

---

# **Warriors as the Feminised Other**

**The study of male heroes in Chinese action cinema from 2000 to 2009**

---

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Chinese Studies  
at the University of Canterbury  
by Yunxiang Chen  
University of Canterbury  
2011

---

---

## Abstract

“Flowery boys” (花样少年) – when this phrase is applied to attractive young men it is now often considered as a compliment. This research sets out to study the feminisation phenomena in the representation of warriors in Chinese language films from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China made in the first decade of the new millennium (2000-2009), as these three regions are now often packaged together as a pan-unity of the Chinese cultural realm. The foci of this study are on the investigations of the warriors as the feminised Other from two aspects: their bodies as spectacles and the manifestation of feminine characteristics in the male warriors. This study aims to detect what lies underneath the beautiful masquerade of the warriors as the Other through comprehensive analyses of the representations of feminised warriors and comparison with their female counterparts.

It aims to test the hypothesis that gender identities are inventory categories transformed by and with changing historical context. Simultaneously, it is a project to study how Chinese traditional values and postmodern metrosexual culture interacted to formulate Chinese contemporary masculinity. It is also a project to search for a cultural nationalism presented in these films with the examination of gender politics hidden in these feminisation phenomena.

With Laura Mulvey’s theory of the gaze as a starting point, this research reconsiders the power relationship between the viewing subject and the spectacle to study the possibility of multiple gaze as well as the power of spectacle. With such reconsideration of the relationship between the film texts and the audiences, this project aims to strip off the negative connotations imposed on the concept of ‘feminisation’ and to seek to prove the emerging of a feminine discourse popularised by a graphic revolution.

## Acknowledgement

Whenever I talk about some of my favourite actors with friends, they often easily jump to a conclusion that I have a penchant for feminine actors, which is part of the urge for me to carry out this research on the feminisation phenomenon in Chinese action cinema in the past decade (2000-2009). This research was also inspired by my MA thesis mentor and great friend, Associate Professor Chigusa Kimura-Steven, when I was doing my master research on women warriors in Chinese cinema in 2006. She and my MA thesis co-supervisor, Dr. Adam Lam, who became my main mentor for my PhD research, as well as Dr. Xiao Hong who is my associate supervisor, had great faith in me and constantly encouraged me to believe in myself that I would be a great researcher.

My main supervisor Dr. Adam Lam has great faith in me. When I was still an Honour student, he had told me that I had the potential to do a PhD research. He has given me many great opportunities to work with him in different projects in order to build up my skills to be an academic scholar, including book translation and tutoring. With Adam's help, I have translated a section of one chapter of my research into Chinese, which has been published in the Chinese version of *The Reinvention of Everyday Life: Culture in the Twenty-first Century* (edited by Howard McNaughton and Adam Lam, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005).

It is difficult for me to find a better word to express my gratefulness to Associate Professor Chigusa Kimura-Steven for her spiritual support and great advice. She sent written comments for my structure and thesis planning through mails when she was in Japan. Every time she came back to Christchurch, she would squeeze time to meet up with me and discuss my progress. Even at an extreme sad time when her beautiful house was destroyed by the February 22<sup>nd</sup> earthquake in Christchurch, she still managed to arrange time to see me to make sure I had been taken good care of.

I am extremely grateful to Professor Howard McNaughton for his inspirational advice on my final journey toward completing my research. During our supervision meetings, he always has a sharp eye to pick up the core of my argument and compares it with fascinating examples. I was touched at the bottom of my heart because it is him who makes me feel that there is someone who understands exactly what I want to say. Whenever I walk past our office corridor and see Howard sitting in front of his computer (perhaps reading something by

---

one of his students), a sense of guilt strikes me hard: even though he now has to depend on medication and painkillers, he never stops working diligently to help every one of his students

I owe a great deal to Dr Peter Low who has been my proofreader. It was an extremely difficult time when he offered his help as his house was damaged in the earthquake, but he has devoted himself to helping me. He has a great eye for details and spent three months helping me correct and improve my writing style.

This project was supported by the Brownie Scholarship granted by the University of Canterbury. I am grateful for all the staff in the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics in Canterbury University for their support in the past four years. My heartfelt thanks to Dr. Xiao Hong for her continuing support and encouragement. I am also grateful to Dr Ji Fengyuan for her advice given in all seminars I have taken part in.

My family have been standing by my side for all these years and indulged me so that I can afford to focus on my research without worrying about anything else. I came from an extended family and a conservative community where a normal choice for a grown-up daughter is to get a job and then a husband. When I think of my parents, I often feel guilty for my somewhat 'wayward' choice of burying myself in a topic that probably no one cares rather than following this normal path. But my parents have never lessened their love on me and sheltered me from all the bias and the squint-eyed gaze toward my unusual choice.

Never shall I forget all the inspiration and support from friends who have believed in me when I have doubt in myself. All these great friends, Ginger Jiang, Sun Wenjun, Al You, Rornie Smarte, Musique Huang, William Liu, Gao Feng and Guo Li have shared their great ideas with me. I am also really thankful to all those who I have met in all the conferences I have attended during in the past four years for their feedback and encouragement. Special thanks to Masafumi Monden for his great inspiration and book references.

In spite of the interruption by two major earthquakes in 2010 and 2011 and numerous aftershocks, my research journey in the past three years and four months has been a colourful one with a great deal of happy memories for me to cherish.

---

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
---------------	---

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	ii
-----------------------	----

### Introductions

#### “Behold the Metrosexual as Star”

0.1 Flowery Boys Sensations.....	1
0.2 Masculinity: an Invented Category.....	10
0.3 Research Outline.....	14

### Chapter One

#### The Coming of Age of a Feminine Discourse

1.1 Preamble.....	23
1.2 Seizing Power: the Discourse of Femininity as Soft Power.....	25
1.3 Spotlighting the Female Gaze.....	32
1.3.1 Male Body as the Desired Object.....	32
1.3.2 Empowering the “Gazed/spectacle”.....	40
1.4 Feminisation and the Authoritarian Gaze.....	45
1.5 The Vitality of a Feminine Discourse in China.....	48
1.5.1 Chinese Scholar Masculinity: “Beauty Is Part of My Dignity!”.....	49
1.5.2 The Maternal Thinking in Chinese Masculinity.....	58
1.6 Masculinities and Chinese Cinema.....	68
1.6.1 The <i>Wu Xia</i> Heroes.....	69
1.6.2 The Feminised Scholars.....	77
1.6.3 Other Voices.....	82

---

1.7 Chapter Conclusion.....	84
-----------------------------	----

## Chapter Two

### Docile Son Forever:

#### The Feminisation of Son Warriors

2.1 Introduction.....	86
2.2 Feminisation Aspect 1: The Male Actor as a Spectacle for the Fans.....	89
2.3 Feminisation Aspect 2: the Culture of Filicide ( <i>A Battle of Wits</i> ).....	94
2.3.1 Filial Piety vs. Docility.....	94
2.3.2 Filicide vs. Patricide.....	99
2.4 Feminisation Aspect 3: Hail to the Metrosexual Son ( <i>Playboy Cops</i> ).....	104
2.4.1 A Son Who is not Weaned Yet.....	104
2.4.2 Producer vs. Consumer.....	106
2.5 Feminisation Aspect 4: the Triumph of Sentimentalism.....	114
2.6 Chapter Conclusion.....	117

## Chapter Three

### Warriors in Love:

#### The Feminisation of Warriors as Lovers

3.1 Introduction.....	119
3.1.1 New Wine in an Old Bottle: Film Selection.....	119
3.1.2 Film Synopsis and Chapter Outline.....	121
3.2 A Gazer's Discourse.....	124
3.2.1 Female gaze with Female agents:	
“Men beautify themselves for the women who love them”.....	124

---

3.2.2	The Craving for Romance: “Feminine Man is Her Cup of Tea”.....	127
3.2.3	What about the Macho warriors?.....	134
3.3	Girl Power in a Hostile Regime.....	136
3.3.1	The Girl Messiah in Action.....	136
3.3.2	The Glass Ceiling?.....	141
3.4	Feminised Masculinity: past and Present.....	145
3.4.1	A Lover’s Discourse: “A man is feminised because he is in love.”.....	145
3.4.2	Homecoming Ceremony for the Feminine Power.....	148
3.5	Leitmotiv Discourse: Feminised Warrior, masculine Motif.....	150
3.5.1	Commercialisation of the Leitmotiv Cinema.....	150
3.5.2	Love Me Tender: the Tactics of Feminised Warrior.....	154
3.5.3	To Unmask the Feminised Warrior.....	157
3.6	Chapter Conclusion.....	161

## Chapter Four

### The Flags of the Fathers:

#### The Feminisation of Our Father(ly) Warriors

4.1	Introduction.....	163
4.1.1	Family Romance: The Flag of our Fathers.....	163
4.1.2	Film synopsis.....	171
4.2	In Search of a Father: <i>Spy Dad</i> and Hong Kong.....	172
4.2.1	During the Carnival: Feminise Daddy to the Full.....	172
4.2.2	After the Carnival: A Dragon Dad Holding Back the Dragon Ladies.....	176
4.3	The Seduction of Iron Men: <i>Assembly</i> .....	180
4.3.1	Iron Men in the Cage of Authoritarian Gaze.....	181

---

4.3.2	Iron Man as Sufferer.....	186
4.3.3	A New Loving Symbolic Father.....	190
4.4	A Special Case of a Woman Director: <i>Run Papa Run</i> .....	194
4.4.1	What Do Women Want?.....	195
4.4.2	Is It Really What Women Want?.....	199
4.5	Chapter Conclusion.....	204

## Chapter Five

### In search of a Better Tomorrow and a Better Place:

#### Anti-heroes' Resistance against Feminisation

5.1	Introduction: Feminisation as Crisis.....	207
5.1.1	Anti-feminisation and Counter Examples.....	207
5.1.2	Film Synthesis.....	210
5.2	Hypermasculinity: Anti-Heroes' Self-made Maleness.....	214
5.2.1	Intimidation vs. Pleasure.....	216
5.2.2	Man Loves (Wo)Man.....	219
5.2.3	Undisciplined, Hard Bodies vs. Docile, Soft Bodies.....	221
5.3	<i>Exiled</i> : The Wrath of the New Father.....	225
5.3.1	Devils at the Doorstep.....	225
5.3.2	Noble Savage: "I'm the Father.".....	233
5.4	<i>The Best of Times</i> : The Longing for an Absent Parent.....	237
5.4.1	Legend of a Unicorn.....	238
5.4.2	Return to the Feminine Sphere.....	242
5.5	<i>Walking on the Wild Side</i> : Save Our Lost Children.....	246
5.5.1	"Where will We Be Tomorrow?".....	248



---

5.5.2 National Gaze: “Save Our Children!” .....	254
5.6 Chapter Conclusion.....	259
 <b>Conclusion</b>	
6.1 Chinese Warriors as the Cultural Other.....	262
6.2 The Dawn of the feminine vs. the Eclipse of the Masculine.....	265
6.3 China: Feminine Power as Part of Cultural Nationalism.....	269
“The Boys Are Back in Town” .....	274
Bibliography.....	277
Filmography.....	304

---

## Illustrations

0-1	Taiwan boy band Fahrenheit	3
1-1	Chen Kun: Metrosexual as Scholar	52
1-2	<i>Once upon a Time in China I</i>	75
1-3	<i>Once upon a Time in China I</i>	75
1-4	<i>Tunnel Warfare</i>	81
2-1	<i>A Battle of Wits</i> (Mo Gong, 2006)	102
2-2	<i>A Battle of Wits</i> (2006)	102
2-3	<i>A Battle of Wits</i> (2006)	102
2-4	Shawn Yue and Chen Kun in <i>Playboy Cops</i> (Huahua xingjing, 2008)	108
2-5	Shawn Yue and Chen Kun in <i>Playboy Cops</i> (2008)	108
3-1	Nicolas Tse in <i>A Chinese Tall Story</i> (Qingdian dasheng, 2005)	126
3-2	Nicolas Tse in <i>A Chinese Tall Story</i> (2005)	126
3-3	Charlene Choi and Nicolas Tse in <i>A Chinese Tall Story</i> (2005)	139
3-4	<i>An Empress and the Warriors</i> (Jiangshan meiren, 2008)	149
3-5	Chen Kun in <i>The Knot</i> (Yunshui yao, 2006)	156
3-6	<i>The Knot</i> (2006)	156
3-7	<i>The Knot</i> (2006)	156
3-8	a, b, c, d, Vivian Hsu in <i>The Knot</i> (2006)	158
3-9	Vivian Hsu in <i>The Knot</i> (2006)	159
4-1	Tony Leung Kar-Fai in <i>Spy Dad</i> (shenyong tiejingang, 2003)	177
4-2	Bruce Lee in <i>The Way of the Dragon</i> (Menglong guojiang, 1972)	177
4-3	<i>Assembly</i> (Ji jie hao, 2007)	183
4-4	<i>Assembly</i> (2007)	183
4-5	<i>Daughters of China</i> (Zhonghua nüer, 1949)	184
4-6	<i>Daughters of China</i> (1949)	184
4-7	Internet poster of <i>Run Papa Run</i> (yige hao baba, 2008)	198
5-1	<i>The Best of Times</i> (meili shiguang, 2002)	218
5-2	<i>Walking on the Wild Side</i> (lai xiao zi, 2006)	218
5-3	Anthony Wong in <i>Exiled</i> (fangzhu, 2006)	218
5-4	Francis Ng in <i>Exiled</i> (2006)	218
5-5	The Hong Kong-Macau implication in <i>Exiled</i> (2006)	226
5-6	Inserted scene in <i>Exiled</i> (2006)	228

---

5-7	<i>Inserted scene in Exiled (2006)</i>	228
5-8	<i>Exiled (2006)</i>	232
5-9	Unicorn' in <i>The Best of Time (2002)</i>	238
5-10	close-up in <i>A Better Tomorrow (1986)</i>	255
5-11	close-up in <i>A Better Tomorrow (1986)</i>	255
5-12	close-up in <i>A Better Tomorrow (1986)</i>	255
5-13	<i>Walking on the Wild Side (2006)</i>	256
5-14	<i>Walking on the Wild Side (2006)</i>	256
5-15	<i>Walking on the Wild Side (2006)</i>	256

## Introduction

### “Behold the Metrosexual as Star”<sup>1</sup>

#### 0.1 Flowery Boys Sensation

On 12 April 2001, a Taiwanese television drama *Meteor Garden* (*Liuxing huayuan* 流星花园, dir. Tsai Yueh-Hsun [Cai Yuexun] 蔡岳勋) based on a Japanese *manga* (cartoon books) *Hana Yori Dango* (Boys over flowers), was first broadcast on Chinese Television System (CTS 华视), a major Taiwanese television network. It was so popular that it was swiftly brought into Mainland China<sup>2</sup> and Hong Kong as well as many Asian countries such as Korea and Japan. A sequel was made afterwards and it has been replayed time and again in various television networks.

Its sensational success turned the four leading male protagonists, referred to be F4 (Flower 4), into megastars overnight. As one critic puts it, F4 are four beautiful young men who “are initiating a new aesthetic standard for males: graceful body, elegant long hair floating with the wind, fair complexion, and melancholy expressions. They are as enchanting as beautiful flowers, as charming as trees made of jade.”<sup>3</sup> Feminine men were idolised and displayed to an unprecedented level.

---

<sup>1</sup> Simpson, “Here come the mirror men”, accessed 06 October 2010, [http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/mirror\\_men.html](http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/mirror_men.html), originally published in *The Independent*, 15 November 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Although State Administration of Radio, Film and Television prohibited it from broadcasting in March 2002 after one third of it had been shown, according to my personal experience in Beijing at the time, pirate copies were easily to obtain and the theme song was one of the repeatedly played songs in campus.

<sup>3</sup> Can, Ran, ed. *Nanren dong nan xi bei: Zhongguo nanren ziyuan de linglei baogao* (Man from the East, West, South and the North: An alternative report on man resources) (Guangzhou: Guangdong lüyou chubanshe, 2004), 7. The original book is in Chinese and all the quotes are my own translations.

After the “F4” success, the media in Mainland China suddenly brought out similar images in various television competition shows. A typical example is the “Good Boy” contests selecting a champion among millions of young men from many cities according to their performance on the stage. The second competition in 2007 was promoted as “the Battle between the kingly warriors” (wangzhe zhi zhan 王者之战). During the competition period from May to 21 July, the organiser, Shanghai Dragon TV (东方卫视), advertised the candidates dressed in mythical warrior costumes, posturing with swords in hand, but when the show began, all they did was to show their talents in singing, dancing and other performances to impress the judges and the audience. The winner was to be crowned as the ‘warrior’, but in this case, a definitely ‘feminine’ one who has been put on perfect makeup, dressed in fancy costumes deliberately designed to enhance his glamorous look and physical attractiveness, reminding the audience of women in beauty contests. This feminine warrior strikes a sharp contrast with the conventional masculine warrior who is an exemplary self-made hero, an unyielding explorer, a daring pioneer and an aggressive conqueror.

Such feminine male images do not exist only in television programmes, but also are a phenomenal trend in Chinese pop cultural sphere. They represent the new blood of the Chinese entertainment empire, including the pop music industry, television and film. Pop boy bands after the F4 sensations including Fahrenheit<sup>4</sup> (Fei lun hai 飞轮海 Figure 0-1), Lollipop (bangbang tang 棒棒堂), new megastars Nicholas Tse (Xie Tingfeng 谢霆峰, who will be studied in Chapter Three), Chen Kun (陈坤 in Chapter Two and Four), are all representatives of the young ‘hot’ actors active in Chinese pop culture. They are often nicknamed as ‘*dang*

---

<sup>4</sup> Among the four members, Wu Chun (Wu Zun 吴尊) is most famous for his ‘beauty’. His maiden film work is *Butterfly Lovers* (*Wuxia liangzhu* 武侠梁祝, 2008), directed by Jingle Ma, whose film will be discussed in Chapter Two. This film is a perfect example for discussion on feminised warriors as it is a famous scholar-and-beauty story adapted into a martial art version, which would fit well into Chapter Four on warriors as lovers. However, I decided to take it out of detailed analysis, because I wished to avoid using two key examples by the same director in my research.

*hong xiaosheng*’(当红小生) in Chinese, while ‘*xiaosheng*’ in Chinese refers to a particular character of a young man, in most cases, refined, delicate Confucian scholars in Chinese opera. ‘*Hong*’ means red, indicating being popular in Chinese. These new bloods in Chinese pop scene, who often seduce their fans with their coy smiles and pinkish suits, have demonstrated common ‘effeminate’ attributes: soft and smooth skin, slim body and melancholy eyes refined by either by eyeliner or mascara.



Figure 0-1 Taiwan boy band Fahrenheit

This introduction has drawn a sketch of the flowery boy sensations in the pop culture in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China. These three regions are now often conflated and labelled as *liang'an sandi* (两岸三地, literally standing for “two shores, three regions,” with the shores referring to either side of Taiwan Strait)<sup>5</sup>.

It is not to claim that the ‘effeminacy’ phenomenon is a unique Chinese pop culture feature. The “Glam Rock” fashion led by David Bowie in the 1970s when flamboyant costumes and personalised makeup played growing importance than traditional hard and macho rock tradition had already shown a sign of feminine appearance expected in man as

<sup>5</sup> Another term is *liang'an sidi* (two shores, four regions), with the fourth region referring to Macau. Macau shares many similarities with Hong Kong, so it and Hong Kong is often regarded as one region. However, this research does not rule out Macau; in fact, one of the film examples in Chapter Five is a story set in Macau.

image. The androgynous feature of masculinity reflected in such Glam Rock might have been on the same track for acceptance of ‘feminine men’.<sup>6</sup> Nowadays, feminine men as superstars are commonly accepted in Western pop culture led by Hollywood. Marian Salzman and her fellow researchers comment on Hollywood stars today, “[n]owadays, for every Russell Crowe, there is a baby-faced, effeminate Tobey Maguire, Orlando Bloom...”<sup>7</sup>

Men who are admired for their fair, soft skin and adopt colours like pink, men who show particular taste in fashion and cosmetics, and men who function as spectacles are so easily categorised as feminised or effeminate men. While the connotation of feminisation will be further elaborated in Chapter One, but saying that men outside the conventional muscular, tough, aggressive stereotype are acting feminine indicates that male and female are compartmentalised into two definite opposite groups. Feminine men easily conjure up negative feelings that a man is not manly enough: he is either a man or unman (feminised below the status of a man). There is no third dimension or in-between possibility. This either/or unequal binary would face the entrapment of the hegemonic discourse of the masculine heterosexuality that Judith Butler takes great efforts to criticise. Butler argues that such gender binary “institutes the production of discrete and *asymmetrical* oppositions between ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’”,<sup>8</sup> whereas such gender binary reflects the hegemonic control of heterosexual institution:

The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practice

---

<sup>6</sup> P. Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006.)

