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Witnessing the Birth of Asian Hollywood through the Hong Kong Film Archive: an Informational Interview with the Head of the Hong Kong Film Archive

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Abstract

Hong Kong Chinese-language cinema has a century-old history. In comparison to cinema in China, Hong Kong enjoyed a greater degree of political expression. The Hong Kong cinema industry produced a greater variety of Chinese-language films, without having to suffer from the constraints imposed by government censorship. For decades, Hong Kong reported to be the third largest motion picture industry in the world, after Bollywood and Hollywood, and the second largest exporter. However, Hong Kong cinema did not attract scholarly attentions until the mid-1980s. The HKFA is the first research-based institution to be established for documenting the history and evolution of the region's cinema. This article is a direct face-to-face informational interview with Richie Lam, Head of the Hong Kong Film Archive - who discusses the film collection, expertise at the HKFA, strategic plans at the HKFA, as well as the Institute's contributions to the film industry and popular culture.

Introduction

Hong Kong Chinese-language cinema has a century-old history.   In comparison to cinema in China, Hong Kong enjoyed a greater degree of political expression.   The Hong Kong cinema industry produced a greater variety of Chinese-language films, without having to suffer from the constraints imposed by government censorship. For decades, Hong Kong reported to be the third largest motion picture industry in the world, after Bollywood and Hollywood, and the second largest exporter.   However, Hong Kong cinema did not attract scholarly attentions until the mid-1980s.   The Hong Kong Film Archive (HKFA) is the first research-based institution to be established for documenting the history and evolution of the region's cinema.   In this interview, Richie Lam, Head of the Hong Kong Film Archive discusses the film collection, expertise at the HKFA, strategic plans at the HKFA, as well as the Institute's contributions to the film industry and popular culture.

Patrick LO (PL): Could you begin this interview by introducing yourself, your past training and professional experiences.   In addition, could you also explain your current role(s) and duties at the Hong Kong Film Archive[1]?

Richie Lam (RL): I am Richie Lam.   I am currently serving as the Head of the Hong Kong Film Archive (HKFA).   Technically speaking, I am an arts administrator, not a film expert, but I absolutely love movies.   Anyways, I graduated from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and I majored in Government and Public Administrations. Although my major at university was not film-related, I have always been a keen moviegoer, even when I was still a student.   And I have already been a big fan of the film festivals.   Being able to work for the HKFA, I feel like I have won the lottery - because I really love my job, and I feel most fortunate to be working here.

As I remember, back in the mid-1980s, soon after I graduated from university, I started working as the Cultural Services Manager for the Hong Kong Government. In fact, I have worked in many different arts administration positions in the Government.   For example, when I first entered the Government, I worked for the [Hong Kong] Space Museum[2] - to manage the venue operation.   After that, I

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[1] Hong Kong Film Archive (香港電影資料館) - Homepage.   Available at:
http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/HKFA/en/index.php

[2] Hong Kong Space Museum - Homepage.   Available at:

worked for the Cultural Presentations Section[3] - to plan for the performing arts programmes for the Hong Kong public.   After the Cultural Presentations Section, I worked briefly as the Training Officer for the museum curators in Hong Kong.   And in 1993, I had a chance to be involved in the planning of the Film Archive.   At that time, there were only 3 staff involved in the overall planning of the HKFA, and I was one of the team members.   In 1997, I was transferred to the [Hong Kong] International Film Festival[4] - to work as the Manager of the Festival.   And then 2 years later, I was transferred again to the Hong Kong Cultural Centre[5] - to manage the venue.   And in 2000, I went to the [Hong Kong] Film Programmes Office[6] to arrange for the corporatization of the Hong Kong International Film Festival which was originally organized by the Government.   And then in 2002, I worked for the Hong Kong Antiquities and Monuments Office[7] - doing something related to the protection and preservation of the local built heritage.   In 2007, I returned again to the HKFA.   So that was the summary of my career path and professional experiences up to now.

PL: Can you tell me whose idea was it to establish this Film Archive in Hong Kong? In addition, what were the aims and purposes for establishing the HKFA? Was the HKFA a governmental initiative?

RL: I would say only partially.   Back in late 1980s, some cultural persons like Law Kar (羅卡) and Yu Mo-wan (余慕雲)[8], who cared very much about the preservation of the local film heritage, requested the Government to open a film library in Hong Kong.   At the same time, the Government also expressed interest in doing something similar.   As a result, the Government engaged an archive expert from Canada to conduct a feasibility study; and the study concluded that it was both feasible and

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http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/ce/Museum/Space/e_index.htm

[3] Hong Kong Cultural Presentations Section – Homepage.   Available at: http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/en/index.html
[4] Hong Kong International Film Festival – Homepage.   Available at: http://www.hkiff.org.hk/eng/main.html

[5] Hong Kong Cultural Centre - Homepage.   Available at: http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/HKCC/en/about/intro.html

[6] Hong Kong Film Programmes Office – Homepage.   Available at: http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/ce/CulturalService/filmprog/english/programmes.html

[7] Hong Kong Antiquities and Monuments Office - Homepage.   Available at: http://www.amo.gov.hk/en/main.php

[8] Further information on Yu Mo-wan (余慕雲) is available at: https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E4%BD%99%E6%85%95%E9%9B%B2

possible to set up a film archive in Hong Kong.   However, since film archive was new thing to Hong Kong, a lot of studies and research had to be conducted before making any final decisions on building the archive.   So in 1993, we had a small team to begin the actual research and planning work for the film archive.   Concurrently, apart from doing the research, we also started to build the film collections.   Because we understood well that if we could not start the acquisitions process as soon as possible, many of the valuable film collections would soon disappear.   As you understand, old films are very fragile materials and they simply cannot wait.   So at that time, apart from gathering the information from the overseas archives, we also collected some films and printed materials mainly from individual collectors.   During that time, we also approached many large film companies like the Shaw Brothers [Studio][9], and the Golden Princess[10], to ask for donations of any film-related materials.   Unfortunately, we were still very much under the planning stage at that time, so the responses from these big film companies were, *"Only until I can really see the Film Archive has been fully established, or the storage facilities for films are readily available, then we could seriously consider donating something to the Archive…. But not until then…"*   As you can see, it was really challenging to begin building the collections for the Archive during the initial stage.

PL: From your perspective or from the Hong Kong Government's perspective, why do they think the film industry in Hong Kong play such an important role in our local heritage? Is it a recent concept or it has always been very important since the early days?

RL: Films, in a sense, are really special cultural products; but in another sense, they are commercial products for the entertainment industry in Hong Kong.   The film industry in Hong Kong has had a very long history - almost 100 years old. Especially during the 1950s or 1960s, we had a large quantity of films being produced in Hong Kong at that time, and we also carried the name, "The Hollywood of the East / 東方荷里活"[11] or something that was equally fancy.   Hence, films are very important in Hong Kong, in terms of both their cultural and commercial values.   In addition, to me, films are also a kind of carrier of social images, as well as social messages…   Through a film, one can retrieve a lot of old information that you cannot find from a regular printed book or even from a photo.   So the film industry

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[9] Shaw Studio (邵氏兄弟(香港)有限公司) – Homepage.   Available at: http://www.shawstudios.hk/

[10] Golden Princess Film Production, Ltd. (金公主電影製作有限公司)

[11] "The Hollywood of the East / 東方荷里活" – for details, see *Cinema of Hong Kong* at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinema_of_Hong_Kong

or the film culture is a very important part of our local heritage in this regard. In addition, films could also reflect how we see society at a particular period of time. Apart from the documentary aspects, films can also give us the real pictures of the society in which we live, for example, the so-called feature films, the drama films, and the dramatic cinemas, etc. – they all reflect a kind of cultural values at that time. For example, during the 1960s, through films, you can find out about the way people lived in Hong Kong during that time. In fact not only in Hong Kong, but all over the world, many people find this art form [film] to be really important throughout different societies. As a result, many regions and countries have their own film archives. In fact, there is an international association called, The International Federation of Film Archives[12], and according to the information provided, there are altogether over 150 archives for films over the world. As a result, this International Film Federation serves as an important platform for the people who work for film archives like us to share and exchange our expertise and professional experiences.

PL: As one of the founding members of the HKFA, during the initial setup stage, did you need to develop a set of policies and the procedures for operating the Archive? While developing the procedures and policies for HKFA, did you adopt existing policies and procedures from other overseas institutions, i.e., to borrow ideas and techniques from them on how to operate film archive in Hong Kong.

RL: Yes, we did take references from other overseas archives. The idea of setting up a film archive in Hong Kong was indeed very new during that time. During the initial setup stage, we took references mainly from the film archives in the UK and in Australia. Yes, we did try to model the HKFA after their establishments in overseas. Of course, our Archive was comparatively much smaller and more compressed in terms of the whole structure.

PL: Why did you choose to take references from film archives in the UK and Australia, instead archives in other places, e.g., the USA?

RL: There was not really a special reason. It was simply because the UK's and Australia's governmental structures were very similar to that of Hong Kong's. Because Hong Kong was still a British colony then, and their structures were very similar to some of the governmental offices in Hong Kong. Besides, it was before 1997, and there were not any political considerations at that time; just for very

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[12] International Federation of Film Archives – Homepage. Available at:
http://www.fiafnet.org/uk/faq/default.html

practical reasons. For the North American models, we also took them into considerations; however, at that time, we really needed to set up the HKFA as soon as possible, so we preferred to start with a medium to a small-size archive that would be more manageable. Of course, ideally, we would want to have a large archive; as we had to consider the future developments; but you would need to take much much longer time for the overall planning, as well as getting the money from the Government.

PL: When you first tried to set up this HKFA, were there any legislations, rules that had to be followed, e.g., the copyright issues for films?

RL: In fact, at that time, or even now, we don't have any legal deposit legislations - NO legislation at all whatsoever. For Korea, they have this legal deposit legislation for films; but frankly speaking, not many regions or countries have this so-called legal deposit legislation, because films are really special products, especially for those commercial films. Even now we have to acquire the films actively ourselves, i.e., not to wait passively for the film production companies to donate or deposit their films to the Archive. We really have to actively go out to acquire the films from them instead!

Of course, it would be ideal to have an archive law, so that any films produced in Hong Kong will be deposited automatically to the HKFA; but in actual practice, it could be really complicated. Because when it touches upon the property rights and the copyrights of the film materials - to many people, they think these rights are very personal or even private, because these rights are closely related to the commercial values of the actual film products. As a result, the film companies were reluctant to give out their film productions to the Film Archive in our early stage. However, I still think that we need to take time to educate people, in order to change their mindset. I think it is very important for the HKFA to acquire, to preserve and to provide access to the movies for non-profit-making purposes. So far, we have collected over 10,000 copies of film including negatives and film prints. After eliminating the duplicate copies, we have collected around 4,000 to 5,000 titles of Hong Kong films. You have asked about the policies of the HKFA earlier, it is very simple - we collect Hong Kong movies, i.e., all movies related to Hong Kong; produced in Hong Kong; or produced by the Hong Kong filmmakers…. if we find any films belonging to these categories, we will collect them.

PL: You mentioned earlier, you worked in many different departments within the

Hong Kong Government, e.g., the Cultural Presentations Office, the Culture Centre, the Space Museum, etc….. would you say that these experiences in some way have contributed to your current work at the HKFA?

RL: Although I have previously worked in many different offices within the Government, many of them were somehow related to films. For example, I have previously worked for the Festival Office which organized the annual Hong Kong International Film Festival, and then the Film Programmes Office, etc. As you can see, all these past experiences are somehow related to the film business. Even for some other non-film-related offices which I previously worked for, I still believe the learned office procedures and practices could be adopted when running the HKFA.

Part of the training and the past experiences within the Government were certainly beneficial to my current work at the HKFA. In fact, the setup of the HKFA is very similar to other cultural related offices in the Government, although we are very different in many technical aspects. For example, we have engaged quite a number of contract staff to work for the HKFA, as we need a wide variety of experts from various backgrounds. And all those film and other technical experts are simply not available inside the Government. Hence, we need to open some contract positions to recruit them to work at the Archive.

PL: Please highlight your collections here at the HKFA, e.g., do you have any rare film items that you are very proud of; or any unique film items that are only available at this Archive?

RL: For example, we have a very valuable film of Bruce Lee (李小龍) entitled, *The Orphan* (人海孤鴻). The story behind this film goes all the way back to 1994, when our HKFA colleagues were receiving training at a film laboratory in UK, the laboratory manager told us that they had gathered some Asian films, maybe from Hong Kong, and they were about to dispose it. Because they knew that we came from the HKFA, so they wanted us to handle this film – perhaps to return the film to the appropriate archives or organizations… So we went to the storeroom to inspect the film. Wow! As it turned out, it was a very important film of Bruce Lee! This film was commercially released in Hong Kong in 1960, just prior to Bruce Lee heading to the USA.

PL: Okay! But since this film was released commercially, how come those people working at the rent laboratory did not recognize it?

RL: Because those people who worked at that laboratory in the UK could not read any of the film's information in Chinese – it was all so foreign to them.   In addition, they were only the negatives of the actual film – like the negative of a photo - so the laboratory staff in the UK could not watch the entire film either.   It was indeed one of the most important films of Bruce Lee that was made in Hong Kong, in addition to 4 other films that he shot after he returned from the USA.   So we felt so fortunate that we were able to retrieve the film.   In addition, we only needed to conduct very minimal restoration on this film, because it has been so well kept over the years.

PL: How did the negatives of a Hong Kong Chinese film end up in a film laboratory in the UK?

RL: Have you heard about the Eastman colour film?   Back in the 1960s, for the processing of such films, they had to do it in the UK, USA or Japan, etc.   Once the processing of all the negatives was complete in the overseas laboratory, the prints would be sent to Hong Kong for screening while the negatives would be left in the film laboratories.   The HKFA would therefore have the opportunities of retrieving some of these negatives back to Hong Kong.   We were indeed very lucky.

PL: Who are the main HKFA users?   Are they mostly from Hong Kong or overseas?   Are they just regular movie goers or they are serious scholars who are doing research on film studies at the HKFA?

RL: In 2011, a user survey was conducted, and according to the survey results, the average age group of our users is over 50, i.e., something between the age of 50 to 60. In other words, most of the local HKFA users are senior citizens or retired people.   I think this could be related to HKFA's location, because we are located in a residential area.   Our user groups are very different from that of the other public museums in Hong Kong.   Also, many of them are situated in the heart of the city, viz. Tsim Sha Tsui, where you could attract a more diverse group of audience, including tourists from Mainland China and from other overseas countries.   Anyhow, we still have younger audience group using the Archive, although the proportion is not really that large.

PL: Would you say a majority of the users come to the HKFA for entertainment purposes?

RL: Yes, a majority of them come for entertainment purposes.   They come to see the exhibitions on the Ground Floor, to browse the magazines at the Resource Centre (Library), and also to attend the film screenings at the cinema inside the HKFA.   Of course, we also get a lot of scholars and researchers from both local and overseas who come to the HKFA Resource Centre for research purposes.

PL: For the local and overseas scholars, what kinds of inquiries or requests would they usually make?   What kind of information would they want to obtain from the HKFA?

RL: Normally, the researchers are interested in finding out information about the old movies, for instance, movies produced in Hong Kong during the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, they want to find information on the major film studios in Hong Kong, for example, the Shaw Brothers and the Golden Harvest, etc.   The researchers could read our collection of old magazines in which much information on local film history could be found.

PL: Am I to understand that the Resource Centre (Library) would be responsible for answering this kind of questions? In other words, within the film archive, you also have a library, which you call the Resource Centre - so what are the purpose and function of the Resource Centre?

RL: The basic functions of the Resource Centre are to make our collections available for the public to access.   You may say that the Resource Centre is a facility that the public or the researchers can come to conduct their searches and researches on the materials we hold.   For the HKFA, in addition to collecting, and keeping the film materials, the ultimate goal is to make these materials accessible to the researchers, and to the general public, for appreciation and even for entertainment purposes – through which, the general public can learn about the film history, film industry and film culture in Hong Kong.   Of course, the HKFA also has a Programming Team which is responsible for organizing various public programmes including film screenings, exhibitions, talks and seminars etc.   That is another way to make our collection accessible to the public.

PL: How far ahead do you need to plan your public or outreach programmes?

RL: We usually have an annual programme plan for those film screening programmes and exhibitions.   However, we also have initial ideas for more long-term

programmes say for 3 to 5 years.   For example, for the coming year, in April 2014, we will have an exhibition on the theme of "Hong Kong gangster film".

PL: Could you please tell me how does the HKFA develop ideas and plans for public programmes and exhibitions?   While developing these programmes, how could you ensure that they are corresponding to the public's needs and interests?

RL: There is a really complicated workflow, but I try to make it simple for easy understanding.   First of all, we have a panel of colleagues, who would discuss all the ideas first, and then we will develop more concrete proposals for the different film programmes.   In fact, we have already developed some ideas for our programmes for the next 5 years.   But how do we develop them?   Well, there are so many factors which will affect our programming considerations and decisions.   First of all, we have to look at our film collections, for example, if we have acquired or restored some representative collections, we will certainly develop a series of special programmes to promote them – and that is one way.   The other way is that we are systematically doing research on different film studios, film companies, film makers and film genres in Hong Kong, etc.   So we can organize special programmes on these major film studios, for instance, on the Shaw Brothers; on Cathay Organziation (HK) (國泰電懋); and also on the Great Wall (長城電影製片有限公司), Feng Huang (Phoenix) (鳳凰影業公司) and Sun Luen (長鳳新電影公司), etc.

We also launched programmes on important film makers for example, on Li Han-hsiang (李翰祥)[13]; Yi Wen (易文)[14]; King Hu (胡金銓)[15], etc. – all these programmes were results of our research woks and with a view to arousing the interest of the publics and researchers on Hong Kong film history.

PL: The HKFA offers a variety of public programmes and exhibitions every year, how can you ensure that you have the adequate funding for them? What resources are needed to implement the programmes proposed for the forthcoming year?

RL: Luckily, we have a rather stable budget from the Government every year around \$30 to \$35 million Hong Kong dollars for the operational expenditure of the

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[13] Li Han-hsiang (李翰祥).   Further information available at:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Li_Han-hsiang

[14] Yi Wen (易文).   Further information in Chinese available at:
http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%98%93%E6%96%87

[15] Hu Jinquan (胡金銓).   Further information available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Hu

organization.　The budget would then be allocated to various functional units of the HKFA.　Every year, we would come up with an annual programme plan for the approval of the Government.

PL: Have there been situations that you and your colleagues both thought, "Oh! This is such a great programme!" And you knew that HKFA audiences would also love it. But after you have submitted your proposal or funding application to the Government, they told you that they did not like your proposal and did not give you the funding that you sought?

RL: Frankly speaking, NO!　Maybe because the Government has a lot of trust in our expertise, and therefore gives the Archive a great deal of freedom to do our jobs. Not all our colleagues are civil servants – in fact, some of them are engaged on contract terms who are professional in film research, editorial and programming. We have totally 7 different functional units within the HKFA. One unit is mainly responsible for the acquisition of films.　We have another team which is responsible for the film conservation and preservation.　As I mentioned earlier, we have a Programming Team and they take care of all the film exhibitions and the screening. And for the Research Team, the colleagues make use of the collected materials for conducting research on various themes, for example, doing research on film studios like The Golden Harvest; on film directors, such as, King Hu (胡金銓); on Bruce Lee (李小龍), etc.　And then we have the Resource Centre which is staffed by the librarian colleagues who will take care of the printed and audio-visual collections and manage the Centre.　And we also have the Systems Unit which takes care of the computerized system for recording the information of the archive collection.　Last but not least, we have the Venue and Administration Unit looking after the daily administration and operation of the Archive.

PL: Throughout the years, the HKFA has developed many interesting programmes for the Hong Kong public - could you name one or 2 programmes, which you thought were great successes?　Maybe you could tell me about a programme that you are really proud of, the audience loved it, it was also well received by the media, and also received a lot of support from the Government?

RL: I think it has to be the project on the famous Hong Kong movie actress, Linda Lin Dai (林黛)[16] - it was no doubt an exhibition that we are really proud of.　The

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[16] Lin Dai (林黛), 1934-1964, was a very famous Chinese actress of Hong Kong films in the Shaw Brothers Studio during the 1950s to 600s.　Further information is available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lin_Dai

experience from the whole event was hard for me to forget, even until these days. Lin Dai committed suicide in 1964; and her son approached us in around 2008, as he generously offered to donate his mother's personal items to the Archive.   It was my very first time to visit Lin Dai's residence.   We could see that her family did not make any changes to the settings inside her bedroom since the day she passed away - and being able to witness that first hand was definitely an unforgettable and sentimental experience for me.   We then collected all the items, and tried to re-create her bedroom in our Exhibition Hall.   That particular exhibition on Lin Dai received overwhelming responses.   It was so well received by both the public and the media that it actually broke the attendance records of our previous programmes.

PL: For those personal items taken from Lin Dai's bedroom, did you have to return them her family after the exhibition, or they were simply donated to the Archive?

RL: No, all those items belonging to Lin Dai were donated to the Archive.   In fact, for the HKFA, we also take up a minor role of a museum, i.e., to keep some film-related artifacts such as movie cameras, projectors, costumes, props etc.

PL: In other words, this institute is not just an archive for films; but also a museum for personal items related to the film industry?

RL: Yes, that is correct!

PL: Could you give me another successful programme launched by the HKFA?

RL: Another example I want to give is not an exhibition, but a film.   You might have heard of a long-lost film entitled, *Confucius* (孔夫子)[17], directed by famous director Fei Mu (費穆).[18]   It is a black-and-white film made in 1940 in Shanghai, during the Japanese occupation.   This film was very meaningful in terms of its main message, as well as its overall aesthetics.   Director Fei Mu tried to use the character of Kongfuzi to promote the awareness of Chinese people about our own national image, giving us a sense of national pride during the Japanese oppression.

PL: How did you acquire this film, and when was it acquired?

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[17] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucius_(1940_film) ;
http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/cuoaa/conficious%20add.pdf

[18] Fei Mu (費穆).   Further information available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fei_Mu

RL: As said, *Confucius* was a long-lost film. Originally, we thought that we would never discover this film again. Many people had tried to locate this film for over 50 years, but without success. This film was originally released in Shanghai in 1940, and it was then released again 8 years later in 1948. It then suddenly disappeared, and only the film's printed brochures were remaining. But in 2001 or 2002, a member of the public telephoned the Archive, saying that a relative had just passed away, and left behind some reels of films. As usual, we went to the site to check out the collection without much expectation. As the donor handed the film cans to us, we found one of the cans was labeled *Confucius* (孔夫子) in Chinese. As we saw this, we were all totally shocked and amazed! Initially, we were very skeptical about the real content of the film reels being handed to us. But later on, we were able to verify that it was indeed the long-lost *Confucius* that we have been searching for so long. This was another amazing experience for me.

PL: Did you also organize another exhibition or special film screening for promoting this long-lost film?

RL: We acquired that film at that time and frankly speaking, we don't have the expertise to handle it. First of all, it was a flammable nitrate film, so we had to put it aside first. We spent quite a lot of time researching this film including the details of its production background, copyright issues, condition of the film negatives, etc. to prepare for the restoration work. We had then collaborated with an overseas film laboratory in Italy to conduct the restoration work. That was the first large-scale restoration project of the Archive. Before that, we have conducted a number of restoration projects as well, but the scale was comparatively small.

PL: Which part of your work at the HKFA do you find most satisfying?

RL: In fact, when I first arrived at the HKFA many years ago, I worked as the Film Acquisitions Manager, and I absolutely loved my job then. I really did enjoy my job. For example, being able to collect, to rescue our film heritage - I have to say it was the most satisfying part of my job. Frankly speaking, I was happier and more satisfied when I worked as the Acquisition Manager during the old days. I truly enjoyed being the "Acquisition Person". How to build my networks; how to approach different people in the film industry; how to really acquire films to expand our HKFA collections…

PL: What about being able to see how the audiences' positive responses towards the

programmes developed by the HKFA - do you find it to be satisfying?

RL: Of course, most satisfying indeed!   In addition, I have the chance to witness the developments of the HKFA in the past 20 years.   When we first started the HKFA project in early 1990s, we only had a very small team for doing all the planning. Now, we have a team of 50 staff, although not of large scale, we still manage to organize many meaningful programmes for the public.   The success of the HKFA is really a team effort, all our colleagues came from all sorts of professions, of very diverse training and backgrounds, etc.   Without programming colleagues, we would not be able to develop any programmes to promote our unique film collections. Without our library colleagues, we would not be able to provide good public services to the public and to the film researchers.   Without the conservation team, we would never be able to preserve the films, and make them available to our Archive audience. Without the acquisitions colleagues, we would not be able to develop such a rich and diverse film collections, as we now hold.   So we really need all these different experts to work together, in order to get the HKFA to work.

PL: Would you prefer the HKFA to stay at where it is now, or would you prefer it to be somewhere around the Cultural Centre, e.g., to next to other museums in Hong Kong – via which you could attract more visitors or tourists?

RL: Yes, you may say that our present location in Sai Wan Ho is not that accessible. As I mentioned earlier, back in 1993, at that time, if we had not accepted this present site in Sai Wan Ho; and if we had chosen to wait for a more centralized location, I seriously don't think we could not have begun the HKFA immediately.   I was directly involved in this project since its planning stage, hence, I totally understand how difficult it was to build the whole Archive from scratch.   Of course, every single archivist or librarian would want their archive or library in a more centralized area, but in actual practice, it is very difficult to.   As a result, we decided to take up a location in Sai Wan Ho.   Maybe now is the time for us to think about opening a branch for the Archive in a more centralized location.

PL: Where would you prefer the new branch to be?

RL: I don't have any preferences at the moment.   In fact, even with our current location, we have been arranging some of our programmes to be organized in the more urban areas, for example, showing our films at the Broadway Cinematheque[19]

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[19] Broadway Cinematheque – Hompage.   Available at: http://bc.cinema.com.hk/

in Yau Ma Tei; at the lecture halls of the Hong Kong Science Museum and Hong Kong Space Museum in Tsim Sha Tsui so as to allow our publics to enjoy our film screenings without the need to come to the Archive premises.   But of course, my ultimate goal is to find a place which is a much more convenient for our patrons. Some patrons already told us that the Archive is too far away from where they live. In fact, I have already conveyed my idea of a new urban branch for the Archive to our senior management, and hopefully, such idea can be materialized.

PL: What are the major difficulties and challenges that you and your colleagues are currently facing at the HKFA?

RL: I think the accommodation and storage issues are the challenges at the moment. Since our collection and staff size are growing, we are in great need of additional space for office and collection stores.   In addition, the possible retirement of film stock (film celluloid) in the near future is probably another great challenging to us and in fact to the whole film archive community.   With the rapid development of digital technology, many films are now produced by digital means and screened by digital projector in the cinema.   It results in sharp drop in the demand of film stock which forces the production companies such as Kodak, Fuji and Alfa to stop the production of film stock.   The diminishing demand also triggered the closing down of many film laboratories.   With this trend developed, where the film archive ultimately can buy the film stock and process the film prints for screening?   Will it be the end of "film projection"?   The impacts will become more salient in the coming few years and a lot of discussion will be held among the film archives.

PL: Do you have anything else that you would like to add before closing this interview?

RL: I can easily talk about the HKFA for over 6 and even 10 hours.   I really like to work in the Archive.   I have previously worked in many different posts relating to cultural services and arts administration, but so far, this is the one that I enjoy working most.

PL: When watching a film, which cinematic elements do you enjoy most?   Do you enjoy the aesthetics part, or the visual part (e.g., the graphic excitements) or the drama itself or the narrative part or the other nostalgic elements?   Which part of the film do you think is most important?

RL: I can just say that I like watching movie in the cinema, not at home, because I can be enveloped in total darkness, being able to watch those moving images on the screen without any distractions; being able to immersed 100% in the story and the drama – that is what I really enjoy.

PL: To you, what elements are more important?

RL: To me, it has to be the drama, and the script.   I really enjoy watching any films with good scripts.   Of course, I also enjoy the visual aspects of the film.   But I think the most important thing is the whole context – in order words, the actual script of the film should be the most important thing, because you really need a good convincing script to bind all these different cinematic elements together.   A film without a good script, to me, is not a good film.

PL: Thank you very much!

RL: You are welcome!

Image 1. Exhibition *Zen and Sensibility Legend in King Hu's Drawing*

Image 2. Guided Tour of Exhibition

Image 3. Hong Kong Film Archive Premises

Image 4. Publication *Mastering Virtue - The Cinematic Legend of a Martial Artist*

香港電影資料館 Hong Kong Film Archive

Mastering Virtue:
The Cinematic Legend
of a Martial Artist

(English Edition in CD-ROM)

Image 5. Restored Treasures *Confucius (1940)*

Image 6. Restored Film *Confucius* in DVD Format

Image 7. Exhibition – *A Touch of Magic Veteran* - Set Designers Chan Ki-yui & Chan King-sam

Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey and its Film Adaptation Revisited

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Abstract

This paper seeks to a). compare and contrast the narratives in Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey and that in the movie adaptation, and b). discuss the differences in terms of Catherine Morland's gothic imaginations in the novel and movie adaptation and Austen's attitude towards the impacts that gothic romance brings about upon the novel narrator. The author also hopes that such relevant comparisons and contrasts might help mark out the gap of the plot between the original version and the movie adaptation. Before the author starts the discussion on the textual gap of the plot both in the novel and movie adaptation, he attempts to arouse people's attention to the connection why he thinks the movie adaptation is an effective way for readers to handle the given text. And in the introduction, the author mainly epitomizes the movie adaptation, which is followed by the story outline in the novel. And the author intends to point out some specific sections intentionally omitted and expanded, which causes "the disunity of narratives" (Keller 132). Finally, Austen's narratives style is compared with that of the film director.

Key Words: disunity of narratives, gothic imagination, Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, film adaptation

1. Introduction

Realistic Mode of Contemporary Life

Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey has long remained a topical issue in the literary world when critics argue over the novel's narrative style since its publication in 1818, soon after Austen's death. However, the novel did not get published immediately soon after it had been finished but waited for its publication long after fifteen years. Although Austen did not see her novel published, she is aware of and curious about the reason that made her first novel unpublished behind the scene. As Austen herself reflects, "This little work was finished in the year 1803, and intended for immediate publication. It was disposed of to a bookseller, it was even advertised, and why the business proceeded no farther, the author has never been able to learn. That any bookseller should think it worth-while to purchase what he did not think it worthwhile to publish seems extraordinary..." (1).

