2000, Sheldon H. Lu noted that television drama was the most widely watched form of entertainment in China in the turn of the century (2000, p. 25). The growth of soap opera episodes produced in China in the 1990s accompanied the exponential growth of TV set ownership, which went from only 1.5 million in 1978 to 280 million in 1996, with an estimated TV audience of 800 million (Lu, 2000, p. 25).

The popularisation of television series and soap operas in China began in the 1980s with imports from countries such as the USA (with series such as *Garrison's Gorillas*, *Man from Atlantis*, *Hunter*, *Falcon Crest*, and *Dynasty* being

1 Throughout the article, I have chosen to follow Lu (2000) and Zhu, Keane and Bai (2008) in employing the term “soap opera” to designate a particular form of serialized drama that appeared on Chinese television from 1990 onwards, known in Chinese as *changpian shinei ju* or by the loanword *feizaoju*. However, it is important to point out that Chinese “soap operas” carry a lot more in common with the Latin American *telenovela* than with the British or American counterpart (known as soap opera).

2 While Zhu et al (2008) write that the play was broadcast in May 1958, Sheldon Lu (2000) gives the date as 15th June 1958. According to my own research and to Baidu this is the correct date (see <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E4%B8%80%E5%8F%A3%E8%8F%9C%E9%A5%BC%E5%AD%90/1842085>)



quite popular in the first half of the decade), Japan (the soap opera *Oshin* was also extremely popular when it was shown on CCTV from March 1985 onwards – see Takahashi, 1998), as well as Mexico and Brazil.³

Of utmost importance was the screening of Brazilian *telenovela* *Isaura: Slave Girl* (*Escrava Isaura* 女奴). Based on an 1876 novel by Bernardo Guimarães, *Escrava Isaura* was adapted by Gilberto Braga and produced by TV Globo in Brazil between 1976 and 1977. It was subsequently exported to over 80 countries around the world. The soap opera was shown on Beijing Television in 1984, the year that marked the 10th anniversary of China-Brazil diplomatic relations. It quickly gained immense popularity across the country. Its main actress, Lucélia Santos (卢塞莉亚·桑托斯), became a great star in China, and in 1985 she received the Golden Eagle Award (金鹰奖), the country's highest accolade for performance in a television drama, and an unprecedented feat for a foreign actress. She remains to this day the only foreign actress to have received this award. At that time, *telenovelas* were becoming a very important export product in Brazil. The screening of *Isaura: Slave Girl* led to two translations in China of Bernardo Guimarães's original novel and to the publication of at least four "picture-story books" depicting the *telenovela*'s narrative (see Hu and Roberto, 2020).

The first serialized narrative in Chinese television screens was *Eighteen Years in the Enemy Camp* (敌营十八年 *diyīng shíbā nián*), a nine-episode action-thriller serial shown in February 1981 depicting an undercover Communist

who infiltrates the Nationalist government for eighteen years (from 1931 to 1949). This was produced by CCTV and conceived in response to the growing number of foreign TV series being shown on Chinese television in the early 1980s (Kong, 2012, p. 7). Another important landmark was the 28-part *Four Generations under One Roof* (四世同堂 *si shi tong tang*), an adaptation of Lao She's 1944 novel which aired in 1985. 1986 was the year of *New Star* (新星), a somewhat politically daring 12-part shot by Taiyuan TV in Shanxi Province, later re-edited for content to be shown around the country.

Zhu, Keane and Bai observe that "television drama in China has developed in tandem with social reforms, embracing international ideas as well as celebrating tradition". They go on to say that "the Chinese TV audience immediately saw itself reflected as the new subject of TV drama; its members constituted an imagined community seemingly on the verge of creating the great society" (2008, p. 4). It is important to point out that serialized narratives formed an integral part of Chinese traditional storytelling, being the backbone to classical novels originating from oral literature such as *Journey to the West*, *The Water Margin*, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (see Zhu et al, 2008, p. 4). It is no wonder, therefore, that these novels were adapted to the small screen in the 1980s, including a 1982 Shandong Television production of *The Water Margin*, a 1986 popular adaptation of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, and a 1987 production of *Journey to the West*.