<sup>7</sup> Marian Salzman, Ira Matathia & Ann O’Reilly, *The Future of Men* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 47. Certainly, the feminisation of male star in Hollywood is far more complicated than the brief argument here, but it is out of the scope of this thesis to address Hollywood in more details.

<sup>8</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 10th anniversary edition (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 23. *Italic mine.*

---

of heterosexual desire. The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary results in a consolidation of each term...<sup>9</sup>

It is a primary intention to deconstruct the asymmetrical opposition between ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ and to re-examine the feminine side of masculinity that propel this research on the feminisation phenomenon in Chinese cinema. The feminine side is no longer denounced as unmanly and pushed outside the masculinity, and such a change is reflected in new terms coined for male identity. In the English language, “metrosexual” men, a term coined by Mark Simpson in 1994,<sup>10</sup> is used popularly to refer to young male celebrities representing glamorous feminised masculinity. According to him, a metrosexual man is a “man with money and an interest in fashion and beauty who lives within easy reach of a city.”<sup>11</sup> Based on Simpson’s argument, Marian Salzman and others in their book *The Future of Men* further define “metrosexual men” as follows:

Metrosexuals, in our view, are sufficiently confident in their masculinity to be willing to embrace their feminine sides—and to do so publicly. Rather than adhere to the strictures of their fathers’ generation, they are willing to move beyond rigid gender roles and pursue their interests and fantasies regardless of societal pressures against them.<sup>12</sup>

Men embracing or even celebrating their feminine sides (that is their appearances) are conspicuous in popular culture and consumer culture worldwide. In a 2003 Poll of American Men, eighty-nine percent agreed that grooming is essential in the business world. Nearly half

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 30-31.

<sup>10</sup> Simpson, “Here come the mirror men.” The response to and debate around metrosexual has been a popular topic in popular culture since its invention; for example, in 2007, Margaret Ervin has written an intriguing article for an online journal *American Popular Culture*, “Politics, Marketing, and the Metrosexual: the Eloquence of a Marketing Tool”, accessed 19 September 2011, <http://www.americanpopularculture.com/archive/style/metrosexual.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Simpson, “Metrosexual? That rings a bell”, accessed 06 October 2010, [http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/metrosexual\\_ios.html](http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/metrosexual_ios.html).

<sup>12</sup> Salzman, Matathia and, O’Reilly, 55.



said that there is nothing wrong for a man to get a facial or a manicure.<sup>13</sup> Salzman and her co-authors identify this phenomenon as “the irresistible rise of fragrant man.”<sup>14</sup>

Tim Edwards conceptualises this twist as a “feminised form of masculinity.”<sup>15</sup> He believes that because the universal forms of consumption, including shopping for fashions, using beauty products, and cosmetic surgery, are turning more feminine, society, in order to strengthen the consumption desire, began to encourage male consumers to take an interest in improving their appearance.<sup>16</sup> Baudrillard identifies the movie stars as typical examples in such a consumer society; he calls these stars “heroes of consumption” and “great dinosaurs who fill the magazines and TV programmes, it is always the excessiveness of their lives, the potential for outrageous expenditure that is exalted.”<sup>17</sup> These film stars and sports heroes are promoted as new male ideals, whose function is, in Baudrillard’s words, “to provide the economic stimulus for mass consumption”<sup>18</sup>. This social context of consumer culture has transformed the masculine identity. Simpson describes that a conventional heterosexual man as a self-contained producer has now been re-dressed in ‘pink’ by consumer capitalism, in which “[t]he stoic, self-denying, modest straight male...had to be replaced by a new kind of man, one less certain of his identity and much more interested in his image – that’s to say, one who was much more interested in being looked at.”<sup>19</sup>

It is necessary to point out that metrosexual masculinity is not identical with feminine men or “the flowery boys” in this research. The metrosexual concept is quoted here to illustrate the particular awareness of these feminine men as images because of their appealing

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Edwards, *Cultures of Masculinity* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006), 113.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, Theory, Culture & Society (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998), 45.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>19</sup> Simpson, “Meet the Metrosexual”.

---

power to attract a gaze toward their bodies. It does not deny the metrosexual men's other more masculine skills beyond their lovable surface. Like David Beckham who is a metrosexual icon, but also a talented soccer player, other examples can be found in the boy bands and young actors that I selected to discuss in this research. For example, one of the members of F4 Ken Chu (Zhu Xiaotian, 朱孝天) is a martial artist who once won the champion in Taichi and Wrestling in a Championship held in Spain in 2007. Young actor like Shawn Yue (who will be examined as a metrosexual representative in Chapter Two) is an enthusiastic basketball player of a Hong Kong basketball club and has participated in various local basketball championships. The discussion of feminised masculinity does not imply that feminine characteristic is the univocal, singular quality in such a form of metrosexual masculinity. Rather, this research endeavours to understand the feminine aspect of such a form of masculinity that has multiple layers of references and meanings.

The celebration of feminine men was not just a type of male narcissism and a redefinition of the hero, but was also welcomed by women who find feminine men more pleasant to look at. According to a psychological test carried out at University of St. Andrews in Scotland in 2002 to survey females' preference for ideal males, "the researchers admit their perfect male looks slightly girlish, their conclusion is that women want caring feminine traits rather than more macho markings."<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, feminine gentility which has been condemned as an inferior syndrome of a patriarchal society by feminists is now redeemed as a virtue. Some third wave feminists celebrate feminine traits and advocate them to be universal virtues. Debbie Stoller, cofounder of the third wave feminist popular culture magazine *Bust*, calls for feminine traits as new standards. She believes that "we should bring feminine things into masculine spaces" and she

---

<sup>20</sup> Salzman, Matathia and, O'Reilly, 29.

proclaims that feminine traits are not preserved “just for women, but also in opening up the girlie space for men’s girlie aspect.”<sup>21</sup>

In summing up the trends in shifting male culture, Tim Edwards concludes:

...masculinity is seen to increasingly depend on matters of style, self-presentation and consumption as opposed to more traditional models of masculinity centred on work and production or, to put it more simply, masculinity is perceived to be increasingly predicted on matters of how men *look* rather than what men *do*.<sup>22</sup>

The importance of IMAGE in contemporary society has forced the studies on masculinity gradually to shift gear. Martin Mac an Ghaill and Chris Haywood remark, “we can identify a major cultural shift from working *with* the body (*focus on the industrial employee*), to working *on* a culturally inscribed, inspirational and narcissistic body (*focus on the aesthetically stylized body image*) of reflective modernity.”<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, this current research on the “aesthetically stylized” Chinese male images represented in film texts is one following this cultural shift. It seems that the flowery boy sensation and the metrosexual male celebrities do not merely reflect a challenge to gender boundaries and a new fashion in male identity, but also will be one of the key points in the redefinition of masculinity which this research will delve into. There is a whole new value system being constructed regarding the meaning of ‘feminisation’. Therefore, it is a prime time to conduct a thorough study on this feminisation sensation. The term ‘feminisation’ denotes a change in the traits and behaviours of male heroes with the inclusion of more traits and behaviours traditionally categorised feminine. This does not mean that I agree with the

<sup>21</sup> Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, “Feminism and Femininity: or How We Learn to Stop Worrying and Love the Thong”, in *All about the Girl: Culture, Power, and Identity*, ed. Anita Harris (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), 63.

<sup>22</sup> Edwards, 111.

<sup>23</sup> Mairtin Mac an Ghaill and Chris Haywood, *Gender, Culture and Society: Contemporary Femininities and Masculinities* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 151.

traditional categorisation. On the contrary, such categories vary in place and time, as will be discussed in Section 0.2.

The current study of the popularity of feminised men in Chinese language films not only contributes to the understanding of internal gender politics and their linkage with Chinese cultural traditions in contemporary Chinese communities, but also contributes to the studies on the cultural industries worldwide as Chinese blockbuster films begin to play a part in the global market. The feminised, beautiful Chinese males have inspired a wave of interest towards Chinese pop culture and have helped to soften China's international visage.

According to *Newsweek*:

Many southeast Asians are full of worries about China, ranging from the effects of the region's new trade pact to how to compete with Beijing for foreign investment. But for tens of millions of young Asians, there is a far more burning question at hand: who is the cutest member of F4...<sup>24</sup>

The same article continues to describe how these feminised young male idols stimulate a burning enthusiasm towards Chinese language and its culture throughout Asia. "The members have turned into unwitting ambassadors for greater China. Thanks largely to F4, Thais, Filipinos and Indonesians – not generally known for their interest in contemporary Chinese culture – are embracing it with a vengeance."<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, it is necessary to carry out a timely study on these feminised male images who have been idolised as cultural ambassadors to help promote Chinese culture in the global market. I intend to examine this feminisation of warriors in Chinese language films both in the contemporary context of the flowery boy phenomenon and in their connection with

---

<sup>24</sup> Alexandra A. Seno, "F4 Boys in the Band" F4 Boys in the Band", accessed 20 August 2010, <http://www.newsweek.com/2003/09/21/the-boys-in-the-band.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

---

Chinese traditions, in order to define the ‘Chineseness’ of this feminisation phenomenon as well as its postmodern features.

## 0.2 Masculinity: an Invented Category

The title of this thesis “Warriors as the Feminised Other” is not a playful word game, but rather a thought-provoking banner to re-evaluate the panorama of current gender identities and the division of masculinity and femininity.

When the words ‘feminisation’ and ‘warriors’ are mentioned together, some people assume that this is a ‘man-hating’, even ‘man-bashing’ feminist work that attempts to ridicule or downgrade men; some people get the impression that this is a study of ‘eunuch warriors’ or ‘sissy’, or homosexual men, all of which refer to stereotypically negative or marginalised images of men. Furthermore, since this is a research about Chinese language films, people who speak Chinese often come up with the phrase *yinrou* (阴柔 which literally means feminine soft) in comparison with *yanggang* (阳刚 literally meaning masculine hard).

First of all, given that this research is interplay of two languages, English and Chinese, thus engaging two cultures, the correspondence of ‘feminisation’ with Chinese phrases *yinrou* plays an essential role in initiating this research. Secondly, although a feminist perspective will be an important theme of this research, I intend to expound the ‘feminisation’ phenomenon from an impartial position without vilifying men, regarding both men and women as equal cultural citizens in a postmodern consumer society. This is not a study of transsexual or castrated men, nor one of homosexual men or women. Instead, the main focus is on heterosexual warriors, with an emphasis on male heroes, even though female warriors will also be considered in comparison.

The very first question of this research is to elucidate the mystery why ‘feminisation’ evokes negative feelings and stigmatised male images. In order to track down the origin of

the negative connotation of the word ‘feminisation’, especially when the word is used to describe man, one needs to go back to the cradle of patriarchal order in the English-speaking world, but this is out of the scope of this research. It is also unnecessary, as the focus of this research is Chinese cinematic culture.

This research is to study femininity and masculinity without “implying anything about anatomy or physiology”, to quote Robert Stoller.<sup>26</sup> Masculinity as an ideology, an identity, as well as an institution, is a source of both power and enslavement for men. On the one hand, words derived from ‘masculine’ were endowed with privileges with the heroic and positive status within a patriarchal society; on the other hand, as Pierre Bourdieu argues in his work *Masculine Domination* in 1998 men have to struggle to live up to an extremely high standard of manhood, because they are haunted by “the *fear* of losing the respect or admiration of the group”.<sup>27</sup> This explains the negative attitude towards “feminisation” of male heroes because they are regarded as disappointing males who fail to live up to a masculine ideal.

The superior status of masculinity and disparagement of femininity is, de facto, promoted to consolidate a male-centred discourse. If we follow the ideology of patriarchal hierarchical epistemology of masculinity overpowering femininity, feminisation is equal to debasement and humiliation. Women, marginalised male and ethnic groups are condemned to be feminised, and their only way out is to distort themselves, to give up their authentic origins, in order to masculinise themselves to squeeze into the masculine noble world.

However, Baudrillard overthrows such conventions and establishes a system of feminine power. He insists that the truth behind this slander of ‘feminine’ power is only a masquerade to hide the fragility of the male. According to Victoria Grace’s interpretation, Baudrillard criticises the traditional oppositional structure of male/female,

---

<sup>26</sup> Robert J. Stoller, *Sex and Gender: On the development of Masculinity and Femininity* (London: 1968), ix.

<sup>27</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 52.

masculine/feminine as “fundamentally a ‘masculine’ opposition.”<sup>28</sup> According to Baudrillard, “... the masculine has always been but a residual, secondary and fragile formation, one that must be defended by retrenchments, institutions, and artifices. The phallic fortress offers all the signs of fortress, that is to say, of weakness.”<sup>29</sup>

Exposing the hidden gender discriminations against ‘feminisation,’ the current study does not endeavour to eliminate this word, but to peel off its derogative connotation and to re-define it in an impartial sense. However, this is no easy task, as Mary Vetterling-Braggin argues that “feminine” and “masculine” are “essentially contestable” concepts.<sup>30</sup> In any given period, femininity and masculinity are not fixed, unchangeable concepts, but historical construct, which will have changed with the historical socio-cultural context. Judith Butler argues, “[g]ender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follows; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*.”<sup>31</sup> That is to say, gender is not an essential concept based on the physical distinction between men and women, but one formulated by the exterior context.

Sean Nixon also agrees on the changeable nature of gender identity. Quoting Jeffrey Weeks, he argues, “like all identities, masculinities are... **invented categories**. They are the product of the cultural meanings attached to certain attributes, capacities, dispositions and forms of conduct at given historical moments.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Victoria Grace, *Baudrillard's Challenge: A Feminist Reading* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 150.

<sup>29</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, trans. Brian Singer (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1990), 16.

<sup>30</sup> Mary Vetterling-Braggin, ed. “Femininity,” “Masculinity,” and “Androgyny”: *A Modern Philosophical Discussion* (Totowa, N. J.: Rowman & Allanheld Publishers, 1982), 1-4. She is referring to Alasdair MacIntyre, “The Essential Contestability of Some Social Concepts,” *Ethics*, 84 (1973): 1-9.

<sup>31</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 179.

<sup>32</sup> Sean Nixon, “Exhibiting Masculinity,” in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, in association with Open University, 1997. Reprint, 2001), 301; bold in original; for detailed description, see Weeks Jeffrey, *Against Nature: Essays on Sexuality, History and Identity* (London: Rivers Oram Press), 1991.

The current research aims at one such given historical moment – the decade between 2000 and 2009. The previous section on the flowery boy sensation of Chinese popular cultural arena has shown that a feminised form of masculinity is a high-profiled, if not a dominant, form of male identity. Those pop cultural icons with feminine features repeatedly act out a new style of feminised masculinity in new historical context, whereas their “*repetition of acts*” helps to institute a new masculine culture.

This new masculine culture with feminine features can be easily revealed by words and expressions that were used to describe women and stigmatised as womanish attributes but now commonly used to modify male characters and manhood, including ‘cute’, ‘hot’, and ‘beautiful’,<sup>33</sup> whereas pink is no longer a colour for girls, but also for boys (Figure 0-1). Such gender-crossing modification and reference garnish the feminisation of male identity.

In addition, at any of the “given historical moments”, the connotations of masculinity can be dissected into three different aspects, according to Kenneth Clatterbaugh’s argument. That is, masculinity can be understood as “a set of behaviors, attitudes, and conditions that are generally found in the men of an identifiable group”, or stereotypes (that is, what people think men are), or gender ideal: what people think men should be.<sup>34</sup>

Using film texts as study material, this research will examine the feminised form of masculinity from these three aspects. It will first look at the question that whether feminine characteristics are acceptable part of masculinity, then compare feminised masculinity with stereotypical machismo, and thirdly, study the new ideal manhood in the postmodern world.

---

<sup>33</sup> A typical example is the rising young idol Robert Pattinson in the *Twilight* Saga: “Robert Pattinson: Cute in Japan,” accessed 17 August 2010, <http://www.robssessedpattinson.com/2009/11/robert-pattinson-cute-in-japan-pictures.html>; Alex Pappademas, “He’s Hot, He’s Sexy, He’s undead,” accessed 18 August 2010, <http://www.gq.com/entertainment/celebrities/200903/robert-pattinson-harry-potter-twilight>. In Chinese, the phrase “ke’ai” (可爱 cute), similar to “kawaii” in Japanese, is commonly used.

<sup>34</sup> Kenneth Clatterbaugh, *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity: Men, Women, and Politics in Modern Society* (Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), 3



---

That being said, what men really are, what people think men are, and what men should be like are all behavioural variables that change according to social contexts. Therefore, masculinities are interesting barometers to investigate the social contexts that drive the transfiguration of masculinities. Consequently, the study of the representation of the male images is not only a way to understand the gender characteristics in contemporary Chinese communities of Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, but also a way to understand other relevant aspects of the said communities at these “given historical moments” of the new millennium.

### **0.3 Research Outline**

Women as spectacles have been widely studied and criticised by Mulvey and her successors; therefore, the analysis of women characters will not be the primary concern in order to concentrate on the theme of male warriors as the feminised Other in this research. This research is launched to study the depiction of warriors in Chinese language films from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China in the first decade of the new millennium, as these three regions are now often packaged together as a pan-unity of the Chinese cultural realm.

Regional traits might still be detectable, but since the new millennium, especially since China’s entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001, the great impact of Hollywood blockbusters has propelled the cooperation within film productions between these three regions to grow at an unprecedented pace. Trans-regional cooperation, which includes investments, talent recruitment, film distribution and exhibition, has become a dominant format to maximise profit returns. The *Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement* (CEPA) between Hong Kong and Mainland China put into effect in 2004 have given Hong Kong films the status of domestic production so that they are no longer subjected to the import

---

quota imposed on foreign films. Filmmakers from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China consciously expand their regional markets by absorbing elements from each other in order to secure one integrated market before moving beyond the Chinese cultural sphere toward a global market.

Case studies and textual analyses are two main methods that are to be used in this study. The film selection standards are:

1. films made between 2000 and 2009;
2. films with male protagonists who must be involved in physical battles, either sword-play martial arts, or kung fu, or gun-fights; and
3. films in Chinese language (which could be Mandarin or dialects ).

This research is an in-depth discussion on a genre of warrior images limited to one aspect –the feminisation phenomenon. Thousands of films have been produced during the timeframe of this research (2000-2009), so it is an impossible task to draw out a panorama of Chinese cinema within the scope of the current project. Since the research mainly focuses on the popular action cinema where box office appeal is one of the important indices, I will endeavour to explore the hidden significance of popular films that have often been treated as commercial products lack of depth when compared with thought-provoking arthouse cinema.

Chapter One focuses on the theoretical frameworks of this research, which will begin with a re-definition of feminisation. It will demonstrate that negative connotations imposed on femininity and feminisation are perpetuated by a masculine discourse aiming at consolidating male privilege. The new definition of feminisation in this thesis includes two strata, one psychological, the other visual. The former stratum includes attributes of men's gentleness, compassion and nurturance, which are constantly stereotyped as maternal features, whereas the latter centres on male bodies as 'sexual objects' for the gaze.

---

The construction of a ‘female gaze’ is one of the key theoretical frameworks of this research. Although Laura Mulvey’s theory of the gaze is a crucial theoretical initiative of this thesis, the reference to her will be limited to her theory of the gaze published in 1975 and her afterthought in 1981. It is acknowledged here that different critics responded to her argument from different angles, but such theoretical debates are not the crucial concern of this thesis. This thesis consists primarily of cultural and historical analyses of contemporary Chinese films; it is necessary to relate this to various crucial developments in contemporary theory, but it is far beyond the scope of this research to attempt a more comprehensive study of the debates and progress around such theories.