Austen's instinct is quite sharp and very accurate. Her intention prevailing in *Northanger Abbey* is to make the story depart from Richardsonian romance[1]. Richardsonian romance tells women of the day to sacrifice themselves for the sake of love or in order to win themselves love (Pamela). Therefore, Richardsonian romance, in essence, discords with that in Northanger Abbey because the former weighs love sentiment as the latter focuses on realistic mode of everyday life, particularly that of women of the day. *Northanger Abbey* might not be very well-known at first when it was published fifteen years after the novel had been finished. As Austen further says, "But with this, neither the author nor the public have any other concern than as some observation is necessary upon those parts of the work which thirteen years have made comparatively obsolete. The public are entreated to bear in mind that thirteen years have passed since it was finished, many more since it was begun, and that during that period, places, manners, books, and opinions have   undergone considerable changes" (1).

Literary Review and Criticism: Positive

Without complicated plot and characters, *Northanger Abbey* is deemed the novel as the precursor of the realistic mode and later influences Henry James[2], William Dean Howells, and Mark Twain when they discuss every subtle aspect of life with a *realistic observation* but with different ways. As Henry James notes, Jane Austen is ranked a very top-notched writer, literary critic, and "the fine painter of life" (James). As Carole Gerster and James R. Keller note, the arrangement of this novel (*Northanger Abbey*) in terms of its simple plot and characters very likely corresponds to the simple character of the female novel protagonist when she began to write her first novel. James Edward Austen-Leigh's A Memoir of Jane Austen reprinted in 1883 spurred what Leslie Stephen describes the public mania as "Austenolatry" (Stephen).

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[1] Pamela, for example, written by Samuel Richardson is a great representative work that is filled with romantic sentiment.

[2] Henry James is one of the most well-know realistic writers in the 19th-century American literature. His brother, William James, explores the realistic mode from human mental mechanism in the Turn of Century. Both devoted to realistic mode from literary and psychological aspect with a great deal; yet, they came in "this stream" nearly a century late than Jane Austen. In other words, Austen, when it was about time to enter Victorian Age, began quite early searching for "exposure of real life—either public or privacy" in *Northanger Abbey*.

Moreover, Austen originally intends to title this novel as *Susan: A Novel in 2 Volumes* rather than *Northanger Abbey*. It can be guessed that Austen writes this novel not for the public but for her family and intimate friends. This novel serves as family's guide book, instructing girls of the day to discern reality from imagination. This novel can also be regarded as the first one, construing the female image in buildgrosman. How a girl proceeds from her girlhood, to puberty, and to the age of a lady is clearly depicted. And not only has the change of the female protagonist's countenance been stated with a careful description but also her disposition has been marked from immaturity to maturity. Also *Northanger Abbey* proceeds *Great Expectation* by around seventy years something. It becomes a model of female buildgrosman novel. It is written and disseminated particularly among the family and relative circle for the exchange of intimacy. Though she is dissatisfied with her novel, Austen does attempt to make her first novel simple and reliable in terms of its plot. She wants her novel to touch the everyday life issue as she arranges her novel female protagonist to become aware of the discrepancy between the reality and the imagination.

"Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* Film Adaptation, 2007" Web. 1 Aug. 2013.

Catherine Morland's Gothic Imagination
The plot of *Northanger Abbey* progresses as the female protagonist grows up and is introduced into "the society." She is fond of reading gothic novels with romantic scenes. She is emotional and her five senses are susceptibly stirred. She meets her Mr. Right at the ball season and is invited to dance with him; yet, she does not know that she will marry him in the end but makes a chain of bold and biased judgment over the death of Mr. Right's mother and her death. The female protagonist is drawn by scenes in gothic romance in terms of her conception not only about men but also about her vision toward the "outside world." She is indeed very simple and plain in character. The female protagonist needs to be guided and the heroine's Mr. Right does not exist without any function. He acts like the heroine's mentor who observes the heroine's behavior and tells her some other possible resolutions to the matter. Yet, according to

Mary Waldron, "Mary Wollstonecraft was shortly to point out how much this sort of thing pandered to the desires of men rather than the well-being of women..." (Waldron 19). From Wollstonecraft's viewpoints, Austen's female character is "created" and "formulated" in order to correspond men's expectation to what an ideal woman looks like and how they should behave in a "polite society" (says Henry Tilney). Women's image is also manipulated in accord with men's "taste" and "passion" not "well-being" of women (Waldron 19). Catherine Morland falls into a particular male ideology that formulates a kind of spooky sphere in which women when threatened by danger should be saved by hero. This motif in Catherine Morland's imagination repetitiously appears.

"Catherine Morland reading *Udolpho*." Web. 1 Aug. 2013.

Although *Northanger Abbey* is less credited with its fame among the contemporaries (Keller), it is believed that Miss Austen triumphantly portrays her heroine as the one who tastes freshness and bitterness between the real life and girls' imagination. Interestingly, Austen was not satisfied with her first novel for it lacks such characteristic as disunity in terms of plot; yet, *Northanger Abbey* was not unpopular among critical realm. This novel induces three forces that have *Northanger Abbey* criticized with flatly different perspectives. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, "...Austen's novels, ..., are paradoxically, at once feminist and submissive..." (Keller 116).

"Arguing that Austen's novels subversively criticize but then submissively accept women's limited place in society, Gilbert and Gubar place Austen within the theory of palimpsest: that nineteenth-century women's writings contain subversive   impulses but mask and ultimately dismiss them" (Keller 116).

This perspective mixes comments toward Austen's novels with both feminist and antifeminist viewpoints. The first force renders Austen's novels eventually subversive and submissive. Comments and criticism in the first force creates a kind of atmosphere under which readers considerably feel ambivalent when they classify Austen's *Northanger Abbey* into a specific category. Is it truly subversive or submit

ssive?

Second force contains praise for Austen's works, which faithfully convey the idea of society, life, and spirit of the day. As a review in *British Critic* applauds the novel, "[it's] one of the very best of Miss Austen's productions" (Keller 132) and very well "worth their time" (Keller 132). Austen's *Northanger Abbey* can stand the test of time because she is the first real female humorist writer who can raise the issue and induce sarcasm to support her perspective to it. As James R. Keller notes, "Austen's contemporaries admired her skill in creating authentic representations of...[the contemporary] middle class" (Keller 132). Austen's portrayal of the contemporary middle-class life is faithfully presented in the novel. For example, the "ball season," in *Northanger Abbey*, is actually a kind of occasion into which young ladies expected to step and made their acquaintances. "They [Austen's contemporaries] praised the modesty of her subject matter--her preoccupation with the events of domestic life" (Keller 132). "The events of domestic life" in *Northanger Abbey* propel Catherine Morland to bear in her mind the reality from the imagination she creates in her brain by means of reading the novel of romance. One reviewer even applauds that Austen's skill rests upon her "talent for observation" (Keller 132). Is Austen's observation realistic or unrealistic?

Literary Review and Criticism: Negative
On the other hand, "the negative observations of her contemporary readers focus primarily on her treatment of General Tilney and the Abbey portion of the novel" (Keller 132). Maria Edgeworth, in a letter to her friend, wrote that "the general is not realistically drawn" (Keller 132). Another reviewer even noted that "[the part about the General and the Abbey] are in considerable want of delicacy" (Keller 132). He even laments that "...Austen has not employed her usual sensitivity in the portrayal of General Tilney" (Kelelr 132). As Keller further argues,
"*Northanger Abbey* may be accurately characterized as one of Jane Austen's problem novels--those works demonstrating a great deal of merit, enough to warrant the attention and delight of readers and critics...but nevertheless possessing flaws that cannot remain unnoticed by the discerning reader familiar with her later, more polished works: *Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Mansfield Park*" (Keller 131).

Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* might invoke absolutely opposite critical perspectives that either rejects or applauds her skills; yet, her employment of authoress portrayal of Catherine Morland shapes out a unprecedented heroine who learns from illusion, and grows from failure.

The intriguing point that makes the author do this research has clearly been stated. Both negative and positive literary review and criticism on Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* has crossed and challenged against each other. One would definitely wonder why Austen juxtaposes the gothic and romantic scenes in the novel and how Jon Jones (the 2007 film director) deals with "the effects and impacts" Austen describes to fall upon Catherine Morland after her reading the gothic novel, *Udolpho*. And readers might be curious about the author's choice of *Northanger Abbey* and film adaptation rather than other more credited novels by Austen. Why does the author choose *Northanger Abbey* and its film adaptation? As Carole Gerster argues, "Austen revises established novel conventions [in *Northanger Abbey*] to take issue with conservative ideas about women, defends novel readers and novels written by and about women..."

(Gerster 115). A quick biographical exploration by Gerster indicates Austen's defense of her novel protagonist, Catherine Morland. As Gerster asserts, "...Jane Austen declared herself an avid novel reader and admirer, and wrote her own novels in reaction to conservative ideas about gender roles and relations" (Gerster 115). Therefore, what does Austen employ in her novel as the reversal in terms of narrative? How does Austen present the gothic images generated from women readers of the day rather than those images presented by the male readers?

As Carole Gerster argues, "Notable as her first mature work, *Northanger Abbey* reveals Austen's feminist impetus and intentions and demonstrates the strategies of parody and irony..." (Gerster 115). If *Northanger Abbey* is merely a kind of "feminist impetus" (Gerster115), as the author will try to argue in this essay, there is still much to be attained and scrutinized for readers' better understanding of both the novel and the film adaptation. This paper which compares and contrasts the novel and its film adaptation is written due mainly to the following two reasons. First, Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, adapted as an one-and-half-hour film, is a great companion to those who have not read the novel or have read but do not fully understand the arrangements in terms of its plot, themes, narratives, and characterization. The movie adaptation provides its watchers with a great opportunity to expose themselves to the original text with a different view for examining the original text. Although this novel was less credited with popular attention and was unsophisticated as "the responses of her contemporaries to the publication of the novel were a [kind of] disappointment" (Keller, 132), it led its readers to the world in which they can go back and forth between the book and the film in order to have a better understanding toward the text. From the film adaptation, readers seem to be able to join the world of "the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century middle class" (Keller 132). For example, readers seem to join the party where people of the day could only make their acquaintances with others through the means of being introduced by their elderly family or relatives at the ball season. Readers can even appreciate the gothic architecture whose roof is towering and creates solemn atmosphere. Yet, the movie adaptation is divorced from the original version in the following dimensions: depth of characters' portrayal, and influence of "gothic romance" (Keller 131) toward the girls of the day. However, one thing that needs to be noticed is the fact that the narratives in the novel differentiates from that in the movie adaptation. And this induces a further study on the narratives. However, the film adaptation seems successfully deals with what critics are worried about the feature of the novel, the "disunity of narratives" (Keller).

Second, Catherine Morland is misled by her imaginations generated from gothic romance that is filled with romantic scenes and scary landscape in Nature. Her gothic imagination is mainly derived from her reading the novels, *Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Romance of Forest* by Anne Radcliff. Miss Morland misunderstands the world she lives in from the one she creates and shapes out from daily reading. Too naive, Miss Morland visualizes everything in terms of human character, human dwelling places, and human eye contact with a biased viewpoints, which threaten her cognitive understanding toward the reality. Catherine's gothic imagination, as Paul Morrison argues, "reminds us that the gothic is conventionally associated with a deviant Catholicism" (Morrison 2). Gothic imagination's quality of deviance, on one hand, makes Catherine Morland excite about the outside world, Bath, that she is about to connect with; on the other, blinds her about the reality which is farther away from her imagination.

Disunity of the Narrative

The disunity of narratives and Catherine Morland's gothic imaginations play the important role not only in the novel but also in its film adaptation. As for the narratives, there are some gaps in terms of plot development between the text and the movie adaptation. These gaps not only play a major role of thematic significance by Jane Austen but also plays the role of what Syndy McMillen Conger aruges, "the inapplicability of the gothic sentiments in the mundane world" (Keller 136) from Catherine Morland's imagination. This film adaptation acts like a quick snapshot which quickly records major scenes written in the novel.

Northanger Abbey is about the story of Catherine Morland who goes through the "trials and pitfalls" of the contemporary "courtship rituals" (Keller 133). Its film adaptation is directed by Jon Jones, the 2007 WBGH/Granada Northanger Abbey (directed by Jon Jones, written by Andrew Davies). Julia Dearden acts as Mrs. Morland and Gerry O'Brien as Mr. Morland. Felicity Jones is an actress playing the role, Miss Morland and JJ. Feild as Henry Tilney. Moreover, Sylvestra Le Touzel plays the role as Mrs. Allen and Desmond Barrit as Mr. Allen. The main characters mentioned above help the author delineate the significance of disjointed narrative of plot both in the novel and film adaptation.

The novel is divided into two sections, the first half is about the challenge that Miss Morland faces: to discern the bad from the good acquaintances, the Thorpes, and the Tilneys. And the rest of the novel mainly focuses on her gothic imagination about General Tilney's wife who died mysteriously in the Abbey. Arranged by Jane Austen, Catherine Morland grows very fine and reaches the age at which she will step into "the society" soon. It means that she will "squeeze into" the society of men and women. Catherine Morland's desire of stepping into the society derives mainly from her maturity from the age of girlhood and her desire to be "gazed" by potential Mr. Right. Moreover, it originates from her interest of reading gothic novels. However, before Catherine Morland readies to accept her adulthood and the world which belongs to adults, she must encounter a series of unexpected and unpredictable events that might shock her and subvert her single-sided conception toward this adult society. She when faces dilemma in terms of friendship[3] and love[4] should be trained so as to be a grown-up Miss Morland simultaneously.

As for Catherine Morland and the Morlands, the movie adaptation hardly opens with a very long description about them; yet, the novel expands the first chapter, describing Miss Morland and her family with a very vivid portrayal of Catherine Morland, the novel protagonist. In the movie adaptation, *Northanger Abbey* opens with the third person narrative viewpoint which makes readers believe that the narrator knows the Morlands very well. The narrator is omniscient. He/ She describes Catherine Morland as if they knew each other since their infancy. The third person narrator does not exist without any function. His description compared with that of the first person narrator is more reliable. He can be anyone among people with a faithful but critical perspective toward the protagonist's routine behavior, personal disposition, and mental

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[3] As for the female intimate relationship, Miss Morland must discern Isabella from Elena to decide whether either of which is genuine to her.

[4] As for the love relationship with men, Miss Morland must discern John from Tilney to decide whether either of which is genuine to her.

mechanism. He stands with readers or film watchers, introducing the Morlands. This third person narrator informs readers of some basic upbringing and characteristics about the Morlands. He points out several things within three-to-five minutes episode about the Morlands. First, Catherine Morland, the female protagonist in the novel, has a kind of "personal disposition which is equally against her family" (Northanger Abbey, Adapted). Hardly can anyone who has ever seen Catherine Morland naturally think of her as her family's hope. Second, Mr. and Mrs. Morland have ten family members, which could be called a "fine family" of the day. Third, Catherine's family are, in general, "very plain" (Northanger Abbey, Adapted). Fourth, as Catherine grows up, her talent in dancing, playing baseball, and books becomes eminently enhanced.

"Catherine Morland." Web. 1 Aug. 2013.

In *Northanger Abbey*, "...Catherine, for many years of her life, as plain as any. She had a thin awkward figure, a sallow skin without color, dark lank hair, and strong features..." (Austen 3). Austen's intention originally befell upon an intimate description of Susan, as both her first novel's title and the name of female protagonist. However, the movie adaptation purposefully erases Austen's attempt of introducing her readers with Lady Susan or anything about Susan. Instead of it, the director of the film substitutes a very intimate portrayal of a girl for a series of events taking place to Catherine Morland. Therefore, a series of dramatic effects in the film arise jointly as Catherine Morland is led into "the society" by Mrs. Allen thereafter. Another example comes from the scene that is recounted in the novel but disappears in the film adaptation. When Catherine Morland is about to leave for Bath, Mrs. Morland's anxiety intensifies. "When the hour of departure drew near, the maternal anxiety of Mrs. Morland will be naturally supposed to be most severe" (10). Not only is Mrs. Morland sad about her daughter's departure, but also she is much alarmed because Catherine Morland has grown up such a beauty with fine lips and complexion. Although Mrs. Morland is supposed to worry about her daughter' safety in Bath, she does not mention any word about "lords," "baronets," and "scoundrels" (11) but just admonishes her daughter with a maternal farewell. As Mrs. Morland says, "I beg, Catherine, you will always wrap yourself up very warm about the throat, when you come from the rooms at night; and I wish you would try to keep some account of money you spend..." (11).

Another example that is never described in the movie adaptation but is carefully depicted by Austen is Mrs. Allen. As Austen introduces her to readers, "Mrs. Allen was one of that numerous class of females, whose society can raise no other emotion than surprise at there being any men in the world who could like them well enough to

marry them" (13). What Austen means is the fact that Mrs. Allen is like the one who *professionally* ushers her relatives and acquaintances into "the society." Mrs. Allen "functions" as "medium" to introduce Catherine Morland into "the society" with courtesy; otherwise, they will be expelled from "it" as Henry Tilney is aware of. In other words, Mrs. Allen, in *Northanger Abbey*, ushers Miss Morland into the world of adult and the world filled with women's sentiment. The world that Mrs. Allen ushers Miss Morland to step into is the one that magnifies Miss Morland's gothic imagination which is particularly formed based on women's perception to the world that they are unfamiliar with. General Tilney's abbey is a great example. The abbey not only signifies General Tilney's mysterious past but also represents the production "simulated" by women's problematic judgment. Problematic judgment is derived from women's sentiment. Women's sentiment indicates their desire to find their Mr. Right on whom they can depend for the rest of their lives. And this kind of women's sentiment has dangerously transformed, as for Catherine Morland, into uncontrollable fantasy, that affects her judgment and perception to people around her. As Keller argues, "gothic sentiment" (Keller 136) is threatening to Catherine Morland since her judgment is misled. However, the juxtaposition of women's gothic sentiment in the text disunite the panoramic third-person-narrative perspective because it has been transformed into the first-person-narrative perspective generated particularly from Catherine Morland's viewpoints. As Mary Lascelles, in *Jane Austen and Her Art* (1939), argues, "Catherine's suspicions of General Tilney's character, is not adequately integrated into the narrative. The gothic parody does not contribute to the advancement of the plot, nor does the crisis or conclusion of the novel rely on or even acknowledge the significance of this material" (Keller 134). Lascelles's observation does not come alone. Marvin Mudrick, in his book *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (1952), asserts that "...the author has intentionally created a contrast and an aesthetic disharmony between the two halves of the narrative in order to demonstrate the superiority of one set of aesthetic principles over another..." (Keller 134).

"Mrs. Allen and Catherine Morland." Web. 1 Aug. 2013.
<http://ts1.mm.bing.net/th?id=H.4892256599803220&pid=15.1>

Another example is the description about Mrs. Allen who ushers Miss Morland into "the society" where Miss Morland made a delightful acquaintance with the Tilney

family and the Thropes. As the narrator in *Northanger Abbey* recounts,
"had neither beauty, genius, accomplishment, nor manner. The air of a gentlewoman, a great deal of quiet, inactive good temper, and a trifling turn of   mind were all that could account for her being the choice of a sensible, intelligent man,   like   Mr. Allen" (13).

Discussion and Conclusion

Northanger Abbey is not merely a great reader's companion. It also catches readers' attention in terms of its "aesthetic unity" (Keller 133) with the accompaniment of "gothic romance" (Keller 133). As Keller maintains,
"the problem of aesthetic unity in the novel arises from the attempted parody of gothic romance...The narrative seems to get off track for a period while the   author burlesques the common elements...[of] gothic and specifically Anne   Radcliff's *Mysteries of Udolpho*" (Keller 133).

A series of events both in the novel and film adaptation are not arranged without function. Jane Austen seeks to parody Anne Radcliff's *Mysteries of Udolpho* for its preposterousness in terms of portraying women as the ones easily affected by their imaginations. However, their imaginations come mainly from gothic romance rather than their self-instinct with which they are believed to be born (Sarah Grand, Mona Caird, and Oliver Schreiner). Catherine Morland's struggle between the reality and the imagination interferes with her perception toward General Tilney, Henry Tilney's father. Also, Catherine Morland's imagination projects out her suspicion toward death of Henry Tilney's mother. Miss Morland is ambivalent when facing a specific situation and her judgment is problematically led by her daily reading of "romance novels" (Keller 131).

Therefore, the second dimension that appears as a major novel motif is girls' gothic imaginations influenced by reading gothic novels. This motif penetrates the novel. The film adaptation presents girls' gothic imaginations, which cannot be visualized and conceptualized through the text. The movie contains lots of scenes that parody problematic gothic imaginations generated from girls as they step into the age of puberty and as they are affected by adult vision toward defining men and women and their love. Girls' fantasy toward the role that either of the genders plays is kindled by their reading of novels with gothic and mysterious senses. Reading gothic romance becomes a kind of great fashion for contemporary girls. Reading itself formulates girls' imagination, which is very complex. They read gothic romance and are affected by their reading. Such concepts as heroes saving beauties and beauties abducted by villains are deeply rooted in their hearts. Their passion toward the unknown adult world that they have not yet "tasted" forms a great black hole that is magnified. Drawn by this "huge black hole" In the stage of puberty, girls of the day zealously imagined that heroes come to the rescue of a beauty in danger. In the movie adaptation, for example, when Catherine Morland is invited by Mr. and Mrs. Allen for taking a journey to Bath, she imagines that scoundrels on their way to Bath would abduct her because of her appearance despite the fact that the novel never directly points it out. Another example comes from Catherine Morland's making an acquaintance with Henry Tilney, from which her liking for Mr. Tilney grows at the ball. Henry Tilney, in the movie adaptation, becomes a typical hero, standing in rain and coming at the rescue of Miss Morland under the threat of John Thorpes. Still, in the movie adaptation, shortly after Miss Morland notices the scene in which Isabella

who has already revealed her affection to Miss Morland's borther, James, flirts with Captain Tilney, older brother of Henry Tilney, she dreams of dream in which Isabella falls a captive to Captain Tilney in the dungeon of the castle, the Abbey.

"Catherine Morland and her Fantasy." Web. 1 Aug. 2013.

From Gerster's observation, some critics regards "gothic portion of *Northanger Abbey* as a flaw in Austen's novel [and] often contend that the realistically depicted Catherine turns out to be a stereotyped heroine after all" (Gerster 121). Readers' first glance seems to correspond to Gerster's observation. However, Catherine Morland jumps out of the expectation of readers as not a typically fixed heroine who must resist any attraction from the male-constructed world. As Gerster argues,

"Austen's irony is effectively at work as, in Bakhtin fashion, her feminist stance takes the form of evoking, in order to negate reader expectation to find a heroine who must learn not to be influenced by novels and to accept reality as defined by the hero" (Gerster 121).

Austen's major concern about dealing with Catherine Morland's gothic imaginations lies primarily in two dimensions. One is that Austen ridicules gothic romance for its "inapplicability" in daily routine life. Its impact on young girls is overwhelming. Its impact leads a girl to the conclusion by which she defines the world in which she lives parallels to that in the gothic romance. However, what Austen is concerned about is the fact the world portrayed in gothic romance actually differentiates from the real world. Moreover, Austen, through Miss Morland's gothic imaginations, indicates that women of the day were living in "domestic carceral," (Morrison 3) that makes women limited to domestic space. Once constrained from the outer space, women of the day easily indulged in their beliefs, and even faiths they absorbed from the gothic romance. Their misled judgment blocks their vision and incidents involved in their life become indiscernible.

In the film adaptation, the cinematic narrative juxtaposes with Catherine Morland's imagination intertwined with perilous and emergent situations. In her imagination, Catherine Morland expects the event in which a lady is abducted and saved by a hero; yet, she outwardly remains reserved and very timid as a girl with a mixed feeling. On the way to Bath with the Allens, Catherine Morland imagines that Mr. Allen is slain and Mrs. Allen faints as they are threatened by "scoundrels" and "baronets." On one hand, she cannot imagine her being abducted really taking place because she thinks she will faint due to her emotion overwhelmed; on the other, she, somehow, looks forward to it. In other words, Miss Morland lingers around the boundary dispersed between girls' imaginations and social conventions. The movie adaptation also contains such imaginary scenes from Catherine Morland. Scenes are as horse chasing when she and the Allens are on the way to Bath. She, a cute lady, is abducted by scoundrels. And a great fighting happens between a hero and scoundrel. As Catherine

Morland imagines, Isabella falls the lady captive to Henry Tilney's older brother in the dungeon.

"Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney." Web. 1 Aug. 2013.
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One Big Happy Family? Subverting Reaganism in Peggy Sue Got Married

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Abstract

While much critical analysis has been done on films made during Ronald Reagan's two terms in the White House (1980-1988), that have been labeled "Reaganite cinema," Francis Ford Coppola's *Peggy Sue Got Married* (1986) has received limited attention. Most scholars have focused on how the film promotes traditional family values, i.e. the reinstatement of the nuclear family headed by a strong, patriarchal father figure, as ensconced in Reaganism. Indeed, the distinct "pro-family" trope reasserting marriage as a worthy institution gets a neat cinematic treatment in the film. However, a closer analysis reveals that the film also reflects Reagan's championing of "new patriotism," as well as the reactionary backlash against women's rights causes and the appropriation of sexual expression only within the contexts of marriage and procreation. In addition, because Peggy Sue (Kathleen Turner) makes the seemingly fatalistic choice of reuniting with her estranged husband Charlie (Nicolas Cage), despite the fact that independent relationship alternatives are available, the film suggest that even a conservative's approach to social issues might be far more nuanced than what the mythologized Reagan storyline suggests. This paper compares *PSGM* with Robert Zemeckis's 1985 film *Back to the Future*, examines its attempts to reunite the nuclear family, how reflects the "greed is good" mentality that was prevalent during Reagan's presidency, and how it seems to both promote and challenge Reaganism. The subversive deconstruction of Reaganism may not be readily apparent, but it becomes evident as the film is viewed more than a quarter of a century after its release.

Introduction

While much critical analysis has been done on films made during Ronald Reagan's two terms in the White House (1980-1988), that have been labeled "Reaganite cinema," Francis Ford Coppola's *Peggy Sue Got Married* (1986) has received limited attention. Most scholars have focused on how the film promotes traditional family values, i.e. the reinstatement of the nuclear family headed by a strong, patriarchal father figure, as ensconced in Reaganism. Indeed, the distinct "pro-family" trope reasserting marriage as a worthy institution gets a neat cinematic treatment in the film. However, a closer analysis reveals that the film also reflects Reagan's (1989: online) championing of "new patriotism," as well as the reactionary backlash against women's rights causes. Because Peggy Sue (Kathleen Turner) makes the seemingly fatalistic choice of reuniting with her estranged husband Charlie (Nicolas Cage), the film suggest that even a conservative's approach to social issues might be far more nuanced than what the mythologized Reagan storyline suggests.

Robin Wood (2003) claims that this "Reaganite entertainment" provides reassurance in numerous ways. First, it reflects a reassuring nostalgia for the 1950s and a return to its simplistic suburban values in an attempt to overcome, or "cover up," the social upheaval and revolutions of the 1960s, such as Vietnam and Watergate. Second, these films work to restore power to the white, patriarchal father at the expense of gendered or ethnic others. Many films, for example, feature the return of women to traditional gender roles, i.e. a woman's place is in the home. Third, they are films that attempt to overcome the perceived weakness of the Carter-era and restore America to its "rightful" place as an omnipotent world leader.

Susan Jeffords (1994: 25) cites 1980s action films, such as the popular *Rambo* films (Kotcheff, 1982; Comsatos, 1985; MacDonald, 1988), which feature male "hard-body" heroes who embody patriotic values that characterized Reagan's presidency. Reagan viewed America as one big "family," and Reaganite cinema, according to Kinder (1989: 4), "is the restoration of the family to its former status as a strong ideological State Apparatus and the reinstatement of the father within this patriarchal stronghold." Finally, the main characters in these films often travel back in time to the perceived "golden years" of the 1950s and return to the present with a renewed sense of purpose and self-confidence.

These time-travel films reflect Reagan's belief that "tampering with the space-time continuum was not dangerous but beneficial…it was…absolutely necessary for happiness and comfort" (Nadel, 1997: 20-21), even if it meant bending the truth so much as to "rewrite" history. Like a movie, Reagan's assurance that his economic policies would eventually lead to a balanced budget was completely illusionary. He asked the American people to be like moviegoers who, in pursuit of short-term rewards, accept the illusionary and illogical space-time continuum of film. Reagan worked his magic as America's favorite storyteller, improvising a narrative about the present and the future rooted in America's mythic past.

Comparing Reaganism in *Peggy Sue Got Married* with *Back to the Future*

Peggy Sue Got Married seems to resemble *Back to the Future* because of its "use of an imagined past to escape from a bitter present" (Crowdus, 1994: 91). In fact, Carter

(2000: 257-266) claims that both films are symptomatic of the American "cultural impulse to internalize the power of time" as well as America's "deeply-rooted chronophobia." They "reverse the arrow of time," reflecting the "American passion for the new" as a symptom of a deeper collective urge: the desire to escape time altogether" (ibid.). However, the main difference lies in the fact that Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) was transported into the past in the 1985 incarnation of himself, whereas Peggy Sue awakens in the past—1960—in the 17-year-old incarnation of herself but with her 42-year-old mind still intact. Unlike Marty, Peggy Sue actually knows her future: an adult life filled with compromise and disillusionment.

The passage of time in the film must be viewed in terms of how its various constructed cultural, historical, biological, and personalized dimensions converge and interact. As Dika (2003: 144) contends, *Back to the Future* and *Peggy Sue Got Married* are similar in the way they "find a past that is flawed and that ultimately yields no security." Both films offer a nostalgic look at a seemingly "simpler" era in American culture. We must remember, however, that time is not synonymous with change, order, or sequence. For Marty and Peggy Sue, their trials of personal redemption necessitates being redeemed from time.

Like *Back to the Future*, *Peggy Sue Got Married* creates, as Babington (1998: 94) posits, an "intensely nostalgic atmosphere that pervades the film." However, as Bawer (1992: 37) rightly points out, the film is much more than a "sentimental journey into the past" because "the idea of time travel…is itself absurd." As a postmodern text, the film also mixes genres: it is both a romantic comedy and melodrama. Ideologically, it seems to choose "monogamy over multiplicity and diffusion in the sexual sphere" (ibid.). For example, despite Peggy Sue's one night fling with the bohemian Michael Fitzsimmons (Kevin J. O'Conner), she chooses Charlie, the only man she's ever dated. The "mistakes" that Peggy Sue made with Charlie have, after all, "given Peggy Sue her children, and she won't change that" (Dika, 2003: 143). Some critics have read the narrative as being simply nostalgic and, therefore, conservative. However, the film's coherence as a text stems also from acknowledging the potential ways of seeing how the film undermines the Reagan cultural fantasy that there is a stable, idyllic past to which the United States can easily or simply return.