Finally, the year 1990 saw the appearance of what would become a national phenomenon, the enormously popular *Yearnings* (50 episodes), considered to be China's first soap opera. *Yearnings* was followed by other successes such

³ Other successful foreign TV series in China were *A Doubtful Blood Type* (Japan 1980), *Huo Yuanjia* (Hong Kong 1982), *Isaura, the Slave Girl* (Brazil 1984), *Stars Know My Heart* (Taiwan, Taiwan 1988), *Last Night's Stars* (Taiwan 1988), *Slander* (Mexico 1985) and *Frustration* (Mexico 1986).



as *A Native from Beijing in New York* (北京人在纽约, 21 episodes, 1993) and *Russian Girls in Harbin* (俄罗斯姑娘在哈尔滨, 17 episodes, 1993), and the 1990s marked the coming of age and maturity of the soap opera as a Chinese genre (Lu, 2000, p. 26).

With the growth of the soap opera genre, as well as of serialized television narratives as a whole, different denominations appeared in China to discriminate between different styles. There was, for instance, the *lianxuju* (television serial), the *tongsuju* (popular drama), the *qingjieju* or *yanqingju* (melodrama), the *changpian shineiju* 长篇室内剧 (indoor drama), the *xiju* (comedy), the *qingjing xiju* (sitcom), the *lishiju* (historical drama), the *wuxiaju* (martial arts drama), the *jingfeiju* (detective and crime drama), and the *biannian shifeng ge dian shi ju* (chronicled drama). *Yearnings* became known as the first “full-length indoor drama” (长篇室内剧 *changpian shinei ju*), which meant that most of its action was shot indoors, in a studio set, with some significant sequences shot on location.

Yearnings is considered the first of its kind on Chinese television. While the birth of TV drama is considered by pioneer directors such as Hu Xu as “an indigenous phenomenon” (see Lu, 2000, p. 25), it is plausible to suggest that *Yearnings* was conceived in its format under the impact of the screening of imported soap operas such as *Isaura: Slave Girl* (1984) and *Oshin* (1985) in China. It is important to note that the original version of the Brazilian *telenovela* had 170 episodes, but that it was shortened to 100 episodes when shown on Beijing Television. *Yearnings* has 50 episodes (of 60 minutes each) and was to that date the longest running series on Chinese television. According to Wang and Singhal (1992, p. 180), it was ‘designed to provide indigenous entertainment to

Chinese audiences (at a time when Brazilian and imported soap operas were popular)’.

Its narrative spans two decades, from the Cultural Revolution to the 1980s, chronicling the story of two families, the Wangs, more intellectual and wealthier, and the Lius, more traditional and hard-working. It followed the lives of several characters from both families from the 1970s to the 1980s, a period marked by significant political and social changes in China, including the trauma of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and the first years of reform. The story primarily revolves around the life of Liu Huifang, a kind and selfless woman, and her struggles with family and societal pressures. It explores social and moral themes that were relevant in Chinese society at the time such as love, sacrifice, betrayal, the status of women, family harmony, class conflict, and the pursuit of personal happiness against the backdrop of broader social changes.

Yearnings became immensely popular, capturing the hearts of millions of viewers. It was one of the first TV dramas to achieve widespread national attention and set the stage for the rise of television as a major form of entertainment in China. Its viewership was so high that streets would empty when it was broadcast, as people rushed home to watch the latest episode. Its impact was so decisive that it can be described as a cultural phenomenon, with its characters, dialogues, and themes resonating deeply with the audience. It influenced future TV productions and became a benchmark for storytelling in Chinese television.

2. Chronicle-style TV series: *Year after Year*

Yearnings set the trend for long serialized narratives on Chinese TV, but it was not until



eight years later that another decades-spanning family melodrama, directed by Li Xiaolong 李小龙 and An Zhanjun 安战军 for Beijing Television, hit the screen. The title of this highly original 1998 soap opera, *Year after Year* (*Yi nian you yi nian* 一年又一年), explicitly signals the chronicling impulse of the narrative, which comprises 21 chapters focusing on the lives of two families living in Beijing, the Chens 陈 and the Lins 林, from 1978 to 1998. The main plot revolves around the relationship between Chen Huan 陈焕, the son of a film projectionist, and Lin Pingping 林平平, the daughter of a disgraced cadre, as they make their way through the fast-changing era of “reform and opening up”.

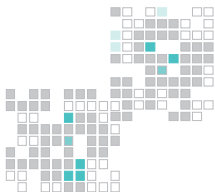
Year after Year's exploration of social and historical issues and their impact on everyday life in Beijing over the course of years is, on one hand, reminiscent of the plot of *Yearnings*. On the other hand, *Year after Year* innovates by employing a more overt and sophisticated intermedial structure that complexifies the family melodrama, interweaving individual and collective history with the changing history of audiovisual media in the country.