The thesis begins with the analysis of Laura Mulvey’s theory of the (male) “gaze” and her challengers. While Mulvey confirms that the gazer holds absolute power, this research is built on a theory that the object of the gaze, be it named as sexual object or spectacle, has an irresistible power to seduce, to engage the gazer in a game of look and being-looked-at. This statement of the power of the spectacle will be supported by Michel Foucault’s theory on power and pleasure, together with Baudrillard’s re-definition of seduction.

The recognition of seduction as a new power, together with the positive connotation given to feminisation, indicate the rising of a feminine discourse from a postmodern revolution in a society no longer led by production, but by consumption – that is, a graphic revolution where images are valued high for their symbolic meaning. Within such consumer-oriented society, women as well as men are encouraged to consume, to pamper themselves; therefore, metrosexual men, or those sometimes called fragrant men are now not just acceptable, but desirable new male ideals.

However, this feminisation in men is not simply a postmodern new feature in China, where male femininity is deeply imprinted in its traditional philosophies, including Taoism

and Confucianism. Muscle power is regarded as a characteristic subordinate to literary talents in the Chinese culture, in which a fragile scholar is often worshipped as ideal male ego.

The remaining chapters from Two to Five will be devoted to the analysis of the feminisation of warriors in Chinese language films by examining men's different roles in the family, in the local community and in the global context as cultural Other. Since coproduction between Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China has been the main practice in Chinese language film industry within the timeframe of this research – the first decade of the second millennium – the majority of the films selected are coproductions; therefore, the main body of this research will not be divided by regions. In addition, the CEPA implemented in 2004 has stated that the Hong Kong film industry is virtually regarded as a domestic industry of Mainland, and its products are no longer subjected to the import quota imposed on foreign films.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, regional origins are not the criteria of Chapter division.

Instead, in order to understand Chinese masculinity, it is useful to start with the conceptualisation of “human” in Chinese philosophy. What is human in China's cultural legacy is not defined as an asocial individual, but as a particle of multifaceted relations which include familial, political, social and economic dimensions. The prominent analyst of Chinese culture Sun Lung-kee (Sun Longji) points out that

...a Chinese fulfils himself<sup>36</sup> within the network of interpersonal relationships. A Chinese is the totality of his social roles. Strip him of his relationships, and there is nothing left. He is not an independent unit. His existence has to be defined by his

---

<sup>35</sup> Stephen Teo, *Director in Action: Johnnie To and the Hong Kong Action Film* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), 201.

<sup>36</sup> Sun uses the male form “他” to refer to human, similar to “man” referring to both male and females. A genderless word “其” had been used to refer to he or she in classical Chinese, and such a genderless term has further proven the absence of sexual difference in gender identification in Chinese tradition.

---

acquaintance....When man can only be defined through his relationships with others, a “loner” without social connections is unacceptable.<sup>37</sup>

These social connections can be charted into five categories according to Chinese rituals: father-son, elder-younger, husband-wife, state-subject, and friend (other)-friend (self). The former role in each of those five relations occupies a superior (*yang*) position, whereas their counterparts are required to behave in an obedient, inferior, therefore, feminised (*yin*) way, who shared the fate of subordinate women in a strict patriarchal hierarchy. Each man is trapped into the social network with no guarantee of holding on to a superior (*yang*) position. For example, a father’s superior role can be feminised in his relationship to his political role as a subject under the sway of his state. The following chapters are dedicated to the analyses of the submissive/ feminised side of the masculinity identity from men’s familial role to his role in his local community and lastly as the cultural other in the global context.

As for his familial role, I start with the analysis of men’s role as sons in Chapter Two (thus an aspect of father-son relationship). Chapter Three is devoted to lovers’ discourse to explore men’s role as lovers (i.e. husband-wife aspect and the second stage of manhood). Chapter Four focuses on the fatherly figures (including father-son, state-subject and elder-younger relations), the third stage that follows men’s role as lovers and husbands. Chapter Five will concentrate on his role as the metaphor of the local community where they are nourished, in combination of the “friend-friend” aspect of men’s role.

Chapter Two, “Docile Son Forever: The Feminisation of Son Warriors”, examines the compatibility of feminine elements in masculinity within Chinese Confucian beliefs. The films examined include *A Battle of Wits* (*Mo gong* 墨攻 2006) by Jacob Cheung Chi-Leung (Zhang Zhiliang 张之亮) and *Playboy Cops* (*Huahua xingjing* 花花型警, 2008) by Jingle Ma

---

<sup>37</sup> Sun, Lung-kee, *Zhongguo wenhua de shenceng jiegou* (*The deep structure of Chinese culture*) (Hong Kong: Jixian She, 1983. Reprint, 1992), 11-13. This English translation is quoted from Geremie Barmé and John Minford, ed., *Seeds of Fire: Chinese Voice of Conscience* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988), 163.

(Ma Chucheng 马楚成). The son's *yin*/feminine position is compared to the Father's *yang*/masculine status, and such power conflicts between father and son result in two extremes – 'filicide' and 'infantilisation' complexes. *A Battle of Wits* is an example for tackling the tradition of filial piety and the 'filicide' complex, while *Playboy Cops* is a film text used to analyse the infantilisation complex. In conjunction with such analyses of power structure between father and son, the Confucian concept of '*xiao*' (孝 filial piety) will be re-examined. The phenomenon of feminised warriors in this chapter will be examined from the following aspects: the male as a spectacle for the gaze; the filicide complex in Chinese tradition and its connection with the feminisation of the warriors and metrosexual manhood.

Chapter Three, "Warriors in Love: the Feminisation of Warriors as Lovers", focuses on the romances of feminised warriors, with three films as examples: *An Empress and the Warriors* (*Jiangshan meiren* 江山美人, dir. Ching Siu-Tung [Cheng Xiaodong] 程小东, 2008), *A Chinese Tall Story* (*Qing dian dasheng* 情癫大圣, dir. Jeffrey Lau [Liu Zhenwei] 刘镇伟, 2005) and *The Knot* (*Yun shui yao* 云水谣, dir. Yin Li 尹力, 2006). Male bodies as spectacles continue to be examined in this chapter, but the focus will switch to images of macho warriors as spectacles and to the women characters' role as active gaze agents, reflecting the ascendance of girl power. The argument in this chapter will be supported by social statistics of the growing importance of the female audience and surveys that show female preference. I will delve into details of how different filmmakers manage to insert their own gender politics into their construction of the images of 'new good men' to cater to the female audience who play an increasingly important role in the film markets.

Chapter Four, "The Flags of the Fathers: the Feminisation of Our Father(ly) Warriors" will demonstrate that the 2000s is a decade of the father. The key films for analysis and comparison are *The Incredible Special Agent* (aka *Spy Dad*, *Shengyong tiejingang* 神勇铁金

刚, dir. Wong Jing [Wang Jing] 王晶, 2003), *Assembly* (*Jijie hao* 集结号, dir. Feng Xiaogang 冯小刚, 2007) and *Run Papa Run* (*Yige hao baba* 一个好爸爸 2008) directed by female director Sylvia Chang (Zhang Aijia 张艾嘉). This chapter will study different forms of feminisation of the father warriors with regional colours as a subtheme. *Spy Dad* is a Hong Kong example of carnival that disguises a feminised form of father warriors, in which the father will be re-crowned as a dragon by the end of the film when the name of the father is reassured. *Assembly* is a Mainland Chinese example of a father being feminised /disempowered by an authoritarian gaze, but such a father who is deprived of power won nationwide recognition and regained his status as a new lovable patriarch.

*Run Papa Run* is quoted as a special case produced by a female director. Female directors are still the minority both in terms of film productions and gender proportion among filmmakers. Moreover, female directors often focus on women's issues. Therefore, only a few examples could be found in this research, since this research concentrates on male images. *Run Papa Run* is one of such rare cases by a woman director, and Chapter Four will study how the director's gender identity influences the gender politics in films and will examine whether a woman director could really embody her own female discourse into her film. Furthermore, the director had to negotiate with Mainland Chinese censorship in order to get a permit to release her film in Mainland China; therefore, this film *Run Papa Run* based on a Hong Kong story directed by a Taiwan-born director is also a significant example of Hong Kong/Taiwan conflicts with Mainland China censorship.

After the examination of masculinity from an individual perspective in a man's role as son, lover and father, I will move on to the discussion of men as a community member, and their masculinity is coloured with their local uniqueness. Chapter Five, "In search of a Better Tomorrow and a Better Place: Anti-heroes' Resistance against Feminisation", focuses on counter-examples of the feminised warriors examined in the previous chapters and how

these counter-examples reveal the different local origins of the feminisation phenomenon.

The three films analysed are typical local stories: *Exiled* (*Fangzhu* 放逐 2006) is a story set in Macau, whose colonial status represented Hong Kong, directed by Hong Kong director Johnnie To Kei-Fung (Du Qifeng 杜琪峰); *Walking on the Wild Side* (*Laixiaozi* 赖小子 2006) is a film set in Shanxi Province in Mainland China, directed by Mainland director Han Jie (韩杰), revealing the lives and suffering of the underclass neglected by the glamorous metrosexual culture; *The Best of Times* (*Meili shiguang* 美丽时光 2002) is directed by Taiwan director Chang Tso-chi (Zhang Zuoji 张作骥), who sets his story at the neglected neighbourhood of Taipei.

The previous chapters have looked at the concepts of masculinity from men as son, lover and father. However, masculinity as an ideology, an identity, as well as an institution, is both a source of power and enslavement for men. On the one hand, they were endowed with privileges with the heroic and positive status within a patriarchal society; on the other hand, they all have to struggle to live up to an extremely high manhood standard, while the failure to maintain a perfect manhood haunts them for their whole life. This chapter will study men's struggle to be 'real men' in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan and how their different struggles with their environment unveil their local history and socio-cultural problems.

Because of the frequent use of Chinese names in this research, it is necessary to clarify their spelling. For all the Chinese names quoted in the main body of this research will be written according to the Chinese tradition – the family name comes before the first name. For those who have adopted Western names, their adopted first names will be written before their family names. In addition, because different Romanisation or Pinyin systems are used in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other Asian communities, this research will acknowledge and respect the regional differences and the Chinese names of people from each of the above mentioned regions will be spelt according their own way of Romanisation, only



---

that the rule of family name comes first will be followed. In places where applicable, the Chinese characters and Pinyin will be provided. For those people who only published in Chinese and their English names are not available, Pinyin will be used for the spelling of such names. For the sake of consistency, the same rule will be followed in the footnotes, even though the formal practice of footnote requires the first name to be put before the family names. However, in order to help the reader to identify such names more clearly and provide an obvious clue to the bibliography, whenever a Chinese name appears at the first time in the footnote, a comma will be put after the person's last name. This practice here is neither a challenge to any established rule of English writing nor a deliberate act to stand out as different, but only for convenience and consistency.

As a conclusion to an introduction, it is clear now that this research is necessary because the feminised male images have been a high-profiled presence in Chinese popular culture, which provide a reservoir of primary sources for this research. Male identity is an invented category that is modified by different historical contexts. Therefore, the study of Chinese manhood in such a period is not merely to examine gender relationships, but also as a more ambitious project to understand how Chinese cultural heritage and its contemporary postmodern context have helped reshaping the structure of masculinity. Using feminisation as a starting point, I intend to redefine its meaning, peel of its derogative connotations, and find a way to prove that feminisation is no longer a form of disempowerment, but some form of self-made empowerment.

## Chapter One

### The Coming of Age of a Feminine Discourse

#### 1.1 Preamble

As a study focusing on the first decade of the second millennium in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, this thesis re-defines ‘feminisation’ in the discipline of film study in three aspects.

The first one refers to the psychographic traits of the characters in the filmic narratives. From this aspect, a feminised person is one (man or woman) who maintains a personality that is conventionally considered to be ‘maternal/feminine.’ Feminisation, first of all, refers to the trend of soft characteristics in masculine identity, such as nurturing, caring, gentle, sensitive, obedient, which will be analysed in Section 1.2.

The second aspect of the re-definition of ‘feminisation’ in this study refers to the visual function of male figures serving as ‘sexual objects’ in films, which is considered as a ‘feminisation’ phenomenon based on a corollary from Mulvey’s opinion that “[w]oman displayed as sexual object is the *leitmotif* of erotic spectacle”.<sup>1</sup> In other words, since being sexual objects has been stigmatised as women’s role, men who play the same role would be regarded as ‘being feminised’. Since this vision of the male as “erotic spectacle” is added to Mulvey’s theory on men looking at women, her view on “MEN AS BEARER OF THE

---

<sup>1</sup> Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” in *Feminism and Film*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Reprint, 2004), 39-40. This article was first published in *Screen*, Vol.16, no.3 (1975), 40. The first italic is my emphasis, and the second one is original.

LOOK”<sup>2</sup> should be adjusted to ‘both men and women as bearer of the look’. As mentioned in Introduction, heterosexual warriors are the main focus of this study, there is now an essential issue to search for a “female gaze”<sup>3</sup>. Yet, the male image as an erotic object is not looked at as a sign of disempowerment or passiveness. Man as spectacle, on the one hand, caters to women spectators and reflects a form of feminised masculinity as women-made masculinity, but on the other hand, also reflects the male identity being reformed by the postmodern consumer culture where the seduction of the image is given more strength. This aspect will be analysed with Baudrillard’s theory on consumer society and seduction in Section 1.3.

The third layer of feminisation is defined on the power relationship, which is based on the metaphor of gender relationship discussed in the previous two layers of feminisation. Referring to Lacanian theory of the Law of the Father as the symbolic order, E. Ann Kaplan talks about a child entering his adult manhood as he steps into “the world of the symbolic governed by the Law of the Father and revolving around the phallus as signifier.”<sup>4</sup> The Lacanian theory of the system is established in the name of the Father, where the female is excluded as the silent, marginalised Other, outsider and object. Therefore, a feminised strategy is to imitate the female to play the weak, subordinate soft role, through which to search for a discourse of the silent, soft party. This layer of feminisation will be studied in Section 1.4 and such a feminised approach is also recognised as the Chinese characteristic of masculinities in Section 1.5 and 1.6.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 2. Full capitalisation in original text.

<sup>3</sup> This research does also acknowledge the homosexual gaze towards male screen persona but it is a topic out of the scope of this thesis. Heterosexual audiences are still the main target of the main stream cinema, and many of the mainstream films with homosexual themes are released for heterosexual mainstream audience to consume, such as *Brokeback Mountain* (dir. Ang Lee, 2006); this thesis focuses on the heterosexual mainstream. Meanwhile, this research also acknowledges the existence of heterosexual male gaze towards the male body, which will be discussed brief in next section.

<sup>4</sup> E. Ann Kaplan, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York: Methuen, 1983), 19.

## 1.2 Seizing Power: the Discourse of Femininity as Soft Power

The feminised form of masculinity represented by the flowery boys described in Introduction is by no means just a male issue, but rather reflects a social trend that upholds a discourse of feminised values. However, the most obvious connection is easily made between the male body and his feminine behaviour. While the male body as an erotic object will be considered a second layer of the feminisation phenomena, the feminisation of the male body, first of all, refers to the feminine characteristics adopted by men. However, what kinds of behaviour could be interpreted as feminised behaviour in terms of common knowledge is not easy to be defined by clear boundaries. In order to understand the connotation of ‘feminisation’, it is first necessary to clarify the conventional division of ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’. Mary Vetterling-Braggin gives a comprehensive summary of the connotations of “feminine” and “masculine” in the following tables<sup>5</sup>:

<b>Feminine</b>	<b>Masculine</b>
Gentleness, modesty, humility,	Strength of will, ambition, courage,
Supportiveness,	Independence, assertiveness,
Empathy, compassionateness,	Aggressiveness,
Tenderness, nurturance,	Hardness,
Intuitiveness,	Rationality or the ability to think
Unselfishness,	logically, abstractly and analytically
Sensitivity	Ability to control emotion

<sup>5</sup> Vetterling-Braggin, 5-6.

However, such classification by no means constrains the masculine model to males and the feminine model to females. Judith Butler's famous theory "gender is performative" argues that gender is

a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one.... If it is possible to speak of a "man" with a masculine attribute and to understand that attribute as a happy but accidental feature of that man, then it is also possible to speak of a "man" with feminine attributes..."<sup>6</sup>

The flowery boys sensation is an example of Judith Butler's theory of the performativity of gender, where men pick up feminine attributes to construct a feminised form of masculinity, but certainly her theory should not be confined to the feminisation of gender identity. Her criticism of the hegemony of heterosexual patriarchy and her contribution to political positioning of all other gender identities that are outside the heterosexual dyad, such as queer identity, transsexual, have to be acknowledged at the same time.

As for the timeframe of this research (2000-2009), a discourse of soft power<sup>7</sup> based on feminine virtues has been widely appreciated in contemporary society. As early as 1989, an influential custom market research company Taylor-Nelson, co-operating with French based International Research Institute on Social Change, conducted a research on the lifestyle and psychographics trends in Europe. Taylor-Nelson identified the following as key motivations among the groups at the forefront of social trends: "networking, polysensuality, hedonism, desire for emotional experience, risk-taking, and exploring new mental frontiers".<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xv and 10, 32.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Essential Works of Michel Foucault*, vol. 3: Power, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley and others (Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 2001): 326-348. Foucault's discussion on pastoral power as not a form a command but sacrifice and salvation formed the theoretical base of soft power.

<sup>8</sup> Sean Nixon, *Hard Looks: Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1996), 97.

Since these demographic attitudes were regarded as the vanguard mindset at the end of the 1980s, the company in fact envisaged the coming of age of a softer lifestyle and psychographics from the 1990s.

In Taylor-Nelson's findings, even though "risk-taking" is conventionally a military trait, which is commonly identified as masculine, traits of "polysensuality" and "hedonism" that emphasise sensual pleasure of the body, have been stigmatised as feminine features. Hellenistic Jewish Biblical philosopher Philo (20 BCE- 50 CE) has pointed out that sense-perception is symbolised as female, while maleness is symbolically represents the realm of Mind and God.<sup>9</sup> Polysensuality and hedonism both emphasise the satisfaction of sensual pleasure, which is a typical feature of the consumer society where Baudrillard observes that we are seeing an "*extension of the feminine model to the whole field of consumption,*" where "[m]odern man ... is also called on to indulge himself."<sup>10</sup> The metrosexual men illustrated in the Introduction are representatives of such consumer heroes guided by a feminine model to indulge themselves, posing themselves as leaders of the glamorous feminised heroes who show more concern to fashion and their look rather than muscular power, while they become to new role models to encourage imitation.

Not just men find it desirable to adopt a feminised lifestyle; women, and even critical feminists, celebrate women's bodily pleasure as feminine power. For example, the authors of the manifesto of third wave feminism,<sup>11</sup> Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, describe the coming of age of a 'girlie feminism':

<sup>9</sup> Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' & 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1993. Reprint, 1995), 23.

<sup>10</sup> Baudrillard, *Consumer Society*, 98, original italics.

<sup>11</sup> More detailed discussion on third wave feminism can refer to Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, eds. *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1997); Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000).

Girlie encompasses the tabooed symbols of women's feminine enculturation – Barbie dolls, makeup, fashion magazines, high heels – and says using them isn't shorthand for 'we've 'duped.' Using makeup isn't a sign of our sway to the market place and the male gaze; it can be sexy, campy, ironic, or simply decorating ourselves without the loaded issues.<sup>12</sup>

If Baumgarner and Richards observe this 'girlie feminism' and its emphasis on the feminisation trend in women's culture as a Western phenomenon, Chinese women now join in this 'girlie' community by regarding exhibiting their glamorous bodies in front of the camera as newfound confidence. An article published in 2008 in an important Chinese women's magazine, *Women of China*, records girls expressing their ecstasy in dressing up in beautiful outfits and make-up to pose for glamour shots.<sup>13</sup> When Harriet Evans studies Chinese women's attitude to fashion in the 2000s, she notices that "[f]or them [Chinese women], the possibility of making choices between different shapes and colours of femininity signifies the freedom to express desires and values denied their mothers' generation".<sup>14</sup> Thus, the feminine model in the consumer society is widespread in Chinese communities.