Peggy Sue's time travel back to 1960 occurs before the feminist movement and the sexual revolution. Even though Peggy Sue is given the opportunity to imagine a different kind of life, in the end she reasserts her identity as a wife and mother. The message seems to be that it is okay for Peggy Sue to give up her dreams to be a dancer and Charlie's dream to be a singer because in doing so, it reunites the family and awards them with "middle-class success: money, stability, security" (Young, 2008: Online). In particular, marriage is imagined as a woman's most important accomplishment.

The film also reflects the Reagan ideological rhetoric in a similar, yet different, way as *Back to the Future*. Whereas *Back to the Future* was about legitimatizing the strength of the father's role and re-envisioning history, *Peggy Sue Got Married* attempts to reinvigorate the case for family and marital values at a time when 1980s America was experiencing a decline in such values and institutions. Reagan based his presidency not only on economic reform and military might, but also on

reestablishing "traditional" family values: men as heads of households and breadwinners, women in charge of childrearing.

So important were family values to Reagan—ironically, the first divorced man to become U.S. president—that it was the focus of his December 20, 1986 radio address to the nation, in which he stated: "…the family today remains the fundamental unit of American life" (Reagan, 1986: Online). And by looking back to family values of the 1950s, one finds that for women, at least, whatever was valued most was not "individualized self-improvement and independence of thought, but obedience" (Stone, 1994: Online). In fact, up until the early 1960s, "the old family values still held…They included religious piety, obedience to parents and superiors, hard work, optimism about future upward mobility, and the deferment of gratification in coping with sexual passion" (ibid.). These elements find a prominent home in *Peggy Sue Got Married*, even as they are challenged by the 42-year-old protagonist.

Peggy Sue only had two options: either she reconciles with Charlie or she starts life anew without him. As Corliss (1986: 9-17) puts it, Peggy Sue is somewhat like George Bailey (James Stewart) in Capra's (1946) *It's a Wonderful Life*: "She receives the gift of second sight. But Peggy Sue's flashback convinces her that she must treasure what she has lost, not what she has achieved." However, she is unlike George, "who never doubted his love for Mary" (Levy, 1991: 243). Instead, Peggy Sue is filled with doubt and uncertainty about both her marriage and her future. Maio (1988: 193) claims that Peggy Sue "doesn't even have the same comfort" that Capra gave George, who "is at least shown what a miserable place the world would have been without him." The "only comfort Peggy Sue is given is that of a possible reconciliation with Crazy Charlie, the Appliance King" (ibid.). With Peggy Sue, the film confronts the illusory separation of the American family from the marketplace, as couched in Reaganomics and the championed attitudes of *laissez-faire* capitalism. But the film also seems to highlight—if not champion—the indispensible dimension of consumerism.

Peggy Sue's journey into the past is very different from Marty's in *Back to the Future*: she is given another chance to realize her teenage dreams, whereas Marty was fighting for his very existence. The problem is that Peggy Sue avoids the riskiest and most potentially rewarding choice in her extraordinary opportunity—which becomes a contentious point for some of the film's sharpest critics. Once she finds herself stuck in 1960, instead of panicking like Marty does in 1955, Peggy Sue begins to cherish every moment with "the adolescent enthusiasm that has been stifled in her mid-life soul" (ibid.), such as eating breakfast with her family and watching TV with her sister. For Corliss (1986), the message is clear: "The movie is a plea to treasure life's ordinary gifts." This certainly is in tandem with Reagan's persistently sunny speeches about the nation's future.

Like *Back to the Future*, the film also serves simultaneously as an endorsement as well as a subtle critique of the artificial and symbolic class of life embodied in Reaganism. For Levy (1991), the film stresses "the values of family…over personal fulfillment…[and] is conservative in its ideology, favoring marriage…over divorce, and family life over singlehood." However, by digging deeper into the film's texts and contexts, we can envision how the critique of family values portrayed in *Peggy Sue Got Married* moves well beyond the polarizing gender and sexual politics of the

1980s into a broader examination of the troubled relationships the American family has with consumerism and capitalism as championed during the 1980s.

Reuniting the Nuclear Family

The rhetoric of Reagan and the New Right in the 1980s resurrected the traditional American family version, but it also effectively sheared away some of its most traditional elements, such as the extended family model, its economic emphasis on shared labor, and patriarchal hierarchy where women and children had been relegated to subordinate roles. Within the fantasy text, the film attempts to resolve this social and political displacement. But we are distracted from this ideology due to the ambiguity of Peggy Sue's time travel. Was it just a dream? But if so, how could Michael have written a book dedicated to her if she had not actually gone back in time and slept with him? In making sense of the choices, we can see many imaginary discourses, although intricately subtle in many instances, that go beyond the evident nostalgic connections between the 1950s and the 1980s in the film.

For Bawer (1992: 37-38), the film not only "seeks to demystify the future, it deromanticizes the past." That is, "Peggy Sue comes to learn…that she was mistaken to think that life, back in high school, had offered her an infinite number of choices. It didn't, according to the guiding philosophy of this film, for life has brought Peggy Sue to where she is now, and was never going to take her anywhere else" (ibid.).

Peggy Sue's interaction with Michael Fitzsimmons warrants further analysis. Consider Bartosch (1987: 3-4), who claims that "Peggy Sue's liaison with Michael" is "a 'gift' to the women in the audience and a small gesture toward the yet-to-emerge sexual revolution and the collective libido." And Caputi (2005: 25) claims that because he portrays a "renegade beat who despises the decade's [1950s] mainstream," he represents the "disaffection for the decade." So when Michael tells Peggy Sue that "he will one day 'check out of this bourgeois motel, push myself away from the dinner table and say, "No more Jell-O for me, ma!"'" he "draws attention to those who sought refuge in the beat culture," for whom "the strictures of the dominant culture spelled a spiritual death from which it was necessary to escape" (ibid.). Peggy Sue's extramarital tryst—and therefore transgression—"becomes a fantasy bribe for funneling Peggy Sue's sexuality into the marital/procreative framework." (Bartosch, 1987). Despite the fact that Charlie is devastated when he finds out about Michael, he ultimately forgives her, thereby reasserting his devotion to Peggy Sue. *Peggy Sue Got Married* pulls the earlier decade forward as a back text into the 1980s by giving Peggy Sue her autonomous, self-directed voice to speak her own experience by challenging authority and refusing to be an obedient teenager in 1960.

Non-conformity stretches only so far as *Peggy Sue Got Married* seems, in some respects, to promote "traditional" family values. However, what it ignores ideologically is just as important—the "unsaid" text reveals and reflects, as did *Back to the Future*, Reagan's reliance on "forgetting" the past. As Coontz (1992, 2000: 23-41) acknowledges: "Families have always been in flux, and often in crisis." Despite this film's attempt to create a nostalgic, rosy tint on the 1960s American family, "there was no golden age of family life" (ibid.), particularly for women. In fact, as McWilliams (1996) states: "Women who failed to conform to the June Cleaver…role of housewife and mother were severely criticized" and "often denied the right to serve

on juries, convey property, make contracts…and establish credit in their own names" (McWilliams, 1996: Online). In short, a woman had to depend upon a man in order to survive and prosper in the "American Dream."

When Peggy Sue first enters her childhood home, she is overwhelmed with nostalgia and enjoys reliving her relationship with her parents and sister, with whom she watches *American Bandstand* (Bonaduce, 1957-1989) on television. As Clarke-Copeland (2007: Online) points out, popular television shows of the 1960s "reflected good, old fashioned ideas of family values. Controversy was not up for discussion." Furthermore, Peggy Sue's mother, Evelyn (Barbara Harris), fulfills the June Cleaver (Barbara Billingsly) "perfect mother" ideal. But she is very much unlike Marty's mother in *Back to the Future*. However, unlike June Cleaver, she does not question the authority of her husband—to a point.

Reagan's (1983: Online) demonization of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire," or the appropriation of "welfare queen" (Fialka, 1976: Online) to characterize the abuse of government benefits, emboldened many segments of his constituent base to deploy their own tools of rhetorical assault in "culture war" (Teixeira, 2009: Online) issues that spanned the racial, ethnic, and cultural minority spectrum. Rather than be aimed at bridging ideological gaps in public issues, the culture war rhetoric solidified an identity wholly antagonistic to the prevailing sociopolitical culture, and which preferred division and enmity over collegiality. On the other hand, there have been small ripples suggesting the type of mature political thinking as detailed in the film's scene description above. Indeed, the secular paths of conservative and liberal can converge in the aggregated experiences that constitute one's emotional, intellectual, and philosophical maturity. It is the ultimate capacity that the choice between conservative and liberal is a false one, a pseudo-war fomented by those who stand to profit by the manufactured conflict.

Unfortunately, Peggy Sue's mother cannot be viewed as an independent, self-actualized, modern woman. This becomes quite apparent in the scene in which Peggy Sue is having breakfast with her family and asks her mother to sit down and join them, to which she responds: "You want me to sit?" She is completely taken aback by this simple request, so accustomed to her role as a housewife who *serves* her family. Still, however clichéd this nostalgic image of the "ideal" American family may be, it remains a stubborn relic, a national symbol that has yet to be retired as threadbare and somewhat unrealistic (Benfer, 2001: Online). Americans still want to believe that the nuclear family and traditional family values are an integral part of what makes America strong.

We must remember, however, that Peggy Sue has come from 1986, a time when the American nuclear family and traditional family values were seemingly in peril—despite the Republican Party's and the Christian far-right's pleas to restore the nation's family values. Peggy Sue's own marriage and family had collapsed. The sanctuary from the brutalities of the outside world had been compromised. Reassuring comfort was couched in easily definable and readily solvable explanations of how and why the stability of the family would rectify all of America's social, economic, and cultural ills. Perhaps Peggy Sue's decision to reunite with Charlie is simply the most pragmatic solution when faced with the inevitable death of her hopes and dreams. And shouldn't we expect her to choose the path that will ensure the birth of her future

children? For Bawer (1992: 38): "The film…takes on the theme of fate vs. free will and comes down strongly on the side of fate." However, Bawer is clearly suggesting a different take than Levy's view of the film's fatalistic philosophy. Beth is quick to tell her mother, "Dad's been here everyday," to which Charlie adds: "Because I love you…and I need you, Peggy Sue." But lest we get caught up in the nostalgic romance in this scene, Peggy Sue sees Charlie for whom he really is: a man who has been utterly defeated by his philandering ways.

In addition to Peggy Sue's emotional epiphany, there is also the restored sense of orderly time that ultimately makes room for the redemption of the traditional American family. Charlie tells Peggy Sue: "I would cut my right arm off for another chance." And that is exactly what the message of this movie gives us: another chance for America is possible, but only if "the family" retakes its rightful place as a world power under the loving guidance of Ronald Reagan, who believed the family was the essential core of national exceptionalism. Even though Peggy sue tells Charlie, "I need some time," we can be sure that she will ultimately forgive him and reintegrate her family.

Marchant (2007: 319-323), furthermore, makes an interesting—and sympathetic—point in how the film "sheds considerable light on the primary reason Peggy Sue and Charlie are contemplating divorce as adults": simply put, because "they married so young, they missed out on a lot of what life has to offer." However, the film has been harshly condemned by several feminist critics who see Peggy Sue's inability to change her future for the "better" as a slap in the face to the progress made by women since the women's rights movement began in the 1960s. Once again, Reagan's 1986 message echoes with dominating cogency: "…the family…remains the fundamental unit of American life" (Reagan, 1986: Online). Indeed, it must be maintained at all cost, even if that means "forgetting" or "ignoring" its shortfalls and failings.

Arising from the film's enigmatic tone is an awareness of the artificiality of the conservative-liberal divide: maturity versus immaturity, selflessness versus selfishness, disinterested truth versus power at any price. In 1980, there were Reagan Democrats who crossed the ideological divide, hoping for a statesman able to breach the political gridlock that frustrated both sides of the aisle. Twenty-eight years later, many independent voters—including those who had described themselves as Reagan Democrats—cast their ballots for Obama, hoping for a prudential judge of national affairs. The question remains whether, in the larger sphere, individualism can trump selfishness.

Greed is Good?

Gordon Gecko's (Michael Douglas) oft-repeated quote, "…greed is good. Greed is right," in Oliver Stone's 1987 film, *Wall Street*, accurately reflects Reagan's pro-business presidency and the bull market of the 1980s. When the 80s came to a close, the decade was often summed up by the media using Gecko's words. But what does this have to do with *Peggy Sue Got Married*, a film that seems to be saying that the family—as long as it is headed by a man—comes first? By taking a closer look, we find that Peggy Sue is selective in how she describes the past 25 years to Richard.

In addition to revealing her personal history with Charlie, she enthusiastically reports technological achievements and product developments. Sure, it's great that men have walked on the moon, but Peggy Sue seems more excited about the possibility of making Richard and herself rich using her knowledge of future commodities, such as running shoes and digital watches. While Richard is at first taken aback by this information, he quickly jumps on the moneymaking bandwagon.

Materialism is the safe haven removed from the psychological and emotional stresses of relationships, fidelity, sexuality, and uncertainties about the genuine forces of love. And for Peggy Sue and Richard, it seems that greed *is* good. However, it is important to note that while Richard—a man—does in fact become wealthy in the future, Peggy Sue's decision to return to 1986 and reunite with Charlie prevents any chance for her to profit financially from her "trip" back in time.

For Peggy Sue, the lifting of her repressed memories was limited to her own particular circumstances. All of the excitement had seeped out by what Peggy Sue left out of her description of the past 25 years: the social turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s, the Vietnam War, Watergate, and the fight for women's and civil rights. Does she try to warn Martin Luther King that he shouldn't go to Memphis on April 4, 1968 or face assassination? No. For Bartosch (1987: 3-4), in *Peggy Sue Got Married* the "movements of history become defined solely in terms of technology and commodities—twenty-five years of social, political, and economic history become repressed." Just like Marty in *Back to the Future*, instead of using this unique time travel opportunity to intervene in history, Peggy Sue does nothing: "She acts historically only in a business and a personal context" (ibid.). She only succeeds in fulfilling her destiny and helping Richard achieve his.

While not appropriating the tone of Gordon Gecko's turbocharged exultation in *Wall Street* about the goodness and the rightness of greed, *Peggy Sue Got Married* echoed the more affable, personable tone of Reagan's message that one's self-interest was justified, especially for the purposes of empowering the individual to reap for his or her family the symbols and manifestations of the American Dream and economic success. Absent of irony or satire, the film engendered a gentler yet still disturbingly skewed view of Reaganism, and a championing of capitalism with no worries about wider social or ethical responsibilities.

Challenging Reaganism

Peggy Sue Got Married promotes a Reagan-friendly ideology in the way that it is pro-marriage/anti-divorce, and in how it promotes "traditional" (i.e. male-based) family values. The film reflects, in part, the ideology of the radical Right, the so-called "Moral Majority" (Wuthnow & Liebman, 1983) and it's evangelical, Christian-based, lobbyist agenda—a group with so much political clout that it gave Ronald Reagan two-thirds of the white evangelical vote in his 1980 defeat of Jimmy Carter. In this context, the film completely ignores the group's, and Reagan's, efforts to outlaw abortion, its opposition to the women's rights movement, the Equal Rights Amendment, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, and its attempts to demonize homosexuality and view AIDS as a "just" punishment for being gay. Underneath the film's nostalgic veneer, *Peggy Sue Got Married* represents—perhaps inadvertently—a

compelling endorsement of Reagan's, and the country's, political swing to the right, while ignoring the most important economic, political, and social issues.

Feminist critics have also been especially harsh on the film (Maio, 1988; Kinder, 1989: 2-11; McCreadie, 1990: 31-32). As a grown, mature woman, Peggy Sue's potential outside her marriage with Charlie is given little attention, though we do learn that she runs a successful bakery. By choosing to stay with the obviously imperfect Charlie, the film seems to reverse the gains made in the women's rights movement. *Peggy Sue Got Married*, like *Back to the Future*, underscores Reagan-centric ideology in suggesting that the nuclear family must be preserved at all costs, even at the expense of a woman's freedom and happiness, and of missed opportunities to escape the dull, quotidian, pre-determined bourgeois life. As in *Back to the Future*, the promise of *Peggy Sue Got Married* carried the broadly proven popular appeal of positioning the cinematic image of youth perched precariously on the border between childhood and adulthood. On the surface, the film served an ideal platform for arguing that the nuclear family should—and could—be preserved.

However, nothing really gets resolved in this film, and we are left with a depiction of just how far removed from ideal Peggy Sue's marriage really is. The certainty is that status and popularity, as well as reconciliation—whether one is a teenager or an adult—is or can be derived from being fully socialized into the principles of a highly competitive market society. She fails to achieve a different reality that would include implicitly the halt to time, the opportunity for her to find a totally satisfied sense of perfection with the same degree of courage embodied by Richard and Fitzsimmons. Maio (1988: 192-193), for example, laments over the fact that unlike Marty McFly, a "successful" male time-traveler, the female Peggy Sue appears to be "passive in and little enriched by her re-exploration of the past."

Yet, these same fatalistic elements—that Peggy Sue has no power at all over her past nor her future—of which some of these critics and others lament (Levy, 1991; Bawer, 1992)—constitute potentially subversive challenges to the Reagan rhetorical peroration about the American Dream being equally accessible to all who aspire toward it. Critics can turn these lamentations into incisive and deeply critical commentaries that can expose the utter incoherence of Reagan's promise that contemporary Americans could, in effect, have it all—both in terms of healthy families and economic prosperity.

In fact, it is impossible to reconcile the Reaganesque rhetoric because it is not only women who are powerless in *Peggy Sue Got Married*. Men also take comfort in materialism as their safe haven from the emotional and psychological stresses of family relationships, the tensions arising from surviving economically in an always-volatile business world, and of proving their professional worth. Morris (2000: 122-123), who describes the men as weak, insubstantial, and immature, claims they "have their sights set on realistic goals: home and cars, barbecues every weekend."

Reagan's success at forging a new political coalition was predicated on his strongly optimistic orientation toward the future, which ironically, would not resemble the harsher antagonistic tone taken by today's neoconservatives who have appropriated their own mythological version of Reagan's legacy. What often is overlooked is the oversimplification of that optimism, which carried over into Reagan's policies, and

which failed to address the still-entrenched problems of a market economy unapproachable for millions of Americans. Reagan's plain eloquence was easily twisted into a protective rhetorical code for self-serving interests. Individual interests are manifestations of being free, but they do not constitute the whole of our liberty. Reagan was so out of touch with reality that he failed to stress the collective nature of our political governing and our personal obligations within this process.

Peggy Sue seems initially to be somewhat empowered—particularly in her relationship with Charlie: she knows his future weaknesses and failures, and she is "in charge" sexually. However, despite waking up a high school teenager again, she is still the same person: a 43-year-old, burned out, on-the-verge-of-divorce, woman. Peggy Sue is able to retrace her steps in the past, but she remains the same subordinated woman.

Admittedly, searching for those subversive anti-Reagan elements in *Peggy Sue Got Married* must be centered almost exclusively on these limited fatalistic contexts. Dunn (1986: 17), on the other hand, gives a more positive—if not distinctly Reaganesque—slant in his review of the film, claiming: "As an exploration of personal dreams and wishes, it reveals that what we are is often the best of what we could possibly have been." Because Peggy Sue goes back to her old life and is willing to forgive her philandering husband, the film re-legitimizes the traditional notions of American family life as a social institution. However, I do not accept Dunn's premise that it represents our "best" potential.

Conclusion

Peggy Sue Got Married refuses to view the turbulent 1960s and 1970s as a period of healthy self-doubt and self-interrogation. Instead, it attempts to offer us solace in its fatalistic, nostalgic depiction of a "better" past, which never really existed. Unfortunately, Peggy Sue will never reap the full benefits of pleasure from a sense of timelessness, being only connected to her intuitive, instinctive, subconscious experiences for the extremely limited purposes of making sense of the shortcomings in her marriage. Still, this fatalistic realization reveals that in order to achieve anything approaching the Reaganesque vision of the American Dream requires individuals to settle for mediocrity and lowered expectations when it comes to a stable family and independent career-driven wealth.

However, the prevailing analysis can be extended. On the surface, the film gratifies a broadly defined audience willing to accept a nostalgic depiction of a time as believable yet uncomplicated entertainment. On the other hand, because the film skips over so much social, economic, and cultural territory, which surely anyone would have been confronted with had he or she been in Peggy Sue's circumstances, one wonders if the best to be hoped for in a world influenced by Reaganesque ideals about family and capitalism amounts to settling for a lot less life-sustaining value. The subversive deconstruction of Reaganism may not be readily apparent, but it becomes evident as the film is viewed more than a quarter of a century after its release.

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Luang Prabang Film Festival: 3 Years of Strength with the Power of Movie Fanatics to Enhance Filmmaking in Southeast Asia

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Abstract

Luang Prabang Film Festival was founded in 2010 by Gabriel Kuperman, an American expat who had a strong passion for both film and this old capital city. The festival was run by an organized group called The Not-For-Profit Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF). The 3rd year of this festival was held in December 1-5, 2012.

Now in its 3rd year, the festival has grown strongly with the collaboration from movie fanatics in Southeast Asia and Western filmmakers. From the field study trip to the latest event, it was found that there were 3 main activities provided, including the selection of twenty-eight Southeast Asian films from 9 countries to showcase, the film-making workshop, and the film discussion forums. All of these activities were funded by companies, organizations, foreign embassies, and online donation campaign through kickstarter.com. The festival also received help from film distribution companies, hotels and local restaurants in facilitating the screening activities and space, as well as, the government sector, Lao Department of Cinema that supported and helped facilitate in the festival.

The objectives of this festival were to promote cultural expression, mutual exchange, sustainable industry, diversity and education. However, the most important outgrowth received from this festival was the tourism promotion that helped make Luang Prabang a lively and better known city among foreign tourists.

Introduction

The 3rd Luang Prabang Film Festival took place on December 1-5, 2012 with the initiative of Gabriel Kuperman, a 28 year old American expat, who previously worked in the film industry and television in New York. Traveled to Southeast Asia and impressed with the beauty of Luang Prabang, after his master's degree graduation, he then moved to lived in this city in 2008. Moving to this country, he has also brought what he was interested about to initiate a concrete festival in conjunction with of Department of Lao Film.

The not-for profit Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF) has been annually held in order to promote film industries in Southeast Asia. It first took place in 2010 as to promote the domestic film industry in Laos and to exchange the knowledge of filming in this region. The objectives of this film festival are:

1. To promote the cultural expression through films; the film interested persons would have the opportunity to visually see various films, to exchange the cultural knowledge and reflect their own stories from different countries to the audience.

2. To initiate the mutual exchange: LPFF provides a space for those Southeast Asian filmmakers to come together and exchange their knowledge and skills in filming in order to help enhancing film industries in this region.

3. To promote a sustainable film industry: LPFF improves Lao film industry in various aspects and initiate the exchange of international film market. This generates incomes and moves the industry forward. LPFF also draws attention from international film industries to look at the country's film industry.

4. To present the diversity: LPFF aims to create the equality through films that tell stories and perspectives in order to reflect the society, race, gender and belief differently. The festival opens an opportunity for independent filmmakers to show their works, as well as women who are related to filming participate in the events.

5. To provide film education: every year Lao people who are interested in filming improve their skills and experiences through an activity in the festival. LPFF collaborates with the state sector and related organizations, such as Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, to help find filming experts to educate their knowledge. This year's festival was honored by United States Embassy that supported a 10-day workshop, and in this workshop fifteen participants were selected to participate in deeply practicing public topics they wanted to communicate to the society.

Luang Prabang Film Festival Administration

One of other important factors in running a film festival is the funding. The fundraising for LPFF came from the collaboration of four significant parties, including private companies, non-governmental organizations, embassies, and donation. The fundraising also came from its campaign run online through kickstarter.com and the support from film distributors and local hotel owners.

Hiring staff to run the festival was not an important issue since the festival received a friendly support from partnerships from Southeast Asian countries who had love in filming. From the study, it revealed that Southeast Asian film experts from each

country were invited to help about the film selection in this festival. For example, below is a list of experts who helped in film selection in 2012.

Mr. Chha Bora, a film director and producer from Cambodia
Ms. Varadila Daood, the film festival organizer from Indonesia
Mr. Somsanouk Mixay, a writer and journalist from Laos
Mr. Amir Muhammad, a film producer, writer, and media from Malaysia
Mr. Swe Than, a film expert from Myanmar
Mr. Francis Joseph A.Cruz, a film critic from Philippines
Ms. Yuni Hadi, the festival organizer and film selector from Singapore
Mr. Kong Rithdee, a film critic from Thailand
Ms. Nguyen Trinh Thi, a film producer and educator from Vietnam

These experts were asked to select 10 outstanding films from their own country that were shown within the last five years. Then the festival asked for film screeners from the collaborative film distributors. After that, the screeners would be sent to the festival committees who came from the state, private, and international sectors to finalize the film selection to showcase. The reason that LPFF refused for independent submission due to the fact that only major qualified and outstanding films should be shown in this festival in order to present the overall image of countries in Southeast Asia.

The number of total films shown in this year's festival was 28 (before the withdrawal of Rak Am Lam movie, so actually only 27 films were presented) from 9 different countries across the region. There was no film sent from Brunei since the country's film industry was not growing well.

The following 28 selected films were categorized into the country they were from.

Image 1 : Program Schedule

Other significant activities beside the film showcase included two panel discussions;
  The 1st forum was the discussion of "Cross-Border Filmmaking" on December
2nd 2012, 2 pm. The participants in this discussion were
   - Luke Cassady-Dorion, a film director
   - Ananda Everingham, an actor and film producer
   - Sherman Ong, a film producer
   - Kong Rithdee, a journalist, film producer and selector from Thailand
   - Nicholas Simon, a film director

Image 2: The discussion of "Cross-Border Filmmaking"

The 2nd forum was the discussion of "Documenting Southeast Asia" on December 4th
2012 at 2pm. The participants in this discussion were;
   - Ian Bromage, a film producer
   - Bradley Cox, a film director
   - Peter Livermore, a film producer
   - Thanapanont Phithakrattanayothin, a film producer
   - Shalahuddin Siregar, a film director

Image 3 : The discussion of "Documenting Southeast Asia"

The showcase cinemas in this festival were located in different areas depended on the time of the day. The film showcase during day time was in:

    <u>Luang Prabang City</u>
    1. LPFF Visitor Center – Project Space Luang Prabang
    2. Amantaka Hotel
    Suburb Areas of Luang Prabang
    1. Traditional Arts & Ethnology Centre
    2. Coconut Garden
    3. Saffron Coffee Company
    4. T'shop Lai Gallery
    5. Ock Pop Tok
    6. @ My Library
    7. House of Dreams

The night time film showcase happened in Handicraft Market that was renovated by UNESCO in 2003 and located in center or of the city. With such location, this market became a perfect location for cultural and public activities with the ability to receive up to 1,500 audiences.

From above, in summary, there were two main activities occurred in this film festival; the showcase of selected films from different countries in the region and the academic film discussions/seminars. All of such activities happened through various locations belonged to both the state and private sectors. The activities were run during the day and night time based on the schedule made by the festival organizers.

The First Step from A Film Lover To The Success Of Luang Prabang Film Festival

From the study, the festival began from a group of people who were interested in filming and passionate of Lunag Prabang city. Such feelings were turned into the force of initiating Luang Prabang Film Festibal. Currently, the festival has been held for three years already.

Although there has not been many films produced in Laos, having this film festival was considered something more than a success that ever happened among other countries in the region. If only showing Lao films, there would not be enough films to showcase and would not be able to make the festival succeeded. The collaboration from partnerships and support of people who had passionate on films were the significant keys for preceding the festival conveniently. These have helped solving the issues of funding since people who loved films all aimed to see the growth of film industries, especially the ones in Southeast Asian countries where they lacked of support from the governments. However, with the power and love that people have towards film and filming, the festival has moved forward throughout three years, and it seems to be growing with a great leap forward. Thus, this then has resulted in the increased support and roles of government. It is also expected that the support will be further grown.

Conclusion

In the past three years, it is found that LPFF has grown continuously. With the beginning from a group of people who had love in films and filming and being supported by various parties and organization, the festival then has been able to grow further and sustainably.

Running LPFF is significantly important for the growth of Lao film industry since it has encouraged and awaked the industry to be more lively and creative in producing qualified works. Moreover, the state and private sectors also started to look at and pay attention in filming Medias. This could be seen from the increased support they gave to the festival each year.

However, the festival could be grown with sustainability if the Department of Lao films take more roles. If possible, LPFF will be able to improve and grow farther than being a film festival for Southeast Asia.

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Malaysian eStories: the Passing of Oral Traditions

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Abstract

With new media and mediums, the art of oral traditions such as storytelling has evolved. Children and youngsters today learn stories from visual media such as the television, the Internet and more current, the Smartphone and tablet. How does a given cultural or traditional story retain its substance? Does a change in medium or media influence the manner in which stories of oral traditions are understood? This paper explores the manner in which Malaysian children and youngsters today, learn and understand stories of the past. It attempts to identify the manner in which youngsters understand, accept and acknowledge these stories. It also looks at how children too in turn, pass stories on, as studies such as that by Lopamudra Maitra (2008) claim, "Folk tales and tales from oral tradition are an important way of communicating with children. Acting especially as repositories of moral and social lessons and religious instructions discovered by grandparents and parents through time, these traditions have always been an important part of growing up." This is a research that attempts to identify the manner in which traditional and cultural stories continue to be told in the present, and into the future.

