

Sunrise, another four-act play, was first serialized in the *Literary Monthly*.

Sunrise (1936)



Greatly shocked by the suicides of two young female film stars who had been the target of merciless gossip in the tabloid press, Cao Yu poured his empathy into *Sunrise*'s heroine, Chen Bailu. Groups of people including bankers, clerks, university students, workers, prostitutes and mafia figures revolve around Chen, a student-turned-courtesan, who lives in a luxury hotel, supported by a wealthy banker. Later, faced with her benefactor's bankruptcy, Chen commits suicide. Presenting vivid scenes of contemporary Chinese metropolitan life, the play studies evil and suffering, and conveys a strong social message: the need to rebel against the ruling plutocrats.

Cao Yu outlined his intentions in this play by eight quotations, the first and last of which are as follows:

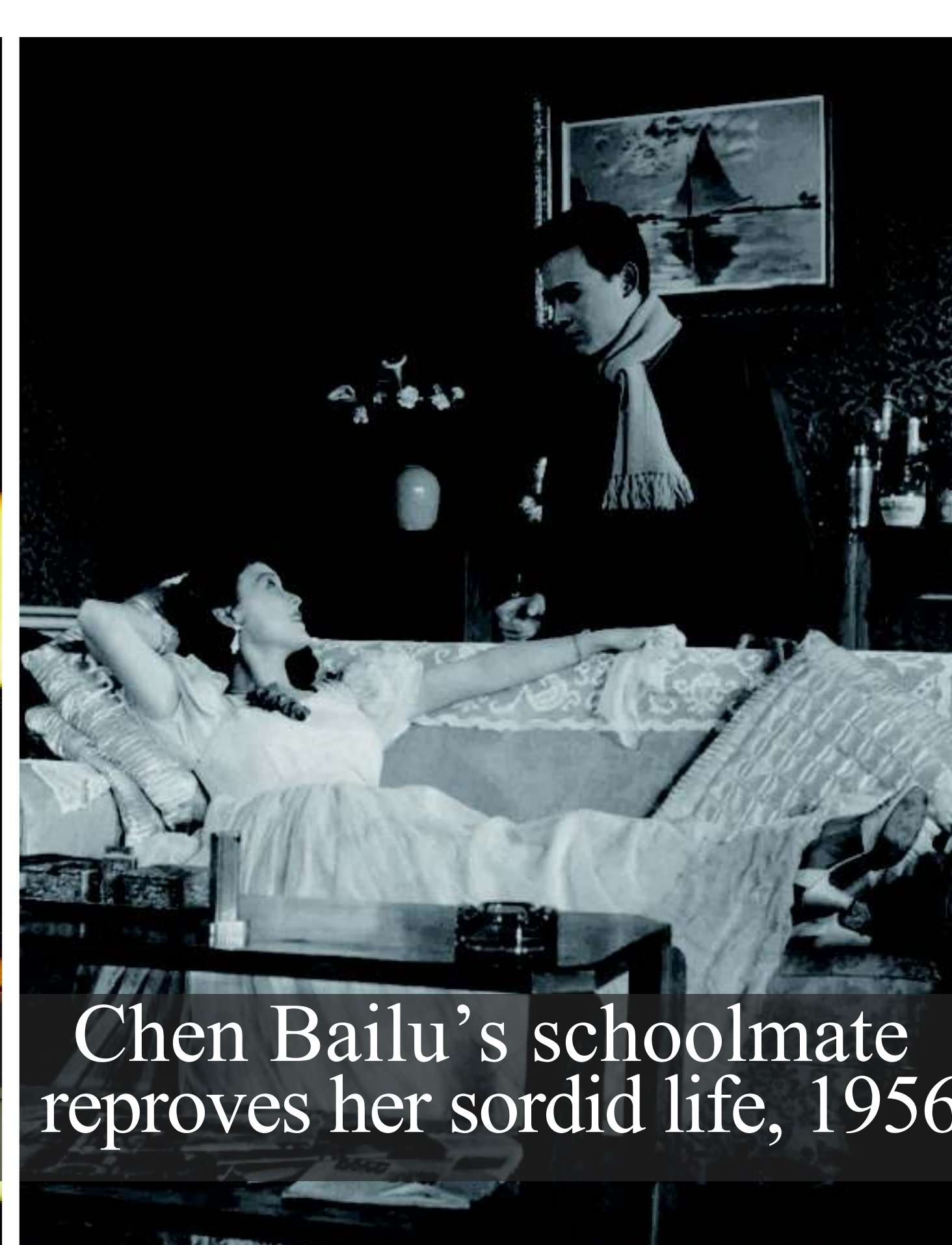
For thus the way of God
Cuts people down when they have had
too much
And fills the bowls of those who are in
want.
But the way of man will not work like
this:
The people who have not enough are
despoiled
For tribute to the rich and surfeited.
- Laozi *Magnum opus on Taoism*

Then I saw a new heaven and a new
earth, for the first heaven and the first
earth had passed away, and the sea was
no more.