The second type of attitudes that are closer to feminine characteristics in Taylor-Nelson's finding is "networking" and "desire for emotional experience". Such social trends were not just Taylor-Nelson's findings; Anoop Nayak and Mary Jane Kehily, borrowing from Anthony Giddens' *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, love and eroticism in modern age*, introduce "a new and highly personalized form of democracy based upon emotions" in postmodern society, replacing the previous "external norms and values."<sup>15</sup> Explicitly, people now prefer to build up relationships and intimacy on emotional needs rather than following social regulations and obligations.

<sup>12</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, 60.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Martin, "Glamor Shots Transform Chinese Women into Models," *Women of China*, No.1 (2008): 60.

<sup>14</sup> Harriet Evans, "Gender in Modern Chinese Culture," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Chinese Culture*, ed. Kam Louie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 86.

<sup>15</sup> Anoop Nayak and Mary Jane Kehily, *Gender, Youth and Culture: Young Masculinities and Femininities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 62.

The anticipation of psychographic change towards emotion in Europe was spread internationally, which is proven by the popular culture in the Hollywood of the 1990s. Filmmakers in Hollywood cinema explored the emotional male heroes in their presentation of heroic warriors in films from the 1990s, focusing on softening the macho warriors. It was also at the same period when some of these Hollywood blockbusters were allowed into the Chinese market after 1994 when the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television decided to import ten foreign films on the basis of a profit-sharing scheme from 1995.<sup>16</sup>

Dariusz Galasiński creates a film metaphor to highlight the ‘feminised’ process in his study of men and the language of emotions; “[i]n Hollywood terms, it is much more *Forrest Gump*, or *Saving Private Ryan* than the likes of *First Blood*.”<sup>17</sup> Susan Jeffords is a prolific scholar in this field and is widely quoted. In her 1993 article, she started to pay attention to the emotional expression in macho male characters, detecting masculine sentiment in such macho films as *Terminator 2* (dir. James Cameron, 1991). She notes that films like this “supply a ‘new’ way for masculinity to go...inward, into increasingly emotive displays of masculine sensitivities, traumas, and burdens.”<sup>18</sup> She neatly summarises the evolution of male protagonist presentations in films in the three decades from the 1970s to the 1990s with the hard/soft transition:

...the Reagan years offered the image of a ‘hard body’ to contrast directly to the ‘soft body’ of the Carter years, the late 1980s and early 1990s saw a reevaluation of that hard body, not for a return to the soft body but for a rearticulation of masculine strength and power through internal, personal, and family-oriented values.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *The Fugitive* (dir. Andrew Davis, 1993) was the first film imported in 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Dariusz Galasiński, *Men and the Language of Emotions* (Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 38.

<sup>18</sup> Susan Jeffords, “Can Masculinity Be Terminated? ”, in *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*, eds. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 259.

<sup>19</sup> Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 13.



More recently, Marian Salzman and others have noted that “Hollywood is increasingly tilting toward a ‘lite’ version of masculinity—one that emphasizes sensibility and sensuality over power and bravado.”<sup>20</sup> Yet, they also realise that “it’s because of the bravado, the strength, and the superpowers that the men are allowed their feelings today.”<sup>21</sup> Such stresses on sensibility and feelings strikingly tally with Baudrillard’s conception of our postmodern world where “[a] whole maternal, protectionist lexicon is deployed to refer to these institutions: social security, insurance, family allowance, old-age cover, unemployment benefit ....”<sup>22</sup>

During the 1990s, Daniel Goleman constructs a new emotional male in his influential works including *Emotional Intelligence*, establishing a scientific and positive foundation to reveal emotions, especially for men. Thus, emotion was given an official status, raising the important role of Emotional Quotient (EQ) that place greater emphasis on empathy, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, that is, the networking and emotional factors in Taylor-Nelson’s findings.

EQ is not merely highlighted in the construction of preferred personality. In social production, positive appreciation of feminine virtues is closely related to the transformation of the work ethics. Society began to embrace more and more characteristics which had been linked to women (therefore being lower in status in a patriarchal society) as progressive and positive dispositions. Nayak and Kehily call it “the growth in a ‘soft economy’”,<sup>23</sup> where there was a gradual process of ‘feminisation’ of the labour force. All over the world,

...the sorts of jobs that called for male muscle and daring are disappearing fast and being replaced by the type of work women can do at least as well as men. Office jobs, services jobs, jobs that involve working with people and information rather

<sup>20</sup> Salzman, Matathia and, O’Reilly, 124. The original text is in bolds.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 127. The original text is in bolds.

<sup>22</sup> Baudrillard, *Consumer Society*, 160.

<sup>23</sup> Nayak and Kehily, 40.

---

than with things and machinery are gaining in prestige and power—and in paycheck.<sup>24</sup>

Both men and women were dragged into the development of a soft economy. John MacInnes argues that the development of modern capitalism is “the rise of the rule of the offices not men.”<sup>25</sup> In the office, men start to face competition from women, as Salzman and others also agree with MacInnes, noting that in the network of the office world, “interpersonal and multitasking skills are becoming the must-haves, and they’re female specialities.”<sup>26</sup> Men need to develop their feminine communication skills rather than their muscle to catch up with the ‘feminisation’ of the economy, whereas women are better equipped to fit into this transition and enjoy more opportunities. One of the decisive effects of women’s expanding employment, as MacInnes has pointed out, is “the gradual death of male breadwinner ideology.”<sup>27</sup>

Of course, the feminisation of labour does not indicate that men are driven out the working force. Men, on the contrary, face up to the challenge by adapting feminine traits. Linda McDowell, in *Capital Culture: Gender at Work in the City*, observes “men using femininity as a cultural resource in their self-presentation... as serving to distance themselves from older men’s traditional occupational style of a centred, patriarchal masculine identity. Rather, they portray a gendered style imitative of feminine ways of being and doing.”<sup>28</sup>

The brief psychographic mapping above reflects a change in commercial practice, with an emphasis on narcissism, emotions, pleasure and leisure, as well as the transition in work ethics, indicating a discursive transformation in society in the past two decades. In other

---

<sup>24</sup> Salzman, Matathia and, O’Reilly, 108.

<sup>25</sup> John MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity: the Confusion of Sexual Genesis and Sexual Difference in Modern Society* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998), 5.

<sup>26</sup> Salzman, Matathia and, O’Reilly, 9.

<sup>27</sup> MacInnes, 53.

<sup>28</sup> Mac an Ghaill and Haywood, 92. The quotation was their interpretation of Linda McDowell, in her work *Capital Culture: Gender at Work in the City* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

words, such softer, thus feminine virtues have been promoted to what Foucault called “social hegemonies”<sup>29</sup>, thus forming a new soft power discourse. The Introduction argued that both masculinity and femininity are historical constructs, the rising status of feminine values has become the new historical context for gender relationship and gender identity. The metrosexual phenomenon introduced in the beginning of this research is a confirmation of the coming of age of a feminine discourse. Feminine attributes in a man are no longer something shameful that needs to remain hidden, but rather, such a man is a “sensitive new-age guy”(SNAG)<sup>30</sup> protected by the social hegemonies that reveres a softer version of discursive power.

### **1.3 Spotlighting the Female Gaze**

#### **1.3.1 Male Body as the Desired Object**

Not only is it now acceptable for men to perform a feminised form of masculinity, such feminised male images also provide visual pleasure for those who gaze at them. Since one characteristic of metrosexual men, as Simpson noted, is their consciousness of their appearance and their awareness of them being-looked-at, the following two sections will focus on the relationship between these male images and those who gaze at them, thus examining the second theme of feminisation of this research – the visual presentation of the male images. Since this research is a case study of the cinema, the discussion will concentrate on film-related theories.

Historically speaking, both actors and actresses would become spectacles once they performed in films, but since the beginning of the film industry when male held the economic power and thus controlled consumption, it seemed that there has been a common strategy to

---

<sup>29</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality: Volume I*, 93.

<sup>30</sup> Salzman, Matathia and, O'Reilly, 44.

satisfy male voyeurism by depicting female actors as erotic spectacles for the male gaze. Such gender politics seemed to be so common and acceptable that it was seldom questioned, whereas male bodies as spectacles, just like the coloured ‘minority’ in race and ethnicity, were treated as special. Long before systematic theoretical studies of the gender political behind screen had been carried out, some scholars have shown interest in people’s amazement at these male spectacles.

As early as 1954, Bob Thomas already identified a phenomenon of male as spectacle.

“Whatever does she see in him?” is a common female crack about another girl’s beau or husband. Or about her movie hero....Some like them tough, some like them tender. Some like them wistful and in need of a mother while others like them as protective as a father. Rippling muscles and a bare chest give some women shivers of delight while still others feel that Hathaway has done more for men than nature. A dimple in the chin is deliciously sexy to dimple doters while other women want to fill it up with putty. Feats of strength and prowess make certain women feel all weak and swoony though some want to say, “Come off it, you big baboon!”<sup>31</sup>

Certainly, Thomas described an interesting phenomenon without criticism, but already touched on a sense of anxiety of men as spectacles. With the growth of feminist consciousness and female economic power, an increasing number of feminist critics began critiquing the gender politics in films. Mulvey’s criticism to the erotic objectification and fetishism towards women represents the pinnacle in such a gender consciousness awakening. She inaugurates the theory of the “gaze” with her most influential article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, in which she argues:

The male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked

---

<sup>31</sup> Bob Thomas, “The Stronger Sex Makes Strong Box Office,” *Life* 31 May 1954, 93; quoted in Steven Cohan, “Masquerading as the American Male in the Fifties: Picnic, William Holden and the Spectacle of Masculinity in Hollywood Film,” in *Male Trouble*, ed. Constance Penley and Sharon Willis (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 203.

---

at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.<sup>32</sup>

She further argues that in a patriarchal narrative structure, men cannot bear the burden of being the spectacle; therefore, the “spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he projects his look onto that of his like, his screen surrogate.”<sup>33</sup> That is, the spectators identify with the male protagonist and share his point of view of as the observing subject to enjoy watching the female in the film, so the actors who play the male protagonists will not be turned into erotic objects of the gaze.

Admittedly, Mulvey’s publication of the “gaze” theory in 1975 inspired a gender aspect in film criticism, but what she fails to see is that she bases her argument on the confirmation of passive female and active male split, therefore, reinforcing *de facto* the masculinisation of the “gaze”. Even though in her afterthought in response to her challengers in 1981, she acknowledges the presence of the female spectator, she highlights the “phallic aspect” of it and re-states that the female audiences were attracted to the “memory of the ‘masculine’ phase”<sup>34</sup> to resist their passive femininity, thus reinforcing the stereotype that the male hero is the active agent. Steven Cohan and Ina Ra Hark criticise this masculinisation of the “gaze”:

...film theory has for the most part confidently equated the masculinity of the male subject with activity, voyeurism, sadism, fetishism and story, and the femininity of the female subject with passivity, exhibitionism, masochism, narcissism, and spectacle.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” 39-40.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>34</sup> Laura Mulvey, “Afterthought on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ Inspired by King Vidor’s *Duel in the Sun* (1946),” in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 129. It was originally published in *Framework* 15-16-17 (summer 1981) pp12-15.

<sup>35</sup> Cohan & Hark, “Introduction,” in *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*, eds. Steven Cohan & Ina Rae Hark (London & New York: Routledge, 1993, reprinted 1995), 2.

Marc O'Day criticises such a dichotomy in the "male gaze" theory as unsound: "spectator identifications are not necessarily locked within the Mulvey dynamic of the active, sadistic 'male' gaze and the passive, masochistic 'female' gaze."<sup>36</sup> So, both the central hero and heroine "can be seen to function simultaneously as the action subject of the narrative and their erotic object of visual spectacle."<sup>37</sup>

Following Mulvey's insight of the object of the gaze being "feminine", some critics have already raised the question of men turning into a spectacle as men being feminised. In Mulvey's interpretation, femininity is equal to spectacle. An erotic objectification of the male body puts the male into a sign, an object to be looked at. His image functions as a passive sign consumed by the audience. E. Ann Kaplan borrows Lacan's argument on subject and object to argue women's usual position as the object and the Other in the patriarchal hierarchy, "[a]ssigned the place of object (lack), she is the recipient of male desire, passively appearing rather than acting."<sup>38</sup> Thus, men, as spectacles and sexual objects, are put into a position which is usually assigned to women. Therefore, at the moment of being looked at, his passiveness can be regarded as being feminised. The erotic objectification of the male body is one aspect of the feminisation of the male image.

Different scholars and critics started to discuss about the feminisation of male images and characters after Mulvey's formation of male-as-active-subject and female-as-passive-object. Gaylyn Studlar uses the dancer-actors in the 1910s and 1920s Hollywood cinema to demonstrate the male body as spectacle and discusses such masculinity as women-made masculinity. She illustrates that the attention to the dancers' body for visual pleasure unsettled the normal sexual norms where women were usually assigned the role of the desired

---

<sup>36</sup> Marc O'Day, "Beauty in Motion: Gender, Spectacle and Action Babe Cinema," in *Action and Adventure Cinema*, ed. Yvonne Tasker (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 204.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>38</sup> E. Ann Kaplan, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York: Methuen, 1983), 26.

objects. She states that the start of male dancers as spectacles “also stood for the many American males of the late 1910s and 1920s who perceived themselves as being in danger of being desired and dominated rather than desiring and dominating.”<sup>39</sup>

Studlar did not use the word “feminisation” to state her points, but many other scholars were more ready to openly discuss the male characters as erotic object as a form of feminisation. Although Steve Neale agrees with Mulvey’s premise that the spectatorial look in mainstream films is fundamentally male, he definitely sees that there are occasions when men are served as the erotic spectacles. He uses Rock Hudson as a case of male image “presented quite explicitly as the object of an erotic look. The look is usually marked as female... Hudon’s body is *feminized* in those moments....”<sup>40</sup>

Steven Cohan talks about male images as spectacles in post-war Hollywood musicals as “the genre’s ‘feminisation’ of the song-and-dance man through spectacle”<sup>41</sup>, and understands such a more feminised version of masculinity represented by the dancers was a response to the “postwar anxieties about male authority and masculinity.”<sup>42</sup> Of course, his argument on feminisation is still based on the more conventional understanding that the feminisation indicates crisis and castration, which leads to his conclusion that feminisation is related to anxieties and loss of power. However, this conventional understanding of feminisation is one of the main points that this research attempts to review and revoke. The following section will have more detail on the empowerment of feminisation.

Such an erotic objectification of the male body as one aspect of the feminisation of the male images does not exclude the macho heroes. Fred Pfeil indicates that even the most

---

<sup>39</sup> Gaylyn Studlar, “Valentino, ‘Optic Intoxication,’ and Dance Madness”, in *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*, 34.

<sup>40</sup> Steve Neale, “Masculinity as Spectacle: Reflections on Men and Mainstream Cinema”, in *Screening the Male*, 18. *Italic* in original.

<sup>41</sup> Steven Cohan, “Feminizing’ the Song-and-Dance Man: Fred Astaire and the Spectacle of Masculinity in the Hollywood Musical”, in *Screening the Male*, 65.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

masculinity-assertive genre of film, that is, action films, exposes slick masculine bodies to satisfy the visual pleasure of the viewers:

...how can we distinguish between their fierce (re)assertion of gendered difference and their submission to the camera...as objects of its gaze and our own? What likewise, is the boundary line between the diehard assertion of rugged white male individualism and its simultaneous *feminization* and spectacularization?<sup>43</sup>

Yvonne Tasker in her article, “Dump Movies for Dump People: Masculinity, the Body, and the Voice in Contemporary Action Cinema”, identifies “a tendency of the Hollywood action cinema toward the construction of the male body as spectacle, together with an awareness of masculinity as performance”<sup>44</sup>, with Sylvester Stallone and Bruce Willis’ tough guy images as examples. Her argument resonates with Judith Butler’s central theme of the performativeness of gender.

When Rey Chow discusses about Chinese cinema and cultural phenomena, she extends Mulvey’s argument of “image-as-woman to image-as-feminized space, which can be occupied by a man character”.<sup>45</sup> This research is inspired by Chow’s argument and is launched on the point of male characters as images in the feminised space.

In Mulvey’s analysis, the woman images on display functioned on two levels: “as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as an erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium”<sup>46</sup>; similarly, the man on screen also functioned in two

<sup>43</sup> Fred Pfeil, *White Guys: Studies in Postmodern Domination and Difference* (London and New York: Verso, 1995), 29. Italics mine.

<sup>44</sup> Yvonne Tasker, “Dumb Movies for Dumb People: Masculinity, the Body, and the Voice in Contemporary Action Cinema,” in *Screening the Male*, 230.

<sup>45</sup> Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: the Politics of Reading between West and East* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 18. The man character Chow refers to is Pu Yi in *The Last Emperor* (dir. Bernardo Bertolucci, 1987).

<sup>46</sup> Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, 40.



aspects: as spectacle of the audience (both male and female) and love object for the protagonists.<sup>47</sup>

After acknowledging the spectacle/object status of the male bodies, the next question will be: who is the spectator/subject? Obviously, as this research focuses on the commercial blockbusters, the films to be discussed reflect the heterosexual mainstream. Therefore, when male images are taken as erotic objects, women play the central role of looking subjects. In 1989, Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment compiled an early collection on the study of female gaze in their edited book *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture*. Even though Gamman acknowledges the dominance of male ideology in filmmaking, she points out the power of the female audience in identifying their own pleasure in looking. She says, “the female gaze is not produced simply because women are behind the camera or because the main characters are women.”<sup>48</sup> In other words, the female gaze does not have to be embedded in films made by women or films with women controlling the narrative development. Female audience can become the gazers as long as they find an aspect that they enjoy looking at. From this approach, it can be argued that even in the Hollywood mainstream films where Mulvey first formed her views on women as erotic objects while man as the looking subject, women can have the fun of looking at the men on screen. The men on screen might assume they have the privilege of power and control by consuming the erotic women objects on screen. At the same time, the female audience freely admired those male characters as erotic spectacles. It is from such an approach that I can justify that even though the majority films selected for this research are made by male directors, a female gaze can be identified. Furthermore, even though women characters do not play a central role in

---

<sup>47</sup> All the chosen film texts in this research depicted heterosexual relationships. Although the male as object for the homosexual male gazer is acknowledged here, it is not a primary concern of this research.

<sup>48</sup> Lorraine Gamman, “Watching the Detectives: the Enigma of the Female Gaze,” in *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture*, eds. Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment. (Seattle: The Real Comet Press, 1989), 18.

the majority films discussed, a female gaze is still valid when a female audience is playing a significant role in the consumer society.

In fact, when John MacInnes discusses about the flooding male imagery in cinema, television and advertising, he solemnly declares, “the hegemony of the ‘male gaze’ has been broken” and we witness “the rise of the ‘female gaze’”.<sup>49</sup>

Even though the heterosexual aspect is the main focus of this research, before dealing with detail examples, it is necessary to clarify here that men looking at men is also an important aspect to be studied. Acknowledging that the audience is composed of both men and women, Steven Cohan observes that the objectification of the male body “implies a doubly engendered viewer: the visual address invites erotic interest from an ostensible, female spectator as well as narcissistic identification from an ostensible male one”.<sup>50</sup> Cohan’s argument conveys an ambiguous attitude in identifying the homosexual male gaze, while the male gaze toward male images is identified as a “masculine-masculine look” by Sean Nixon in his *Hard Looks: Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption*, where he suggests what is embodied in the formula of male-looking-at-male-figures “was the organization of identification in the look. Or, to put in another way, the narcissistic register of the look.”<sup>51</sup> Nixon continues to comment that the masculine-masculine look is traditionally associated with gay men, but he, using male fashions as examples, suggests a sexual ambivalence was coded in commercial practices that emphasise individual consumption and leisure. It is such ambivalence that draws spectators towards the male images “without re-

---

<sup>49</sup> MacInnes, 47.

<sup>50</sup> Steven Cohan, “Masquerading as the American Male in the Fifties: Picnic, William Holden and the Spectacle of Masculinity in Hollywood Film,” in *Male Trouble*, eds. Constance Penley and Sharon Willis (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 227.