Introduction

Like most cultures, oral traditions are the most basic forms of knowledge transference known to man. From stories told around campfires, to those in homes, to writings on cave walls, verbal or oral tales are told of experiences that are shared with a larger inner social group, the family. Oral traditions are considered as the manner in which stories of the past are told as legacies for the future. While there is an abundance of literature on the transformation of traditions gathered from various perspectives, one definition of oral traditions as identified by Jan Knappert (1998) declares it as 'unwritten literature'. Unwritten literature within these terms refers to the many cases in which story traditions only became literature after they were orally composed and told. With oral traditions, memory functions as a key role in the continuation, or passing down, of these stories especially among small clusters of society as stories that continue to be told orally are remembered vividly by the storytelling of it all. On that note, like any other culture from around the world, Malaysia too is no stranger to the changes taking place within society, changes that influence generations to come. Tales of old was once passed down from one generation to the next via oral stories. The power of the voice and the imagination offered means of ensuring that tales were mentally grasped, captured, retained and built within the minds of its listeners. The trend today, however, is much the opposite. Visual media and visual mediums influence youngsters as it feeds, on probably a lesser note, their lack of imagination. It is this visual culture that media companies in efforts to keep up with the frenzy, conjure short films, feature films, web clips, web toons, animation, and the works, to cater for this new evolution into the mode of storytelling. But do oral traditions continue into these new forms? If so, how are these stories told, passed on, or shared? Or are these stories of old totally overlooked?

The 'passing' on of these stories of oral traditions is important and cannot be taken lightly, especially when there are journals dedicated to the evolving discussion and debate of oral traditions (such as http://journal.oraltradition.org). They function as a means of documenting a society's cultural history as stories of life and practices are told. Such is the situation as explained by Mohd Taib Osman (1989) in *Malay Folk Beliefs*, in which,

> Ironically, folk beliefs are in themselves a documentation of that history for as we look at the existing folk beliefs today, or at least as they are faithfully and ethnographically recorded, they are easily recognized as a conglomeration of disparate elements, and sometimes seemingly incongruently mixed and related to one another.

The stories themselves thus provide the means of not only historical record, but depict the cultural representation of a given nation. It identifies the nuances of a societies beliefs, fears, ideologies, and philosophies that form the foundation of a given community. While the idea of communal sharing of stories differs among cultures, its role is to ensure that the listener understands the fundamental lessons that can be found in them.

The notion of 'passing' within the context of this paper takes on a connotative approach. The literal passing, from one person to another, is the physical action of sharing as tales are told. Oral traditions being 'overlooked' or 'bypassed' on the other hand is greatly influenced by the changing mode or medium in which stories today are told. The art of telling stories begin at home in which parents tell their children tales of their own personal life. As children grow older, go to school and gain experience, they are introduced to other stories of life via books and reading materials in which, one commonly told Malaysian story is the tale of the Sang Kancil and his adventures. While the true origins of the Sang Kancil tales are unclear, it has been passed down from one generation to another differing only in its form. The first known, if not documented tale of the mouse deer is linked to the historical beginnings when the nation was first discovered and formed. (King) Parameswara on resting against a tree (named Melaka) witnessed how a white mouse deer kicked one of his hunting dogs into the river. Upon seeing the courageous act of the mouse deer, the King decided to set up the state of Melaka on that very spot. As oral traditions go, the tales of the sang kancil has no identified or recognized author, true origin, or time when it was created, but has been assimilated into the knowledge of a given social culture. The Sang Kancil tales refer to the adventures of a mouse deer as he endures the experiences of living in a harsh and demanding jungle. It ranges from ideas of survival, friendship, wittiness, and bravery, as a whole, positive and good values.

Image1/Link1: *Hikayat Sang Kancil dan Monyet* (1984), was produced by Filem Negara Malaysia for local television

Image2/Link2: *Hikayat Sang Kancil dan Buaya* (1985), produced by Filem Negara Malaysia for local television

The transference and change of this form of oral traditions thus takes ground in that modern/mobile technology has changed the manner in which these tales are told. The younger, more visually oriented generation Y and Z, come to contact with these tales through a whole different medium. It is on that note that this paper attempts to identify the manner in which these tales are passed on, as well as acknowledge the

manner in which GenY and GenZ comprehend, absorb and retain these stories. As Lopmudra Maitra (2008) states, folktales function as 'repositories of moral and social lessons and religious instructions'. It needs to be stated that this paper does not intend to address the new form of oral traditions as methods of teaching and learning, but more as a process of storytelling in which the narrative is crucial towards the continuation of social cultural values and traditions.

Malay(sian) Oral Traditions

Historically, as identified by prominent Malay literary scholars such as Mohd Taib Osman and Muhammad Haji Salleh, the original Malay word-art was in the form of a free composition in the spoken language. This free composition came in the form of a *pantun* (a four-line stanza poem) that represented both love-song and living expressions of a popular philosophy of life. It was from this starting point that folklore and popular beliefs then became stories. But as Knappert (1998) explains, a tale is not yet a literary composition as,

> A long, sustained effort is needed before a ballad becomes an epic, before a legend becomes a romance, before the fable becomes a book of animal-wisdom. A long period of festation is required for a given cultural community, so that this evolution can take place; it usually goes hand in hand with the transition from a truly oral art to a written literature. It is essential though, that the spoken language continues to fertilize the literary language.

Knappert's perspective is further iterated ten years by national laureate, Muhammad Haji Salleh in *The Poetics of Malay Literature.* Muhammad Haji Salleh (2008) believes that literature is spread over a vast area of the artistic field. He discusses that all works in the Malay language, including those in the various dialects, provide "an extraordinary variety of forms and genres, styles and idiosyncrasies, where the traditions of Malay language and literature are combined and mixed into the customs and special local *adats* and ways." These varied forms of oral traditions reflect the fundamental cultural practice of the Malay community as 'the roots of modern Malay literature are buried deep in the traditional' as the nineteenth century marked events of traumatic changes within the region (Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2008). The nineteenth century was a period when the world of Malay literature changed, "from being a shared social experience of listening to a text spoken or read within a community, to a more private individual one, taking place within one's own room and privacy – in all ways that this new approach entailed."

Malay(sian) tales were believed to be developed by individuals to form a collective experience suited to their environments, situations, experiences and given tasks. The notion of 'significant speech' as defined by Havelock (1982) was the range in which experience preserved in books and writings of all kinds were where the ethos and technology of culture was preserved. Havelock elaborates by claiming that, it is through 'a significant speech that a society may help an important meaning or a good mind be developed.' It is this approach of perceiving literature that invariably categorizes it as a 'collective treasury of a people's knowledge, collated from its great span and range of experience.'

> Only an accomplished tongue may catch the soul, content and character of a people if we wish to continue to note and express all that we live through, physically, spiritually or intellectually. We must have the most current instrument of thought and expression. Besides that the language that may catch all these aspects is a significant language. (Havelock, 1982)

While stories form the fundamental layer of a society's past and present, it is through literature that it is documented. Literature in the Malay language is considered a composition of melodious but suitable sounds to sketch or describe a situation, a person or idea. In its best form it is considered a language that is in song that supports a meaning. In which case, oral stories are considered examples of their styles where language is composed for the ear. The gathering of local storytellers was developed at an early stage. Through Malay oral traditions and literature, animal stories such as the tales of the Sang Kancil (a mouse deer) were formed. The stories were short and dramatized by succinct dialogues are woven with 'messages' and moralistic significance of the story. To a given extent, even oral stories of the past quite significantly fall into the modern form of the three-act structure in which the beginning, middle and end of the story are significantly interjected with twist and plot turns.

In exploring literature of the region with emphasis on local folklore, James Danandjaja (1984) *Folklor Indonesia* describes folklore as being part of a collective culture. Based on Danandjaja's referencing of Jan Harold Brunvand, it is suggested that folklore is 'disseminated and inherited over the generations in collective societies of all kinds, in a traditional manner in different versions, be it oral or in patterns accompanied by gestures of mnemonic devices.' Due to the oral nature of the folklore that is anonymous, it emerges in different versions and forms. However, they are able to serve a social function of instructing and educating the young and are able to provide entertainment when needed. In turn, these shared stories are of collective ownership of the society it belongs to. The conclusion that can be made is that Malay folk stories and literature have a collective ownership that has its own patterns and forms. As a result, it is believed that Malay literature has become a social institution. It has evolved in being a process in which the storyteller goes from village to village to tell stories to villagers gathered on verandahs, balconies and open spaces. The tales that are told are considered 'main pillars of literature as an instrument of entertainment, instruction, customs, medicine and native laws, that are necessary foundation of the society'. However, no literary community is static.

Trending Oral Traditions: a New Wave of Storytelling, the eStories

In efforts to pass on these oral traditions, stories are told in various forms. While many started through print media, it was not long before visual mediums such as the television became a household name. Children were introduced to narratives of various themes as visual mediums took over the twentieth century. However, the digital age of cyberspace has forced the telling of these stories to change. The fast paced and mobile lifestyle demands a change of not only pace but ease of accessibility to immense amount of information at any given time. When once sources

were from books, books today are now legible digital texts. Based on the latest survey by Media News Trends in June 2013 (http://www.newmediatrendwatch.com/markets-by-country/11-long-haul/55-malaysia), there is an estimated 17 million internet users in Malaysia. This number represents 60.7% of the total population of 17 million online Malaysians out of a population of 27 million people. Out of that, 11 million are between the ages of 15 and older, which as the survey discovered accessed the internet from home or work.

The first story a child is introduced to is at home in a closed and controlled environment. Tales told are of daily affairs and events, and shared with the family (the public). As children's social structures expand, their exposure, involvement and experience with the environment begins to evolve. They meet and make friends in which stories are exchanged. The older the children become the more stories they hear as well as create. It is the type of stories that are passed on or told if not retold that differs. The environment at this point of time is no longer isolated to the small family and social nucleus but expands to include a wider public as well as mediums of information transference that is available to the public at that point in time. Hence the evolution of oral traditions begins to make its journey. The stories of old are represented in the form of print, to read. In which from print it reforms itself to visual and audio mediums such as the television and radio. However, it is in this new age of mobile information that the amount of stories that circulates and is circulated becomes infinite.

Early sampling of how children comprehend stories is that no matter the circumstance, stories all begin as oral tales. It is in the creation of the imagination of the children's minds that they begin to formulate their own 'limited' mental images to associate with the stories they hear. As children listen to more stories and experience life, they begin to formulate their own stories based on their surroundings and the influences within that surrounding. While oral tradition would be a dominant fact of everyday life, children's surroundings such as the television, radio, digital mediums such as the smart phone and tablets, recreate, reformulate and re-form their imagination with a somewhat structured, if not instructed framework. The types of stories that children are introduced to are based on local folktales such as the Sang Kancil stories, the adventures of Hang Tuah and his friends and Pak Pandir tales of moral values.

The current local trend of passing on these stories as an eStory can be seen on YouTube. From the local producers of the successfully Upin and Ipin animated television series, Les'Copaque produced the animated series of local folklores such as the Sang Kancil stories under the program *Pada Zaman Dahulu* (or 'Once Upon a Time'). A clear demarcation of this new form of story telling is with the opening theme song and credits that declares, *hikayat lama berwajah baru* "old tales with a new image."

Image3/Link3: "Sang Kancil dan Perigi Buta," *Pada Zaman Dahulu* (TV Series),
published online 21 September 2012 (248,500 views)

Image4/Link4: "Sang Kancil dan Gergasi," *Pada Zaman Dahulu* (TV Series),
published online 21 September 2012 (622,262 views)

The stories told within the context of the animated series attract the attention of young children, while retaining the original context of storytelling in the stories that it tells. For example, the programme usually begins within the context of the modern. Children are introduced and are seen as being occupied by modern gadgets and wasting the time away with insignificant activities. The programme sets the pace by offering a transition, in which the children are faced with various predicaments. Their grandfather however, appears on hand to offer guidance and advise, in which he sets his examples through the animal folktales that he tells. All this occurs visual through animation whereby children have immediate access to the content/programme not only via the television but also through the internet as the programme becomes virtual

Conclusion

On that note, it can be said that the oral traditions of Malay folk tales have evolved into a new form of storytelling and access. The virtual nature of the tales themselves allows for the formation of the eStory. The ease in which children today have on hand access to these stories reduces that gap with regards to time, or when they hear of are told these stories. Their experiences are heightened within a short period of time. Thus, it can be suggested that as long as society continues to communicate among themselves, oral traditions will not die. It will only evolve from oral form to that of various mediums that are either technology driven, or one that is made accessible to the public. No matter what form stories take such as that of the eStory, they are still stories told from one generation to another. Children listen, watch and comprehend these stories before the stories are then passed down first through oral traditions and later evolve through various new mediums. There is no need for society to keep up with technology as everyone tells a tale everyday of his or her life. Technology only functions as a mode of repackaging these stories into a form that is shared with the

wider audience or public. While trends of these oral traditions take on new forms, the stories themselves continue to be passed on. Children and teenagers continue to have access and exposure to traditional stories and with time these stories too will be passed on. As long as stories are a part of our daily lives, it is something that not easily fades.

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Applying an Evaluation Model for Media Performance On Taiwanese Cinema

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Abstract

The rise of huge Chinese markets leads many movie entrepreneurs and professionals in Taiwan and Hong Kong to transfer their stages to Mainland China. To satisfy the Chinese Cinema market, Taiwan's movie industries and their local audience have been encountering social phenomena such as local audience's maladjustment to movie text produced by China, local movie directors' resistance to change movie plots which leads them to give up Chinese funding, Taiwanese movie consumers' low support for movies co-produced with China. There is a strong, professional assertion that Taiwanese movie industries have to develop Chinese movie market for their survival. This article proposes an evaluation model for media performance amended from Cuilenburg's and McQuail's to balance a dilemma of Taiwan's governmental policy which has to meet different needs between its local cultural sovereignty and bigger regional market. This paper identifies the concept of consumer identity in different levels to cope with that dilemma. In addition, how this model could be applied to a context filled with ideological conflict is also discussed by exploring three concepts liberty, equality, and order in the age of globalization.

Keywords: collective consumer identity, norms for media performance, film policy, Taiwan film, cultural economics

I.   Introduction

Taiwan's movie industries and their local audience have been encountering social phenomena such as local audience's maladjustment to movie text produced by China (林立明, 2008； 邱智賢, 2008), local movie directors' resistance to change movie plots which leads them to give up Chinese funding (滕淑芬. 2009), Taiwanese movie consumers' low support for movies co-produced with China (光影隨想, 2012). There is a strong, professional assertion that Taiwanese movie industries have to develop Chinese movie market for their survival (王雅蘭，2013). In contrast, the concept of consumer rights of cultural sovereignty has been discussed by different disciplines by asserting that the public and nationals in a state have the need for consolidating their collective identity through consuming popular mass media as vehicles for their cultural practices of everyday life (Chen, 2013). Chen argues that in the process of the globalization, the public as consumers through local film industries can pursue their resistance and create their special interpretation of their experience of modernization by building up momentum of local culture. By comparing film industries of the Republic of Korea, Japan with that of Taiwan, Chen found that the Republic of Korea and Japan persist in their local cultural practices and connect them to globalization is the key for their success. She proposes a possible result that a nation's domestic film markets dominated by Hollywood movies now may change in the future if the locals can shape their nation's collective imagination through their own film industry. This article is to follow Chen's idea to develop a possible evaluation model for movie performance of Taiwanese governmental policy for the purpose of boosting its cinema market from cultural economical perspectives. The rise of huge Chinese markets leads to many movie entrepreneurs and professionals in Taiwan and Hong Kong transferring their stages to Mainland China. To satisfy the Chinese Cinema market, Taiwan like many other nations might possibly lose their cultural sovereignty. It is necessary to explore why Taiwanese government should focus on enlarging the local market of its local film industry rather than focus majorly on Chinese film market.

II.   Consumers' different levels of identity

Through the context of globalization and glocalization, consumers can seek their different levels of identity such as identities of personal, social groups, communities, and nations. Under the influence of cultural discount or cultural relevance (Straubhaa, 2000), consumers may choose the domestic products they like as their first choice but choose the foreign products if those domestic products could not meet their needs. Through the experience of film markets in Japan and Korea we can find that the two domestic markets have significant changes when their film makers target their local audiences' preference and their local film distributors regain top 3 titles in their local movie markets (Chen, 2013). This implies that consumers might create a momentum to pursue their national identity as the need to pursue their collective memories and production of their collective cultural symbols. In fact, several scholars have promoted the ideas that modern culture or art should connect people with their daily life in terms of the public's cultural rationality (Habermas, 1985) and their historical memories in terms of immigration characteristics (沈清松，2002) or collectively develop their own national identity through cultural creative industries to connect their culture with economic development (Throsby, 2003). Therefore, developing

local cinema market and aiming to connect it to global market could be a nation's priority policy from cultural economical perspective.

Consumers become an important source to bring the economies, culture and competitiveness into the same concept as consumption rights of cultural sovereignty which emphasizes the idea that a government not only should use laws and protection to promote their own culture content but also create their domestic communication content for their solidarity and economic goals. However, Taiwanese government has been claiming that it tries to develop film industry but fails to apply an approach of consumer rights of cultural sovereignty mentioned above. In contrast, without developing its fundamental infrastructures of its local markets, Taiwanese government focuses on targeting its cinema revenues majorly from Chinese movie markets (Chen, 2013). This article argues that a normative evaluation model for cinema industries should be built to balance the needs of bigger regional or international film markets and that of local film markets.

III. Redefining the concept of media policy

Cuilenburg & McQuail (2003) identified three paradigmatic phases of communications based on the practice of media policy applied by the US and Western Europe: Phase I as communications industry policy (from mid-19th century until the Second World War); Phase II as the paradigm of public service media policy (1945–1980/90); and Phase III (from 1980/90 onwards) where a new policy paradigm proposed because of the significant changes of information society and globalization. In Phase I, the communications policy in that era was mainly pursued for reasons of state interest and financial corporate benefits. Communications and media policy then primarily referred to the emerging technologies of telegraph, telephony and wireless based on their observation. This model of government-regulated private monopoly was the core of US policy accompanied by general anti-trust sentiment and support for competition (p.187, Cuilenburg & McQuail 2003). On the contrary, The European policy was to make major communication services then as a public monopoly and as a public utility. In Phase II, media policy was dominated by sociopolitical concerns in terms of public interest and the ideal of public service broadcasting was at its height, notably in Western Europe (Cuilenburg & McQuail 2003). In Phase III, technological and economic convergence in media and communication sectors merge, regulation of mass media became increasingly connected to telecommunications regulations (p.197-198, Cuilenburg & McQuail 2003). They explain that the 'public interest' is being significantly redefined to encompass the economic and consumerist values and less policy emphasis on equality. The emerging new communications policy paradigm in Phase III is presented in Figure 1. Their idea is that depending on national circumstances, a nation should define the scope and aims of public sector in the media, the choice of policy instruments, and its coherent set of principles and a framework of regulation (p.201-202) to define their choice of media policy to fit their national goal. To develop an evaluation model for Taiwanese film policy in the context of globalization and local needs of collective identity, this article uses the concepts of Cuilenburg & McQuail specifying more about social and economic welfare (See Figure 1) and Mcquail's model in 1990 focusing more on needs of democratic society and solidarity by considering three redefining concepts together: freedom, equity, and order (See Figure 2).

Ultimate Goal/Public Interest

| Political Welfare | Social Welfare | Economic Welfare |

Domains and Values/ Criteria

| political | Freedom Access Diversity Information Control/ Accountability | social-cultural | Choice Identity Interaction Quality Cohesion | economic | Competition Development Employment Consumerism Innovation |

New Communications Policy
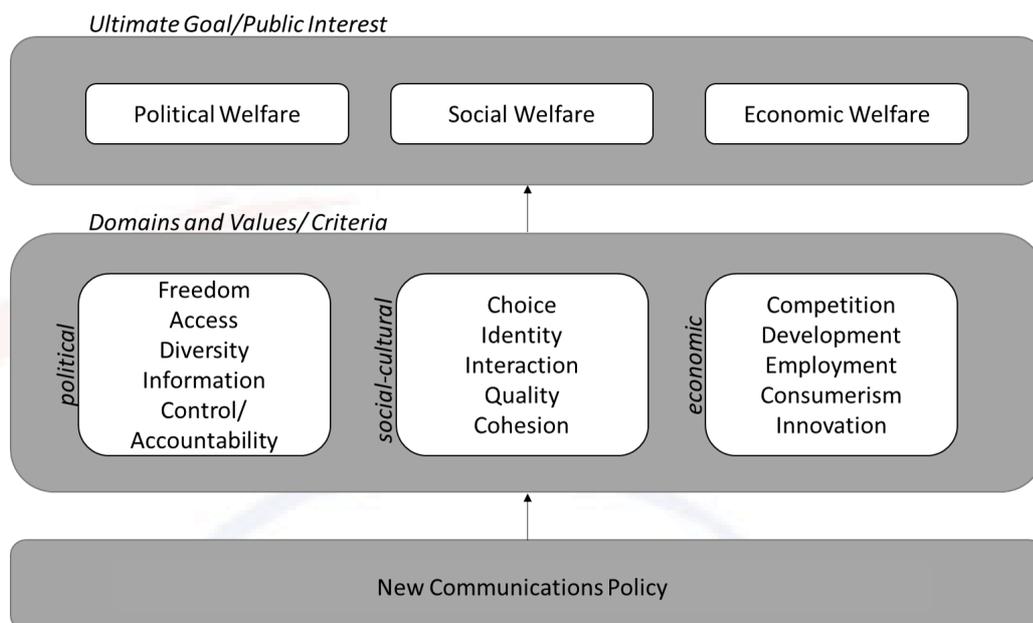
Figure 1 *Phase III (1980/90–): an emerging new communications policy*

Paradigm

Figure 1 remade by the author is from *Media Policy Paradigm Shifts: Towards a New Communications Policy*, by Jan van Cuilenburg and Denis McQuail, 2003.

McQuail's model (1996) explains three definitions of public interest which are majority interest, common interest, and unitary. This article emphasizes them because cultural sovereignty is considered as an object with the nature of collectiveness from the concept of globalization. Through this perspective, this article redefine freedom, equity, and order through the collectiveness that asserts the idea that citizen consumers may work together to achieve a goal for the public good when facing global competition. Through the behavior of consumer, government policy, and civil society, they may keep the local film market prosperous to produce the cultural symbols they wish to represent themselves and their ideas about the world.
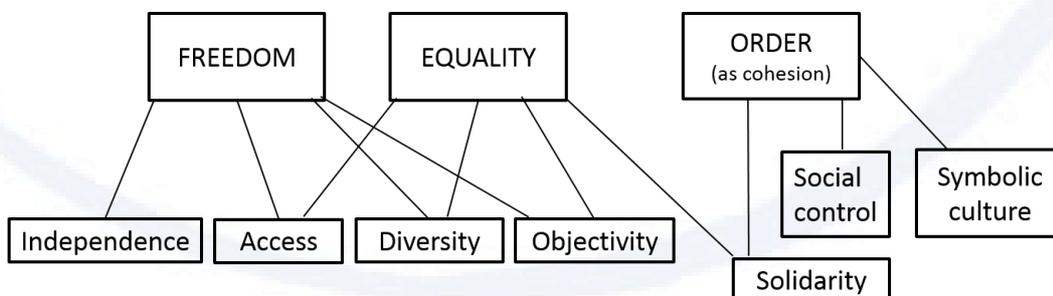
Figure 2 *Summary framework of principles of media performance*

Figure 2 remade by the author is from *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest* by Denis McQuail, 1992.

McQuail explains freedom by referring it primarily to the rights of free expression and the free formation of opinion. He considers that for these rights to be realized, there must also be access to channels and opportunities to receive diverse kinds of information. However, in the context of globalization, access to Taiwanese local movies through movie theaters is not controllable by local theater owners since they are more likely to cooperate with MPAA members which offer Hollywood blockbusters as sources of main profits of theater owners. In addition, when the Taiwanese government focuses more on mainland China's movie markets, the production personnel lose their independence to produce local content let alone to discuss the existing political disputes of cross strait in local movies. In terms of diversity, in Taiwan local consumers can see many Hollywood, Japanese, Korean or Chinese movies which explore their histories and national conflicts among their social groups; however, not enough Taiwanese movies for local consumers can touch their historical, moral or factual disputes in Taiwan. When considering the ideas of independence, access, diversity, we can find the film policy lack of collective momentum to pursue its local or national identity.

As for equality, McQuail emphasizes that equality calls for an absence of discrimination or bias in the amount and kind of access available to senders or receivers. In Taiwan's condition, senders as movie production teams need to face the challenges of a smaller local film market of Taiwan. To make this local market larger, government needs to explore its infrastructure such as more researches about demographic analysis about local audiences, their needs and favorite movie genres, and instant box office systems to enlarge the number of times for locals to watch local movies. As McQuail explains, the real chances of equality are likely to depend on the level of social and economic development of a society and the extent of its media system. It is important to explore how a media system fails to develop because of issues of Taiwan as a political sensitive topic. That this island fails to create its cultural symbols and explores ideological conflicts of social groups could not strengthen its social cohesion.

Ⅳ.   Redefining the concept of order to evaluate media performance

McQuail emphasizes that the differentiation of media provision (content) should approximately correspond to the differences at source or to those at the receiving end. However, in the process of globalization, local markets might not have a chance if the government pays more attention on regional markets which are served as the target. From his views of individuals and the component sub-groups of society, mass communication can also have both positive and negative tendencies; therefore, it may help in forming and maintaining personal identity and group cohesion or leading to an opposite result as centrifugal or differentiating (Carey, 1969; McQuail, 1987). In Taiwan's condition, there is a trend that more popular local movies are presented as local stories, local themes, and local languages. It seems that the problem of Taiwan local cinema is not about movie content that leads to centrifugal society but lacks more delicate production of local movies because of its lower budgets of production and a history of local audiences' lack of interests in watching local movies. In fact, there is a long history that local Taiwanese movie production teams did not pay attention to what local audience wants and needs. From this perspective, McQuail also emphasizes cultural autonomy for language groups, regions and national cultures. This article emphasizes this views to treat order from the following perspective: a

sharing of common meanings and definitions of experience as well as much divergence of identity and actual experience. McQuail not only cited Wright (1964) functionalist theory attributes to mass media as a latent purpose of securing the continuity and integration of a social order by promoting cooperation and a consensus of social and cultural values but also explains that shared culture and solidaristic experience tend to be mutually reinforcing. However, in the trend of globalization, if a nation loses its local film market, its nationals may fail to maintain its cultural autonomy. There is a distinction between the *social* and the *cultural* domains and this article emphasizes a more solidaristic aspect of order – mutuality, cooperation, voluntarism, balance, etc. It is the cultural side of order that is explored in this article which explains positive support. In the global markets of film, several nations have reclaimed their rights of consumer citizens (Chen, 2013).

This article advocates that the media system should reflect the demands of would-be receivers, especially in the local audience market (theaters, DVD rentals, related creative products, MOD) or indirectly through the advertising market (TV, the Internet). This article agrees with his idea that social-cultural variation in terms of life-style, fashion, music and similar consumption-based identifications is also likely to be well served on the basis of the media market if more social groups' life style can be presented in mainstream local movies. In a collective pursuit of cultural sovereignty based on the model discussed here, local film markets should be constructed in a greater efforts rather than given up or paid less attention by the government.

V. Redefining cultural economics as its influences on media performance

From the concept of cultural economics, Throsby explains how cultural economics is different from economic perspective while the latter contains strong individual characteristics.

> *… such behavior reflects collective as distinct from individualistic goals, and derives from the nature of culture as expressing the beliefs, aspirations and identification of a group as defined above. Thus the cultural impulse can be seen as a desire for group experience of collective production or consumption that cannot be fully factored out to the individuals comprising the group. These desires range over many types of activities, but we might use the arts as illustration. On the production side, many artistic goods and services are produced by group activity where the outcome is a collective effort acknowledged by the participants as having a value or meaning…*
> THROSBY, D. 2001. *Economics and Culture*, P.13

This article uses both social and cultural perspectives to argue how order are formed by solidarity/attachment from a social perspective and by autonomy/authenticity from a cultural perspective (p.75, McQuail, 1992). From McQuail, both cultural and social perspectives are from below to explain how social and cultural domains can maintain relations and create symbolic world. However, it is not enough to only have these two perspectives "from below" (the people) as nationals to develop order since we still need good quality of movie production and control from high-ranking officials to develop media system to regulate and control agents in the field of movie industries. That is we also need an official or social elites' perspective as "from above" (the elites) to maintain order and build media system (See Figure 3). Based on McQuail model, concepts related to order include public order, consensus, national/subgroup identity, empathy, quality (improved by education and science, aesthetics) and bad

taste (facing the uncultural facts by exploring social reality). Through these concepts mentioned above, Taiwan can develop its national brand by producing movie products through collective national consumers as needs of national identity rise. Globalization contains both homogeneous and heterogeneous characteristics. Global industries produce cultural products that makes nations worried about their cultural invasion. In contrast, several nations such as Japan and South Korea have shown that emphasizing their national cultural characteristics help develop their national brand and national pride which increase the heterogeneous characteristics of globalization.
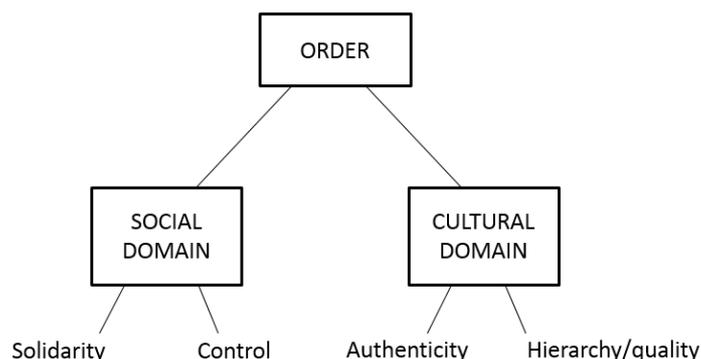
Figure 3   Order and its main component principles

Figure 3 remade by the author is from *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest* by Denis McQuail, 1992.

This article offers an adjusted model based on the discussion of two models presented by both Cuilenburg and McQuail to explain how a society as Taiwan with ideological conflicts across straits can still pursue its local cultural sovereignty despite its smaller local market and highly economic reliance on Mainland China (See Figure 4). The model lists three goals of building national identity, national brand, and national pride as highest priorities for Taiwan now since this country lacks its cultural symbols for its national identity. To serve the Chinese market, Taiwan needs to study Chinese audiences but this purpose should be in goal 3 and this should not sacrifice goal 1 and goal 2. To meet the three goals, values are listed separately in Figure 4.