- Book of Revelations 21:1



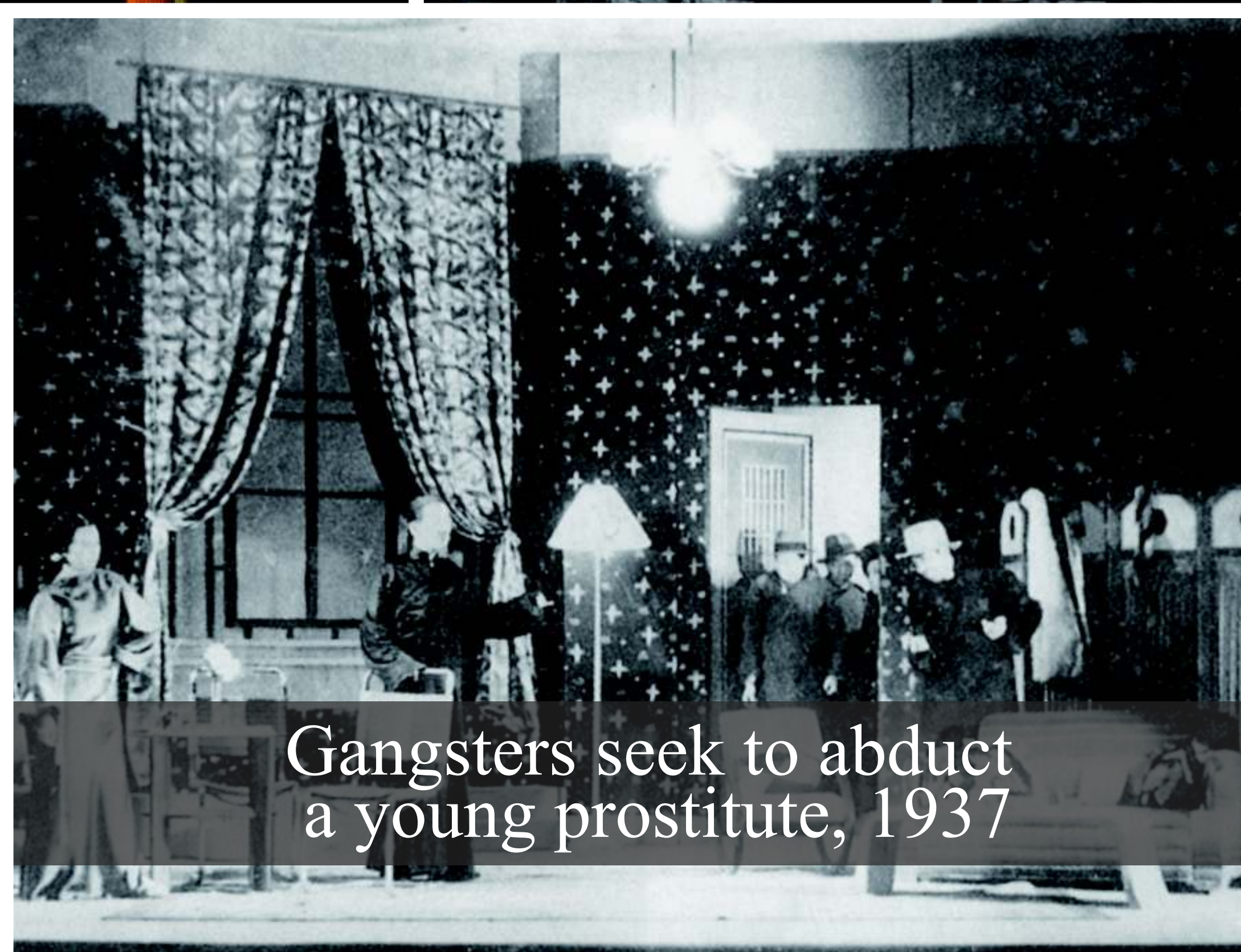
The young banker blackmails his boss, 2000



Chen Bailu's schoolmate reproves her sordid life, 1956



Chen Bailu flirts with two admirers, 1956



Gangsters seek to abduct a young prostitute, 1937



Chen Bailu partying, 2002



Japanese production at Tokyo's Mitsukoshi Royal Theatre, 1981