<sup>51</sup> Nixon, *Hard Looks*, 178.

inscribing the binary split between ‘gay’ and ‘straight.’”<sup>52</sup> Such a masculine-masculine look will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Two and Chapter Five.

The male gaze toward the male image is just half of Cohan’s argument; he also highlights a “female gaze” towards the male images in his critique of male spectacles. On the one hand, the male character is ‘feminised’ as an object of desire to a woman character who now sometimes dominates the film’s narrative. On the other hand, the male actor is rendered as “erotic spectacle” to satisfy the voyeuristic craving of the female spectators in the auditorium. These two aspects of male as spectacle will be studied with specific film examples in the following chapters. The flowery boys phenomena and heterosexuals discussed in the Introduction reflect the two layers of feminisation so far: on the one hand, feminine attributes are incorporated into the re-definition of masculinity; on the other hand, these feminine men attract the gazers with their more glamorous outlook and appearance.

### 1.3.2 Empowering the “gazed/spectacle”

Not everyone celebrates the female gaze. Many critics regard it as a form of masculinisation of the woman. E. Ann Kaplan, for example, holds such views:

when the man steps out of his traditional role as the one who controls the whole action, and when he is set up as a sex object, the woman then takes on the masculine role as bearer of the gaze and initiator of the action. She nearly always loses her traditionally feminine characteristics in doing so – not those of attractiveness, but rather of kindness, humaneness, motherliness. She is now often cold, driving, ambitious, manipulating, just like the men whose position she has usurped.<sup>53</sup>

Such an argument is still based on the antagonistic opposition between man and woman, except that now woman and man swap their roles, whilst inequality remains the

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 201.

<sup>53</sup> E. Ann Kaplan, “Is the Gaze Male?” in *Feminism and Film*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Reprint, 2004), 129.

essential feature of gender relationship. It also repeats Mulvey's oversight, reaffirming the split and irreconcilability of passive femininity and active masculinity.

This conventional format maintains the power and voyeuristic pleasure of the 'gazer' but denies the power and pleasure of the 'gazed.' Traditional criticism and assailment towards the "male gaze" usually relies on the premise that the act of 'looking' equates to prerogative, while "to-be-looked-at-ness" shares the same fate as 'powerlessness'. Such an argument indicates that only those who assume the privilege of 'looking' can establish themselves as a proactive group, and not end up as the pathetically powerless sexual object. Such an assumption is one of the main issues that this research seeks to dissect.

The 'gaze' does not and cannot exist by itself, that is, it is not an isolated 'body', but results from an engagement between two ends: the gazer and the gazed. The interplay of the gazer and the gazed is best illustrated by Michel Foucault's argument of power and pleasure:

The pleasure that comes of exercising a power that questions, *monitors, watches, spies*, searches out, palpates, brings to light; and on the other hand, the pleasure that kindles at having to *evade this power, flee from it, fool it*, or travesty it. The power that lets itself be invaded by the pleasure it is pursuing; and opposite it, power asserting itself in the pleasure of *showing off, scandalizing*, or resisting. *Capture and seduction*, confrontation and mutual reinforcement.<sup>54</sup>

To interpret his comments more specifically, the gazer/spectator "*monitors, watches, spies*" on the spectacles shown on the screen, to acquire pleasure from exercising his/her power of looking. Those being gazed at (the spectacles) entertain themselves in a game to "*evade this power, flee from it, fool it*". The gazer/spectators enjoy 'pursuing' the object on display, but simultaneously, let themselves "be invaded" by the object they are pursuing. On the other hand, those being gazed at have the pleasure of "showing off" themselves, intoxicated with

---

<sup>54</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality: Volume I*, 45. Italics mine.

their seductive power. Baudrillard has emphasised that in this game and passion of seduction, the promotion of an object as subject “is accompanied by its return as object.”<sup>55</sup>

Foucault notes that “[p]leasure and power do not cancel or turn back against one another; they seek out, overlap, and reinforce one another.”<sup>56</sup> Baudrillard might have various confrontations with Foucault, but they are coming to similar suggestions on the reversibility of seductive power. The reversibility was identified by Baudrillard as a “cyclical reversal”: “[e]verywhere, in every domain, a single form predominates: reversibility, cyclical reversal and annulment put an end to the linearity of time, language, economic exchange, accumulation and power.”<sup>57</sup>

This epistemology of “reversibility” leads to a re-evaluation of the hidden relationship between the gazer/spectator and the gazed/spectacle. Such a philosophy of “reversibility” emphasises the dual/duel relationship between object and subject:

The diagonals or transversals of seduction may well break the opposition between terms; they do not lead to fused or con-fused relations (that’s mysticism) but to dual relations. It is not a matter of a mystical fusion of subject or object, or signifier and signified, masculine and feminine, etc., but of a seduction, that is, a *duel and agonistic* relation.<sup>58</sup>

Such a “duel and agonistic” relationship is concretely disclosed in the collective seduction of the film stars. According to Baudrillard’s interpretation of a new universe in times of the expansion of the cinema, in such a universe of the cinema, there comes a collective seduction of film stars and cinema idols.<sup>59</sup> When the gazers (the audience) feminise the images by enjoying looking at them, the images under the gaze actually seduce the gazers by their feminised appearance, as Baudrillard illustrates with a paradoxical metaphor, “You

---

<sup>55</sup> Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 25.

<sup>56</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality: Volume I*, 48.

<sup>57</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976), trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (London: Sage, 1993), 2.

<sup>58</sup> Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 105.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 94.

no longer watch TV, TV watches you (live),... where the distinction between active and passive is abolished.”<sup>60</sup>

Thus, with the abolition of the active/passive distinction, a new way to understand the relationship between the gazer/spectator and the gazed/spectacle can be established: the gazers / spectators are the initiators of the act to “look”, but they fall as ‘victims’ of “seduction”; the gazed / spectacles are passive slaves of the spectators/gazers, but they are simultaneously the initiators of “seduction”. Such interaction between the gazer/spectator and the gazed/spectacle endows them with a dual identity: they appear as intimidating rivals, but they constantly attract each other and reverse their positions.

Even though the gazed/spectacle is now rescued from the enslavement of the spectators, its power of seduction is a form of soft power, of feminine power, or the power of weakness. Baudrillard establishes a brand-new concept of feminine power in the modern universe which

...must be interpreted in terms of play, challenges, duels, *the strategy of appearance*—that is, the terms of *seduction*....a universe where feminine is not what opposes the masculine, but what seduces the masculine.... It is not quite the feminine as surface that is opposed to the masculine as depth, but the feminine as indistinctness of surface and depth.<sup>61</sup>

By adopting this feminine discourse, men, as images for the gaze, do not undergo the threat of disempowerment, but have been promoted to be new ‘heroes’ since the 1990s (if Simpson’s coining of the word “metrosexual” in 1994 can be regarded as a watershed of such a trend<sup>62</sup>). This power of appearance and surface must be understood in the background of a new social revolution. Daniel Boorstin notes, with the invention of photographs, phonographs, and motion pictures, and last but not least, television, man can “make, preserve, transmit, and

---

<sup>60</sup> Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 53.

<sup>61</sup> Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 7-10. Italics mine.

<sup>62</sup> See Introduction, note 1.

disseminate precise images.”<sup>63</sup> He invents the new term “Graphic Revolution”<sup>64</sup>, referring to men’s capability to produce images at an accelerating pace.

Fredric Jameson indicates one crucial theme of postmodernism is the “transformation of reality into images”,<sup>65</sup> which is the essence of graphic revolution in Boorstin’s argument. Baudrillard, who is influenced by Boorstin’s theory,<sup>66</sup> creates his influential theory of seduction which “lies in the transformation of things into pure appearance.”<sup>67</sup>

One consequence of this revolution was the displacement of the concept of ‘hero’ with ‘celebrity’, and consequently, an altered definition of masculinity. Glen and Krin Gabbard also explain, “[t]oday’s hero is someone who has successfully manufactured a winning image that so appeals to the masses as to catapult him into a position of celebrity.”<sup>68</sup> Boorstin points out that in traditional understanding “[t]o become known to a whole people a man usually had to be something of a hero,”<sup>69</sup> but the graphic revolution changed this formula. “THE HERO was distinguished by his achievement; the celebrity by his image or trademark. The hero created himself; the celebrity is created by the media. The hero was a big man; the celebrity is a big name.”<sup>70</sup>

However, this value of an elegant celebrity body after the graphic revolution is by no means a self-invention by the postmodern consumers in the metrosexual culture, but rather has its own historical roots in the traditions of feminine and superficial decorativeness as

---

<sup>63</sup> Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 13.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1893-1998* (London: Verso, 1998), 20.

<sup>66</sup> Baudrillard in his *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* combines his theory with Boorstin’s.

<sup>67</sup> Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 117.

<sup>68</sup> Glen O Gabbard and Krin Gabbard, *Psychiatry and the Cinema*, 2ed. (Washington D.C and London: American Psychiatric Press, 1999), 252.

<sup>69</sup> Boorstin, 46.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 61.

aristocratic temperaments. Susan Bordo observes that for most of human history, concerns for body appearance have been associated with class hierarchy. She argues that

Of farms, frontiers, and feudal estates, women were needed to work alongside men and beauty was hardly a priority for either. Among aristocrats, it was most important to maintain class privilege (rather than gender difference), and standards of elegance for both sexes...were largely the same: elaborate headwear, cosmetics, nonutilitarian adornments, and accessories.<sup>71</sup>

Men are now more than happy to perform such feminised masculinity without being ridiculed but rather prompting jealousy. The graphic revolution brings the world into a visual epoch, where to become a visual object is no longer regarded as frustration of disempowerment, but rather an ecstatic experience of becoming the new hero.

## 1.4 Feminisation and the Authoritarian Gaze

Power relationship reflected in the feminisation phenomena is the central theme in this research, with gender identity that I have discussed so far as one aspect. In Foucault's analyses of the function of panopticon and political power, he states, in order to be exercised, "this power had to be given the instrument of permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance.... It had to be like a faceless gaze that transformed the whole social body into a field of perception"<sup>72</sup>. All the individuals of the social body are under the omnipresent gaze of the authorities. This authoritarian gaze has its surveillance power over the life and death of its members, and exercises its power with 'economic' growth as an important goal, while this economic growth is not in a materialistic sense, but to "increase both the docility and the utility of all the elements of the system."<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Susan Bordo, *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and Private* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 201.

<sup>72</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979. First edition 1977), 214.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 218.



This authoritarian gaze puts those under its surveillance into a subordinate position. According to Dai Jinhua, “the gaze of the authorities... is of course male, though it is not the gaze of male desire”.<sup>74</sup> Men become the object of the authoritarian gaze, and according to Bourdieu, “the gaze is not a simple universal and abstract power to objectify, as Sartre maintained: it is a symbolic power whose efficacy depends on the relative position of the perceiver and the perceived”.<sup>75</sup> Under the authoritarian surveillance, the perceived men need to perform the roles that are assigned to them. Of course, there are different ways to respond regarding the assigned roles. A more violent response will be dealt with in the last chapter on counter-examples of feminisation. Here, an acceptive response will be analysed.

The first two layers of the definition of feminisation are connected more closely with the approach of Baudrillard’s feminine logic. In *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, Baudrillard also introduces two models of social discourses: “the Masculine and the Feminine Models”<sup>76</sup>; he defines the masculine logic as “equivalent to the military and puritan virtues: intransigence, decisiveness, valour.... The masculine choice is ‘agonistic’: it is, by analogy with the challenge”, but feminine logic is “*showing oneself off to best advantage [se faire valoir]* by subscribing to a model and conforming to a ready-made code, ... [and] narcissistic concern for one’s own welfare....[W]hat is perpetuated in the feminine model is the derived value, the vicarious value”.<sup>77</sup>

The first layer of feminisation emphasises a softer personality of man, such as gentleness and emotional sensitivity that are the opposite of “military and puritan virtues”. The second layer of feminisation emphasises the seductive power of the image, and in this research, the male image, while seduction is a typical feminine strategy in the sense that the

<sup>74</sup> Dai, Jinhua, *Cinema and Desire: Feminist Marxism and Cultural Politics in the Works of Dai Jinhua*, trans. and ed. Jing Wang and Tani E. Barrows (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 102.

<sup>75</sup> Bourdieu, 65.

<sup>76</sup> Baudrillard, *Consumer Society*, 96.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 96-97, original italics.

image subscribes “to a model” and accepts its role as the desired object. Such acceptance leads to the third layer of feminisation in this research: a non-aggressive, submissive strategy in political positioning. The willingness to accept a certain system, a certain standard, is a form of submission, while according to Baudrillard, such willingness to accept a ready-made code belongs to a feminine discourse. This feminine side of masculinity in Chinese philosophical traditions and cultural contexts will be elaborated in the next section, while this section will focus on the theoretical framework of this research.

Under authoritarian surveillance, there are different ways to react and search for identities. Feminisation in this research is not just a gender approach to study the gender relationship, but it is also used as a gender metaphor to understand a softer strategy to construct cultural identities and political positioning under an established power order. In Lacanian theory, the social system is established in the name of the Father, where the female is excluded as the silent, marginalised Other, outsider and object, with Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* as an excellent example of study on women as the Other. Therefore, a feminised strategy is to imitate the female to play the weak, subordinate soft role, through which to search for a discourse of the silent, soft party. Instead of a confronting, rebellious approach to overthrow an oppressive system, which is recognised as a masculine approach, feminisation refers to a non-aggressive, non-threatening strategy to search for identity and positioning.

It is under the third layer of feminisation in defining power relationship that widens the range of films to be discussed in this research. The understanding of Confucian ethics and Chinese masculine culture in the following sections, the non-violent approach of the fatherly figure in the film *Assembly* in Chapter Four and the female director’s approach to modify her film in Chapter Four, are fit into the criteria of this research scope in the sense that they reflect the feminine strategy in the power hierarchy.

However, the feminine and masculine logics are not isolated. According to Michel Foucault, on the one hand, “[r]elations of power-knowledge are not static forms of distribution, they are “matrices of transformations”, and on the other hand, “[w]here there is power, there is resistance”.<sup>78</sup> The masculine and feminine models are interdependent but antagonistic towards each other, with each model coming into domination at different historical moments.

### 1.5 The Vitality of a Feminine Discourse in China

“The Chinese are the opposite, more feminine. A bit passive. But passive, as I say, in the way of people when they are so intelligent and so sophisticated they don’t need machismo.”

-Bernardo Bettolucci, director of *The Last Emperor* (1987)<sup>79</sup>

The preceding three sections have provided comprehensive discussions on the feminisation of masculinity from two key aspects: the development of social ethos that tend to incorporate more and more feminine and maternal characteristics into the masculine ideal and the self-consciousness for a glamorous, beautiful body among the metrosexual culture. More importantly, these feminised male images serve as spectacles for the female gaze. However, since this research concentrates on Chinese cinema, it has to discuss the female gaze with Chinese characteristics.

When John Urry discusses about the tourist culture and tourist gaze, he finds out, “[t]here is no single tourist gaze as such. It varies by society, by social group and by historical period.”<sup>80</sup> It is also a fair statement to make as there is also no single female gaze. Female gaze is definitely moulded by specific historical, cultural and social contexts. The

<sup>78</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978), 99, 95.

<sup>79</sup> Quote in Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity*, 5.

<sup>80</sup> John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990, second edition, 2002), 1.

Chinese traditions and cultural background actually contribute to a sinicised version of the female gaze. The common knowledge of the historical background of the films, the cultural values that the Chinese audiences have been brought up with, the unique social and local context and experience, all have great influence on the formation of the female gaze towards Chinese language films and the understanding of Chinese masculinity.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to offer a comprehensive study on Chinese philosophy in order to understand Chinese audiences and the cultural context of Chinese language films. Since the current research will concentrate on the feminine side of Chinese masculinity, whereas such a feminine side is closely relevant to the understanding of “*wen*” (文, cultured), the philosophical analysis in this research will be narrowed down to the traditions of *wen*, with scholar masculinity and Chinese understanding of “*Junzi*” (gentleman) at the centre. Masculinity, as a constructed concept, includes multiple layers of meanings and references; however, in order to be consistent with the discussion on the multilayers of the new definition of feminisation, the following discussion will be condensed in two main themes: the particular attention to male appearance (compatible to the second layer of feminisation) and the maternal thinking in Chinese tradition (compatible to the first and third layers of feminisation).

### **1.5.1 Chinese Scholar Masculinity: ‘beauty is part of my dignity!’**

The metrosexual culture might be regarded as a European phenomenon by Simpson, but the global spread of metrosexual culture has made its footprints in China. One of the most influential metrosexual male magazines, *GQ* (Gentlemen’s Quarterly), was launched into Chinese market in 2009, while in its “Men of the Year” gala, Chinese actors, including Chen Kun (will be analysed in Chapter Two and Four), are glamourised metrosexual heroes in

Chinese mass culture.<sup>81</sup> The first metrosexual male magazine in Chinese language was *Men's Uno*, launched in Taiwan in 1997, later Hong Kong version in 2003 and Mainland China version in 2004.<sup>82</sup> Significant examples of the popularisation of metrosexual culture and the male celebrities as new 'heroes' can certainly be found in Chinese markets. 'The flowery boy sensation' highlighted in the Introduction has drawn a picture of such feminisation of male identity. Thus, the discussion on metrosexual manhood can easily fit into the Chinese cultural sphere.

Needless to say, China can hardly avoid the global spread of a metrosexual culture, as proven by the launch of *GQ* there. However, the metrosexual culture cannot be merely regarded as a cultural invasion or cultural assimilation from the *outside*, or simply put as the inescapable trap of globalisation. Interestingly, while a metrosexual man is nicknamed as "fragrant man"<sup>83</sup> by some Western scholars quoted in the Introduction, a related Chinese idiom *xiangcao meiren* (香草美人), literally meaning 'fragrant grass, beautiful person', is also used to refer to manhood. In this idiom, 'fragrant grass' is an allegory to loyal subjects of a kingdom. This Chinese idiom is derived from a famous ancient poem *Lament* (离骚) by Qu Yuan (屈原 ca. 340 BCE-278 BCE): "[t]hree ancient kings there were so pure and true; that round them every fragrant flower grew"<sup>84</sup>, where he has created the allegory of loyal subjects as fragrant flowers, whereas *meiren* (beauty) can refer to a king, the patriarch and sovereign of a kingdom, confirming Bordo's argument of the connection between nobility and beauty.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Photos can be viewed at *GQ's* Chinese official website, accessed 10 September 2010, <http://www.gq.com.cn/special/20100908/2374.html>

<sup>82</sup> *Men's Uno* official website: <http://www.mensuno.com.tw/>

<sup>83</sup> See Introduction, n. 14.

<sup>84</sup> Chinese original: "昔三后之纯粹兮，固众芳之所在。" Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang, trans., "Li Sao (The lament)", accessed 14 July 2011, <http://www.chinapage.org/poem/quyuan/quyuan-e.html>

<sup>85</sup> The origin of this idiom is referred back to the poem *The Lament* by Qu Yuan. Eastern Han scholar Wang Yi (王逸) states in a preface to the poem *The Lament* that "dainty birds and fragrant grass are allegorised as the

Whereas “fragrant man” is a newly coined term, the Chinese idiom ‘fragrant grass, beautiful person’ can be traced back to more than two thousand years in Chinese history – the Warring State Periods (453-221 B.C.). The metrosexual might be a product of consumer society, but the Chinese reading of such glamorous male icons is often garnished with Chinese flavour. Metrosexual images once again serve as the preamble of the discussion of Chinese culture and such images are, interestingly, read and sinicised by Chinese audience when they encounter them, changing them into Chinese concepts. Metrosexual masculinity is a Western concept, and such a concept is inseparable from the commercialisation of male products sold with the help of male images. The male images in the Chinese film industry and advertisement industry are often complicit with Western images. It is quite common that Chinese men are moulded into typical metrosexual images with standard neat Western suits, with accessories marked with international brands, either watch or jewellery. However, when Chinese people come to look at these metrosexual images, they often decode them in a Chinese way.