Building a Model of Cultural Consumer Sovereignty

Goal 1: Developing National Identity	Goal 2: Developing National Brand by Producing Products of Good Quality	Goal 3: Developing National Pride by improving Economic Welfare

Values

| *Defining us in global perspectives* | Freedom
Access
Diversity
Empathy
Equality
Cohesion
Authenticity | *Market Structure* | Concentration
Integration
Product differentiation
Barriers to entry
Cost structure | *National Pride defined by economic welfare* | Competition
Development
Employment
Consumerism
Innovation |

Media policy pushing media conduct such as product strategy, research, advertising, pricing

Criteria to evaluate media performance: efficiency to meet goals, product market share, economic performance

Figure 4. *Building a Model of Cultural Consumer Sovereignty*

Figure 4 produced by the author but some content of cells collected from *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest* by Denis McQuail, 1992 and from *Media Policy Paradigm Shifts: Towards a New Communications Policy*, by Jan van Cuilenburg and Denis McQuail, 2003.

Three goals in order are defining national identity in global perspectives that explains how we are different from other nations; defining market structure to develp media organizaitons and systems to produce national brand by producing products of good quality; defining national pride by measuring economic welfare. After national goals and values are clarified, media policy are discuessed as policy that should encourage media conduct such as product strategy, research, advertising or pricing. Therefore, criteria to evaluate media performance are clear since efficiency to reach goals, product market shares, and economic performance can help develop a local movie market. With a strong and steady local market with many local film products of good quality which show Taiwan's special social and cultural characteristics are more likely to push national products as national brand to achieve its economic goals.

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Sound used in the movies: Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Wong Kar-Wai's film works,

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Abstract

Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Wong Kar-Wai's film work has always been full of topics and controversial. Their filming technique often raise extensive discussion including the connotation of the script and the characters scored showing a special film language. This article analyzes the film text, using Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Millennium Mambo* and Wong Kar-Wai's *Chungking Express* as the research topic, to explore whether the sound performance practices and the theme of the film representation has absolute correlation? How does sound become a cohesion filed of cultural imagination? This research will also investigate the interaction between different levels of sounds in the movie and its use of film language practices; to verify the position and importance of sound elements in the film.

Keywords: Sound, Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Wong Kar-Wai, Millennium Mambo, Chungking Express

Introduction

Elements of sound in a film can be categorized into voice of dialogue, sound effect and music. The sound synchronously recorded by naturally or man-made during the filming is called "direct sound", while the "post dubbed sound" is the sound recorded or produced after the filming. (Timothy Corrigan:1997) The relationships among scene, narrative and voice are multiple and complex, so the source of sound appearing before or after associated scene can be categorized into voiceover, dialogue, music or sound. For the needs of story or special effect in the film, the level of application of sound element can also be different. Moving from silent film to the movie with sound, the process of this evolution allows us to distinguish the sound and elements other than sound that interacts with movie which include using voiceover to render the original meaning of the movie.

Mr. Hou Hsiao-Hsien is one of the most important leading representatives of Taiwan's new wave cinema movement during the 80s. He uniquely creates his personal movie aesthetic with his "long shot" style, which is also most widely discussed subject by others about his works. Hou's filming style is just like an observation of life attitude and vision that is outside the space of camera lens, voice, or film story itself. He utilizes voiceover to across the time and space of scene to allow audiences to link each segment and each shot. (Chu Tien-wen:1994) Hou Hsiao-Hsien is specialized in directing the films that are mostly related to the history of Taiwan from different era. Directing the film with modern topic is something he seldom does. To him, due to time (or generation), the modern story does not always give him a perfect angle to cut into story, and is somewhat difficult to grasp the whole story properly. Hou Hisao-Hsien once mentioned about the filming style of the famous Hong Kong modern film director Wong Kar-Wai during an interview. Hou thought Wong Kar-Wai was not directing the modern movie; rather Wong was filming his "nostalgia". The background of Wong's film was today's fast modernized Hong Kong which was once colonized by the British. The background of this fast path of modernization and continues of development and progress, created Wong Kar-Wai's special filming style. (Michael Berry:2007)

Films start with screenplay and Wong Kar-Wai is good at screenplay. Generally speaking, a screenplay is based on characterization and dialogue. It is the element that constitutes the development of a play or film. Wong Kar-Wai has a very special way in characterization; usually, it doesn't take long for a role to establish a distinct personality and characteristics. Voiceover and music are auxiliaries that allow the character's personality to be more prominent and obvious. Wong Kar-Wai screen-write and direct all his featured dramas. His films are often topical and controversial. In Wong's films, the script content, figure depicts, voiceover, andunique film language always impress the audiences and are widely discussed by others.

Sound

Millennium Mambo was the work of director Hou Hsiao-Hsien in 2001. Movie started with voiceover accompanying with the appearance of music to present that in the turn of century, people in Taipei, with their limit, to look for the rule of survival in

the city. In this movie, Hou presented scene of status that emphasized the mood of time and space of the story. In "Millennium Mambo", Hou Hsiao-Hsien utilized voiceover to create a mood of tension and poetic atmosphere. In the beginning of movie, leading actress Vicky walking alone on a pedestrian bridge,Hou smartly used voiceover as the retrospect of her past and echoed that with the rhythm of background music. The background music was the electronically synthesized music genre. Hou Hsiao-Hsien once said that in *Millennium Mambo*, quite often the dialogues would be re-recorded by actors themselves. They wore earphone and listened to the dialogues previously recorded and then re-recorded their dialogues one sentence at a time. They walked and talked from scene to scene. There was no rehearsal at shooting scene and there were no dialogues except scenarios in the screenplay; but clearly with details in it. Therefore, the actor's dialogues were directly and reflectively spoken out. Actors would affect or be affected by others (actors) and dialogues were not thought out in advance.This movie has three core sound levels or tracks: the techno music which belongs to disco pub or dance club's electronic music, especially the DJ character of Hao-Hao; the often chaotic and mixing of noise or voices in ambience; and the voiceover narration from Vicky's socially insulated, intimate and distant voice, which remind us of what we see in the images from years ago. (Adrian Martin:2008)

Wong Kar-Wai is expert in using events or behavior to present characters' repeated living situation; a type of life that cycles through and repeats itself again and again. To certain extent, it is also a stereotype life style. Characters in the film are mostly trustworthy narrators; simple and direct. David Bordwell once said "these films, either within or in between large sections of story, all have various scales of repeating traces. Characters in the story return to same place; do the same thing, speak same dialogue…. Wong Kar-Wai usually stacks these cyclic scenes together to emphasize its repeatability." (Pun ,Li Zhaoxing:2004) As a film maker, Wong Kar-Wai uses "repeating" technique in his film making to differentiate himself from others. Wong Kar-Wai likes to use event or behavior from the stories to present the plots involving characters' repeating behavior or to present a particular character in the movie. This usually exists in the same context, cycling through life; looking from another angle, it is just like a static and never changing life. Wong Kar-Wai uses this repeating style of topics to package or re-touch the characters or emotion to deepen audience's impression about this movie.

In Wong Kar-Wai's movie, characters often live in a closed world, and often like being along but afraid of not knowing how to express themselves, and psychologically result in an aphasia phenomenon. In *Chungking Express*, Tony Leung repeatedly had dialogues with himself in multiple occasions. One occasion was when he returned to his place and thought that his girlfriend was playing hide and seek with him secretly (in fact, Faye Wong had already sneaked into his house). Tony muttered to a piece of soap, a towel, dolls or house, and wandered within his own space. This film used "internal monologue" to present character's state of aphasia. Using character's soliloquy to show alienated relationships in the modern urban life is Wong Kar-Wai's usual yet unique style. Soliloquy complements the part that film itself can't express which mostly portrays the state of mind of the character. It opens up a new era in film making that enriches the feelings of character's inner world to another level. The film thus is full of literary language because of extensive usage of soliloquy.

Music

Millennium Mambo was different from the usual movie themes he used before. Direct Hou Hsiao-Hsien used metropolis as background of the screenplay and leading actress's mentality as the theme. He used more close-up shots in this film than the long shot which he commonly used before. This film's soundtrack was produced by Mr. Lin Chiang who has been involved in the movies such as *The Puppet master*, *Good Men and Good Women*, *Goodbye South, Goodbye* and others. The 1995 *Goodbye South, Goodbye* was Lin's first soundtrack work for director Hou Hsiao-Hsien's film, and the *Millennium Mambo* was the second one. This was his first attempt to use *Mambo* genre as the film music that was related to the title of the film. When Hou Hsiao-Hsien shot *Millennium Mambo*, he took into account the music rhythm of Mambo. Lin Chiang used more objective point of view to deal with his work; therefore when making the soundtrack, he tried to find a way to meet Hou's elements and fused to form another Mambo special rhythm. Lin Chiang once said that the reason why the song *A Pure Person* would match to the story of the film was due to the utilization of electronic music genre. It had a sense of four-beat tempo, just like character Vicky's sense of youth and feeling of tradition. (Huang Ting:2001)

The stage of *Millennium Mambo* was in 2001's Taipei. In this film, the leading actress Vicky used "she" as third-person with great amount of voiceover narrations to elaborate what had happen to her in that year. The first theme song *A Pure Person* was a similar style of electronic dance music but sung with seldom seen local Taiwanese singing style. It well portrayed Vicky's sense of youth and feeling of tradition. The movie scene and music came from Taiwan's disco genre in 1970s. Some of the background music was produced with live DJ re-mix. When Vicky was dating her boyfriend, the scenes in the film were mostly shot in the dim lighting and noisy pub. Lin Chiang utilized electronic rock and roll style music to interpret the younger generation's emotional confusion in the film. Human voice mixing with sound of music presented young man and woman indulging in the atmosphere of self-liberation and another wasted life style of life in the metropolis. Film and art critic Adrian Martin once described the music in *Millennium Mambo* as "in virtually every scene-block of *Millennium Mambo*, is that what we take to be diegetic techno music begins very slowly to fade up from an extremely quiet volume level, But the music never hits the right volume level, or attains the correct ambient edge, to ever really reassure us that it is, in fact, part of the scene. And whenever the voiceover punches in, this techno music immediately dips." (Adrian Martin:2008)

California Dreaming and *Dreamer* were two representative theme songs in the movie *Chungking Express* by Wong Kar-Wai in 1994. The theme songs, throughout entire movie, related the element of sound and film story; in particular, the relationship between story and characters. Sung by American musical group The Mamas and Papas during 60's, *California Dreaming* was repeatedly echoing in the story as a narrative for the strange circumstances. Echoing between drama and song title and lyrics, the story wandered as if it was in the real life or in the dreams. Another dream (or dreamland) in this part of film was the *Dreamer*. Covered from Irish rock band The Cranberries' famous song *Dreams* in the 90's, the *Dreamer* expressed the feeling of endless strange dreams. Wong Kar-Wai chose Faye Wang as leading actress in the film and settled the theme song *Dreamer* into her daily practice. Since Miss Faye

Wang was the singer of *Dreamer* in real life, including this song in the film would further project the meaning of the song onto Faye Wang's role in this movie. Tony Leung was Faye Wang's *Dreamer* in the film and Faye herself was another *Dreamer*. In the story, both of them were dreamers living in different dreams. After all, both of them had to walk out of dreams and face the real life in the end. In *Chungking Express*, music throughout entire scene, two main theme songs, regardless of titles or lyrics, all integrated with the plot or the emotional drama together, showing a seemingly simple but in reality, some special techniques.

Wong Kar-Wai's films utilize repeated presence of music or song to express some stories or some hints. Using music's repeatability (including characteristics of numbers of repeats and repeating tune) to increase audience's impression about movie (character and its inner world). Wong Kar-Wai selected Faye Wong as the leading actress and mixed her Cantonese cover version of *Dreams* into her character. In this film, leading actor and actress were just like each other's *Dreams* (*lover*). When Faye Wong sneaked into Tony Leung's house for the second time, it came with another type of usage of music. This section of *Dreams* dub music could not be heard by the leading actress; it's a non-diegetic sound. The music in the film is the diegetic sound of the drama world. The sound of drama world and non-drama world staggered emerge, and establish the characteristic of dubbed music; it is also considered as a montage technique in film audio. In this part of movie, Faye Wong was a character expressed feeling of free, informal, arbitrary, or simply just an unrestricted freedom of musical atmosphere. (Pun ,Li Zhaoxing:2004)

Using *California Dreaming* in the movie had its symbolic meaning. This song was also the keepsake of the love affair between Tony Leung and Faye Wong. It was also played while Faye Wong cleaned Tony's room. She listen the song while playing Tony's airplane model; it somehow prophesied her future career as flight attendant and expressed her cumulative emotion or feeling about this relationship. Wong Kar-Wai cleverly showed a graceful charm by adding *California Dreaming* onto Faye Wang's body. (Pun ,Li Zhaoxing:2004) Faye Wong's nonstop indulging in *California Dreaming* was just like a self-defense to establish her "closed" world. In the end, she opened up her mind to the world through her feeling about California. This type of happy ending was unusual and seldom seen in Wong Kar-Wai's films.

Music often appears in Wong Kar-Wai's movies in different styles (singing songs or playing music) to enhance the film's narrative. Whether they are vocal music or pure music, in Wang Kar-Wai's film, they all become powerful narrative work adding multiple implications to polish the films. As the film critic Noel Carroll said: "this type of music has certain expression of its traits, it can be modified or replaced by screen characters, objects, events, image, and scenarios for shaping the descriptions...this modified music in "servicing" the screen gives the film a deeper personality and polish." (Pun ,Li Zhaoxing:2004)

Conclusions

Sound and music play important role in film making. Sound tells the story while music creates atmosphere. Both sound and music tell audiences what emotion or feeling they should be experiencing. Interesting enough, audiences seem to be more annoyed by the poor sound quality than by poor cinematography. Two internationally

recognized film directors Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Wong Kar-Wai has similar filming style of using sound and music but with different approaches. They both have preference of using voiceover in their films. Hou Hsiao-Hsien uses sound to portray character's story or feeling and music to emphasize the scene (i.e., *Millennium Mambo*). It gives audiences a deeper impression of what happen in the story. Wong Kar-Wai, on the other hand, utilizes sound to demonstrate the state of mind of the characters and music (songs) to connect the scenes throughout entire film (i.e., *Chungking Express*). It often gives audiences long lasting thoughts about story even after seeing the movie. The preference of using voiceover by both directors has become a special feature of their films from narrative aspect. The difference is the language used by the characters. Hou Hsiao-Hsien often renders the process differently according to the screenplay background or characters. No doubt, both directors' creativity in the use of sound and music has produced the special artistic effect in their films that are so unique and stylish in today's film industry. It is authors' recommendation that a further study of the interpretation technique of using voiceover and sound in the film from a cross-cultural perspective.

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Traditional Chinese Aesthetics in Life of Pi: An Analysis of Traditional Chinese Aesthetics in Ang Lee's Films under Contemporary Context,

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Abstract

With the rapid development of film market in China, more Hollywood films involving Chinese philosophy has begun to proliferate. This paper attempts to investigate what is the impact of traditional Chinese Aesthetics on Hollywood movie. A specific analysis of Ang Lee's latest work **Life of Pi** is the focus in this paper. Taoist philosophy is employed as the fundamental analyzing framework. The concepts of "Jing-you" (鏡游) and "Jing-yun" (鏡韻) are further discussed. It is concluded that **Life of Pi** is a great success in practicing combining western and eastern aesthetics by integrating the most advanced technologies under Hollywood productions, while Taoism can be widely recognized as a universal Chinese-ness philosophy for vast form of artworks globally

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Introduction

Ang Lee, the award-winning director, "surprise" the world again by his latest film *Life of Pi* (Miller, 2013). The great 3D adventure film presents an epic journey within only one boat carrying an Indian boy and a Bengal tiger. This article aims to explore how Ang Lee integrates traditional Chinese aesthetics into this Hollywood 3D production and why the advanced technology is suitable for presenting traditional Chinese aesthetics. Canadian writer Yann Martel wrote the original story of *Life of Pi*, and David Magee together with Ang Lee wrote the adapted screenplay. Therefore, although this film looks like an Indian style story, it is actually the product of American and Chinese culture.

The computer graphic technology along with the advanced equipment for film shooting made it possible for Ang Lee to present his imagination on the screen. However, this paper goes beyond the simple discussion of why Ang Lee chose CG animation, 3D technology or how they made those amazing creatures. This paper tries to discuss not only the aesthetics, especially traditional Chinese aesthetics behind these technologies, but also the ideas that made Ang Lee to choose these elements in this film and the spirit Lee wanted to show. Therefore, it is not a film critic for *Life of Pi.* It is a comprehensive study on traditional Chinese aesthetics in Hollywood films. Moreover, it highlights Taoism as the philosophic basis of traditional Chinese aesthetics in contemporary filmmaking.

Rethinking of Chinese aesthetics

There are three reasons why we should rethink and focus on Chinese aesthetics in the 21st century, especially in Ang Lee's films. The contents should include the structure, the system, the method and the methodology.

First, Ang Lee believes in Taoism. And he consciously deploys Taoist spirit in his works. Ang Lee once described the use of water and the spiritual element in *Life of Pi* to the press: "I'm Chinese; I believe in the Taoist Buddha" (Ebert, 2012). Hence, it actually is not we choose traditional Chinese aesthetics to interpret Lee's film; it is they, the production team, consciously use traditional Chinese aesthetics.

Secondly, China is becoming the world's largest market, and it would bring fundamental change in Hollywood. In 2012, Chinese audience is worth $2.7bn (£1.7bn), up from $2bn in 2011, taking it past Japan, became the second largest market in the world (MPAA, 2012); and it continues to grow (Cunningham, 2012). Some studies believe that Chinese film market "is expected to exceed the US box office by 2020" (EY, 2012). This claim maybe has some exaggerations. However, it is undeniable that Chinese film market is too big to ignore. Many Hollywood productions are doing well in China by using Hollywood experience, such as large production scale, super stars, visual audio stimulating, etc. However, more and more Hollywood pioneers want to better cater to China, this most potential market. "According to recent figures from the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) almost 70% of the studios' annual revenue from box office now comes from international markets, particularly China and Russia."(Brook, 2013) David

Hancock, Head of Film and Cinema at IHS Screen Digest, says: "If it's a larger budget production that's meant to go abroad then really the overseas revenues will be the dominant factor in that decision." (Brook, 2013)

Hence, Hollywood productions would shape their content more accordingly; some of them even try to make co-production films in China (Lai, 2013). Therefore, they have to have a deep understanding of the audiences' aesthetics.

Thirdly, the most important reason we can choose traditional Chinese aesthetics to analyze *Life of Pi*, is that this film is almost an all computer graphic artwork, in which the deployment of Chinese aesthetics is similar with those in painting, music, literature, opera or other traditional art forms. We can deconstruct this all computer graphic film into individual elements. And each element is painted frame by frame according to director's will, then the music, voice and other stuffs in need. It provides director an opportunity to develop the ancient aesthetics and increase its diversity through using experimental elements and then reconstructing those elements into a whole new piece which may include some extraordinary beautiful scenes even against natural phenomenon, otherwise, into practicing pure art. In this way, the director turns paintings with Taoist spirit into moving images.

Nevertheless, even lots of Chinese do not understand their own traditional aesthetics, let alone Westerners. Many contemporary mainland scholars who have studied traditional Chinese aesthetics for a long time still cannot get significant achievements because of using Marxist philosophy as methodology.

As Ye Lang said: "我们在综合运用多种方法的时候, 必须坚持自己的哲学基础, 即马克思主义哲学基础. 换句话说, 我们采用的方法是多元的, 而我们的哲学基础（世界观、历史观）则是一元的"(Ye, 1989).

He said that when we use multiple methods, we must insist our unitary philosophic basis—— Marxist philosophy as world and history view. This is a neither proper nor universal methodology to study arts. That's why many Mainland Chinese cinema criticisms cannot find appropriate approaches to contemporary cinema. However, it is always impossible to study traditional Chinese aesthetics without a deep understanding of traditional Chinese philosophy. Actually, we can feel the beauty deep inside ourselves by fully accepting and following the traditional philosophy. Taoism is a great ancient Chinese philosophy about ultimate freedom.

Life of Pi provides us a prefect sample to examine Eastern aesthetics developed and expressed in Western technology. We choose Taoist Buddha, which Ang Lee believes, in traditional Chinese aesthetics to analyze this "poetic aesthetic"(Sharkey, 2012) cross-culture production, which happens to tell a cross-culture story.

Why and how 3D CG could fulfill Chinese aesthetics?

Someone may argue that 3D animation against traditional Chinese aesthetics that presented as the normal manifestation (flat) of traditional Chinese paintings. Nevertheless, there are facts we have to consider:

Comparing to traditional Chinese arts, moving picture is a newly developed art form ruling the entertainment industry globally now that is invited by westerners based on optical photographic system in only above 100 years. Hence, no one, even Liu Xie (劉勰) or any other famous ancient Chinese painters or critics themselves, could shoot real world to flat figures, as Chinese paintings, by using mechanical optic system excepted making pure animation. Moreover, Taoism contains far more connotations than in that single particular explicit image representation that is fit on painting but seems like impossible to be made in film.

Additionally, film as an art form containing four dimensions into a 2D surface, it seems like can not be analyzed by any certain traditional Chinese aesthetics, nevertheless, the elements that constructed a moving-picture production, literature, drama and music etc., and many sub elements affect a movie, such as spirit, story-telling and production design etc. It acquires development of traditional aesthetics, especially those aesthetics were available before photography. Thereby, generation and generation's Chinese filmmakers try their best to search a way to practice their philosophy. The process is hard, but could work.

Emotion as fundamental of Taoist aesthetics

Many people believe that Ang Lee is a great storyteller no matter in East or West. But few people can tell why. When the Hollywood production company decides to turn this story into film, the producers think that only one director is able to handle this story. While others, from their Western point of view, believes that it is impossible to adapt it into a script or to visualize it. However, Ang Lee successfully makes it a masterpiece. Why? Because the Taoist aesthetics is based on emotion. It is different from Western aesthetics, which is based on rational knowledge and geometry. Chinese artists have learnt to feel and follow their emotions and present their emotions in artworks. The whole story in *Life of Pi*, in Ang Lee's point of view, is about emotions:

> "I wanted to use water because the film is talking about faith, and it contains fish, life and every emotion for Pi. And air is God, heaven and something spiritual and death. That's how I see it. I believe the thing we call faith or God is our emotional attachment to the unknown. I'm Chinese; I believe in the Taoist Buddha. We don't talk about a deity, which is very much like this book; we're not talking about religion but God in the abstract sense, something to overpower you." (Ebert, 2012)

The basis of traditional Chinese philosophy is *Yi - Yin* (陰) and *Yang* (陽), two *Qi* (氣) that make the universe. All creatures need to take *Qi* from heaven and earth. In the vivid circling of Yin and Yang, it creates a kind of rhythmic life. What all artists are willing to

do is to free their minds and their bodies, feel the nature, make themselves to be the universe. Then they can feel themselves, follow their emotions, follow the confluence of *Qi* from the universe and themselves, and find the rhythm of their life as well as the universe. Finally, they represent these feelings and thoughts naturally in their artworks. This is what makes Ang Lee, a master of Taoist artist, able to become a storyteller who can handle feelings and emotions better than anyone else.

Jingyou (鏡游) and Jingyun (鏡韻)

You (游) is the ultimate state and goal of Taoist philosophy. *You* means journeying (Lo, 2011). It also means swim or swimming. Moreover, it has an additional meaning of playing. These three major meanings for the single character you make it able to carry many cultural dimensions. *You* is the ultimate aura for all arts and all lives. The ultimate *You* can be understood as "xiaoyao" (逍遙, peripateticism) (Ye, 1989) because Zhuang Zi (庄子) wrote the book called Xiaoyao you (逍遙遊). It happens that in *Life of Pi* Ang Lee provides us a visual-audio masterpiece in 3D, which fits in every dimension of You. In this film, we can have a taste of the delicate and profound ancient philosophy of complete freedom.

The concept of Jingyou was developed in the early 1980s by the Hong Kong film scholar Prof. Lin Nien-tung (1944-1990). "The concept consists of two words. The first word '*jing*' means the lens, and the second word '*you*' originating from Taosist philosophy" (Lo, 2011). June Yip translates the term as "wandering in the lens" instead of "wandering lens" (Yip, 2004). But Dr. Lo Wai-luk who followed Lin's scholarship in Hong Kong, prefers the explanation of "experiencing through the lens"; and they both agree that "jingyou is an aesthetic strategy that is not found in conventional Hollywood filmmaking but can clearly be seen in Hou Hsiao-hsien's work" (Yip, 2004). However, it is too early to say it. I will apply the concept of jingyou to *Life of Pi*.

The other concept *Jingyun*(鏡韻), is developed by Lo Wai-luk. It is also grown out of Taoist painting philosophy *Qiyun shengdong* (氣韻生動), "which means the vividness that moves and flows" (Lo, 2012). And Jingyun also consist Jing (lens). Lo describe yun from the formation of the Chinese character. Nevertheless, I prefer go back to the original word "*Qiyun shengdong*" to find out the meaning of *yun* in "*Jing-yun*", which is created by Lo. Zong Baihua describes it when talking about Chinese painting: "中國畫 的主題 '氣韻生動', 就是 '生命的節奏' 或 '有節奏的生命'" (Zong, 1987, pp.377). The theme of Chinese painting is "Qiyun shengdong", which means "the rhythm of life" or "the rhythmic life". More than thirty years later, he explains "Qiyun shengdong" as creative works' ultimate goal and the ultimate state. It is the major standard of painting criticisms: "氣韻，就是宇宙中鼓動萬物的 '氣' 的節奏, 和諧. 繪畫有氣韻, 就能給欣賞者一種音樂感" (Zong, 1987, pp.395). It says "*Qiyu*" is the rhythm and harmony of *Qi*, which is motivating everything in the universe. If painting has *Qiyun*, then audiences can feel the musicality.

Here we should know traditional Chinese philosophy musicalizes literally everything, such as lives, emotions, the universe, time, space and so on. Anything made by Qi should be musicalized. As our above discussion points out, in Taoist philosophy, everything grows out of the two Qi: Yin and Yang. Consequently, everything has its own rhythm. The rhythm is called Yun (韻). Hence, Jingyun can also be a concept about the rhythm of cinema. "*Shengdong*" means vivid, lively, and energetic. Therefore, from *Qiyun shengdong*, we can develop the concept of *Jingyun shengdong*, it would be an interesting notion when people are making cinematic experience critiques.

Jingyou Pi

In Life of Pi, the whole film is about Pi's lonely and dangerous journey. The journey itself is a kind of You. Director Ang Lee provides us lots of spiritual elements such as water, floating island, green light jellyfishes, etc to visualize all the reality and imagination in the adventure, which can be called *Muyou* (目游, eyes' journey). Yet the journey that changes Pi's mind and effects his emotions at last makes him grow up. This experience can also be called *Xinyou* (心游, heart and spirit's journey) (Lin, 1987). Chinese believe that your heart can decide what you look like (相由心生). All the external representations are the reflections of internal motivations. As the external representation, Pi's *Muyou* has lots of Chinese aesthetics reflections.

The typical Chinese aesthetic elements

Mountain and water are the most popular elements in Chinese painting. It is because Chinese believe mountain and water are the closest elements to nature. Besides, there are gods living in them.

The space consciousness and perspective

Taoist artists reject using perspective as the composition of pictures. They believe that no matter which point you choose, you will lose lots of details when composing pictures from one certain perspective. They believe that perspective will severely limit people's mind and horizon. Artist should provide horizon in their works as long as they can in order to free all minds, let audiences you (journey or swim) inside the artwork by themselves and decide where to look at by themselves. Sheng Kuo points out: "大都山水之法, 蓋以大觀小, 如人觀假山耳." (Kuo shen, 1086). It means that the way of painting *Shanshui* (views) should be presenting objects as small things. Artists should present the whole view layers by layers. The point of view should not be settled. It should be freely you by following the natural *Qi*.

Putting Taoism into film, Lin believes there is a space composition theory named "以遠取象" (catching the distant view) (Lin, 78). Lin says that although cinematography is limited by photographic technology and basic principles of optics, Chinese artists try to use middle shot lens system to avoid the distortion. They put lens far away, focus on the "第三向度中間層" (the middle layer of third dimension), and use high angle and

further camera position to widen horizon. The use of CG was not developed as a common technology in filmmaking when Lin established this concept. The third dimension here is the depth of picture, which is, constructed perpendicularly to the screen in the two-dimension surface. Before Ang Lee, deep focus lens has already helped Taoist filmmakers a lot. However, Ang Lee does it better than ever. Based on the advanced computer graphic technology, Ang Lee can break the limitation of optimistic system and provide wide-angle shots without strange distortion through the use of high angle deep lens full shot to present images. The CG can make the focus so deep that we can see storm miles away coming clearly as the foreground in *Life of Pi*. We even can see both the animals under water and the clear golden clouds from sky. When the green light jellyfishes come at the dark night, the full star sky, brighten sea animals and Pi with his boat are all clearly presented in one single shot, that we can put our eyes anywhere inside the picture and choose the elements that touch us by following our hearts. That is *Jingyou*, the whole new experiences to Western and Eastern audiences in moving images history. You can forget yourself, and forget this is the 3D movie. You can be fully in love with the incredible futures and forget what is real and what is fantasy. Moreover, that is also *Jingyun*, the rhythm you follow freely in your mind and the journey you follow in your heart.

Peter Travers of Rolling Stone says, "Lee uses 3D with the delicacy and lyricism of a poet. You don't just watch this movie, you live it." (Travers, 2012). *Parmita Borah of Eastern Fare* says, "There is this one scene in particular where the entire ocean is covered with jelly fishes which makes you feel like 'this is what heaven must look like'." (Borah, 2012) Those feelings are just like the saying of the well-known painter Yun Nantian (惲南田) in Qing Dynisty: "諦視斯境, 一草一樹, 一丘一壑, 皆潔庵靈想所獨闢, 總非人間所有. 其意象在六合之表, 榮落四時之外" (Zong, 1936). It describes the deepest state of art. Art is illusion. But through imagination, we can create the arts not only exist in the world but also go beyond time and space. This kind of art will only follow our hearts.