I intend to investigate *Year after Year*'s use of different media by resorting to the notion of intermediality, deriving inspiration mainly from Irina Rajewsky (2010) and Ágnes Pethő's (2020) ground-breaking studies in the field. In my view, both authors have been crucial in theorizing intermediality in novel ways, eschewing the definition anxiety and focusing on the plurality of meanings and possibilities afforded by the concept's malleability. Rather than asking 'what intermediality is', I hope to discuss 'what intermediality actually entails' in the soap opera, both formally and narratively, leading to the idea of a multifaceted form of self-reflexivity. I will

also take into consideration Bolter and Grusin's (2000) notion of remediation – understood as the process that informs the genealogy of media through history, and that sees the emergence of the television medium as a process of remediating other media such as film, vaudeville and the radio. In *Year after Year*, television's genealogy as remediation is emphasized through what I call 'intermedia self-reflexivity', which shows how the evolution of media and the increasing mediatization of Chinese society in the first two decades of the reform period have been impacting the formation of subjectivities in the country, working both towards and against homogenization and consensus.

Year after Year became known as China's first “chronicle-style TV series” (编年史风格的电视剧 *bian nian shi feng ge dianshi ju*), a denomination that emphasized its innovative year-by-year chronology. As already mentioned, its plot is reminiscent of *Yearnings*, and it is no wonder they share the same producer (Zheng Xiaolong 郑晓龙) and the same scriptwriter (Li Xiaoming 李晓明). Both soaps focused on the lives of two families in Beijing and the changes affecting them through the years. But *Year after Year* exacerbated the chronological impulse and its commemoration of the past through recollection by dedicating each of the soap's chapters to a single year, starting in 1978 and totalling 21 chapters in the year 1998.

The plot follows the family of film projectionist Chen Fusheng 陈福生, who lives in a hutong residence near Beihai and represents the urban working classes, and that of Lin Hanmin 林汉民, a leading cadre who was wronged during the Cultural Revolution, representative of a more intellectual class. Chen Huan 陈焕, the son of the Chen family, and Lin Pingping 林平平, the



daughter of the Lin family, grew up as childhood sweethearts (青梅竹马), and together were sent-down during the Cultural Revolution (又一起上山下乡). The soap opens with the two youngsters collecting their test results after the reestablishment of college entrance examinations in 1977. But while Chen Huan is admitted to Beijing Normal University (师范大学), Lin Pingping, who had always been a top student, fails to land a spot due to her father's political problems. With the start of the reform era, however, Lin Hanmin (落实政策) is rehabilitated and returns to a leadership position (重返领导岗位), and Lin Pingping is finally admitted to Peking University (北京大学).

The soap then follows Chen Huan and Lin Pingping's relationship through the years. He embarks on an academic career and becomes a university professor, remaining closer to his grassroots origins; she starts working in television and then moves to the USA to study media production. Once back in China, their romance rekindles and they get married, only to divorce a few years later. Pingping then moves back to the States and the two gradually grow apart. Year after year, the soap also follows the other members of the Chen and the Lin families, affected by the many changes brought to them by the first twenty years of *reform and opening up*.

Critics at the time of the original broadcast (see 施旭升, 2000; 王小明, 2000; 王朝宁, 1999, and 张志君, 吴辉, 1999) have noted the extraordinary array of social and economic events covered by the soap opera, which includes the restoration of the college entrance examination, the return of educated youth to the city, the rehabilitation of disgraced cadres, the start of overseas business trades, the installation of the stock market, the demolition of old residences, the relocation to

new apartments, and the start of tourism travel. Specially in the case of the Chen family, the impact of new household appliances is evidenced in the plot. The arrival of the first colour television set, the tape recorder, the washing machine and the refrigerator are all occasions to be celebrated, but at times equally the source of apprehension to Hu Guilian 胡桂兰, Chen Fusheng's wife, who at times seems suspicious of the new devices invading her home, and worries about the growing cost of electricity they will entail.