Such a Chinese interpretation reflects Stuart Hall’s re-definition of encoding and decoding. According to Hall, there are three positions to interpret representations: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated and oppositional codes. When the readers take on a dominant-hegemonic approach, they are reproducing a dominant or official (or politically correct) ideology, whilst a negotiated approach “contains a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements: it acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions..., while, at a more restricted, situational (situated) level, it makes its own ground rules.”<sup>86</sup> In this Chinese interpretation of metrosexual culture, it is obviously that the Chinese “makes its own ground

---

loyal and chaste subjects; elegant beauty is allegorised as the king.” ( “善鸟香草，以配忠贞；……灵脩美人，以媲於君” )

<sup>86</sup> Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-1979*, eds. Dorothy Hobson Stuart Hall, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis (London, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland, Johannesburg: Hutchinson, 1980), 136-138.

rules.”<sup>87</sup> For example, Chen Kun, who is one of the male protagonists in *Playboy Cops*, is portrayed in such a metrosexual light when he is chosen to advertise for one watch series for the international brand Van Cleef & Arpels, but the Chinese report on such advertisement emphasises his elegance with words like “*ruya*”(儒雅).<sup>88</sup> Its literary meaning is Confucian grace, which is an adjective referring to a learned and refined man, and it is a typical term to describe a scholar in Chinese. Even though Chen’s internationalised male image has nothing to do with Chinese tradition, but the elegance and grace in his metrosexual male image is easily picked up by the Chinese to represent something they are familiar with, in this case, the Confucian scholar beauty.



Photo 1-1: Chen Kun: the Metrosexual as scholar:

[http://photo.gmw.cn/2012-12/06/content\\_5925512.htm](http://photo.gmw.cn/2012-12/06/content_5925512.htm), accessed 28/02/2013.

Within the Chinese cultural sphere, the emphasis on beauty in man and on the maternal side in masculinity is not solely a new-born baby of the postmodern consumer

<sup>87</sup> Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-1979*, eds. Dorothy Hobson Stuart Hall, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis (London, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland, Johannesburg: Hutchinson, 1980), 136-138.

<sup>88</sup> Anonymous, “Chen Kun: Ruya neihan (‘Chen Kun: Ruya Charisma’),” [http://photo.gmw.cn/2012-12/06/content\\_5925512.htm](http://photo.gmw.cn/2012-12/06/content_5925512.htm), accessed 28/02/2013.

society where production is giving way to consumption. On the contrary, both can be traced back to Chinese ancient cultural imprints. Bordo highlights the decorative aspect of the elegant body of the nobleman, while by comparison, in a Chinese context, a beautiful male body is cultivated by his inner spirits, poetic talents and humble virtues.

In Chinese, an ideal man is often described as *wenwu shuangquan* (文武双全), which could be translated as “both excelling in literature (*wen* 文) and military skills (*wu* 武).” Such an argument is compatible to the *yin-yang* theory of Chinese philosophy, in which all things and beings are believed to contain in themselves both *yin*/feminine and *yang*/masculine essences. The classical Taoist work *Tao Te Ching* (道德经) demonstrates the cyclic unity of *yin-yang*:

Tao gives birth to one,  
One gives birth to two,  
Two gives birth to three,  
Three gives birth to ten thousand beings.  
Ten thousand being carries *yin* on their backs and embrace *yang* in their front,  
Blending there two vital breaths to attain harmony.<sup>89</sup>

“Harmony” is a utopian ideal that is often challenged, even upset, by constant negotiation between these two discursive models conflicting with each other in different historical contexts. Kam Louie summarises the inner relationship of the *wen-wu* dyad:

Chinese masculinity, it will be shown, can be theorised as compromising both *wen* and *wu* so that a scholar is considered to be no less masculine than a soldier. Indeed, at certain points in history the ideal man would be expected to embody a balance of

---

<sup>89</sup> Chinese Original: 《老子》第四十二章: “道生一, 一生二, 二生三, 三生万物。万物背阴而抱阳, 冲气以为和。” According to Ellen M. Chen, there was a Chinese variation of this passage. In the Ho-shang Kung version, the “万物背阴而抱阳” was identified as “万物负阴而向阳” and the translation goes: “Ten thousand beings turn their backs towards *yin* and their face towards *yang*.” For detailed text, refer to Ellen M. Chen, *The Tao Te Ching: A New Translation with Commentary* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 157-160. The exact day of its compilation is difficult to determine. There is one version saying that it was composed by Laozi whose life is also a mystery, with surmises of his living time ranging from 6th century B.C.E to 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.



*wen* and *wu*. At other times only one or the other was expected, but importantly *either* was considered acceptably manly.<sup>90</sup>

The *wen* aspect is one of the two key dispositions of an ideal gentleman *junzi* (君子) according to Confucius, who highlights *wen* and *zhi* (质) as two balances within a true gentleman. One translation of Confucius's definition of *junzi* goes as, "When nature (*zhi*) prevails over culture (*wen*), you get a savage; when culture prevails over nature, you get a pedant. When nature and culture are in balance, you get a *junzi*."<sup>91</sup>

One of the key words *wen* is translated as "culture" here, but the connotations of "culture (文)" also refer to the refinement of civil and literary skills. Xu Shen in his etymology says "*wen* is to interlace lines to make picture... *Wen* refers to patterns to decorate the body".<sup>92</sup> *Wen*, in other words, is like sumptuous clothing that ornaments our bodies. Even though it was later developed to refer to written characters and literature composition and talents, such extension of meanings mysteriously refers to its decorative origin, as so to be used as an antonym of *wu* (valiant and military strength). Hence, Arthur Waley translates the same passage quoted above as:

[w]hen natural substance (*zhi*) prevails over ornamentation (*wen*), you get the boorishness of the rustic. When ornamentation prevails over natural substance, you get the pedantry of the scribe. Only when ornament and substance are duly blended do you get the true gentleman.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Kam Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2002), 11.

<sup>91</sup> Chinese Original: 《论语雍也第六》十六: "质胜文则野, 文胜质则史, 文质彬彬, 然后君子。" This translation refers to Simon Leys' version, *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 65.

<sup>92</sup> Xu, Shen, *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Jin Shi (Chinese Etymology)*, ed. Tang Kejing, 3 vols. Vol. 1. (Changsha: Yuelu shushe chubanshe, 1997). Chinese original: "文, 错画也。朱芳圃《殷周文字释业》: '文即文身之文'。" Translation mine.

<sup>93</sup> Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. Arthur Waley, (Beijing: Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe, 1998. Reprint, 5th print 2003), 73. All the English translations for the quotation from Confucius from this section onwards are referred to Arthur Waley's translation.

These two discourses of *wen* and *wu*, one emphasising soft power, including poetic talents and ornamental grace, the other emphasising militant gifts, that is, hard power, have influenced the transfiguration of the masculine ideal to different extents in different social contexts in thousands of years in Chinese history.<sup>94</sup>

Although the *wen* side, that is the literary, non-violent and feminine side, was not the dominating side of masculinity throughout Chinese history, it has been imprinted in the Chinese philosophical traditions and often associated with the gentry. Kam Louie and Louise Edwards elaborate, “[t]his hierarchy of talents... meant that *wu* became associated with non-elite masculinity at various times in China’s past, while *wen* was often a more elite masculine form.”<sup>95</sup>

According to Confucius, a *junzi* (gentleman) who successfully maintains the balance between *wen* (culture) and *zhi* (nature) follows the principles of “courtesy, breadth, good faith, diligence and clemency”<sup>96</sup>, all of which advocate love and humbleness as part of an ideal gentleman. While such humble virtues will be further discussed in the next subsection, what is particularly relevant to this research is the Chinese emphasis on the compatibility between these humble virtues and a man’s beauty.

Mencius observes the relationship between a man’s appearance and his cultivation of the refined *junzi* demeanour:

That which a gentleman follows as his nature, that is to say, benevolence, rightness, the rites and wisdom, is rooted in his heart, and manifests itself in his face, giving it

---

<sup>94</sup> It is beyond the scope of this research to present an overview on how these two discourses on *wen* and *wu* were interacted and balanced in different times. For a detailed discussion from such an aspect, see Min, Jiayin, ed. *The Chalice & the Blade in Chinese Culture: Gender Relations and Social Models* (Beijing: China Social Science Publishing House, 1995).

<sup>95</sup> Kam Louie and Louise Edwards, “Chinese Masculinity: Theorizing *wen* and *wu*”, *East Asia History* 8 (1994): 146.

<sup>96</sup> Chinese Original: 《论语阳货第十七》六: “恭、宽、信、敏、惠。”

a sleek appearance. It also shows in his back and extends to his limbs, rendering their message intelligible without words.<sup>97</sup>

In this Mencius doctrine, four crucial codes have been listed, including “benevolence” (*ren* 仁), “rightness” (*yi* 义), “rites” (*li* 理) and “wisdom” (*zhi* 智). While the connotations of these concepts will be explained further in the next subsection as part of the feminine side of masculinity in Chinese conventions, especially *ren* as part of the “docile body” discourse, to borrow Foucault’s terms,<sup>98</sup> the main focus here is the emphasis on the relationship of men’s elegant beauty with their cultivation of virtues. Interestingly, the etymological significance of one of the virtues *yi* has proved a Chinese cultural consciousness for a beautiful body. The original meaning of the character *yi* is “dignified appearance and demeanour.” In other words, it is a character that defines a self-image, while its traditional form (義), composed of “羊” (lamb) and “我” (I).<sup>99</sup> The character “羊” originally refers to “beautiful and good things”. A succinct rendering of (義) could be “I am a beautiful thing; this is my dignified self-image.”

Confucian scholar Xun Zi (荀子, ca 300-230 B.C.E) elaborates further a body refined by *wen* demeanour as a “beautiful body”: “[t]he learning of the gentleman enters through the ear, is stored in the mind, spreads through the four limbs, and is visible in his activity and repose. The learning of the gentleman is used to ennoble himself [literally ‘beautify his body’].<sup>100</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Chinese Original: 《孟子》 “仁义理智根于心，其声色也，卒然见于面，盎於背，施於四体，四体不言而喻。” English translation refers to D. C. Lau’s version, *Mencius* (Penguin Books, 1970), 186.

<sup>98</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, Chapter 1 in Part Three.

<sup>99</sup> The Chinese original is referred to Xu Shen’s *Chinese Etymology*, 许慎 《说文解字》：義，己之威仪也。从羊我…。徐锴《系传》：“羊者，美物也。羊，祥也。”（1909-1910）Meanwhile, Chinese character for “beautiful” is “美”，许慎 《说文解字》：“美，甘也。从羊从大。”（511）

<sup>100</sup> Song, Geng, *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 74. The original Chinese version is 君子之学也，入乎耳，著乎心，布乎四体，行乎动静……君子之学也，以美其身。

Such a connection between the depiction of a beautiful male body and his Confucian learning is best illustrated in the *Caizi jiaren* (才子佳人 scholar and beauty) novels. It is beyond the scope of this research to do a thorough historical study of this genre of literature,<sup>101</sup> but the male protagonists in some of the films to be examined in the later chapters reflect the shadow of a typical fragile scholar image. Furthermore, such scholar masculinity is an obvious and important aspect of the feminisation in this research. Thirdly, the influence of these scholar romances was spread to the cinema right from its preliminary stage, which will be studied in more detail in the next section. One aspect of this genre of literature is the particular attention to the male body, which is compatible to the theme of male image as spectacle in this research.

Wu Cuncun provides an explanation of the depiction of the beauty of the scholar: “[t]he beauty of the *caizi*, in this context, is a sign of his Confucian virtue; in fact, it is hardly distinguishable from it. When they first meet a boy with soft features and a feminine personality, readers know implicitly that he is virtuous and due for reward.”<sup>102</sup>

Thus, a beautiful man is often admired as a talented nobleman, as a saying goes, “the more handsome a person is, the more talent he has.”<sup>103</sup> Following this ideology, Song Geng concludes that ‘knowledge will be externalized on the body of the *junzi* and thus becomes visible’.<sup>104</sup> That being said, the Confucian gentleman – *junzi*, the scholar with *wen* virtues in Chinese history – has represented a noble masculinity of the leading gentry, which is termed

<sup>101</sup> Some important academic achievements on this scholar and beauty romance includes: Song, Geng. *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture*. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), Zhou, Jianyu. *Caizi jiaren xiaoshuo yanjiu (Studies on Scholar-Beauty Novels)*. Taipei: Wen shi zhe chubanshe, 1998.

<sup>102</sup> Wu, Cuncun, “Beautiful Boys Made up as Beautiful Girls: Anti-masculine Taste in Qing China,” in Kam Louie and Morris Low, *Asian Masculinities: the Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 24.

<sup>103</sup> Song, *The Fragile Scholar*, 74. The original Chinese: 有一分之貌，必有一分之才。

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

---

scholar masculinity by Song.<sup>105</sup> The *wen* temperament of a man polishes his elegant look, and thus refines his dignity.

A metaphor can be used to conclude this subsection: the penchant for a refined body is like a native seed in Chinese culture rather than some imported plant. It remains in Chinese soil and would develop into a plant with the appropriate nutrition (social context). The spread of metrosexual culture and consumer desire provides such nutrients for it to flourish once again.

### **1.5.2 The maternal thinking in Chinese masculinity**

The connotations of feminisation in this research include a visual aspect (the glamorous male body) and feminine temperaments in men. The previous subsection has demonstrated the connection between an elegant male body, his noble spirits and poetic talents. The following argument will illustrate that the noble spirits admired as male ideals in Chinese cultural practices have constantly been tainted with maternal, thus feminine colours.

Before going deep into the historical review of the formation of such maternal characteristics in Chinese men, it is useful to consider some evidence of Chinese men performing mothers' roles found in some contemporary surveys. When Salzman and others redefine masculinity in *The Future of Men*, they agree "[f]or people in the Western World, in particular, it's easy to forget that what we would consider 'macho' behaviors aren't necessarily in synch with definitions of masculinity in other societies."<sup>106</sup> They quote Chinese masculinity as an example: Chinese male migrants doing housework, such as cleaning, cooking, laundry and shopping, are regarded as traditions from their cultural roots.<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Salzman, Matathia and, O'Reilly, 45.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

The rest of this chapter will dissect such cultural roots in order to connect Chinese traditions with the salience of a feminine discourse in contemporary Chinese society reflected, directly or indirectly, in the films studied in this research.

Feminine power with no sexual implication, or soft power, is first reflected in the dogma of Taoism. Laozi exalts the power of softness and weakness (*rou ruo* 柔弱) in *The Tao Te Ching*

The softest in the world,  
Gallop in the hardest in the world.  
...  
Nothing under heaven  
Is softer and weaker than water,  
Yet nothing can compare with it  
In attacking the hard and strong.  
Nothing can change place with it.  
That the weak overcomes the strong,  
And the soft overcomes the hard,  
No one under heaven does not know,  
Though none can put it into practice.<sup>108</sup>

Such a Taoist discourse promotes the principles of feminine tenderness and maternal values, and Ellen Chen notes “Taoism was the *yin*, the passive hidden spiritual reserve at times rebellious and heterodox”.<sup>109</sup> Sun Lung-kee in *The Deep Structure of Chinese Culture* defines Chinese culture as the culture of the weak, and such a cultural discourse

produces a way (*Dao*) for the weak to achieve victory: that is, to subdue the strong with weak power, to restrain the tough with the soft, to constrain movement with

<sup>108</sup> Chinese Original: 《老子》第四十三章：“天下之至柔，驰骋天下之至坚。”与第七十八章：“天下莫柔弱于水，而攻坚强者莫之能胜，以其无以易之。弱之胜强，柔之胜刚，天下莫不知，莫能行。” The translation refers to Chen, *The Tao Te Ching: A New Translation with Commentary*, 160, 225.

<sup>109</sup> Chen, *The Tao Te Ching*, 69. Du Fangqin also identifies the feminine characteristics in Taoism in her article “The Rise and Fall of the Zhou Rites: A Rational Foundation for the Gender Relationship Model,” in Min, Jiayin ed. *The Chalice & the Blade*.

stasis, to retreat as a way to proceed; in order to grasp it, it is necessary to offer it first.<sup>110</sup>

Baudrillard's theory of seduction and feminine power has an intriguing resonance with this classic Taoist philosophy. For Baudrillard, "[t]o seduce is to appear weak. To seduce is to render weak. We seduce with our weakness, never with strong signs or powers. In seduction we enact this weakness, and this is what gives seduction its strength."<sup>111</sup>

Such a soft power mentality is also reflected in Confucianism. Confucianism, which has been given religion-like omnipotent status in Chinese tradition, in spite of its conflicts with Taoism,<sup>112</sup> similarly proclaims a soft power in its doctrines. Confucianism is a philosophy of benevolence (*ren*, 仁), which has a great variety of English translations, including "benevolence, love, altruism, kindness, charity, compassion, magnanimity, human-heartedness, humaneness, humanity, perfect virtue, goodness...."<sup>113</sup> Confucius mentioned the word "*ren*" more than a hundred times in his works *The Analects*, while another Confucian scholar, Mencius, proclaims, "the benevolent (*ren*) is invincible."<sup>114</sup>

Such Confucian dogmas that emphasise humble behaviour are systemised to be part of ideal masculinity. Mencius has singled out four feelings as gentlemanly behaviour: *ren* (benevolence) *yi* (rightness), *li* (rites) and *zhi* (wisdom), as quoted in the previous subsection. On the one hand, *ren* and *yi* are concepts that favour philanthropism and love as the key elements rather than hegemony or conquest. According to Mencius, *ren* (benevolence) is serving one's parents, and *yi* (rightness) is following one's elder brothers. This rhetoric of *ren*

<sup>110</sup> Sun, Lung-kee, *Zhongguo wenhua de shenceng jiegou (The deep structure of Chinese culture)* (Hong Kong: Jixian She, 1983. Reprint, 1992), 239. Original Chinese: "却也同时产生了弱者取胜之道, 那就是: 以弱胜强, 以柔克刚, 以静制动, 以退为进, 欲取先予, 欲擒故纵, 借力打力。" Translation mine.

<sup>111</sup> Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 83.

<sup>112</sup> Their conflicts are out of the scope of this thesis. For brief or further arguments on this aspect, Fung Yu-lan's *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: the Free Press, 1966).

<sup>113</sup> Li, Chenyang, "The Confucian Concept of Jen and the Feminist ethics of Care: a Comparative Study," *Hypatia* vol.9, no. 1 (winter, 1994): 72.

<sup>114</sup> Chinese original: 《梁惠王章句上第五章》: "仁者无敌。" Translation mine.

emphasises a discourse on self-sacrifice and emotional bond and submission, which shares more similarity with a feminine discourse aforementioned in the first section of this chapter. Such softness as virtue is intermixed with the construction of an ideal manhood in Confucianism. Another male code *yi* is a code of male bonding that emphasises sacrifice for and loyalty to friends, which are much closer to maternal instincts than to the masculine model of agonistic subjugation. On the other hand, on the same passage, Mencius continues to argue that *li* and *zhi* are both cooperative behaviour, in which *li* regulates the practices of virtues of *ren* and *yi*, while *zhi* is to understate and practice the same virtues.<sup>115</sup>

Similarly, the Han Confucian philosopher Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒 179-104 B.C.E) synthesises five Canons of Confucian manliness: *Ren* (benevolence), *yi* (righteousness), *li* (rites), *zhi* (wisdom), *xin* (faith).<sup>116</sup> Dong Zhongshu defines *ren* and *yi* with the following dictum. “the code of *ren* lies in loving others, not oneself; the code of *yi* lies in restricting oneself, not others.”<sup>117</sup> That of ‘*li*’ is defined as proper behaviour and social rituals, while under the codes of *ren* and *yi*, altruism and self-sacrifice are often required as “proper behaviour”. Furthermore, *zhi* is translated as “wisdom”, but such wisdom is not the Intelligence Quotient (IQ), but knowledge of the social rituals and behavioural codes and the ability to perform them. *Xin* indicates faith, which enables a person to remain royal (*zhong* 忠) to friends and filial (*xiao*) to superiors.