Another Taoist philosophy shown in this film is the relationship between human and nature. It is another journey for Pi. It is his inside change--*Xinyou*, the journey of heart. The film begins with Pi in his childhood; he is confused about gods and nature. It makes him believe many religions. But as Ang Lee says: as Chinese, "We don't talk about a deity, which is very much like this book; we're not talking about religion but God in the abstract sense, something to overpower you" (Ebert, 2012). Hence, when Pi begins his journey with confusion, he seems to admire Gods and nature. But deep inside his heart, he is trying to control the nature. Like Western fundamental philosophy since ancient Greece, he believes the opposition of men and things, heart and situation, the subjective and objective opposite. He also has a little sense to argue with his father about it. When the disaster comes, on one hand, he is sad and trying to find a way to survive, on the other hand, he is actively trying to handle the environment surrounds him. But when the passenger liner ignored his rescue signal, when the foods and clean water are gone, when the storm comes again, he is in despair. At this stage, he is deeply in awe of nature and tries everything to follow the nature. However, it still cannot save him. Then, suddenly, after he asked:

I'VE LOST MY FAMILY!
I'VE LOST EVERYTHING!
I SURRENDER!
WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT?

He realizes something and turns himself into the third stage, the ultimate stage. In this stage, he gives up the opposition of man and nature, objective and subjective. He turns himself into nature and become a part of nature. There is no more human and cruel nature. The human - nature opposition is just gone. There is only one united nature: Pi makes himself nature. Then he says: "I'm sorry Richard Parker!" This is the highest spirit in Taoism: the unity of human and nature. They must combine as one entity in order to feel the nature's flow and free them all. It is the fundamental philosophy of Taoism, and fortunately, it seems could be accept by spectators globally.

Conclusion

Undeniable, *Life of Pi* is a success practice in presenting and combining western and eastern aesthetics. Ang Lee, a culture phenomenon, reveals eastern - western culture encounters are more and more frequently nowadays, it causes increasing impact of Taoism, a robust brunch of traditional Chinese aesthetics, in Film globally.
As the wide illustration of Ann Lee's Taosim Philosophy in his *Life of Pi*, the most advanced 3D and CG technology made Ann Lee's initiative of presenting Taoism in his film possible.
Assuming the tendency, growing of Chinese economy, pursues as now, more and more Hollywood productions would take the market as increasingly significant factor to their works, also more and more Chinese students, as Ang Lee, Mabel Chueng etc., would be sent to U.S. to learn and join the film productions in United State, considering more Chinese culture or borrowing more Chinese elements may become a future trend of tactic that gaining overseas success.

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"Our Fear Has Taken on a Life of its Own": The Monster-Child in Japanese Horror Film of The Lost Decade,

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Abstract

The monstrous child of Japanese horror film has become perhaps the most transnationally recognisable and influential horror trope of the past decade following the release of "Ring" (Hideo Nakata, 1999), Japan's most commercially successful horror film. Through an analysis of "Ring", "The Grudge" (Takashi Shimizu, 2002), "Dark Water" (Nakata, 2002), and "One Missed Call" (Takashi Miike, 2003), I argue that the monstrous children central to J-horror film of the millenial transition function as anomalies within the symbolic framework of Japan's national identity. These films were released in the aftermath of the collapse of Japan's bubble economy in the early 1990s — a period known in Japan as 'The Lost Decade'— and also at the liminal juncture represented by the turn of the millennium. At this cultural moment when the unity of national meaning seems to waver, the monstrous child embodies the threat of symbolic collapse. In alignment with Noël Carroll's definition of the monster, these children are categorically interstitial and formless: Sadako, Toshio, Mitsuko and Mimiko invoke the wholesale destruction of the boundaries which separate victim/villain, past/present and corporeal/spectral. Through their disturbance to ontological categories, these children function as monstrous incarnations of the Lacanian gaze. As opposed to allowing the viewer a sense of illusory mastery, the J-horror monster-child figures a disruption to the spectator's sense of power over the films' diegetic worlds. The child's presence threatens symbolic wholeness, exposing a glimpse of the amorphous real: a fissure in the symbolic order which prevents the spectator from viewing the film from a safe distance. The frisson resulting from this sudden loss of mastery correlates with anxieties surrounding the child's symbolic refusal to remain subordinated in its 'proper place' in contemporary Japanese society, particularly in response to the disintegration of secure narratives of progress in The Lost Decade.

Much insightful criticism has already been written about the explosion of transnationally popular Japanese horror films which emerged in the late 1990s, heralded by the release of *Ring* (Hideo Nakata) in 1998, which remains Japan's most commercially successful domestic horror film. Yet to date this criticism has elided or understated the most tellingly new commonality that underpins this assemblage of films: the monster-child, a figure who embodies tensions about national progress. The group of films under discussion, known transnationally as "J-horror", seem to be deeply intertwined with certain socio-cultural and technological shifts that were taking place in Japan at the time of their release. In fact, as both Kinoshita (2009) and Phu (2010) have pointed out, the term "J-horror" does not necessarily denote a nationalized film genre, but, to use Kinoshita's terms, more of a "movement" (105). While scholars such as Tateishi (2003) have positioned this swell of J-horror films as a "resurgence" of the Japanese horror genre popular in the sixties (295), Wada-Marciano (2009) suggests that J-horror does not constitute a resurgence of a previous genre as such but an entirely new movement associated with the conditions of the late 1990s, a suggestion with which I agree.

In fact the liminal period straddling the late nineties into the new millennium can be seen as a moment saturated in anxiety and apprehensions within grand narratives of socio-cultural progress across the world, however in Japan the period from the late 1990s into the 2000s was rather pointedly fraught as a result of the bursting of the bubble economy. The period from approximately 1991-2003 has become known in Japan as "the lost decade"[1], as the incredibly rapid economic growth that occurred in Japan from the late 1970s until the early 1990s suddenly slumped dramatically and incomprehensibly: scholars in both Japan and around the globe are still picking apart the ruins of the lost decade in attempts to determine its causes. Fletcher and Staden (2012) have explained that "the experience of the lost decade has been traumatic for Japan….. Observers no longer claimed that Japan was 'number one'….. the effects of the economic stagnation linger as the nation has not found a way out of its economic purgatory of slow growth over the past two decades" (275).

The lost decade marked an uncomfortable disruption to the narratives of rapid progress that have buttressed conceptions of national unity and pride since the dissolution of the Allied Occupation in 1952; the anxieties surrounding this collapse are expressed through the figure of the monstrous child. With the collapse of the bubble economy in the mid-'90s and subsequent lost decade, this unity of national meaning seems to waver, and the monstrous child embodies this threat of both socio-cultural and symbolic collapse in each of the films under discussion: *Ring* (Hideo Nakata, 1998), *Ju-on: The Grudge* (Takashi Shimizu, 2002), *Dark Water* (Nakata, 2002) and *One Missed Call* (Takashi Miike, 2003). In alignment with Noël Carroll's (1990) definition of the monster as "categorically interstitial, categorically contradictory, incomplete or formless" (32), the children in each of these films exist between hermetic categories rather than within them. Sadako, Toshio, Mitsuko and Mimiko embody the wholesale destruction of the boundaries which separate victim/villain, past/present and corporeal/spectral.

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[1] In fact, this term is often revised to be "the two lost decades", as Japan struggles to overcome this period of economic stagnation.

In alliance with their disturbance to ontological categories, these children function as monstrous incarnations of the Lacanian gaze. Usually in filmic discussions of the gaze, as in Mulvey's seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), the spectator's gaze, as shaped by the camera, allows the viewer a sense of illusory mastery over the filmic world. Instead, these children figure a disruption to the spectator's sense of power over the films' diegetic worlds through their disturbance of coherent temporal frameworks. The relationship between the spectator's gaze and the monster–child thus instead becomes a source of anxiety and powerlessness as, in the words of McGowan (2003), the gaze becomes "not the vehicle through which the subject masters the object but a point in the Other that resists the mastery of vision" (33). The frisson resulting from this sudden loss of mastery is inherently bound up with anxieties surrounding the child's symbolic refusal to remain subordinated in its proper place in response to the disintegration of secure narratives of progress in the lost decade: in these films, the child no longer embodies the security of the future, but instead threatens national progress.

The child is a particularly over-determined symbol of national cohesion and progress in Japan. Child education has been central to the national project of industrial and economic advancement in post-Restoration Japan, a project renewed with heightened impetus and exigency following the traumatic ruptures of World War II. The child in the horror films discussed discomposes linear modes of national progress, most commonly through invading technology — one of the most potent signifiers of Japan's extremely successful post-war progress. The ghostly children featured in J-horror of the millennial turn make circularity of progress, as leisure technologies and related emblems of Japanese modernity repeatedly become home to vengeful spectres which restate the primacy of the spiritual and temporal modes of pre-modern Japan.

Much of the scholarly discourse currently extant about the J-horror film discusses the figure of the *onryo* (vengeful female ghost) or broader category the *yurei* (female ghost) and her symbolic power. Wee (2011), Balmain (2008), McRoy (2008) and Hand (2006) in particular have traced the *onryo's* prominence from classical ghost stories, or *kaidan*, originating in the Tokugawa Shogunate Era (1608-1868), woodblock prints, Kabuki, and Noh plays, before becoming a feature of post-war and contemporary film. These scholars offer insightful analyses of the *onryo's* filmic emergence and her influence on contemporary J-horror. Yet I suggest that in this discourse the way in which the child has become bound up with this figure has been largely elided.

The works of the scholars outlined above rightly discuss the ways in which contemporary J-horror films borrow "from the tradition of the Japanese female ghost story, adapting its conventions to express a growing masculine anxiety within contemporary Japan, where modernity and social change are steadily undermining previously entrenched gender roles" (Wee, 152). However I argue that the child is the central, and, most tellingly new common feature of the J-horror films of the millennial turn, and the continual emphases on the *onryo* alone have wrongly neglected this important development. For instance, McRoy cites Hendrix's discussion of the phenomenon of "dead wet girls", the common feature of most contemporary J-horror films. Yet both McRoy and Hendrix quickly neglect the girl, or specifically, child factor suggested in this constellation in favour of adult gender divisions. For instance, McRoy states that Hendrix's "recognitions both of the theme of water and of the

angry ghosts' gender is crucial" (82) to an understanding of much J-horror, deftly abandoning the (admittedly already vague) "girl" classification.

This imprecision between child and adult is perhaps understandable, as it is reflected in the most famous J-horror film series, the *Ring* cycle, in strange yet significant ways. The indecisiveness over whether the monstrous Sadako is a child or an adult is manifested in the large body of literature that has been produced in the last decade about the *Ring* films: many works resist classifying Sadako using age-suggestive terms, instead using the broad classification 'female' (as in Richards (2010), Martin (2008), Tateishi, McRoy, Wada-Marciano and White (2006)), some refer to Sadako as a 'child' or 'girl' (see Lowenstein (2009), Wetmore (2009), Lury (2010) and Balmain), others refer to her as a 'teenager' or 'young woman' (see Wee and Hand) while others still position her simply as a 'woman' (see Haque (2010)). A brief overview of Sadako's characterisation across the Japanese film cycle illustrates how this imprecision has come about.

The first film, *Ring,* tells the story of Sadako, a young girl with psychic powers, who murders a journalist responsible for taunting her mother at an exhibition of her mother's own psychic abilities. Eventually, threatened by her powers, Sadako's father tosses her down a well and seals her inside. Sadako's spirit festers as she remains trapped in the well, and from her watery sepulchre she uses her abilities to imprint her thoughts, an eerie, incoherent series of images, upon a videotape. Anyone who comes across her mysterious tape is doomed to die within a week unless they copy and pass the tape on to another victim.

The ghostly Sadako is presented as a child throughout most of the film, appearing as such in the haunted videotape which bares her curse, and in the psychic 'flashbacks' she inflicts upon protagonists Reiko and her ex-husband Ryuji. Thus, the haunting is seemingly carried out by a child figure throughout most of the film. However, Reiko and Ryuji come to learn that Sadako was murdered by her father at the age of 19; yet, as suggested by her haunting projections, has not mentally developed beyond an enraged, tantrum-prone child. Sadako also establishes psychic links with Reiko and Ryuji's young son Yoichi, a doubling which becomes increasingly threatening throughout *Ring* and its sequel, further placing Sadako within the realm of childhood.

However in *Ring 2* (Nakata, 1999) it is bizarrely revealed that Sadako in fact remained 'alive' in the well for thirty years, dying only a year or two before Reiko discovered her decaying corpse in the well. Confusing matters further, the prequel, *Ring 0: Birthday* (Norio Tsuruta, 2000) depicts Sadako as a socially and mentally stunted 19 year old girl, who unknowingly places a deadly curse upon almost everyone she encounters. It is revealed that this seemingly innocent teenage Sadako is latently inhabited, and at moments of fear or rage, taken over, by a second version of herself: the child incarnation of Sadako. It is only when this monstrous child version possesses the soft and gentle teenage Sadako that she loses control of her psychic powers and kills or torments people.

At the film's climax, terrified members of Sadako's theatre troupe brutally beat her, facilitating the child's take-over of her bent and broken body to wreak vengeance upon all of her aggressors, leaving none alive in her wake. It is after this massacre that her father tosses his daughter(s) into the well. Thus, Sadako's status as child or adult is extremely unstable and ambivalent throughout the *Ring* cycle.

It is particularly notable that both Nakata and Tsuruta choose not to depict the collapse in gender boundaries central to Koji Suzuki's book series, upon which the films are based — in the first novel, *Ring* (1991) the climactic twist occurs when Sadako is revealed to be a hermaphrodite. The film's screenwriters and directors replace this element with a thoroughly threatening vacillation between childhood and adulthood. This ambivalence places the horrors of the film not along gender lines, as in Suzuki's books, but along temporal ones. Sadako's uncontainable fluctuation between child and adult comes to structure the unstable time frames of all three films.

None of the J-horror films subsequent to the *Ring* cycle are as extreme in their ambivalence about relationships between childhood and adulthood; in the rest of the films discussed, all the child-ghosts remain exactly that for the duration of the film, having been killed while children. I suggest that the *Ring* films express such extreme instability because they mark a paradigmatic shift in the longstanding and firmly entrenched trend of the adult female ghost story in Japan. The *onryo* exposes the extent to which women in post-Restoration Japan were figured as both victims and threats: *onryo* rage against patriarchs who have defied their duties of care and responsibility, and who have thus thrown out the balance of society. Furthermore, the *onryo* condenses masculine fears of the feminine power elided in discourse about the passive (and oppressed) perfect Japanese woman, anxieties that escalated as the loosening of female oppression became a necessary element of socio-cultural progress in the early 20th century. The vengeful child ghost, who is also usually female, drags with it these tensions, as well as a host of other new anxieties. The bursting of the economic bubble in the 1990s brought with it an interrogation of progress and futurity, which ultimately boiled down to a renewed cross-examination of Japanese concepts of childhood.

 The unstable time-frames incarnated by Sadako and her vacillation between childhood, adolescence and adulthood collapses linear narrative progress and the very notion of a child's 'growing up' — just as her supernatural invasion of optical media technologies disturbs notions of technological progress. As the series has progressed, Sadako has displayed an adept litheness in response to technological change, moving her curse between videotapes, computers, floppy disks, and the internet. Her supernatural 'virus' thus ensures that every new technological development becomes home to the same anxieties about progress and the uneasy repression of the pre-modern past — with her fractured movements and dressed in a white burial gown, Sadako recalls the archetypal *onryo* figure of pre-modern kaidan. Furthermore, her curse is enacted contagiously, as in order to survive, those who see her cursed video must copy and pass it on, and even then those who live are forever marked by her trace. Because she is so closely associated with childhood, the tensions involved in this disruption of narratives of progress become more acute, as the child, receptacle for the nation's future, instead renders temporal progress as an inescapable, contagious loop.

Ju-on, released soon after *Ring* in 2002 (and in fact it first appeared as two television movies in 2000), can be seen as another transition film, as the trope of the adult female ghost becomes intertwined with the monstrous child. In *Ju-on,* the monstrous spectres of a mother, Kayako, and her child, Toshio, linger within the house in which they were brutally murdered by Kayako's husband (Toshio's father). They haunt anyone who enters this space, yet in a subversion of typical haunted house tropes, this haunting is enacted, like Sadako's curse, via a traumatic 'infection' that is not escaped

once those effected have left the space of the haunted house. Instead, anyone who comes into contact with Toshio or Kayako experiences the wholesale collapse of linear timeframes in their everyday lives.

Usually, the ghosts of horror film compel audiences and characters to periodically experience moments of frisson through the re-exposure of traumatic pasts which rattle neat formations of linear time, but secure borders between past and present become restated at the conclusion. The J-horror child, to use Cua Lim's (2009) expression of ghostly temporalities in Asian fantastic cinema, impels "characters (and those spectators who identify with them) to experience *time with the ghost*" (Lim's emphasis, 161). As in *Ring*, the spectral hauntings of *Ju-on* figure temporality as an inescapable loop, as characters literally are 'haunted' by their own doomed futures, a mechanic escalated in *Ju-on 2*. In this film, for instance, characters Tomoka and Noritaka hear a mysterious banging noise seemingly coming from the wall of their apartment, which occurs at the same time each night. Eventually, as their experience of temporality becomes increasingly unstable, Tomoka, Noritaka and the viewer come to learn that all along this mysterious sound has been the result of Noritaka's own corpse: Kayako's ghost strangles him with her supernaturally-charged hair, leaving him hanging from the apartment's ceiling, and the ghost of little Toshio playfully (and monstrously) swings Noritaka's body backwards and forwards so that his feet periodically hit the wall. Thus Tomoka, Noritaka and the film's audience have been locked into a temporal cycle from which there is no escape.

The viewer's experience of the *Ju-on* films' narratives echoes being helplessly trapped within this doomed loop. In most ghost films, the audience follows a linear narrative which gradually advances our knowledge of the mechanics and motives of the spectres, as we progress towards a triumphant climax in which the protagonists satisfy the demands of the unquiet spirit and restore the coherency of past and present. Yet in the *Ju-on* films, we instead witness separate, non-linear segments which layer different representations of the same time period from the perspectives of each character as they meet their demise at the hands of Kayako and Toshio. The individual segments do not necessarily come together to form a coherent tapestry of narrative meaning, instead serving to lock the audience, like the characters, in to a pre-ordained, hopeless loop, as we become witness to the ways in which all the characters' stories intersect and double back upon each other. Little Toshio is forever stuck at a particular temporal moment and prevented from 'growing up' and enacting the future for which he is the receptacle, and his haunting forces characters and the audience of *Ju-on* to live out this collapse, as they drop out of a linear, progressive time-frame and are instead forced to experience temporality as an inexorable spiral.

While *Juon* and *Ring* may be seen as bridging films, as the child ghost becomes conflated or intertwined with the long established trend of the adult female *onryo*, in *Dark Water* (2002) and *One Missed Call* (2003) it seems the transition period has started to settle. Both of these films centralize hauntings by ghostly children — two figures who died while children, and who continue to enact the traits and habits associated with childhood, yet in monstrously distorted form, through their hauntings.

Like *Ring*, and in fact the film was directed by *Ring*'s Hideo Nakata, *Dark Water* centres on a single mother and her young child. Following her divorce, mother Yoshimi moves in to a dilapidated apartment building with her young daughter, Ikuko. Soon after they arrive at the building, the two become subject to hauntings

from the monstrous ghost of Mitsuko, a young girl who was abandoned in the apartment building, and drowned after falling into the water tank on the building's roof.

The film continually reinforces the hopeless repetition involved across the lives of the three females, often collapsing the boundaries between them, as we witness repeated scenes of the three characters being left behind by their parents as young children. The film opens with Yoshimi's childhood memory of waiting to be picked up by her parents from her kindergarten on a rainy day, and during the course of the film we watch a very similar scene from ghostly Mitsuko's past, as well as in the film's 'present' narrative when little Ikuko is left behind at the very same kindergarten Mitsuko once attended (on a similarly rainy afternoon) when Yoshimi fails to collect her when a job interview runs overtime. Past and present thus fold in to each other in this cyclic process of abandonment, both via the wispy tendrils of memory and the spectral hauntings of Mitsuko.

Ghostly Mitsuko desperately seeks the love of Yoshimi and wants to 'replace' her daughter Ikuko, and her hauntings intensify as her jealousy seethes. In order to save her daughter's life, Yoshimi sacrifices herself to forever play the role of ghostly surrogate mother to Mitsuko within the dilapidated walls of the apartment building — itself an image of arrested temporal progress which exists in a static state of decay and desuetude. Ultimately Mitusko's haunting involves forever locking Yoshimi into a single temporal moment, as metonymized by the dark, claustrophobic apartment in which little Mitsuko died.

The film concludes with an epilogue which presents a vision of temporal advancement contrasted against this arrested moment in time: young Ikuko, following the disappearance of her mother, has now grown into a teenager, but remains haunted by the memory of her absent mother. She returns to the decaying apartment to see if her mother is still there. The apartment appears just as it did over a decade ago when Ikuko lived there with her mother as a child. Ikuko briefly encounters the spectre of her mother, yet as she talks to Yoshimi, the blurred figure of Mitsuko appears ominously behind her shoulder — an image of frozen time pulling at Ikuko from behind. Ikuko senses Mitsuko's presence and whips around to catch sight of her, but the ghost evades her gaze, disappearing the moment Ikuko looks in her direction. When Ikuko turns back to her mother, she too has disappeared, and Ikuko sadly leaves the decrepit building.

In allowing little Ikuko to grow into a teenager, the film ends with a glimmer of hope that Japan's cultural identity may not be stuck at the moment of arrested progress represented by the lost decade. Yet tugging at this image of growth from underneath is the frozen moment rendered spatially by the apartment in which Ikuko and her mother once lived, troubling the process of Ikuko's growing up. Ikuko, like Mitsuko and Yoshimi before her, has become trapped within a cycle of parental abandonment. Furthermore as in *Ju-on*, monstrous child Mitsuko has ensured that Yoshimi herself will always remain trapped within this moment: the child's inability to grow up has blocked any chance of Yoshimi herself progressing into the future. As the film concludes, it leaves behind an ominous trace through the suggestion that the teenaged Ikuko, at the threshold of enacting her future as a productive adult citizen, will also be engulfed by this claustrophobic loop of parental abandonment. This tension is

signalled in the final shot as Ikuko's seemingly tiny body is dwarfed by the huge, decaying apartment building.

One Missed Call was released a few months after *Dark Water,* and it also clearly demonstrates the solidification of the paradigmatic shift from adult female *onryo* to monstrous child. The film centres on a cell phone curse passed from victim to victim; much like in *Ju-on*, *Ring*, and *Dark Water*, the viral nature of this curse thus marks out a threat to Japanese society wholesale. Victims receive a mysterious missed call from their own number, accompanied by a ringtone that is not their own. The voicemail left behind is dated from a short time in the future, and it in fact records the moment in which that person is doomed to die – with unfailing accuracy. Once the victim has died, the corpse mechanically types the number of the next victim into their mobile phone. Enacting the threat suggested by the final scene of *Dark Water*, most of the central characters are teenagers, on the threshold of their future as adults. The cell phone curse thus traps these future productive citizens, as in the earlier films discussed, into an inescapable loop which pre-determines and, ultimately, shuts down their future.

For most of the film, the protagonists attempting to discover the mysteries of this supernatural curse believe it to be the ghost of a vengeful and mentally unstable woman, Marie: a fit to the long-standing *onryo* trope. Marie was the mother of two little girls, and she supposedly had "Munchausen by proxy" syndrome — it is revealed that Marie's youngest daughter often required treatment for various injuries at hospital, and hospital staff believe that Marie repeatedly injured her youngest daughter in order to receive sympathetic attention. Both Marie and her oldest daughter, Mimiko, have since died under mysterious circumstances (Marie in a hospital fire, and Mimiko from an asthma attack), while the youngest child remains in care at an orphanage.

At the climactic twist it is revealed that it is not the supposedly disturbed mother who has been carrying out the hauntings, but her young daughter, Mimiko – a sadist who repeatedly injured her younger sister for her own enjoyment. Thus, the film overtly plays upon the cultural shift from the adult female ghost to the monstrous child, and the way in which this figure troubles progress at the interface between the cultural and the personal. As a ghost, Mimiko's sadistic tendencies are monstrously writ large, as she threatens to stop Japan as a whole from progressing into the future, just as she herself was prevented from growing up, through enacting the mass death of the teenagers who are just about to claim adulthood.

Ultimately, the J-horror films that started to emerge towards the end of the 1990s can be seen as a response to the cultural trauma of the lost decade, in which longstanding narratives of rapid national progress were suddenly destabilized. The child is a powerful receptacle for such tensions, as this vessel for national futurity defies its over-determined classification to instead monstrously *foreclose* the possibility of temporal and sociocultural progress. This mechanism is extended to the viewer via the ways in which the temporal dislocations enacted by the monster-child interrupt both narrative progress and character development, undermining the (illusory) power of the viewer's gaze. The monster-child remains a pivotal component of J-horror. For instance, 2005 saw the release of Takashi Shimizu's *Reincarnation*, in which a ghostly little girl instigates the wholesale replay of a grisly series of serial murders from the past. Furthermore, *Sadako 3D 2* (2013) the most recent addition to the *Ring*

franchise, clearly centralizes a monstrous child figure in what has so far been a series which confuses the boundaries between child and adult. Thus following the trans-millennial shift from *onryo* to monster-child — during which the child tended to be intertwined or conflated with an *onryo* — the monster-child's central place in J-horror, and the mechanics that underlie it, have become clearly demarcated.

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Retelling the Nation: Narrating the Nation through Biopics,

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Abstract

Cinema plays a pivotal role in the negotiation and construction of national identity, selectively appropriating history, attempting to forge a sense of commonality in a set of people by evoking a sense of a shared past and by establishing a rupture with 'others'. One of the means of constructing a nation is through the biopic. Great men biopics chronicle heroic deeds, sacrifice, and lofty moral virtues and either fabricate, or rediscover, and authenticate the myths of the founding fathers and celebrated men. Biopics disseminate the "myth of nationhood" by use of various narrative strategies - such as a glorification of hypermasculinity, structuring binary oppositions in terms of character and thematic concerns, 'otherness', visualizing national territory, homogenizing a cultural diversity etc. These films become a part of the nationalistic discourse that reflect perceptions of what it means to be "Indian". Bollywood in general and the biopic in particular has moved away from the Mother India mythology and its feminine reading of the nation to produce a particular variant of nationalism. This paper attempts to deconstruct how the nation is simulated, and meanings, such as national pride and national idealism, are mediated to the audience in selected Indian biopics - Sardar, The Legend of Bhagat Singh, Mangal Pandey - The Rising and Bhaag Milkha Bhaag. Key terms: Cinema, biopic, Bollywood, identity, memory, otherness, gendering, simulation/construction.
Biopics selected for Study Sardar (1993) - Biopic on Vallabhai Patel, Statesman and India's first Home Minister. The Legend of Bhagat Singh (2002) - on Bhagat Singh, martyr and freedom fighter. Mangal Pandey-The Rising (2005) - on Mangal Pandey, rebel soldier of the Sepoy Mutiny, popularly known as the First War of Independence. Bhaag Milkha Bhaag (2013) - on Milkha Singh, Sportsperson.

The narrativization of the past in cinema has been a method of propagating the idea of the nation to a national public, a means by which a people can build a picture of themselves as individuals and community. The assumption that "nations are enduring primordial entities" (Hjort 2000, p. 8) is now perceived as fallacious and the modernist proposition holds that nations emanate from nationalism and not vice versa.

One of the means of narrating the nation is by reproducing the myths of its founding fathers.
In cinema, great men biopics have been a method of rallying the passions of patriotism. By chronicling heroic deeds, sacrifice, and lofty moral virtues and by fabricating, rediscovering, or authenticating the myths of celebrated men, biopics offer the audience with points of identification with the protagonists and sympathy to his cause. This paper attempts to deconstruct how the nation is simulated and meanings, such as national pride and national idealism, are communicated to the audience in four Indian biopics: *Mangal Pandey: The Risisng, Sardar, The Legend of Bhagat Singh* and *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*. Further, the paper also attempts to show how films can be used as evidence of the nationalistic discourses and culture of the time in which they were produced.

In India, cinematic biography has enjoyed growing popularity over the years with the realist strand in Indian cinema producing many biopics, notably on the leaders of the Freedom Struggle. Critical writing on Indian cinema, asserts Lalitha Gopalan, frequently dwells on how Indian films are continually concerned with the questions of national identity and history (Gopalan 1996, p. 381). The Independence Struggle, cinematically identified with the lives of its leaders, has become a national frame of reference, a meta-narrative influencing collective identity, and film makers have either affirmed or deconstructed the mythology surrounding national leaders. One of the prime motives of the biopic is constructing the nation which can be seen from the fact that the basis of the movie is usually dramatic than historical/ factual.

> While the plot of the film would endeavour to follow the historical 'facts' where possible, the director would not hesitate to substitute a fictional narrative for a historically accurate one when the overarching dramatic concerns of the film demanded (Chopra - Gant 2008, p. 75).

Biopics disseminate the "myth of nationhood" by use of various narrative strategies. These films become a part of the nationalistic discourse that reflects perceptions of what it means to be "Indian". National cinema does not "simply articulate the cultural specificities of a given pre-existing nature" (Hjort 2000, p. 8), but enables the inhabitants of the geo-political space of India to imagine themselves as a distinctive national community.

Anderson's definition of the nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both limited and sovereign" (6) is still the accepted notion of the nation. A nation is an imaginary construct – it is not the awakening of a people into political and social consciousness; it is a creation of a geo-political and cultural idea where none exists. "Both Gellner and Anderson stress that nations are ideological constructions seeking to forge a link between a self- defined cultural group and the state, creating *abstract* or *imagined* communities that we loosely refer to as 'the nation' and which gets passed off as 'natural'" (Hayward 1993, p.89, italics in original). A nation emerges as an idea from the traditions of political thought and

literary language and also through nationalist discourses that present the idea of a nation as persisting through time. To maintain the illusion of cultural and social continuity, a nation needs narratives – a profusion of memories of a shared past, glorious heritage, and heroic endeavours, which are constructed by narratives that seek to name the land and space that a people inhabit.

There are two aspects that constitute the "spiritual principle" of the nation: one in the past; the other in the present – "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories... [and] ... a present day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of a heritage that one has received in an undivided form" (Renan 1990, p. 19). What the biopic does is to create the one and instigate the other. Allied to a significant moment in the life of a nation, biographical stories of national heroes is pivotal in the process of memory, history and construction of a national self-identity.