3. Intermediality and Remediation

Within this intense atmosphere of economic and social change that permeates two of the most extraordinary decades in recent history, *Year after Year* embraces intermediality by concentrating its chronicling efforts around the subject of media transformation, both narratively and formally. The main catalyst for the soap's intermediality is the character Chen Fusheng 陈福生, the head of the Chens, who works in a film theatre projecting Chinese and foreign films, witnessing first-hand the changing habits of the public from the end of the 1970s to the eve of the 21st century.

Intermediality is a highly malleable concept that has been used more and more in the past two decades, largely due to the introduction and dissemination of digital technology and the consequent multiplication of media interactions. Here, I take it to mean the interconnections and interferences that happen between different media, focusing on their relationships rather than on their structures (Rajewsky, 2010; Pethő, 2020). While it is an accepted fact that audiovisual media is, by its own essence, an intermedial phenomenon, there are certain expressions that embrace intermediality into their style, narrative structure and character construction to the



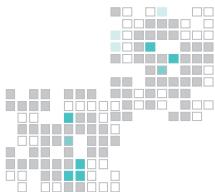
point of depending on intermediality to convey meaning (Nagib and Jerslev 2014). This is the case of *Year after Year*, a television soap opera that sets in motion a series of meaningful dialogues between different media, including cinema, photography, newspaper, radio broadcasts, music, cassettes, video cassettes and, most notably, television itself, conjured up chronologically and denoting a world that is becoming increasingly mediatized. In so doing, it takes the reflexive mode inherent to intermediality to a higher, more evident and exaggerated level, leading to what I call 'intermedia self-reflexivity', by which intermediality in television, the heterotopic space where different media congregate, is necessarily a multifarious, multifaceted form of self-reflexivity.

In order to clarify this argument, it is useful to evoke Bolter and Grusin's (2000) notion of remediation, defined as the process through which different media absorb other media in their evolution. Television, for Bolter and Grusin, emerged from the remediation of film, radio and vaudeville. To this equation, I would add printed media and, in the specific context of China, different forms of operatic theatre. More crucially, however, I would suggest that television also evolves by regularly remediating itself. The plurality of television's genealogy through remediation, as well as its cultural specificities, are made evident in *Year after Year*, where television features widely as a medium striving to achieve cultural significance by paying homage to, rivalling and refashioning other media, specially its older, more respectable brother, the cinema.

Alongside television, the cinema is the other main driving force in *Year after Year*. Projectionist Chen Fusheng claims to know about life through film when giving his son romantic advice. Shown in chapter after chapter as both a zealous projectionist and a privileged

spectator, watching myriad films from his booth, Chen Fusheng witnesses the changes in society by witnessing the changes in films and in audience preferences. Moreover, every chapter of the soap contains a conversation about cinema and television, with Chen Fusheng commenting on his favourite films, new aesthetic experiences and, above all, the menace of television and VHS to his beloved cinema. These sequences are punctuated by extracts taken from over 40 different films, including titles hailing mainly from fellow socialist countries such as *Walter Defends Sarajevo* (Yugoslavia, 1972), *The Flower Girl* (North Korea, 1972), Chinese classics such as *Little Flower* (1979), *Romance on Lushan Mountain* (1980), *Shaolin Temple* (1982) and *Yellow Earth* (1983), and foreign titles such as *The Last Emperor* (Italy, 1985), *The Dream Factory* (1997) and *Titanic* (1998), with mentions in dialogue to at least another 20.

The intermedia self-reflexive plot of *Year after Year* is so pronounced, and Chen Fusheng's bond with the cinema so vital, that, as audience number declines, he starts to gradually lose his eyesight. Not by chance, this happens when the first American film is shown on the big screen in chapter 18, James Cameron's 1994 *True Lies*, opening up the opportunity for a prismatic self-reflexive commentary involving the choice of the film and the projectionist's declining vision. From its title to its then-revolutionary use of CGI technology, explained to a Chen Fusheng in sunglasses sitting in the audience by his son Chen Huan, *True Lies'* attempt to face television's growing hegemony with the spectacle of CGI explosions is the perfect choice to symbolise the end of Chen Fusheng's career as a projectionist. He has left his booth, raised above the stalls, and now sits among the audience, only unable to see. And the cinema – gradually deprived of



its indexical properties, is now little more than a true lie.

