*Farewell My Concubine* review(revised version)

*Farewell My Concubine* is a 1993 Chinese movie directed by Chen Kaige, which gained fame all over the world. This movie depicted scenes from 1924 to 1977(the warlords’ rule, the Second Sino-Japanese War, the victory of Communists, and the Cultural Revolution in the 1970s) and presented the lives of two male characters, Duan Xiaolou (Shi Tou), Chen Dieyi (Douzi) and a female character, Juxian.

From the very beginning when Shitou met Douzi, they were doomed to have an unusual relationship. It was a cloudy day, the mother of Douzi walked with Douzi hurriedly into a Beijing Opera training school. The master Guan refused to take Douzi for one of his hands had six fingers. Douzi’s mother pulled out a knife and cut Douzi’s extra finger. Finally, Douzi was allowed to stay in training school. The first night when Douzi went timidly into the dormitory, Shitou stood beside the door and greeted him with a warm quilt.

“Come here. Douzi.” Shitou said.

“…” Douzi did not reply, looking askance at Shitou.

“All right…”Shitou jumped into his bed.

Without surprise, they slept in the same bed together (all of the boys slept in the same huge bed). From then on, Shitou played both the role of brother and playmate. Either he secretly helped Douzi during the training process or sacrificed himself for Douzi’s mistake deepened their relationship. A few years later, they were both brilliant enough to stand in front of Eunuch Zhang, a powerful official in Beijing, and perform in theBeijing Opera. In Zhang’s room Shitou admired a sword and said, “If I were a emperor, Douzi would be my queen.” Luckily, they became stars of the Beijing Opera. Shitou was an emperor in the Qing Dynasty and Douzi his last concubine. Gradually, Douzi fell in love with Shitou.

Through the view of two opera characters, the director tried to show us the history of a modern China. Under the tortured society, Shi Tou and Douzi were pressured to make some unfavorable decisions, which triggered our thinking toward humanity. Take the Cultural Revolution as an example. In the movie, Shi Tou and Douzi had been intimate friends for many years except for some minor frictions. They survived through two devastating wars but broke up in the Cultural Revolution. On the scene, Shi Tou and Douzi kneed down in a public square where struggle session (political campaign) was held. Red flags were floating in the air; insane Red Guards (mainly consist of students) were swearing maliciously; ashes of burned opera clothes were flying everywhere. On the wooden boards hanging over their necks were there two lines of black slogans “Down with opera despot Duan Xiaolou. Down with Chen Dieyi.” Xiaolou’s face was painted with ugly pictures; hands were bound together. He was forced to expose Dieyi’s crime, exclaiming that Dieyi was a traitor who sang for Japanese soldiers, Nationalist soldiers, capitalists, and landlords, a cannabis smoker who sucked over people’s blood. Dieyi who kneed beside Xiaolou was enraged by his words and countered, “Even you a Conqueror have to knee down; there is no wonder why opera is over.” The conflict between Xiaolou and Dieyi became irreconcilable. We may ask, “What causes the break-up between two brothers?” Yes, the Cultural Revolution as well as the weakness of humanity together destroyed the trust, friendship, and love among people in that age. After the struggle session, Juxian came back to the square, staring despondently at the ashes. After watching this scene, I sighed; I sighed not only for the sad destiny but also the crazy students, the Dark Age.

In the last show when Douzi and Shitou played *Farewell my Concubine* together, Douzi decided to end his life as well as the movie. We cannot tell whether Douzi lived in his dream or in real life, but he for sure mixed his life with the play. In the movie, from the hat on his head to the scarlet shoes, from the posture of his body to his slim hands, from a vermeil smile to lofty sound, all of these revealed the fact that Douzi lost himself on the stage. In the real life, he was upset with the fact that Shitou married with Juxian because Douzi thought Shitou belonged to Douzi.

Compared to Douzi, Shitou was a more realistic character. He swung between the relationship with Douzi and Juxian. Like the emperor that he played, he was obtuse in real life. Without Juxian, he could not even survive from the social change. He played the role of emperor only on stage. His life is doomed to be stigmatized with regret.

Juxian was a normal woman. The status of Juxian (whore in House of flowers) determined her life. Shitou’s love was divided into two parts, one for Douzi and another for her. At last, her husband betrayed her.

How I revise this essay.

After the meeting with Deb, I realized that I put too much summarized language in this essay but not enough details. So I cut half of the essay about the triangle relationship among Douzi, Shitou and Juxian. Instead, I add the scene when both Douzi and Shitou kneed down in front of the public and admitted their crime. This will help to explain the relationship between Douzi and Shitou.

I also combine the first two paragraphs together and make it concise and cut my personal feeling at the end. I reserve the comments about three main characters but fail to add more cinematography because I know nothing about it. I try my best to recreate the scene with words.