Of the biopics chosen for analysis, *Sardar* is a 1993 film on Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Indian Freedom Fighter and Independent India's first Home Minister. *The Legend of Bhagat Singh* (*LBS*) is a 2002 film on how Bhagat Singh develops his ideals and on his struggle for Indian Independence. *Mangal Pandey: The Rising* (*MP*) is a 2005 film based on the life of Mangal Pandey, the Indian soldier who is credited with initiating the Indian rebellion of 1857, also known as 'The Sepoy Mutiny' or 'The First War of Independence'. *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* (*BMB*) is a 2013 biographical sports drama on the life of Milkha Singh, "The Flying Sikh", the Indian athlete who was a national champion runner and an Olympian. These films mark a change from the romanticised and moralistic versions of biographical narratives that were popular in Indian cinema and were all critically and commercially well-acclaimed. The argument this paper makes is that in presenting a quasi-realistic portrayal of the lives of the protagonists, the Indian biopic uses various narrative strategies in constructing and mediating an image of the nation to the audience. On the strength of the films being addressed here, it can be said that the most important narrative strategies are the construction of a masculine trope, the creation of binary oppositions, the use of visual, lexical and symbolic representations in response to what is seen as the current concerns of the nation.

Constructing a Masculine Trope

Indian cinema has moved away from the Mother India trope that depicted the nation as suffering and self-sacrificing to privilege the ideals of hypermasculinity as laudable and desirable. There are three means by which a masculine nation is mediated to the audience – the employment of myth/archetype, conveyance of didactic messages of heroic self-sacrifice, and glorification of normative male values.

• Use of myth/ archetype
The predominant archetypes in all four biopics are heroes of Hindu mythology. The dominant image is the Bheeshma archetype – the Mahabharata bachelor warrior "one of terrible oath" who renounces conjugal life to dedicate himself to his duty. *LBS* presents the young fiancé of Bhagat Singh who seductively sings "*meri bindiya, meri kangana bulaye*" (my bindi and bracelet beckon you) to which he replies "My path is rough; I cannot be one with you" (*LBS*); Milkha Singh tells Perizaad, his fellow athlete, that his is a fight from which he cannot be distracted.

BMB also introduces the Karna myth – the underdog who is technically superior being excluded because of jealousy. During his training, the background music echoes with mythical imagery: "Open the wheels of your chariot, make it the *Sudarshan chakra*". In the Mahabharata, Karna was killed while removing the wheels of the chariot; here the movie exhorts the hero to remove it fearlessly and make it the weapon of Lord Vishnu.

Finally, the Ahalya myth is sounded in Mangal Pandey's acceptance of Heera as his bride. He legitimises, like Rama, the fallen woman, an allusion that can be both symbolic of the rescue of Motherland from the clutches of the foreigner and significant in that Rama had by then become in the hands of the Right wing parties a symbol of nationalist resurgence. The ethnic fund of myths and symbolic practices provides a link with the past and the nation is invoked by the employment of archetypes that resonates with the "collective unconscious".

• Heroic self-sacrifice

Biopics put up national heroes as exempla virtutis, exhibiting public acts of national heroism that is worthy of being emulated. A crucial epiphanic moment is presented when a moral choice is taken – Sardar when he is moved by Gandhi's speech and throws his coat into the fire, symbolically committing himself to India, Mangal Pandey when he turns away from criticism of his country to devotion to its beliefs and challenges William Gordon "We can win back our *mulk* (country), *izzat* (honour, respect, dignity) *sab kutch* (everything)"; Bhagat Singh when he picks up the bloodstained earth at Jallianwala Baag; Milkha Singh when he identifies himself with a cause narrated in terms of identity with the nation: "*Main India Banoonga*" – "I will become India"(*BMB*). The moment when the protagonist takes an oath and dedicates himself to the nation is a memory that informs the thematic concerns of the film. The nation replaces family as the site of sacrifice and devotion.

Suffering is presented as spectacle accompanied by hyperbolic statements of national-historical import which amounts to nationalist propaganda. Bhagat Singh's custodial torture during his fast; Milkha Singh's wound during his first race; the first shot of Mangal Pandey through the noose readied for him highlight the scant regard they placed on their lives. This is reminiscent of Anderson's idea of "purity through fatality" – the willingness to die for a cause (145).

• Glorification of normative masculinity

The protagonists of the films all exemplify hegemonic masculinity – strong, rugged, competitive, physically and emotionally tough. They are unafraid of violence and willing to fight to prove dominance. Mangal Pandey, Bhagat Singh and Milkha Singh are physically superb – their body types conform to the specific physiques popularized by Hollywood action heroes of the 80s – muscular, broad shouldered, massive biceps, perfect abs. The aged Sardar Patel, though not sinewy, reiterates the patriarchal ideology of manly ruthlessness. He is ready to fight, "Sword will be met with sword" and warns the Muslim League that if they create problems for the Government, that Government's Home Minister does not "wear bangles" (*Sardar*).

The reluctance to be violent is seen as contemptible – Chandrashekhar Azad in *LBS* dismisses the non-violent protest of the Congress as the actions of a "*napunsak*" (eunuch). Blood is baptism into manhood as seen in Bhagat Singh's words, "Shedding blood is no great deed, whether yours or anyone elses" (*LBS*). Milkha Singh's rigorous training culminates in blood flow.

Heroes are strong erotic figures indulging in wrestling matches to the cheers of the watching male audience and drinking indigenous drinks (*bhang* or *lassi*). Songs and dances that evoke the nation include the bangada – the aggressively male Punjabi martial folk dance. Masculinity is performance in the recurring metaphor of twirling moustaches – both Mangal Pandey and Bhagat Singh show their pride and defiance when taciturnly twirling their moustaches as they listen to the verdict in court.

Hegemonic masculinity is evinced in lexical choices – "man of steel", "lion in the lair", "bullet from a gun", "every vein of yours is an iron wire" etc. The masculine body is fetishized with close-up, low angle and arc shots that exaggerate the importance of the muscular physique. Writing on *He Ram*, Lalitha Gopalan says, "...the muscular militant body in the film services the cause of the ideal male image in Hindu nationalism" (Gopalan 1996, p.385).

The three political biopics present women characters as taking part in resistance movements, but they are for most part nameless and faceless. In *Mangal Pandey*, the women, in spite of their pivotal roles as romantic interests, fade into the backdrop when the actual agitation begins. In spite of the innumerable political leaders introduced in *Sardar*, women are mostly shown serving tea or accompanying the male protagonists. Women are described as "delicate as glass", "will break at a turn" (*BMB)*. Traitors, examples of subservient masculinities, are abused in feminising terms "*nayi dulhan ki tarah sharmata hai*" (behaving shyly like a bride) (*LBS*). Similarly, the contrast between the sinewy Punjabis, whose game is wrestling, and the lean Englishmen, who are picturized as playing the gentler game of cricket, is brought out in the challenge to the duel – "My opponent will be this one like a girl" (*LBS*).

Superior and inferior social agents are built into the social structure to consolidate the idea of hegemonic nationhood. The narrative 'fixes' the significance of the visuals and semantics to show that the mainstream expression of national identity is overwhelmingly male.

Binary oppositions

A country that faces the problem of divisions along caste and religious lines requires texts and visual experiences to enable citizens to regard themselves as part of a distinctive nation. Cinema asserts the collective identity by both homogenizing cultural differences and by the process of 'othering',

To reflect hegemonic perceptions on what it means to be "Indian," plurality and diversity are erased and culture standardized. Distinct religious communities, identified only by their clothes (fez caps, *tilaks*, turbans, *bindis*) are shown as celebrating Holi together or praying in the dargah (*MP*). It is a Muslim who shouts "Bhagat Singh *Amar Rahe*" (Bhagat Singh is immortal) and another who brings food for the Hindu boys, on whose behalf the latter beat up the English men. The national

myth that India as a country did not know communal or regional squabbles or clashes before British rule is naturalized in films. The depiction of different communities, distinguished by the clothes they were, ostensibly following the same ideals of devotion to the state is the common strategy of biopics. The communities are shown as living within specific boundaries but always typical of the nation. *Sardar* makes a fetish of presenting leaders from different areas and different communities in acting in unison and agreement on most issues. Amnesia is necessary for constructing a nation and the memory of communal discord that is a threat to the nation's fragile sense of unity is a taboo subject.

Films also "construct imaginary bonds" so that "diverse and often antagonistic group of peoples are ... invited to recognize themselves as a singular body with a common culture, and to oppose themselves to other cultures and communities" (Higson 1995, p.7). Nations are maintained by transforming cultural boundaries into political boundaries.

To proclaim its 'otherness' from other nationalities, cinema creates structural oppositions – between Indian and British, between Indian and Pakistani, between national integration and separatist tendencies. The others in political biopics are easily defined. In three films – *Sardar, Mangal Pandey, The Legend of Bhagat Singh* – the main opponent is the imperialist. The British is demonised as morally corrupt – the East India company trades in opium and use slave girls for sex; the British soldiers are drunk and lascivious as contrasted with the Spartan restraint of the Indian (*MP*). Englishmen are mostly portrayed as cruel and cowardly – attacking unarmed Indians viciously, fighting only when odds are overwhelmingly in their favour and retreating fearfully when challenged (*MP* and *LBS*). In *LBS*, the injustice and callousness of the Englishman is displayed in the sign "Dogs and Indians not allowed" and in the words of the British official at the site of the Jallianwala Baag, "Bloody Indians" followed by the British flag that waves before his face. The self-indulgence of the English is contrasted with the sacrifice of the Indian. Voice- over narration in *LBS* annotates the montage of Bhagat Singh's fasting – "On one side the revolutionaries' starvation, on the other side, the revelry and feasting of the British and the princes" (*LBS*).

Crowds and colour evoke the nation – the contrast is between the open, joyful world of the Indians to the claustrophobic discipline of the English. *MP* shows the clamour and companionship in the Indian market place followed by the empty silence of the British cantonement. In *Sardar,* citizens move out (exteriority) to greet him, women open windows and come to apply *tilak* on him while they rush indoors in panic as the British official drives past.

India's past and traditions are upheld as 'high' culture, "India is rich" (*MP*), "Neither my country is poor, nor illiterate. When your forefathers couldn't speak, our children studied the Ramayan and the Gita" , "Your Rani wears the diamond looted from our Taj", "What are you so arrogant about?...for using paper instead of water for cleaning?" (*LBS*).

The opposition extends to women – English women are mostly lazy and sexually promiscuous and the object of Indian male gaze while the Indian woman is maternal, moral and principled even when a sex worker. Politically sympathetic English women

characters in *LBS* do not problematize the premise because the differences that arise are cultural, emotional and psychological – not political.

In the biopics set in the post-colonial and globalized era, the 'other' includes the Pakistani and the adherents of Pakistan. Jinnah, in Sardar, is shrewd, cunning and duplicitous shown first in a three- piece suit, stubbing out a cigarette. According to Barthes, poses and gaze signify values and identities. Visual semiology shows how the film presents Jinnah – he does not look at the viewer, and so there is no response from the audience. When he does, the camera is placed at a higher angle. At meetings, he looks sideways and down – with the negative connotations of defensiveness and duplicity. Gandhi comments on the founder of Pakistan, "Jinnah talks like a child – give me the moon – he will not take anything but the moon" – a lexical choice which connotes immaturity and unreasonableness. Jinnah's threats of 'jihad' is followed by shots of burnt streets, dead bodies, paper reports "1000s feared dead in Calcutta" and Patel's statement, "The House on one side wants to govern; on the other side, the League wants to destroy the nation" (*Sardar*). The 'League' is always a generic type – not humanized.

Likewise, the contrast is stark between the ascetic lifestyle and mature restraint of the widowed Sardar on the one hand, and the flamboyance and callow belligerence of the polygamous Rizwi of Hyderabad who declares that 40 lakh Hindus will die before Hyderabad becomes part of India, on the other. *BMB* is remarkable in that it raises the bogey of otherness at the climactic moment. The film glosses over Milkha Singh's great triumphs as a montage – the culminating scenes are reserved for his eventual victory over the neighbouring country of Pakistan.

One of the means of celebrating the nation is by evoking differences as the binary opposites in terms of character or themes – for 'us' the integrity and moral virtue of people, the valour of men and the chastity of women; for 'them' deceit, cowardice, lasciviousness and retribution.

Visual, Lexical and Symbolic representations

The process of historical reconstruction of key events provides a spatio- temporal horizon for the audience to represent a nation's past to itself. *Sardar*'s frame narrative consists of news reels of the Quit India Movement, clippings from newspapers, television footage of the swearing in of the last Viceroy. The horrors of the Jallianwala Baag massacre are played out through the memory of young Bhagat Singh. These significant moments are mapped out visually and temporally which creates a picture of a nation moving through "empty homogeneous time" (Anderson 1983).

Space is a necessary correlative of time, and biopics give an illusion of visualizing national territory with images of rivers, mountains, hamlets evoking the idea of a unique geographic entity. In *Sardar*, the terrain of India is shown in Patel's travels: the Arabian Sea which opens the narrative, the flatlands, grasslands etc., along with the series of communities of different religious persuasions with period accessories such as dress rendered with fidelity. The Simla Conference begins with a pan shot of Nehru showing Edwina Mountbatten the mountains. National space is depicted by

visualizing national territory, the life of the country, its geography, flora, fauna etc. In *LBS*, the Taj, which is visible from the rooms where the Lahore conspiracy is hatched, creates an illusion of nature and history. If *BMB* speaks of a lower level army officer who goes on to become a celebrated athlete, the film's setting moves from the outskirts of Delhi's refugee camps, to small towns, to the vast terrain of the mountains where he trains. Landscape becomes important and the emerging consciousness of the nation can be seen in the attention paid to spatial details of a visually pleasing landscape.

The emerging consciousness of the nation is seen in the verisimilitude of the spatial details – period accessories and idealized depictions of dress. Significantly, character development is marked by a change in ensemble – Mangal Pandey is seen in the uniform of a British sepoy but he is hanged wearing his attire of a Brahmin. The contrast between the Indian contingent and Jinnah in *Sardar* is also one of clothes – the one in the sartorial mode of the Oriental, the other following the English with his three- piece suits. Milkha Singh "becomes India" when he wears the blazer of the Indian track team.

Traditions are also appropriated and touristic images offered to constitute a national identity. The colourful pageantry and pictorial tableaux of cultural stereotypes is metonymic in affirming a national culture and identity. Minstrels singing and elephants trumpeting with chants of '*mangal*' which means 'auspicious' forms the frame narrative of *MP*. Religion is ubiquitous – women circumbulating the *tulsi* (sacred basil), *sadhus* (holy men), application of *tilaks* to currency, conches, temple bells and rituals, along with bazaars, fairs, dances, acrobatics, shots of bangles, bullock carts, cock fighting, snake- charmers, fire dancers, wheat fields, Ramlila celebrations, ethnic drinks (*Bhaang* and *lassi*) and the constantly reiterated Holi celebrations. Similarly, *LBS* and *BMB* exhort "*pagadi sambhal*" – look after your turban - and "*Pagadi baandh*" – tie your turban – to signify self-respect as the turban is seen as a symbol of prestige. Images, visual and metaphoric, have meaning potential and the film uses "established *connotators*" to signify pride and nationhood to the audience (Maelin and Mayer 2012, p. 51). Plurality of identity is erased and stereotyped images connote a national specificity.

Individual signs and visual paraphernalia like flags and maps also serve to reaffirm the nation by presenting its geographic and emotional contours. Within five minutes of *Sardar*'s opening we see the map of India on the news montage with the flag superimposed on it and a narrative on cross-border terrorist attacks from Pakistan. The presentation of a nation as under attack serves to evoke the sense of community. Flags and maps are in abundance from the initial introduction of Patel on his release form Yerwada Jail to the iconic photo scene with Mother India in chains superimposed on the map of India – an alteration of the actual photograph. The vastness of India is foregrounded by the practice of naming – Travancore, Cochin, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Chenab as voice- over narration and assertions such as "*Is desh ko ek hi hona hai*" (This country has to become one.) and in press- clippings "Tribal Raids in Kashmir", "Greater Rajasthan is Born" (*Sardar*). In *BMB*, the climatic race has foreign flags in the backdrop, the last lap shows the Pakistani flag; the enormous Indian flag, a potent cultural symbol, in rich colour and extra deep perspective, is articulated visually as Milkha crosses the finish line in the first place. The set of

symbols which carry wider emotional meanings serve as a system of reference for Indians to think of themselves as members of a group.

Over-lexicalization to reinforce the geographical space shows the operation of ideology in action. The films reiterate the words '*hum*'(we/ us), '*hamara*'(ours), '*Hindustani*', '*desh*'(country) with its near synonyms, and "*aazaadi*" (freedom). Tatiya Tope tells Nana Saheb that the time has come to recapture the "whole of Hindustan"; he pleads for unity "*Hum Hindustani hai*" – "We are Indians" (*MP*); Mangal Pandey evokes the inevitable union of the country "The whole of Hindustan is watching...We will win even if it takes a hundred years" (*MP*). Bhagat Singh and his companions sing "*Desh mere meri jaan hai tu*""My country, you are my life". The terms used are also those of kinship – the country is referred to as "*ma*" (mother), and nature – "*mitti*" (earth) – something to which one is naturally tied. Linguistic determinism holds that our world is constituted by our language and the lexical choices that connote solidarity, bloodline, and passion are used to convince a 'national' populace that they should identify with the nation.

Great Men biopics delve into national cultural discourses to reintegrate hybrid identities into a national consciousness. Nation- building as a thematic concern is predicated by foregrounding the contrast between a rich past and an inferior present. In a country that is riven by fissiparous tendencies and sub-nationalities, biopics link the past lives to present concerns to emphasise unity and sovereignty. A nation that has been perceived as 'soft', 'non-violent' is re-presented as 'manly' and assertive. The biopic foregrounds the hero but celebrates and consecrates the nation.

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Emotional Realism and Actuality: The function of prosumer aesthetics in film production,

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Abstract

Studies of film spectatorship and production techniques have rarely ignored notions of Reality. From the psychoanalytical approaches of Baudry and Metz to the auditory spaces of Doane, approaches to film reception have primarily focused on the methods and rationale behind a spectator's investment in the reality of the spectacle. Additionally specific techniques that assist in aligning character with spectator have been explored from both visual and auditory perspectives. Sound and music in particular are able to bring spectators into the emotional 'space' of a character, while ocular techniques that invoke points of view visually align the observer and observed. In essence, these techniques attempt to reflect an emotional 'truth' inherent in the unfolding of the narrative and related to the experience of its main players.

Current trends in film and television production styles have favoured the use of aesthetics associated with prosumer and social media productions. These aesthetics, including handheld shaky-cam, variable audio and open acknowledgement of the camera, have been utilised for their ability to imitate 'reality', to take away a little of the polish of professional film and television production and to inject the raw, ad hoc immediacy of actuality. Yet an emotional connection between a film and its spectator cannot be disregarded, and indeed represents another form of reality in film: that of emotional realism.

Through a close analysis of Josh Tranks' *Chronicle* (2012), this paper explores the function of prosumer aesthetics in the representation these two filmic 'truths' and examines its effectiveness as both a mimic of actuality and conduit of emotional realism.

The definition of realism in cinema, in particular fictional film, has always been problematic; after all how does one account for a conceptualization of the real in the artifice of the of the constructed?

Art history accounts for this by constructing a style that hid the technique in the representation, aiming for social realism. It then attempted to expose the process of signification by revealing the artifice (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2012). Later photography presented problems by claiming to represent actuality, yet as Metz argues in the act of capturing the image and re-presenting it, even a photograph of a real object is still a reflection of reality, the "perceived is not really the object, it is its shade, its phantom, its double, its *replica* in a new kind of mirror" (Metz in Rosen, 1986, p. 250). Thus the medium – in this case the camera lens and apparatus of projection – inhibits claims to reality. The image that is experienced via manufactured processes is by default reality rendered as illusion, a symbolic rather than iconic signifier of reality. It is for this reason that Andre Bazin eschews the convention of coverage – in which a scene is visually fragmented into separate shots and reconstituted in the edit – in favor of minimal camera movement, long takes and wide shots. The presence of the camera and the subjective signifiers of variable shot sizes interrupt the presentation of a reality that, while scripted and fictional can reflect a social realism that "tends to make more reality appear on the screen" (cited in MacCabe, 1986, p. 181).

The challenge of the (capturing and projecting) lens lies in its function between the experiential 'real world' of actuality and the perceptual 'screening' of mediated reality. Through the camera's lens reality begins to loose its claim to actuality as it becomes possible to mould, shape, edit and re-contextualize the images of reality into *some other* meaning, thereby fictionalizing even documentary footage which purports to present unmediated fact. Indeed the documentary film's claim to actuality and an objective reality has been widely discounted by many scholars, who argue the genre's stylistic conventions are but techniques to support a highly subjective view of the filmmaker's *version* of reality. As Michael Renov states, "every documentary representation depends upon its own detour from the real, through the defiles of the audio-visual signifier" (1993, p. 7).

Between fact, fiction, and the presentation of reality exists the potential for a variation that includes the lived experience of the 'real world', the scripted narrative of fiction, and the mediated appropriation of documentary. Thus while Bazin advocated for the presentation of a form of social realism in fictional film, cultural theorist Ien Ang supports the notion of a different inherent 'truth' in narrative fiction. Writing about viewer reaction to the 1980s soap *Dallas*, Ang argues for an emotional realism that connotes rather than denotes, one in which the experiences and emotional responses of characters are judged based on their resonance with spectators' own lived experiences; the "… 'true to life' elements…" (1985, p. 47) of the series. This emotional reality is achieved in part through the functions of plotting and characterization but also through the use of conventional filmmaking techniques, the "last shot of an episode is then nearly always a close-up of the face of the character concerned, which emphasizes the psychological conflict she or he is in." (1985, p.

53). The close up highlights the emotional nuances of the actor while at the same time signifying to the audience the relevance of the moment of emotion, and with the aid of music and performance, the emotional resonance the moment has for the narrative of the film.

The techniques create a certain emotional authenticity for the diegesis such that, even if the events of the plot are far removed from everyday reality, the emotional resonance they have for the characters in the plot constructs points of identification and empathy for a viewing audience. By becoming invested in the moments of emotion, the spectator can ease into a suspension of disbelief and connect with the narrative on an illusionary level. Spectators gage character responses against their own lived experiences and if they find a similarity of response, are, more likely to find them 'believable' and 'life-like'. Ang thus speaks not of cognitive realism, but a logical and understandable emotional reality constructed from the artificial (1985).

Spectators are invited to invest in the reality of the fiction not as a mirror of actuality but as a constructed 'other world' in which the plausibility of the plotted events is closely linked to the emotional truth of the character's responses to the world, the events within the plot, and to other characters within the fiction. In order to do so the spectator is required to suspend disbelief and, in the words of Richard Allen to "experience projective illusion…" (1995, p. 139). Conventional filmmaking techniques encourages this projective illusion through the use of the aforementioned close up, while Mary Ann Doane's notion of the three spaces of cinema – the diegetic, screen and theatre – suggests the power of sound design to physically align spectator and character (Doane in Rosen, 1986). Similarly emotional alignment and identification is assisted by the selection of musical score to cue emotional response, as Neil McDonald states "…music can embody aspects of a character or a prevailing mood of pain and obsession" (2000, p. 73). While the sounds used are 'borrowed' from everyday reality, they are used to ground the fictional construct and enable the spectator to develop an aural landscape of the diegesis Mark Evans describes as "perceptual geography" (2004, p. 190).

In the process of achieving projective illusion, audiences demonstrate a learned ability to read the cues of conventional filmmaking – continuity and montage editing, sound design and music – as signifiers of a fictional reality. Audiences inherently 'understand' that to engage with the narrative they first need to 'read' the images not as a reflection of actuality but as a fictional reality, one in which the emotional reality of the construct is paramount to disengaging with their lived reality in order to enter the constructed world. Specifically it is the convention of the technique as relates to the narrative context that cues the spectator to read the presentation as fiction. Audiences are accustomed to seeing the combination of continuity editing, sound effects and music in the construction of fictional reality and indeed come to expect it from all genres of fictional, and occasionally non-fictional, storytelling.

In recent years a series of film have been produced using the '21st century' aesthetic of prosumer technologies that challenges the convention of classical fictional

techniques and blurs the boundary between spectator, character and camera. Prosumer aesthetics are a blend of the raw, gritty and occasionally grainy imagery associated with consumer grade handheld video cameras, described by Lev Manovich as "DV realism" (2001), and the embodied recording and viewing experience of Mark Hansen's "haptic aesthetic" (2004, p. 11). As a set of technical and stylistic choices, the aesthetic mimics the everyday user's appropriation of a multi-lens environment in which the self-referential need to record and publish our lives in social media is enabled via lightweight and easily operated digital cameras and smart phones.

In particular the camera lens (and slaved audio – another feature of the prosumer aesthetic) is not positioned in relation to the viewer (Metz in Rosen, 1986), or to itself as an external object viewing a profilmic event (Mulvey, 1975), but primarily in relation to the diegetic character as an acknowledged object of gaze. It also becomes an object of operation within the diegesis as the visceral, mobile and 'amateur' stylistic tropes of prosumer-composed images are adopted to suggest a non-professional presence behind the lens. By extension, an authenticity associated with the amateur and the unmediated (perhaps incidental) capturing of reality as it happens is suggested. In application the techniques connote as "indexical, providing some truth-value of their referent…" (Landesman, 2008, p. 34).

The aesthetic is often precisely for its indexical ability to 'point to' actuality, a primary reason for its use in the 1999 film *The Blair Witch Project*, a mockumentary that not only challenged the genre's claims to unmediated 'reality', but also efficiently blurred fact and fiction to expose the audiences' conditioned reading of the techniques as signifiers for the 'real'. The film was presented as found footage within a narrative framework that accounted for the presence of the lens in the diegesis by establishing three purportedly real film students who disappeared while filming a documentary on the mythical Blair Witch. A mobile, occasionally shaky, and unfocused lens that accepts direct reference, in combination with audio slaved to the image, constructs aural and visual cues towards authenticity that conventional cinematic techniques cannot achieve. Indeed it was the visceral 'reality' of the technique that accounts (in addition to a novel online campaign) for the believability of the film's premise and the perception from audiences that the events had in fact occurred.

The initial aim of the prosumer aesthetic was then to convince the audience to invest in the actuality of the narrative. To achieve that, conventional cinematic techniques were abandoned and along with them the signification of the fictional. It is an aesthetic that serves the blurred fact/fiction narrative well, as is evidenced by the success of *The Blair Witch Project*, however more recent films have likewise adopted prosumer techniques to serve highly fictionalized narratives in the science fiction (*Cloverfield*, 2008) and horror (*Paranormal Activity*, 2007) genres. These genres have specifically benefited from the ability of conventional cinematic technique to generate a subjective alignment between audience and character, relying on emotional reality to convince the spectator of the fiction's plausibility. In particular, the ability of music to establish mood and excitement, and the effectiveness of sound design to deliver sudden shocks are techniques on which the quality of films within the genre is judged. To diverge from the safety of convention would suggest sacrificing emotional reality

in favor of the apparently 'real', however the fictionalized construct of narrative films clearly relies upon techniques that delineate reality from imagination. How then do a set of stylistic techniques that purport to actuality find footing in fictional films?

This essay uses the science fiction film *Chronicle* as a case study to examine the function of an aesthetic associated with the authentic in a constructed fictional context.

Chronicle: An overview

Josh Trank's 2012 film *Chronicle* adopts the aesthetic conventions of DV realism that characterizes other 'found footage' films in the genre. Shot on 35mm, the final vision was treated to give it a DV 'feel' however unlike *The Blair Witch Project* or *Cloverfield*, *Chronicle* does not purport to be 'found'. Rather than establishing a dramatic conceit in which the unmediated record of a cataclysmic event was discovered and presented as the testament of a (now absent) witness, the film contravenes the aesthetic as a stylistic choice not for its indexical signification of actuality but for its potential as a point of identification and observation which serves to (re) enforce the emotional reality of the diegesis.

Following the discovery of a mysterious alien rock three teenage boys; introverted Andrew, blasé Matt, and popular Steve, develop superhuman abilities that enable them to control objects by telekinesis, manipulate electricity, gives them super strength and the power of flight. At first used for fun, the boys are soon confronted by the dangers of their abilities and their own dark natures as their powers grow.

Physical alignment: POV

The opening shot establishes Andrew and the main dramatic conceit of the film. Half hidden behind the eyepiece of his Canon XL1 MiniDV camera, Andrew announces that he will film all events to follow, presumably motivated as much by his fascination with cameras and filmmaking as with the wish to gather evidence of his father's violent and abusive behavior. From the outset, the camera is associated with Andrew, representative of his view of his everyday experiences and referenced on more than one occasion by other characters Andrew (and his camera) introduces, Matt and Steve among them, to legitimize its position within the diegesis. The 'professional' appearance of the shots is also given a plausible explanation: Andrew is an aspiring filmmaker and dabbles in the types of prosumer equipment that the lens purports to reflect. An assortment of accessories in the form of tripods and on-camera lights completes the illusion.

The viewing lens – that through which the audience sees the film – is associated with Andrew, operated it is imagined by the unseen character whose presence is only 'felt' behind the lens. However this association is not exclusive. At a party attended by the majority of the school's student body Andrew is seen in frame, throwing into question

the origin of the lens. The mystery is resolved when Andrew addresses Matt behind the lens, freeing the camera from its submission to Andrew and introducing the possibility of an associative mobility for the lens within the diegetic space. As subsequent characters pick up and operate the camera the lens becomes briefly associated with their viewing perspective, sharing the same physical space and experiential position as the character who carries and operates it, constituting what Jenna Ng calls the "first person lens based POV" (2009). It is not through a character's subjective POV that the lens sees but through a subjectively laden objectivity. When Andrew's camera is passed to his friends they cease to be objects of the camera's gaze and impose their possessive subjectivity on the camera's objective look.

At the same time, the shared possessive subjectivity of Andrew's camera is not the only view offered in the diegesis. The party scene also introduces Casey, seen first through the first person lens based POV of the camera-as-controlled-by-Matt. She also operates a camera – recording for her blog – and a quick cut to her lens establishes the film's second conceit; any lens is accessible. Inter-cutting between the two lenses offers a direct way of accessing the spatial perspective of the characters, and interjects a conventional shot-reverse-shot editing structure.

Through the first person lens based POV, the camera becomes momentarily associated with whomever controls it, aligned briefly with the viewing position of the character whose perspective it shares. However between characters, the potential for disassociation threatens. Ng accounts for this by suggesting the anthropomorphized POV of the camera as viewing object (2009). In films like *The Blair Witch Project* and *Cloverfield*, when the camera is turned on the controller and directly addressed, its position as a viewing lens is acknowledged openly at the same time constructing it as a legitimate object of address and viewing within the diegesis. When a character looses control of the camera, as when Hud is attacked and killed by an alien in *Cloverfield*, its continued recording reinforces its independence as a viewing object outside of a character's control and constructs it as a character in its own right.