Conversely, the character Lin Pingping represents the emergence of the new media of television in Chinese people's homes and hearts, and its increasing pervasiveness and centrality in Chinese society. After studying Chinese language at Peking University, she starts working for television and is proudly involved in the 1985 pioneering production of *Four Generations under One Roof* (四世同堂), then China's longest TV series. She studies film and television in the USA and gradually becomes a successful businesswoman, leaving China for over a decade. When she returns, wearing sunglasses that once again denote a form of blindness – not a physical but perhaps an emotional one, she is greeted at the airport by American business partners, and despite telling them that she is coming home (“应该说欢迎我回北京”) she moves into a flashy hotel. Lin Pingping represents not only a new generation of Chinese people who travel abroad, learn English and make money, but also, and perhaps more importantly, someone whose subjectivity was forged by an already mediated society. Hers is an electronic subjectivity, seen in opposition to Chen Fusheng's analogue one, forged through a tactile relationship with the celluloid strip.

If on one hand *Year after Year* could be seen as a relentless *myse-en-abyme* of different screens, on the other hand it is also decisively moved by a realist impulse, present in an impressive number of sequences shot on location, the extensive use of documentary footage, a decisive focus on everyday lives of ordinary people, and an impressive use of the long take, a nod to Bazin's notion of aesthetic realism, based on duration. This recalls the importance of Bolter and Grusin's definitive claim that “despite the

fact that all media depend on other media in cycles of remediation, our culture still needs to acknowledge that all media remediates the real. Just as there is no getting rid of mediation, there is no getting rid of the real” (2000, 56-7). *Year after Year* thus complicates such binary oppositions as ‘immediacy and hypermediacy’, ‘transparency and opacity’, revealing a reality that is increasingly mediated but also palpable, resonating with the real experience of urban life in China.

4. Concluding thoughts: towards a consensual subjectivity

Year after year was made as a tribute to the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and to the new century (国庆五十周年和新世纪), and celebrates 20 years of *reform and opening-up*. Its focus on television as a media that remediates other media emphasizes its power to forge and define not only careers, destinies and subjectivities, but also a public consciousness and a form of national harmony. Ultimately, each insertion of a television broadcast in *Year after Year* seems to suggest that, within a fast-changing and increasingly media-saturated world, television can still unite the country and create a consensus through a form of shared experience, be it through sport – notably football, Olympics and China's extraordinary volleyball female team 1981 victory at the World Cup; the news, notably Hong Kong's return to China and the 1998 Yang-tze floods; the New Year Galas and, most reflexively, soap operas. Cinema slowly becomes nothing more than an unfortunate casualty and a form of nostalgia, and while *Yellow Earth* has a small audience, *Yearnings* and other featured soaps such as *A native of Beijing in New York*, *No Worries for Men* (男人没烦恼, 1996) and *Love for Children* (儿女情



长, 1996), unite the whole country in front of the small screen. This is repeatedly emphasized by the editing, which assumes the familiar parallel structure and intercuts between shots of different characters simultaneously watching television, staring at different TV screens but always at the same programme.

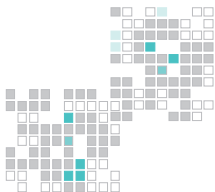
This *main melody* (主旋律 *zhu xuanlü*)⁴ stance in *Year after Year*, remarked by Shi Xusheng (2000), is at its highest level in the soap's final chapter, featuring the national flag and the ever-present image of the rising sun, once a symbol of Chairman Mao and the promise of better days through communism. But, for all its efforts, *Year after Year's* exaggerated form of intermedia self-reflexivity does not allow for complete consensus, disrupting an effort to keep things contained and conformed to the small screen

and the square box. After all, Lin Pingping and Chen Huan, the faces of a new China, are denied their happy ending, and in an important sub-plot Lin Pingping's brother cannot reconcile his social class differences with his wife, who leaves him to open a restaurant and achieves success despite her humble origins. In the end, Lin Pingping – who sees herself as partially a failure, a woman in her forties without a family and unable to write scripts for television soaps, writes a novel chronicling her story with Chen Huan. In 1999, as China prepares to enter the digital age in the twenty-first century, and when consensus will be ever harder to impose, the soap ends with a nod to an older type of print media, the book, and to a time when happy endings and rising suns were still a possibility.

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4 The concept of the "main melody" as a reflection of the CCP's ideals embodied in culture was introduced at the National Film Work Conference in 1987, where leaders raised the need to diversify propaganda products with the slogan "promoting the main melody, insisting on variety". The term is now often found in contemporary Chinese Communist Party discourse to describe any activity in the cultural sphere, including media and journalism, that follows the CCP's main political line.



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