Rope explores the plight of exploited women in China

FIVE GIRLS AND A ROPE

Written by Hung-Wei Yeh, Chia-Hua Lau, and Mao Xiao
Directed by Hung-Wei Yeh

April 17, 1992

By Danny Su

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As for Hexiang (Jing Ai), she finds herself in a moral dilemma. She spites her sister-in-law, but she also has an affair. Her sister-in-law begs for forgiveness and tells Hexiang that she was forced into her marriage by her mother. Hexiang, who has a lover but who also will be forced into another marriage by her mother, is sympathetic and helps the couple escape. But the two are caught and punished by death. Each of those motivations imply that Chinese women, not men, are responsible for the personal sufferings inflicted on them.

In this female-dominated movie, men have only small roles, but wherever they appear, they are the oppressors. Interestingly, there is not a single shot of men laboring on the fields. Women perform all the hard labor depicted in the movie.

Although I was not satisfied with the character development, I was very impressed by some of the scenes which used minimal graphic details to create frightening pictures. When Guijuan (Shih Chiang), a mentally retarded shepherd who treats the women as the equals of men, notices that they are barren, he speaks to his sister: "When the girls realize they can never escape from the endless suffering, they wear new red dresses and commit suicide by hanging themselves. They believe they would then reach "The Garden," where there is no more exploitation of women by men. In contrast to the traditional festive mood that is associated with the color red, the sight of five young girls hanging from the ceiling creates a morbid and sad atmosphere — one that is prevalent throughout the movie.

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HANG On the door faster and louder. The audience knows what is happening outside the room, and all the screaming and yelling makes them think about it even more and creates images more terrifying than what actually appears on the screen.

Similar techniques are also employed during the burial of the eloped couple. It is sunny, and the camera is at a low angle facing the sun. The audience can see only black images of people dumping dirt onto the couple and hands struggling in the air. Finally, someone picks a huge rock and tosses it into the pit, stopping the hand motions. Again, the director doesn't show any graphic details, but the images are frightening.

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