These virtues continue to be reinterpreted and reshuffled to be ideal male behaviour in contemporary China. For example, Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar have included a Chapter “How Should Chinese Men Act? Ordering the Nation” in *China on Screen: Cinema and*

<sup>115</sup> Chinese original: 《孟子第四篇：离娄章句上第二十七章》：“仁之实，事亲是也；义之实，从兄是也；智之实，知斯二者弗去是也；礼之实，节文斯二者是也。”

<sup>116</sup> Chinese original: “仁义礼智信”，《春秋繁露卷 12，五行相生第五十八》。Translation mine.

<sup>117</sup> Chinese original: 《春秋繁露卷 8 仁义法第二十九》：仁之法在爱人，不在爱我；义之法在正我，不在正人。” Translation mine.



*Nation*, quoting three Chinese characters as essential “male Codes”: *xiao* (filial piety), *yi* (righteousness) and *zhong* (loyalty). The concept of *yi* has been explained in previous arguments; the concept of *xiao* is obedience and submission to the father generation, which will be the key theme in Chapter Two. The obvious meaning of *zhong* is, of course, obedience and faithfulness to one’s superiors. Both filial piety and loyalty could be relevant to proper rites towards a higher order.

These virtues of benevolence, righteousness, filial piety, and loyalty downplay the values of physical strength, virility and valour, but endorse spiritual power and humbleness. Thus, according to Mencius: “[t]here are those who use their minds and there are those who use their muscles. The former rule; the latter are ruled. Those who rule are supported by those who are ruled.”<sup>118</sup> Physical prowess, the base of the “masculine model” in Baudrillard’s philosophy, was stigmatised as a trait of commoners and subaltern classes, the peasants. Song Geng argues, “[t]his mind/strength dichotomy privileges the mind over the body and can be regarded as the theoretical base for the later *wen/wu* bias, which reflects the Confucian ideal of a civilized society and a government by virtue.”<sup>119</sup> This is manifested in the Confucian *Junzi* who practice scholar masculinity distinguished by their maternal thinking represent the gentry, the ruling class, the elite class.

It is now clear that Chinese masculinity is a moral concept rather than a gender concept. Therefore, the perfection of Chinese masculinity has been constantly an improvement of morality. Han Dynasty Confucian scholar Dong Zhongshu was an extreme example, who endeavoured to establish the *yin-yang* female-male discourse on the premise of the polarities of prerogative *yang*/male and derogative *yin*/female, in order to attribute all virtuous temperaments to the *yang* category.

<sup>118</sup> Chinese Original: 《孟子》第三篇（上）《滕文公章句上》第四章：“劳心者治人，劳力者治于人；治于人者食人，治人者食于人。” English translation refers to D.C. Lau’s version (Penguin Books, 1970), 101.

<sup>119</sup> Song, 80.

*Yin* and *yang* are two Chinese words that can be doppelgangers of ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ in English, but they were not gender concepts at the beginning. Originally, the definition of *yin* and *yang* lay elsewhere, referring to either place names, or to the shady and sunny of the mountains respectively, and thus corresponding to coldness and warmth. Classics such as *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 诗经) are representatives in these connotations.<sup>120</sup> The definition of *yin-yang* was expanded in later works, such as the *Zuo Annal* (*Zuo Zhuan* 左传, mid 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E), where *yin* and *yang* refer to two of the basic elements of heaven, yet remaining a non-hierarchical relationship: “Heaven has six *qi*. ... The six *qi* are, *yin*, *yang*, wind, rain, dark and light.”<sup>121</sup>

Without gender implication as origin, *yin* was often sanctified as a power of softness. However, Dong Zhongshu assigned gender implications to the *yin-yang* concepts and deliberately allocated all the merits and commendatory virtues to *yang*/male, imposing all evils and negative vice on *yin*/female. He states in *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals*:

The standard of male and female takes its standard in *yin* and *yang*.... Men, however, are in all cases *yang*; women, however noble, are all in *yin*.... Categories of evil all are *yin*, whereas categories of good all are *yang*; *yang* is a matter of virtue (*de* 德), *yin* is a matter of Punishment (*xing* 刑).... *Yang qi* is warm; *yin qi* is cold. *Yang qi* is generous; *yin qi* discouraging. *Yang qi* is benevolent; *yin qi* is cruel.

<sup>120</sup> According to Sun Guangde’s counting, there are eight *yin* and 18 “*yang*” mentioned separately and one *yinyang* appeared together in the *Book of Odes*. For further reading, please refer to Sun, Guangde, *Xianqin Lianghan Yin-Yang Wuxing Shuo De Zhengzhi Sixiang* (The Yin-yang wuxing political ideology of pre-Qin and Han Dynasties). 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshu Ju, 1993. Reprint, 1994). *Book of Odes* includes 305 poems, composed from the early Zhou Dynasty (1045-256 B.C.E) to the middle of Spring and Autumn Period (770 -476 B.C.E).

<sup>121</sup> Chinese original: “天有六气，降生五味，发为五色，徵为五声，淫生六疾。六气，曰阴阳风雨晦明也。” The translation refers to Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 146; the Chinese original text refers to Sun Guangde, *The Yin-Yang Wuxing Political Ideology of Pre-Qin and Han Dynasties*, 14. The *Zuo Annual* is a commentary on the *Chunqiu* or *Spring and Autumn Annal*, a historical chronicle of the rulers of Lu from 722 to 481 B.C.E., compiled by Master Zuo (左丘明).

*Yang qi* is at ease; *yin qi* is anxious. *Yang qi* is loving; *yin qi* is hateful. *Yang qi* gives birth; *yin qi* kills.<sup>122</sup>

Although one key dogma of the *yinyang* thinking is the coexistence of both sides within one entity, Dong's theory reshuffles the connotation of *yin* by allocating all its negative implications to women, while simultaneously, he deprives *yin* /feminine of every positive virtue. Some of the *yang* virtues are actually appropriated from womanly traits, such as the "giving birth" characteristic proclaimed by Dong. Joanne Birdwhistell comments, "*yinyang* thinking, as it functioned for about two thousand years in Chinese society and values, was...constructed from a male perspective and belonged to a male discourse."<sup>123</sup>

This positive-negative allocation defines Chinese masculine as a moral category. A Chinese scholar Ma Ning points out,

Western culture produces a hierarchy of divisions in which male-female subsumes other differences such as self-other in the equations male-phallus-order and female-lack-disorder so as to establish the supremacy of patriarchal law and individual subjectivity or identity. In contrast, the Chinese symbolic order valorizes the divisions of insider-outsider and moral-immoral...<sup>124</sup>

Unlike the gender identity in the West where masculinity is defined by its power relationship with the Other/female, Chinese masculinity is not defined by a relation with women, but rather as a moral concept of male duties towards their authorities and nation, an

<sup>122</sup> Chinese original: 《春秋繁露》卷 16 第 77 章〈循天之道〉: 男女之法, 法阴与阳。……卷 11, 第 43 章〈阳尊阴卑〉: 丈夫虽贱皆为阳, 妇人虽贵皆为阴……恶之属尽为阴, 善之属尽为阳, 阳为德, 阴为刑。……阳气暖而阴气寒, 阳气予而阴气夺, 阳气仁而阴气戾, 阳气宽而阴气急, 阳气爱而阴气恶, 阳气生而阴杀。Translation refers to Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, 163-164.

<sup>123</sup> Joanne D. Birdwhistell, *Mencius and Masculinities: Dynamics of Power, Morality, and Maternal Thinking* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 13.

<sup>124</sup> Ma, "Spatiality and Subjectivity in Xie Jin's Film Melodrama of the New Period," in *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*, eds. Nick Browne, Paul G. Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack, Esther Yau (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 16.

order above the sexual division. Yi Zhongtian notes that a typical warrior is a genderless man.<sup>125</sup> Song Geng observes:

In Western culture, masculinity is defined firstly as the power and ability to conquer the nature, which is symbolized by woman.... Masculinity is therefore defined mainly as an individual subjectivity and by man's relations with woman/other/nature.... In the Chinese cultural tradition, ... masculinity is not defined by a man's relations with this woman, but by his relations with the political mechanism. For Chinese men, manhood is the ability to honor their family name and achieve fame in serving the state.<sup>126</sup>

The 'state' the Chinese men serve is symbolised by a masculine term *zuguo* (祖国), a term much closer to fatherland, in sharp contrast to the concept of 'motherland' in English. Detailed comparison between these two concepts is out of the scope of this research, but the basic ideological difference behind can be summarised as followed: within a patriarchal order, the Motherland demands her descendants to be heroic protectors, while the Fatherland demands his progeny to be obedient, imposing on them a feminised role. The Chinese character 'zu' (祖) is related to ancestral temples and altars, especially those of the ruling class, while those are places where paternal ancestors were enshrined. Under such a patriarchal system that holds sway over all Chinese men, basically all men underneath the power of the fatherland are feminised. Dong Zhongshu states, "The sovereign is *yang*, the subject is *yin*; the father is *yang*, the son is *yin*; the husband is *yang*, the wife is *yin*...."<sup>127</sup> In other words, the only one person in the empire who has absolute *yang* power, that is, absolute masculine status, is the emperor himself. Yi Zhongtian points out, "all subjects have to feminise / 'concubine' themselves in order to submit themselves to the emperor."<sup>128</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Yi, Zhongtian, *Zhongguo de nanren he nüren* (Chinese men and women), third ed, (Shanghai: Wenyi chubanshe, 2006. Reprint, 2006), 7.

<sup>126</sup> Song, 80.

<sup>127</sup> Chinese original: 《春秋繁露》卷十二，基义第五十三章 “君为阳，臣为阴；父为阳，子为阴；夫为阳，妻为阴。” Translation mine.

<sup>128</sup> Yi, *Zhongguo de nanren he nüren* (Chinese Men and Women), 23.

Every male subject except the emperor had a “feminine” role to play in their social identification. Chinese Confucian ethical relationships (father-son, elder-younger, husband-wife, state-subject, and friend-friend), which have been introduced in the Introduction, are hierarchical and vertical bonding, so one who is identified at the lower position is at a feminine (*yin*) position. For Chinese men, to honour their family and to respect the senior, the higher system, is the essential part of their true manhood. Such a culture that instates a more humble principle for its people is compatible more with the feminine logic rather than the masculine logic according to Baudrillard’s classification.

The contempt toward militant values and physical strength and penchant for cultivated literary talents in a “fragile scholar”, to borrow a term by Song Geng, has moulded disciplinable citizens. According Foucault, “in every society, the body is in the grip of very strict power, which imposed on it constraints, prohibitions or obligations.”<sup>129</sup> The ultimate motivation of such a grip is to reduce their tendency of inner autonomy and prepare “docile bodies” that would subordinate to authority and manipulation. A fragile scholar body indicates a subservient subject easy to govern and control, as Song concludes, “[t]he ideal body of the scholar was the body safest to the imperial power, because it was not associated with rebellion or transgression but with docility and civil service.”<sup>130</sup> Conversely, the militant body is often affiliated with disruption, disorder and threats, thus is difficult to control.

Such acceptance of feminine humbleness in masculinity has been termed “maternal thinking” by Birdwhistell. These philosophical claims, she points out, are indications of male thinkers adapting “characteristics of *maternal* practices and thinking to their own political, social, and religious interests.”<sup>131</sup> These soft, maternal virtues in men have been

---

<sup>129</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 136.

<sup>130</sup> Song, 84.

<sup>131</sup> Birdwhistell, 30. Italics mine.

philosophically sanctified as phallophilia, that is, glorified male principles, by these Confucian scholars.

Such a moralistic male discourse often accuses women as being the culprits of disorder and destruction<sup>132</sup>. Contemporary historian Yi Zhongtian exposes such “mischief” of Chinese masculine discourse:

Chinese women cannot count on their men, but Chinese men usually have to count on their women. When defeated by their enemy, they sent their women to negotiate peace with marriage; when their empire was doomed, they blamed their women. The Shang Empire was destroyed by Concubine Daji, and Zhou ruined by Concubine Baosi, and the military rebellion of An Lushan and Shi Shiming in Tang epoch caused by Concubine Yang Guifei. Even the horrific attack on Beijing by the alliance of eight foreign nations in 1900 was provoked by Dowager Cixi. All misfortunes are stirred up by women and all men are exempt from it.<sup>133</sup>

In other words, ‘our men failed not because they are too weak, but because the women are too evil.’ Dowager Cixi is often condemned as the culprit of the fall of the Qing Empire, so that men under her could be spared. The accusation on Jiang Qing as the perpetrator to be responsible for the catastrophe during the Cultural Revolution was another more recent example of woman being the main target of condemnation. Such demonisation of women, in fact, has been motivated to defend Chinese men of their lack of macho temperaments. Chinese men refuse to acknowledge that their humble virtues might fail to protect their country in times of crisis so that the glory of the feminine temperaments within manhood is preserved as intact.

<sup>132</sup> Interestingly, even though women were defamed strategically, the worship of “the Goddess of Mercy” illustrates a glorification of female. The Buddhist icon “Guan Yin” was a male bodhisattva when he was introduced into China together with Buddhism. During the Chinese domestication of this foreign religion, the Chinese populace, including the sutra translators, sculptors, painters, exegetes, as well as lay believers, idolised “Guan Yin” into a compassionate female saviour “the Goddess of Mercy” from around the tenth century, at the time when the image of fragile scholar was in its “full blossom.” By sanctifying feminine traits as goddess virtues, Chinese effeminate masculinity presents itself as a philanthropism, in which their “feminisation” does not disgrace them as inferiorly womanish, but elevates them to be holy as the goddess.

<sup>133</sup> Yi, *Zhongguo de nanren he nüren* (Chinese Men and Women), 19-20.

A metaphor as created at the conclusion of the previous subsection can be used again here. Maternal thinking in the construction of ideal masculinity in Chinese tradition is like a native plant growing in the soil of Chinese civilisation, while the contemporary society in the past two decades with the coming-of-age of a soft power discourse (as argued in the first three sections of this chapter) have provided more nutrient for it to grow stronger.

## 1.6 Masculinities and Chinese Cinema

Numerous scholars have produced a repertoire of insightful academic findings concerning the overall reviews of the history of Chinese cinema, such as Paul Clark, Jay Leyda, Zhang Yingjin, Steven Teo, to name just a few.<sup>134</sup> Chinese scholars have compiled a wide range of academic works written in Chinese on the historical reviews of Chinese films from various aspects, such as the works done by Zhou Xing and Li Duoyu.<sup>135</sup> It is out of the scope of this research to draw a full picture of Chinese film history; therefore, in order to concentrate on the central thread of the feminised warriors in this research, I choose two categories of male images to elaborate a short review on Chinese film history, so as to provide the background context for the study of the Chinese films in the 2000s: the warrior as the feminised Other.

<sup>134</sup> Paul Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949* (Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Jay Leyda, *Dianying: An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China* (London: The MIT Press, 1972); Zhang, Yingjin. *Chinese National Cinema* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004); Steven Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: British Film Institute, 1997). For Taiwan cinema, Darrell William Davis and Ru-Shou Robert Chen, ed. *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

<sup>135</sup> Zhou, Xing, *Zhongguo dianying yishu shi (Art History of Chinese Film)* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2005); Li, Duoyu, ed. *Zhongguo dianying bainian: 1905-1976 (Hundred Years of Chinese Films: 1905-1976)*. (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 2005).

### 1.6.1 The *wu xia* Heroes

The depiction of warriors in Chinese cinema was inaugurated at the birth of Chinese cinema in 1905 when the first Chinese film *Dingjun Mountain* was made, which was comprised of soundless extracts from Peking opera. It depicts an aged but vigorous warrior Huang Zhong (黄忠) of the Three Kingdom Period (184-280 A.D.)<sup>136</sup>, who was performed by the prominent Peking opera actor Tan Xinpei (谭鑫培). For the next hundred years, Chinese cineastes have produced a colourful reservoir of warriors (including women warriors) who are not monotonous simulacra of one stereotype, but rather diversified into distinctive era features.

A large number of films that are adapted from passages from classical novels, regional opera scripts and folklore follow this desexualisation tradition. The most influential fantasy series of the early commercial productions is *The Burning of the Red Lotus Temple* (*Huoshao hongliansi* 火烧红莲寺系列 1-1-8, dir. Zhang Shichuan 张石川, 1928-1931), which was based on the martial arts novel *The Fantastic Heroes of Jianghu* (*Jianghu qixia* 江湖奇侠) by Pingjiang Buxiaosheng (平江不肖生), depicting the fanciful martial arts skills of the outlaw warriors, including one of the most famous women warriors, Hong Gu (红姑 the Lady in Red), who fight against the corrupted monks in the Red Lotus Temple to rescue the hostage. The first episode was so popular that the director went on to produce eighteen more episodes in four years.

Film auteurs faithfully recreated the literature and opera prototypes that were familiar to the audience. Such faithful representations of folk culture, legends and classical literature familiar to the audience truly embodied a *wu* masculinity on the basis of moral behaviour

---

<sup>136</sup> Another periodication of Three Kingdom Period started at 220 A.D. the year when Cao Pi coronated himself to be the new Emperor and named his empire 'Wei', but I choose 184, the year of the Yellow Turban Rebellion, because the general discussed here was mainly active before 220A.D and he passed away in 220 A.D.



without gender implications. The outlaw warriors might be perceived as illegitimate, as Han Fei Tsu (Han Fei Zi 韩非子, ca. 281-233 BCE) has said, “gallant citizens with their weapons infringe the rules”<sup>137</sup>; however, they are often loved by the audience as mythical heroes: “*xia*” (侠). The Chinese character for *xia* depicts a person (人) on the left, and 夹 on the right, which symbolises a person holding weapons. Thus the character ‘侠’ means warrior. According to *Shuo wen jie zi* (说文解字, an ancient etymology of Chinese characters) compiled by Xu Shen (许慎, d. A.D. 120), this character *xia* also symbolises one who is willing to pursue a cause with extreme bravery, while at the same time scorning money and greed. As early as the Han Dynasty, the Grand Historian Sima Qian (司马迁) distinguished the moral elevation of the errant knights *xia*: “although they do not always do what it right, their word can be trusted. They keep all their promises, honour all their pledges, and hasten to rescue those in distress regardless of their own safety.”<sup>138</sup> What Sima stresses in such warrior doctrines is moral power rather than physical strength, which is compatible with the moral codes of Confucian manhood, including *ren* (human-heartedness), *yi* (righteousness), *li* (propriety), *zhi* (wisdom) and *xin* (good faith). *The Burning of the Red Lotus Temple* depicts teamwork and mutual commitment to save the hostage, who is an upright official, imbued with the ethos of *ren* (human-heartedness), *yi* (righteousness), *zhong* (loyalty) and *xin* (faith).

Such *wu* masculinity stresses the moral power, so even though Confucius is the saint of *wen*, the ideal *wu* warrior is always a scholar warrior upholding Confucian virtues. An ideal example of the Confucian warrior is represented in the series of Wong Fei-hung (Huang Feihong 黄飞鸿), based on a real-life martial arts master. From the first film of the Wong

<sup>137</sup> Chinese Original: 《史记》卷 124 《游侠列传第六十四》：“侠以武犯禁。”

<sup>138</sup> Chinese Original: 《史记》卷 124 《游侠列传第六十四》“今游侠，其行虽不轨于正义，然其言必信，其行必果，已诺必诚，不爱其躯，赴仕之厄困。” The English translation as well as the translation of the previous quoted are by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang in *Selections from Records of the Historian by Szuma Chien* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1979), 429.

Fei-hung saga, *The True Story of Huang Feihong: Whiplash Snuffs the Candle Flame* (*Huang Feihong zhuan: bianfeng miezhu* 黄飞鸿传：鞭风灭烛, dir. Hu Peng 胡鹏) in 1949, the actor kwan Tak-Hing (Guan Dexing 关德兴) impersonated Master Wong in eighty-seven films over three decades. He skillfully portrayed a senior Confucian sage with superb martial arts skills and upright morality. He is crowned as a “Confucian cultural nationalist” by Hector Rodriguez.<sup>139</sup> As Chen Mo concludes, “he is a perfect incarnation of traditional patriarchy.”<sup>140</sup>

However, gender identification is missing in these images. Most of their stories have a central theme of warriors as saviours without personal romantic pursuit or personal concern of happiness or identification, and such repression of sexuality of the warrior is embedded in the *xia* masculinity. *Xia* is often known as *wu xia* in Chinese, with *wu* referring to valiance. Kam Louie argues, “[i]n contrast to Western ‘real men’ who always get the girl, the *wu* hero must contain his sexual and romantic desires.... Containment of sexual and romantic desire is an integral part of the *wu* virtue.”<sup>141</sup> Such a repression of the male sexuality is still sometimes reflected in the films made in the 2000s. The macho hero in *An Empress and the Warriors* to be discussed in Chapter Three reflects the shadow of the genderless *wu* warriors.