In *Chronicle*, Andrew's camera is given greater spatial mobility due to a dramatic conceit that gives Andrew the ability to levitate it. This allows Andrew to be seen in the camera's frame while still controlling it. Thus the first person lens based POV becomes turned in on itself. The perspective offered is that of Andrew's yet it is not his subjective viewing perspective of the diegesis – rather it is the view of the camera-as-viewing object, anthropomorphic but clearly controlled by Andrew. However unlike the restricted view of the operator offered by the limited framing in *The Blair Witch Project* or *Cloverfield*, the viewer is presented with a sweeping, free-floating lens reminiscent of conventional dolly or crane shots. While functionally under the control of the character, the camera becomes free of it in both perspective and physicality. The way in which the films handles this POV addresses some of the critiques of the aesthetics which argues that the technique, while offering the semblance of mobility within the diegesis, actually restricts the range of views offered to an audience. When Andrew floats his camera throughout a scene in which he and Steve have a conversation atop a rooftop, conventional framing techniques are

invoked, as it adopts the slow, serene, push-in effect of a dolly track.

Emotional alignment: Lens as Character

The ability to 'float' the camera away from the character gives it an added level of characterization in which its very presence as a viewing object becomes imbued with emotional qualities. As the film progresses Andrew becomes increasingly insular and destructive, cutting himself off from Matt and causing a lightening storm that takes Steve's life. When his mother's medical funds run out, he attacks and robs a group of youths before ransacking and destroying a service station. During his increasingly disruptive actions and particularly throughout the attack on the youths, Andrew's camera becomes progressively removed from his subjective position.

Throughout the duration of Andrew's assault on the group, his camera hovers above at a distance, seemingly seeking safety in objectivity. It looks down on the action as if to judge the morality of Andrew's action from afar, only venturing closer when the act is complete and Andrew slumps by the side of the road, dejectedly clutching his spoils. In that instant the camera – or Andrew's remaining moral core which the camera has come to represent – seems to reach out to Andrew, offering comfort but warning against further violence, its abhorrence manifest in the physical distance between its viewing position and its controller in the preceding action. This is reinforced in the following scene in which Andrew's accident destruction of a service station is shown only through the facility's security camera and not Andrew's own lens. It is as if the camera has abandoned him, signifying a complete disconnection between Andrew's diegetic experience and the camera's viewing position.

Thus Andrew's camera is aligned not only with his perceptive view, but also on a level of emotional alignment. It is at once his confidant, witness and co-conspirator and ultimately comes to represent his humanity. After the incident at the service station, Andrew and his camera are hospitalized. Andrew is confronted by his father who informs him of his mother's death, and blames him for her passing. Throughout this interlude the action is covered from two perspectives; a security camera inside the room providing a high angle view of the room, and Andrew's camera set up on a tripod at the foot of his bed providing a mid-two shot of Andrew and his father. As his father becomes more irate, Andrew slowly wakes and with that his camera starts a slow push in. At the height of his anger Andrew's father motions to hit him across the head and Andrew reacts by grabbing his arm. At the same time the vision of the scene switches to the security camera and through it audiences witness the destruction of the wall and window in Andrew's room, along with his camera. With that, the last of Andrew's humanity is destroyed as he rises from his bed and proceeds to drop his father from the side of the building. He assumes the role of the 'Apex predator', a concept he had been pondering as his powers grew, and sets about eliminating those weaker than himself.

With Andrew's camera gone, Casey and Matt are offered as alternative aligning perspectives and characters with whom to empathize. Some distance away, Matt

senses Andrew's distress and travels to the hospital with Casey and her camera – through which the subsequent action is seen. He arrives in time to save Andrew's father, setting up a confrontation with Andrew that quickly deteriorates into an aerial battle.

Without the characterization of an anthropomorphized lens, Andrew becomes objectified as a force of pure destruction, an anti-hero whose destruction becomes the task of the 'new', alterative hero Matt. For as much as Andrew's control of the camera legitimized its position within the diegesis, the camera's presence also reflected an aspect of Andrew's vulnerability and sympathy as a character. Not only was the camera a proxy for his subjective experiences it also became a chronicle of his emotional deterioration. From the outset the camera was physically aligned with Andrew, showing the audience what Andrew wished to represent of his own experience. Andrew is never seen without his camera and even when he is not controlling it, it is present recording him. As the narrative progresses the camera's view is visually, and then experientially aligned with his subjective experience of his life. In an introductory scene at school, Andrew is targeted by a group of bullies who not only attack him but also his camera. The attack is seen from the perspective of the camera in Andrew's hand; as his is pushed and shoved so is the lens, pulling the camera into Andrew's subjectivity. Eventually it physically echoes Andrew's experience as a bully rips it from his hands and throws it to the ground, extending the alignment from the perceptive to the experiential as it receives the same treatment as the character it 'sees' for.

As the film progressed this experiential alignment extends to the emotional. Prolonged screen time suggests an allegiance between character and lens, which becomes increasingly symbiotic as the film progresses. The camera relies on Andrew to enable it to view, and by viewing to exist within the diegesis, while at the same time Andrew counts on the lens to witness for him the stark reality of his life, and by witnessing to help make sense of his domestic situation and his growing super human powers. As he refines his powers he starts to operate the camera by telekinesis, effectively demonstrating the extent to which the lens had become an extension of his physical being. The way in which he relates to camera operation is also reflective of his emotional state; floating and carefree when Andrew, Matt and Steve experience the joy of flying; slow and pensive when Andrew experiments with levitation after an (off screen) admonishment from his father; and fast, visceral and aggressive when Andrew avenges himself on his school yard bullies. At the same time the camera's presence registers as a type of emotional support when Andrew receives his first on screen beating from his father. Having set up the camera, half obscured, on his desk Andrew turns to confront the verbal and physical abuse that had only been intimated thus far.

The camera is not under his control however Andrew's gaze at the lens both before and after the beating draws the object of his gaze into his subjectivity, affirming his experience at the same time agreeing with his moral perspective. It is as if the camera is connected to Andrew on a cognitive and emotional level, and even though he does not control it, it is very much 'on his side': understanding, sympathetic and reflective.

It is a 'part' of him. In the final scene of the film, Matt addresses the camera and Andrew simultaneously, reinforcing the man-machine fugue. The audience is invited not to view the camera in alignment with Matt – even though it is he who operates the camera – but to see it as a conduit to Andrew, or his memory at the very least.

In a way this emotional alignment is made possible by the multiplicity of POV offered throughout the film. The destruction of Andrew's camera at the beginning of the third act of the film allows the film to fully exploit the ability to access and 'see through' any camera lens. Casey's camera, helicopter, news and security cameras are utilized in quick succession as the viewer's perspective is flicked from lens to lens in pursuit of Matt and Andrew's aerial confrontation. When they pause at the Chicago Space Needle, an abundance of digital devices are appropriated to give the viewer access to the action. These multitudes of lenses (with the exception of Casey's camera) have no specific character to whom they can align, instead mimicking the voyeuristic gaze of the general audience as, phones and tablets raised, the (diegetically insignificant) bystander in the film witnesses and records the climatic events.

While serving the function of 'showing' the viewer the action, the multiple and fleeting lens based POVs were exploited to delineate the intimate, emotional connection that Andrew, his camera and the audience had established. By presenting the external lenses of the bystanders as cold, emotionless and voyeuristic (interested only in the novelty of the spectacle and less in the human tragedy behind it), Andrew's camera is established in contrast as a main character in its own right. In contrast to the measured, serene and at times beautiful images captured by Andrew's camera, these mass POV lenses were fleeting, grainy and harshly pragmatic both in aesthetics and in function, dispensed with once they had served their purpose of tracking the action. The privileged viewing position of Andrew's camera is thus reinforced as the most legitimate, emotionally truthful camera with which to identify.

Aural alignment: Heard first

For Mary Ann Doane, the placement of speakers in the cinema theatre, and the subsequent distribution of sound through those speakers creates a "sonorous envelope" (1986, p. 343) that recalls the imprinting of the mother's voice of the infant before birth. In particular, the human voice, endowed with "…"presence" guarantees the singularity and stability of a point of audition..." (p. 343). Thus while Andrew's voice is not representative of the prenatal mother, it is to his voice that the spectator is aligned. The film opens on black and for the first thirty seconds the most immediate and 'present', both in proximity and vocal quality, sound is Andrew's voice as he argues with his (aurally distant) father through his bedroom door. From that point forward, Andrew's physical location behind the lens constructs him as the most 'present' character as the film extends the conceit of self-shot footage to the audio. As the camera operator Andrew's voice is the closest to the imagined on-camera microphone and thus the clearest and richest in timber.

The film does not strictly conform to the prosumer audio conceit however. For the most part, particularly in the first two acts of the film, the audio is slaved to the image

and shifts abruptly when the visuals change. There is no musical score and the proximity of characters and events to the camera determines the audio quality and strength. However the film does not shy away from the use of sound effects, introducing whooshes (when flying), thumps (when punches are thrown), and high pitched digital distortions mixed with a low hum (when the alien rock is discovered). It adopts the convention of adding non-diegetic sounds to reinforce the fictional reality of the diegesis at the same time conforming to audience's generic expectations of how flying, fighting and alien objects *should* sound. In this regard the film builds in a backdoor, enabling the audio some degree of conceptual freedom and bending the prosumer aesthetic so that a more aurally coherent landscape can be created.

A more flexible approach to sound design also enables the use of sound design to enhance Andrew's emotional experience, adding a level of alignment with his character. The effect is first used towards the end of the second act when Andrew uses his super strength to retaliate against his father. In the silence after the confrontation Andrew floats his camera towards him and a low protracted whoosh-hum is introduced, reflecting the beginning of his psychological decline. In a later scene after Andrew's hospitalisation, the sound is again used to indicate Andrew's control over the camera and his growing emotional trauma. As Andrew slowly wakes from a state of unconsciousness, the camera slowly tracks forward accompanied by the low whoosh-hum subtly mixed under his father's vocals. Outwardly Andrew shows no signs of change however the sound effect signals he is awake and as his father's diatribe reaches its peak a sustained high pitched tone is introduced, reflecting a psychological tension that has reached its limit. When the building finally explodes, the visual and aural release of tension acts as a turning point for Andrew's submission to his role as the ultimate predator.

Conclusion

The prosumer aesthetic is an indexical sign of actuality however in a fictional context the presumptive connotations of reality are challenged by the technique's ability to recontextualize the chronicled events. In this instance an unmediated reality is not denoted, however the subjective experience of the fictional character is enriched by the connotative implications of the aesthetic; the events may not be real, but for the character within the dramatic framework, the *experience* of it is and the aesthetics reflect this reality. By restricting the spectator to the same experiential field as the character, the distance between the spectator's objective gaze and the subjective experience of the character is reduced, thus enhancing an emotional alignment and reinforcing the emotional reality of the film. When the camera lens is constructed as a character in its own right it offers a midpoint of alignment in which the emotional resonance of a scene can be connoted through visuals alone. In this way, more so than with conventional techniques, the lens is endowed with emotion independent from music, sound, and the gaze of character or viewer. Constructed as a 'character', it takes on the "lifelike" (Ang, 1985) qualities of an emoting entity within the diegesis. There is no doubt that these technique will continue to be explored and applied in the unconventional telling of conventional narratives that challenge and confront the boundaries between spectral, character and technological gazes, and which aim to blur the line between fictional representation and the indexical symbolism of the apparently real.

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Making Documentary as Methods: (Re)imagining the Hong Kong Landscape and Geo-politics

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Abstract

This paper explores the strengths of a documentary and the cultural identification of Chinese audiences, by showing them my geo-political documentary and conducting ethnographic interviews with them. The 20-min long documentary 'We Used to Make Bread. Now We Get Dirt' was about the profit-oriented urban redevelopment plans, which destroyed the traditional neighbourhood in one of the oldest town in Hong Kong, were deleting the cultural identity and collective memories of the local people. Due to this, the urgency of preserving locality and democratizing the way of urban planning has filled up Hong Kong in the summer of 2013. By showing this documentary and conducting detailed ethnographic interviews with different kinds of Chinese, including Hong Kongese, Taiwanese, mainland Chinese, British Born Chinese and European Born Chinese, the complexities of the traditional audience-text-context triangulation are restructured. It shows that different kinds of Chinese diasporas considered different contexts which work as determinants affecting how they read the texts, how they interpret the signs and how they construct/reproduce/circulate meanings. This audience research also tests how influential a geo-political documentary, as a cultural product and an ideological mode of narrative, can be. The research method includes semi-structured interviews, opinion sharing and non-recorded dialogues, in order to test the possibilities of mobilizing identifications.

Introduction

In the terrain of traditional audience research, the triangulation of text, context and audience is the basic research framework. Text could be the determinant, affecting audience's willingness to watch it but it is not always monolithic. The audiences decide to watch a particular visual text based on different reasons and contextual situations. In Chinese culture, we have a saying: 'The drunken man is not really interested in wine' (*zui weng zhi yi bu zai jiu*). The same logic can be applied to the cinema-goers or visual text viewers, who could decide to watch the text by particular physical and/or psychological contextual situations. Thus, I would like to investigate the reasons of why the audiences are interested in watching a particular Hong Kong geo-political documentary.

I chose a 20-min long documentary *We Used to Make Bread. Now We Get Dirt* as text in this research. Since this documentary was made by me, I can have better control of the contents in it. By selective editing, I encoded meaning in every sequence and scene, but every meaning is open for interpreting. Furthermore, I would like to experiment the strength of a social activist documentary and see how much it could influence the audience. This documentary is about the profit-oriented urban redevelopment plans in Hong Kong and how these plans destroyed the traditional neighbourhood in one of the oldest town in Hong Kong, and how, by these, they deleted the cultural identity and collective memories of the local people. This documentary aims to express the urgency of preserving locality and democratizing the way of urban planning in Hong Kong. Indeed, the urban redevelopment is also a hot topic in mainland China. In the name of processing modernization, there are many old buildings and communities being torn down in exchange for modern buildings. Demolishing a living community we are familiar with, shatters our cultural identities, which were built by the intimate neighbourhood relationship between the local people. Hence, the theme of this documentary could reflect the contemporary geopolitical situation of the Chinese and how would the Chinese respond to it.

The aim of this research is to explore the cultural identification of Chinese audiences, by showing them my geo-political documentary and conducting ethnographic interviews with them. It also proposes to investigate different socio-cultural contexts which work as determinants affecting how different Chinese Diasporas read the texts, how they interpret the signs and how they construct/reproduce and circulate meanings. Up to now, the audiences and interviewees include Taiwanese, mainland Chinese, British-born Chinese and other European Chinese. This research paper just shows the preliminary observations of the entire research. In the future, I will conduct more similar screening and interviews with Hong-Kongese and other kinds of Chinese diasporas.

The research questions of this paper are stimulated by Stuart Hall's notion of cultural identification. 'Cultural identities is a matter of becoming, as well as of being' (Hall, 2003, p.238). Then I would question when and what was the moment of becoming a British-Chinese, a non-Chinese or becoming a Chinese again, and how and when this moment was shaped.

On the other hand, Gordon Mathews (p.10, 2007) states that 'Cultural globalization cannot be viewed as an isomorphic process, but as multiple processes with different valences and trajectories'. The process of identification and the texture of viewing

experience of Chinese audiences are full of complexity, heterogeneity and hybridity. While absorbing different sorts of mediations in the UK, Chinese media audiences/users/creators or voyeurs may have reinforcement, reconstruction, re-imagination and/or denial of their Chineseness.

Methodology

This research begins with the making of a geo-political documentary. According to Paula Rabinowitz's notion of political documentaries (1994, p.7), 'documentaries have and present values; they are persuasive…and they can 'even control of history'. This documentary targets to influence people to concern about the importance of the 'right to the city'[1] under neoliberalism, and the social inequalities gentrification[2] generates. This documentary style resonates with Rabinowitz's idea (1994, p.7) about 'remaking the relationship of truth to ideology by insisting on advocacy rather than objectivity'. I would test the strength of this geo-political documentary and the distance between the audiences and the filmed subjects, by showing it to the audiences and interviewing them. Judging from Paul Rotha's notion of documentary (2008, p.4) which is '…something closer to an idea, a form of social intellection"', Jonathan Kahana (2008, p.1) suggests that 'the flexibility and endurance of the documentary apparatus, its simultaneous appeal to both state and capitalist institutions and their critics, owes much to this capacity for intellection and its varieties: ideology, theory, imagination, and belief'. Making a documentary and showing it to the audiences could be a way to arouse social concerns to particular social issues and challenge their taken-for-granted imagination of a place. It could be a way to shorten the distances between the sufferers and the audiences.

According to Bill Nicholas's concept of documentary modes (1991, p.32), my documentary contains hybrid modes, which are expository and participatory. The hybrid mode can make the audiences to get into the filmed situation more directly and stimulate them to think about the appropriateness of a forced urban renewal plan.

The interview part of this research is ethnographically oriented, combining two traditional dimensions of ethnography: participation and observation. By evaluating the suggestions of Hammersley and Atkinson, Ann Gray (2003, p.95) points out the importance of establishing 'a good rapport with the respondent', 'reflexive interviewing', conducting unstandardized questions and 'being a good listener'. For the past few decades, the debates of the usefulness and effectiveness of ethnography are continuous. However, Ien Ang (1996, p.71) states that 'what ethnographic work entails is a form of "methodological situationalism", underscoring the thoroughly situated, always context-bound ways in which people encounter, use, interpret, enjoy, think and talk about…'. In this research, all interviews are semi-structured with a lot of open questions.

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[1] 'The right to the city is that we have a real need right now to democratize decisions as to how a city shall be organized and what it should be about, so that we can actually have a collective project to reshape the urban world.', David Harvey, http://urbanhabitat.org/node/4225,

[2] 'It is increasingly argued that gentrification is incorporated into public and the by-product of a range of contemporary neoliberal urban development policies intent on attracting investment capital. However, gentrification can also be the unintended outcome of well-meaning urban policy frameworks, such as urban densification, inner-city regeneration and urban heritage conservation but with arguably negative consequences.'
http://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs12132-012-9182-9.pdf

Inspired by Jean Rouch's filming method of ethnographic documentaries, I hope to conduct the interviews with the interviewees as a kind of casual sharing in order to make this research participatory, rather than a top-down investigation. Jean Rouch 'involved his "actors" [interviewees] in the process of constructing the films themselves' (Bogue, 2003, p.151). More interesting is that Ronald Bogue connects Rouch's interviewees to Gilles Deleuze's 'function of fabulation' (Bogue, 2003, p.152) which is about inventing new identities through the process of making film and ethnographic exploration. Rouch's *Jaguar* and *Moi, un noir* both were filmed in this style. Thus, I hope to explore the possibility of mobilizing identification of the interviewees and myself through a transversal way of researching.

The audience sample

Up to now, the interviewed audiences are the people I know in the UK. The following is the preliminary results of the ethnographic oriented interviews and observations I have done. When I asked the respondents 'What do you think about this documentary?' I get the following answers, which show that different Chinese people have different ideas of their identities.

Being an 'Outsider' upholding two cultures

> 'I think it is interesting for an 'outsider' to know there are also urban development's going on in Hong Kong. I thought it is just an issue in Mainland China, and to be honest I thought Hong Kong is already more 'developed' than anywhere else in Mainland China.' (Linda, 27, Chinese, born in Shanghai, migrated to Germany since she was 7)

Linda identifies herself as an 'outsider' in regard of her relationship with Hong Kong. Having been living in Germany for over 20 years, Linda has been a bicultural person who can speak Mandarin and German fluently. Linda thinks that she is not entirely westernized. During the semi-structured interview, Linda also emphasized that 'Her mind is German and her heart is Chinese'.

Also, she expressed her pride of Shanghai-ese literacy, which is one of the Chinese dialects. In our unexpected conversation, Linda talked a lot about her favourite Shanghai-ese dishes and how much she missed the food there. Linda never denied or tried to reject her Chinese identity and she is actually proud of her Shanghai-ese identity. Ien Ang (2001, p.9) states that, for her family, '"out of Asia into the West" meant the utopian hope and the dogged determination to fully westernize, and to claim the west as our destiny and our eventual site of belonging'. Ien Ang once cited Bhabba's notion of 'in-between' cultural identification which suggests 'almost the same but not quite' (Bhabba, 1994, p.89). However, Linda did not determine to be fully westernized nor 'almost German but not quite'. She is Chinese and German at the same time. The 'in-between-ness' is not Linda's major cultural identification but the possession of having both. Ien Ang further deconstructs diasporic identity, claiming that 'Identity politics, in this regard, is a local offshoot of the decline of assimilationism and its illusory promise of equality on the basis of a strived-for but not achieved sameness: the politics of identity relies quintessentially on the recognition and mobilization of difference once the ideal of sameness has proved unreachable' (Ang, 2001, p.11). During the conversation with Linda, she compared the redevelopment situations in mainland China with Hong Kong, but she never said anything about the urban plans or anything related to Germany. Linda strived for

getting to be more German as a life strategy but not aimed to archive to be a total German.

Valarie Walkerdine suggests investigating audience's subjectification process and their psycho-subjectivities while conducting ethnographic audience research. Walkerdine's conception of production of subjects is based on a mix of Foucauldian post-structuralism[3] and psychoanalysis, aiming 'to recognize the powerful place of those emotions in producing the very practices and subjects' (2001, p.176). Walkerdine (1986, p.340) proposes that 'fantasy and reality already operate in a complex and indiscernible dynamic'. However, I would include memory in this complex dynamics.

Linda also said that she liked my monologue in the documentary as it reminded her 'childhood memories in Shanghai - how it was and how it became now.' Here is the monologue:

> 'Kwun Tong, one of the oldest towns in Hong Kong, is being demolished and undergoing the so called "redevelopment". This redevelopment project is the biggest Hong Kong's ever had. This place is my hometown…, my childhood…, my teenage years… and… my roots. I was shocked by the huge amount of protest banners I saw, protesting against the upcoming redevelopment plan. Some people even claim that the redevelopment of Kwun Tong is a murder of local culture.'

She continued by saying that 'you have to explore the city by foot and see, smell and touch it'. Sengun Seda (2001) uses 'the metaphor of teddy bear during the mother's absence' to describe 'own culture'. She claims that 'When a migrant eats food which is specific to his original country, or listens to a song in his own language, he is immediately linked to his past and his own culture' (Seda, 2001, 68). Mediation has influence on the migrants just as food, sound and smell have.

Linda's sharing resonates with Bazalgette and Buckingham's idea (1995, p.5), which states 'childhood is partly a cultural and ideological construction' and 'is reproduced and reinforced in everyday practices'. Linda reinforced her memories of the old Shanghai while she was watching the documentary.

In between two cultures

Another respondent Candy, a British born Chinese, showed a sense of distancing and belonging to Hong Kong. As her father was born in Hong Kong and they would return to Hong Kong once per year, Candy considers Hong Kong as her second homeland. When she watched the documentary, she was so surprised that she immediately asked me 'Oh my god, what happened in Hong Kong?'. And then, she said that 'I just know the anti-braining protest last year in Hong Kong'. When I asked her what she thought about the documentary, she answered:

> 'It is really interesting and enlightening. Without watching it, I have no idea about what's going on [in Hong Kong]. Now when I go back home, I will do some research. I heard that Hong Kong is changing but

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[3] Walkerdine refers to Michel Foucault' s notion of 'fiction which functions in truth' in *Discipline and Punish* (1979), 2001, p.176, *Growing Up Girl: Psychosocial Explorations of Gender and Class*

> I didn't realize how much it affects people like this. They [the Urban Renewal Authority] did not give them [affected shop owners] enough compensation and not help them. I know the brainwashing education. But, I don't really know about this.' (Candy, 23, British-born Chinese)

In terms of Candy's nationalistic mentality, she is experiencing a sense of 'between cultures' which is suggested by Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins (2003, P.4) when they investigated the case of Turkish migration in London in their diasporic cultural studies. During our conversation, Candy emphasized that 'My dad is always proud of being a Hong Kongese'. Although Candy does not speak Cantonese, she is sensibly aware of those differences between mainland China and Hong Kong. However, Candy's diasporic identification shows her lack of knowledge of Hong Kong locality.

She said that 'I don't know there are local stores for people renting books. I just know how the barber looks like'. The interesting thing about Kwun Tong is that it is full of individual self-run stores, which attracted Candy. At the end of our conversation, when Candy was writing her ethnic background in the demographic information, she wrote 'Chinese' and told me that 'See? I would still identify myself as Chinese'.

Being an active Investigator

Melisa is another interviewee. She was born in China and is studying Journalism in the UK. She told me what she thought about the documentary:

> 'I remember that at the beginning [of the documentary], there are a lot of voice over to introduce the story. The colour temperature and the voice over are nice. I like some shots of the big demonstration and protest, that kind of stuff and also the later the demonstration and you talk to the government officials at the end. You showed your face in your film and it is good. It is a kind of journalistic documentary. For the first part, the colour temperature and the feeling are like [a Hong Kong lesbian movie] 'Butterfly'. The filmed landscapes are similar. Both films are about Hong Kong. I saw some familiar scenes.'

Melisa actively asked me 'Did you post-produce the colour temperature?'. To which I replied: 'Yes, it is about a city so that I showed a lot of landscape scenes'. Then, Melisa continued 'But not too many interviews at the beginning. It would be better to adjust the arrangement of the story a little bit more. I also like your interview with the bookshop owner and also a woman in front of the door'

At the beginning, Melisa was quite concerned about the artistic post-production methods more than about her identity relation to the contents in this documentary. After that, Melisa asked me 'Is it because the Chinese government or some other things make Hong Kong change a lot? like it made some stores closed?'. I told her that 'Actually it is the Hong Kong government. I didn't criticize Chinese government in this documentary because it is a big topic.' Melisa kept asking 'Does it happen after 1997?' and I said 'Well, the urban renewal authority was established after 1997.' Melisa continued by saying that 'So…Sorry that I kept asking you questions. How's the benefit system in Hong Kong? How about the retired people? Are there some national securities?'

Melisa was taking a journalistic role to investigate this documentary. Unlike Linda and Candy, Melisa did not directly put her relation to Chineseness into the progress of interpreting the documentary. However, when Melisa compared the documentary with a Hong Kong lesbian movie *Butterfly* (2004), she said that the demonstration and protest scenes in *Butterfly* brought her to know about Tiananmen Square Massacre for the first time. *Butterfly* is the first Hong Kong movie she watched and it was the first time she knew about 'June fourth' and homosexuality. Van Zoonen (1994, p.76) once envisages that 'signs derive their relevance not only from the particular articulation of signifier-signified, but also from their relation to other signs'. I would suggest investigating the collision between different similar signs. During the conversation between Melisa and I, she kept comparing the filmed Hong Kong landscapes in *Butterfly* and that in the documentary. Melisa paid attention in the voice of a space and was fascinated about the demonstration and protest scenes in both texts.

Clashes between Taiwanese, Hong Kongese and mainland Chinese

At the beginning of the interview, when I asked a Taiwanese interviewee Teresa what she thought about the documentary and she responded:

> 'There are more and more Chinese go to Hong Kong to use their recourses, like education system, hospitals and the goods. It brings Hong Kong inflation. Everything becomes more expensive. It is an issue. A lot of people from mainland China go to Hong Kong. I think what you are talking in this documentary is also like that. Hong Kong is going to have more shopping malls. I think most tourists are Chinese from mainland. I think it is built for shopping. It is very tricky that more shops are opened for the tourists from China but not for Hong Kong people.'

Teresa related to the relationship between Hong Kong, Taiwan and China in an econpolitical context. She did not directly refer to the contents in the documentary. Rather than that, she talked about the current conflicts between mainland Chinese and Hong Kongese at the beginning of her sharing.

When I asked her about the image of Hong Kong in her mind, she thought that 'Hong Kong is a financial center'. However, the landscape of Hong Kong in Teresa's mind is 'an economically power place and full of skyscrapers and shopping malls.' When I asked her 'What do you think about the locality of Hong Kong? ', she said that 'I think it is quite similar with Taiwan's. I am quite familiar with the local shops. People have their own neighborhoods and communities'. During our conversation, she still kept talking with me about the urban redevelopment issues in Taiwan. She even sent me an inbox Facebook message and told me that 'Here is the news about the man who suicide after the local government demolished his pharmacy to make way for a public project. it is a project in Dapu district in Miaoli county, you might find more news in English'.

Teresa's continuous discussions about the social issue of urban redevelopment after viewing the documentary is a kind of extra-cinematic identification practice which is suggested by Jackie Stacey. 'Extra-cinematic identification practices' indicates that many forms of identification 'involves processes of transformation and production of new identities' and also passive 'confirmation of existing identities' (Stacey, 1994, p.172). The fluidity and temporariness of identification, which can be traced through a

different contextualization of viewing, would influence audience's activeness of accepting or rejecting being positioned in certain filmic elements.

Silenced Chinese?

However, not all the respondents finished watching the entire documentary. Bell is one of the respondents, who married to a British for several years and have officially migrated to Britain already. I met Bell in a voluntary work and we chatted a lot. When I told her about the documentary I have just made, she was so interested in watching it and claimed that 'I am not that knowledgeable. My husband knows much about China and Hong Kong. I get the news of China and Hong Kong from my husband'. Then, one day I invited her to view my documentary in a café and she went there with her husband. At the beginning, we have a harmonious greeting and casual conversation. After Bell and her husband had been watching the documentary for 10 minutes, Bell's husband stopped her from watching it and said that 'It is very nice to meet you Mavis. But, I am sorry that she [Bell] cannot watch it'. Stuart Hall (2003, p.237) suggests that '[Cultural identities are] Not an essence but a positioning. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position…'. For Bell's case, as a married-to-British Chinese woman, she chose to watch this documentary but was positioned in a place that is not allowed her to finish watching it. The politics of positioning speaks louder than the politics of choice.

Chabot Davis (2003) criticizes Freud's identification theories and the essentialist notion of identification as a process of recognizing sameness and disallowing that identification may also entail an awareness of difference (p.6). However, I suggest that identification does not only about sameness and differences, but also confusion and contradiction in the process of recognizing the same or the different. Bell showed her curiosity and confusion about the social issues of Hong Kong. At the same time, the freedom of watching a Hong Kong documentary was not decided by herself but somebody else who is not Chinese. She was situated in the middle between the curiosity to Chinese issues and her husband's choice and "love".

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