However, even the desexualisation of the depiction of the character did not stop the audience from re-sexualising the screen images. Paul Clark exposes the incompatibility between the filmmakers’ efforts to desexualise their characters and the audience’s wish to sexualise them in his discussion of the Chinese ballets during the Cultural Revolution. He notes, notwithstanding that the ballet directors try as hard as they may to desexualise the gender relationship, they could not entirely force their audiences into completely “chaste

<sup>139</sup> Hector Rodriguez, “Hong Kong Popular Culture as an Interpretive Arena: The Huang Feihong Film Series,” *Screen* 38, No. 1 (Spring 1997): 15.

<sup>140</sup> Chen, Mo, *Zhongguo wuxia dianying shi* (The history of Chinese martial arts films) (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2005), 103.

<sup>141</sup> Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, 19.

thoughts”.<sup>142</sup> He illustrates the ballet *The Red Detachment of Women* (*hongse niangzijun* 红色娘子军, 1970) to support his argument. Even though all sexual romantic elements are deleted from the story, the heroine’s dancing pose and her leaping body still exude a seductive, erotic sentiment, so that such images were popular “pin-ups” among ordinary audiences who enjoyed looking at her dancing body as an erotic object. Clark discusses the sexualisation of the women warriors by the audience in the lack of proper lens male character to possess the female characters. Similarly, the lack of female lens character who could act as the substitute of the female audience to gaze at the warriors in the narrative does not prevent the female audience from enjoying themselves gazing at their male idols on screen. A classical representative work is *From Victory to Victory* (*Nanzheng beizhan* 南征北战, dir. Tang Xiaodan and Cheng Yin 汤晓丹, 成荫, 1952), a film about some military conflicts between the Communist army and the KMT during Chinese civil war. The male protagonist is a battalion commander played by the attractive 31-year-old actor Feng Zhe (冯喆). He is desexualised in the emphasis on his platonic relationship with the female protagonist. He is not given the role of traditional “male gazer” who directs an erotic gaze towards the female protagonist in Mulvey’s argument. Therefore, he is not a competent male gazer who can act as the surrogate eyes of the audiences.

However, in order to magnify his charisma, the directors manipulate the camera to amplify his charming profile, his talents as a commander, his heroism in the battlefields and his virtuous personality, thus creating abundant opportunities for the female audience to enjoy looking at the charming commander. The glorified male characters inherits an ideal configuration of masculinity, whose attractiveness remains solid and pleasant to look at. Even though the audience might still direct a male gaze at the masculinised female characters, their

---

<sup>142</sup> Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 168.

feminine glamour has been concealed rather than highlighted by their shabby military uniform. The theme of objectification without gaze agent will be further elaborated in Chapter Two.

However, the *xia* warriors are not forever desexualised. Female characters played more important roles in martial arts and kung fu films in the 1960s. They are either the traditional women warriors<sup>143</sup> or the love objects of the warriors, but the warrior's romance often occupied minimum space and the women characters function as an important sign of the warrior as a heterosexual hero. Chang Cheh's (Zhang Che 张彻) films in the 1960s and 1970s promoted the *xia* heroes and staunch masculinity. Some of his works, such as *Deadly Duo* (*Shang xia* 双侠, 1971), still follow the tradition of de-sexualisation, but in some other works the *xia* warriors' heterosexual identity was enhanced by the romantic subplot of the film. For example, *The One-armed Swordsman* (*Du bi dao* 独臂刀, 1967), depicts a young martial arts student Fang Gang (played by Jimmy Wang Yu 王羽) who, after losing his right arm, still manages to learn supreme martial arts from a secret scroll and becomes a martial arts grandmaster. He is saved and nursed back to life by Xiao Man (played by Chiao Chiao 焦娇) and he negotiates his masculinity between the domestic bliss with the woman who saved him and the public responsibility to protect the reputation of his master and his martial arts clan. It is rather straight forward for the *xia* warrior in *One-armed Swordsman* to put his loyalty and male dignity before his desire for romantic happiness, even though he is rewarded by both at the end of the film.

Such a negotiation between two spheres in order to perform an ideal manhood continued to be an important theme in depicting the *xia* masculinity in the 1990s, whereas the *xia* masculinity was further modified. The ideal *xia* hero represented by Wong Feihung is not

---

<sup>143</sup> For example discussion on traditional women warriors in Chinese cinema, refer to Chen, Yunxiang, *Representations of Chinese Women Warriors in the Cinemas of Hong Kong, Mainland China and Taiwan since 1980*. MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 2007.

a senile Confucian warrior patriarch embodied by Kwan Tak Hing, but a more modern and handsome young man played by Jet Li (Li Lianjie 李连杰). More significantly, the younger version of Wong and the *xia* warrior Li represents learn the magic of romance and sexual love. In the first three films of the *Once Upon a Time in China* series (dir. Tsui Hark 徐克),<sup>144</sup> Wong Feihung (Jet Li) is not just a respectful martial arts patriarch with loyal disciples, but also learns about romance. His boyish love to Auntie Thirteen (Shisanyi, played by Rosamund Kwan 关之琳), his jealousy over her Russian friend and his comical way of revealing his love to her in front of his father, all make him a 'cuter' version of the *xia* hero.

Unquestionably, the importance of this series in Hong Kong cinema and the Chinese film history in general should not be confined to the romanticisation of Wong. Nationalism, the conflicts between tradition and Westernisation, the cinematographic brilliance and the spectacular martial arts, all are important themes that have been studied by different scholars.<sup>145</sup> However, Wong's romantic colour is highlighted here to concentrate on the central theme of a female gaze and male image as a love object in this research. The old-styled asexual warrior is romanticised and as in the *Once Upon a Time in China* Series: he becomes the love object of the female protagonist/the female audience. For example, Auntie Thirteen touches Wong's shadow on the wall and falls into a romantic fancy with him. (Still 1-2 and Still 1-3). The male warrior becoming women's love object in action genre is more conspicuous when women play more important roles in the narratives, which will be further discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>144</sup> Normally the series includes six films, the first three (黄飞鸿 1991; 黄飞鸿之二男儿当自强, 1992; 黄飞鸿之三师王争霸 1993) and the six episode (黄飞鸿之西域雄狮 1997) are starred by Jet Li and the fourth and fifteen episodes are starred by Vincent Chao (赵文卓). Lots of research have been done on this series, for example David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 2000).

<sup>145</sup> For furthering reading, Stephen Teo, *Chinese Martial Arts Cinema: the Wuxia Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); David Bordwell's *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Arts of Entertainment*; Tony Williams, "Under 'Western Eyes': The Personal Odyssey of Huang Fei-Hong in *Once Upon a Time in China*", *Cinema Journal*, 40:1, Fall 2000: 3-24.



Still 1-2

Still 1-3

Auntie Thirteen (Rosamund Kwan)'s fantasy with Wong (Jet Li)'s shadow

Many of the *xia* heroes discussed above belong to an imaginary world known as the *Jianghu* (江湖 literally meaning rivers and lakes). There is no singular definition of *Jianghu*, and it normally refers to an imaginary territory of the knight-errand novels. According to Rong Cai, *jianghu* is a symbolic territory which “was often believed to stand in sharp opposition to the oppressive official world of corruption and injustice, hence its resonance with the public.”<sup>146</sup> The protagonists in the world of *Jianghu* are, therefore, outlaws in the eyes of the official order. That is, an essential feature of the *wu* warriors lies in their contempt for laws and orders. Gangster films often depict contemporary versions of these outlaw warriors, with John Woo as an eminent director in this genre. His masterpieces, including *A Better Tomorrow* (*Yingxiong bense* 英雄本色, 1986) and *The Killer* (*Diexue shuangxiong* 喋血双雄, 1989), the former about the fraternity of two triad members, and the latter about the brotherhood developed between a policeman and an assassin, are highly acclaimed, especially in the West.

When John Woo described his intention of making a gangster action drama *A Better Tomorrow* in 1986, he confessed, “I wanted to make a film that would emphasize traditional values: loyalty, honesty, passion for justice, commitment to your family. Things I felt were

<sup>146</sup> Rong Cai, “Gender Imagination in *Crouching Tiger*, *Hidden Dragon* and the Wuxia World,” *Positions* 13, No.2 (2005): 445.

being lost.”<sup>147</sup> In his *A Better Tomorrow* series, Woo criticises the materialism in Hong Kong by portraying the villains as men who shamelessly violated traditional morality for material gains. At the same time, he creates a gangster hero to embody these traditional virtues of brotherhood and altruism, and the God they worship is Guan Yu.

*A Better Tomorrow* initiated a format for the gangster warrior: the gangster is often the symbol of brotherhood, loyalty, self-sacrifice, and in most cases, such emotional binding is maintained among men; when women characters exist, they often function as images to reassure the heterosexual background of the film. While John Woo uses gangsters to recapture the traditional values, to rescue things he felt are being lost, gangster films are again used by different directors to rescue a masculine culture when a feminine discourse is gaining more power and control in the consumer society. Therefore, gangster films are to be discussed in Chapter Five as counter-examples of the feminisation themes.

Even though Kam Louie has pointed out that *wu* masculinity is a non-elite form of masculinity, contrasting the *wen*, or elite masculinity, the physical power of the *wu* masculinity is often justified by the moral concern and spiritual virtues. The *wu* masculinity does not highlight the power to control, to conquer, to challenge. The character *wu* (武) originally means valiant, but its etymology indicates that it includes two parts (止 *zhi* and 戈 *ge*). Its original symbol is a person walking (original meaning of 止 is foot) with a weapon (戈) on the hand, but the inner part of the word 武 also means to stop, so the *wu* always includes a non-aggressive element in its emphasis on military power. Therefore, even though the *wu xia* masculinity presents a militant look, it does not fit well into the masculine model in Baudrillard's arguments. Even though both *wu xia* masculinity and machismo emphasise the physical strength in defining manhood, from the above illustration, *wu xia* masculinity is different from machismo. It is this reason that the original Chinese word is used without

---

<sup>147</sup> Maitland McDonagh, “Things I Felt Being Lost” (interview) *Film Comment* 29.5 (1993): 50.

translating it into relevant English. The non-aggressive attitude hidden in the *wu xia* masculinity made its feminisation less offensive and easy to be incorporated.

### 1.6.2 The Feminised Scholars

Even though feminisation in this research refers to a feminine discourse based on Baudrillard's understanding of seduction and a feminine logic, the discussion of feminisation in of Chinese films needs to start with the more obvious but conventional portrayal of feminised men: the fragile, weeping scholar. The influence of such a fragile scholar can be traced back to the 1920s when filmmakers started adapting novels by the “mandarin ducks and butterflies schools” (*yanyang hudie pai* 鸳鸯蝴蝶派). Rey Chow offers great insights into the new understanding of this genre. The importance of the marriage between film and the mandarin ducks and butterflies literature lies in the theme of feminisation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, when China was forced to face modernisation and the cultural invasion of Western thinking, a number of “old school” intellectuals insisted on the old writing style and produced works that adhered to Chinese traditions. The most famous and popular genre they produced was the love story<sup>148</sup> between weeping beauties and fragile scholars, which came to be known as mandarin ducks and butterflies novels. Rey Chow borrows a succinct summary of the narrative plot of such a mandarin ducks and butterflies novel from John Berninghansen and Ted Hutters:

[A] standard description of Butterfly literature is that it consists of sentimental stories centering on the unfulfilled love between scholars (*cai zi*) and beauties (*jia ren*). These stories are typically summarized as follows: “Boy meets girl, boy and

<sup>148</sup> Of course love story is not the only genre of mandarin ducks and butterflies novels. According to Rey Chow, they include all types of old-style fictions, such as love stories, social novels, detective novels, knight-errant novels, fantasy novels, comic novels and others. (Rey Chow, *Women and Chinese Modernity*, 36).



---

girl fall in love, boy and girl are separated by cruel fate, boy and girl die of broken heart.”<sup>149</sup>

The first sensational success in this mandarin ducks and butterflies novel is Xu Zhenya's (徐枕亚) *Yu Li Hun* (玉梨魂 Jade pear spirit) published in 1912 and it was adapted into film by Zhang Shichuan (张石川) and Xu Hu (徐琥) in 1924. The male protagonist, who is a scholar and teacher, falls in love with a widow who adheres to Confucian patriarchal virtues to remain chaste and mourns for her husband for life. Both of them repress their love for each other and the widow dies of deteriorating health and the scholar marries the widow's sister-in-law against his will. Even though he is rewarded with domestic bliss because the woman he marries in fact loves him all the way, he is a sentimental hero who fits well into the feminisation prototype. He is, first of all, feminised in his fragile, pale-faced appearance and his over-emotional personality. Secondly, he is feminised in the sense that he accepts the ready-made Confucian codes and renounces all fighting spirits. Such readiness to accept pressure, oppression and the dominant codes will be another layer of the feminisation that links the following chapters together, and Chapter Four in particular.

This handsome scholar as a fragile lover was extremely popular in the 1950s and 1960s. The popular young male images in this period are personified by actors such as Kwan Shan (Guan Shan 关山) and Ng Cho-fan (Wu Chufan 吴楚帆) who came into fame by portraying effeminate men. For example, tear-jerkers such as *Love without End* (不了情, 1961) and *The Blue and the Black* (蓝与黑, 1966) by the expert director of love tragedies, Doe Ching (Tao Qin 陶秦), feature Kwan Shan as a fragile lover. In *The Blue and the Black*, for example, Kwan plays the role of Xingya, a genteel young man falling in love. When the

---

<sup>149</sup> Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity*, 51, the quote for her book is from John Berninghansen and Ted Hutters, "Introductory Essay," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 8, no.1 (1976), 2.

two families oppose his love, all he does is wailing like a baby in his bed. Stephen Teo recognises Kwan's acting style as a "classic 'romantic wimp' performance".<sup>150</sup>

However, such a "romantic wimp" does not suffer from discrimination or despise. Instead, he is often the favourite both to the heroines in the films as well as the audience. The resurgence of fragile scholars in the 1980s was represented by Leslie Cheung (张国荣 1956–2003)<sup>151</sup>. Two highly acclaimed films, *A Chinese Ghost Story* (*Qiannü youhun* 倩女幽魂, dir. Ching Siu-Tung, 1987) and *Rouge* (*Yanzhi kou* 胭脂扣, dir. Stanley Kwan [Guan Jinpeng] 关锦鹏, 1988) are two of his representative performances. In *A Chinese Ghost Story*, he portrays a fragile scholar encountering a ghost seductress manipulated by a demonic monster who needs men's essence to sustain his/her life. *Rouge* depicts a female ghost returning from the underworld to look for her lover (Leslie Cheung) who is supposed to have committed double suicide with her fifty years ago. John Zou suggests that the male protagonist "serves as a rather passive object of desire with predetermined functions."<sup>152</sup> Cheung plays in *A Chinese Ghost Story* a vulnerable young man who constantly relies on the female ghost to rescue him with her supernatural power, whereas in *Rouge* he is a coward who succumbs to his mother's opposition to his marriage.

In these images of fragile lovers, even though they represent somehow passive masculinity, they are often rewarded for certain high virtues they uphold and the passiveness is often their virtue. In the typical scholar-beauty romance, he is not only admired for his poetry but also for his acceptance of the Confucian doctrines. With women playing a more significant role as consumer, their preference for feminised heroes led to another wave of

<sup>150</sup> Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: British Film Institute, 1997), 75.

<sup>151</sup> Leslie Cheung's homosexuality was kept secret at this stage. Even after his sexual orientation was exposed, he still enjoyed love and respect from many female fans.

<sup>152</sup> John Zou, "A Chinese Ghost Story: Ghostly Counsel and Innocent Man," in *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes*, ed. Chris Berry (London: British Film Institute, 2003. Reprint, 2005), 41.

---

effeminate lovers in Chinese commercial film productions in the new millenium, which will be further studied in Chapter Three.

The scholar masculinity is not just depicted in the genre of scholar romance, but rather it has been incorporated into the depiction of other male characters in other genres and some of them are more obscure. Take the propaganda war epics made in the 1950s and 1960s in Mainland China for example, the typical male hero in these films is a Communist charismatic leader, while he either brims with great *wen* (cultured) essence or diligently acquires a more *wen* charm. One of the classical examples is *Tunnel Warfare* (地道战, dir. Ren Xudong 任旭东, 1965), depicting some village militia defending their villages against the Japanese invaders with clever tunnel tactics. The male protagonist Gao Chuanbao (高传宝, played by Zhu Longguang 朱龙广) transforms himself into a supplicated military leader by reading, through which he polish his militant image into a scholar. He studies one of the military tactic books written by Chairman Mao industriously and cherishes it like a sacred bible. He is captured in a scene where he devotes himself to study, with a trembling candle light on his right side, while he is holding the book by Chairman Mao with reverence (Still 1-4). The whole reading scene is accompanied by some tranquil music of Chinese pipa. Therefore, the peasant militia leader is packaged into a scholar brimming over with Communist worship, while this scene is best described by a Chinese idiom *hanchuang kudu* (寒窗苦读), the literary meaning of which is persevering in reading by a cold window.



Still 1-4 *Tunnel Warfare*

As Wang Yiyan argues, from the 1930s to the 1970s, the Chinese Communist Party allows peasants, workers and soldiers to be the three major literary heroes, but “soft masculinity in the traditional sense still had an upper hand.”<sup>153</sup> The dominant male heroes are “talented communist scholars” and “[t]his was achieved by transforming the usually macho males through education or communist indoctrination so that their rough masculinity was softened and thus able to meet the expectations and discipline of the Party.”<sup>154</sup> This representation of talented Communist scholars still dominated the new propaganda films in the 2000s, which will be further studied in Chapter Three.

The soldier-turns-scholar image is an excellent example to illustrate two layers of feminisation in this research. First of all, he is feminised in terms of appearance. Gao is a soldier, but his tranquil composure and obsession with the words in the book is in huge contrast with the typical warrior’s readiness to attack with the weapon at hand. Secondly, he

---

<sup>153</sup> Wang, Yiyan, “Mr Butterfly in Defunct Capital: ‘Soft Masculinity and (Mis)engendering China,’” in Kam Louie and Morris Low, *Asian Masculinities: the Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 46.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

completely submits himself to the doctrine written by Chairman Mao and accepts what is written on the book in his hand as eternal truth. Gao, the fearless militant commander, is depicted to take a softened approach to the authorities, completing the unusual combination of warrior with a humble spirit. Such humbleness in the warriors persisted even at the circumstance of injustice caused by the authorities, in which cases the warrior adopts a peaceful non-violent approach to search for justice and official recognition by the authorities rather challenging its injustice. Chapter Four will discuss such humbleness in the warrior spirit under the authorities with the example of *Assembly*.

### 1.6.3 Others Voices

The discussion of the *wu xia* heroes and feminised scholars in the previous discussion seems to identify two extremes of Chinese masculinity, but this research is one about the unusual combination of these two extremes to look at a feminised warrior image. However, before any detailed discussion of different layers of the implication of a feminised warrior image, it needs to acknowledge that, besides the prototypes of *wu xia* heroes and fragile scholars, there are other aspects of masculinity, but it is out of the present scope of this research. For example, a typical *wu* warrior often represents a good cause and even the gangsters have their glamour of upholding fraternal loyalty, but there are also those who rebel without a cause. Hong Kong New Wave movement representative works *Dangerous Encounter--First Kind* (第一类型危险) directed by Tsui Hark in 1980, introduces the teenage delinquents and their anti-social behaviour. They are rebellious and their mischieves cause the death of innocent people. In Johnny Mak's *Long Arm of the Law* (*Shenggang qibing* 省港旗兵, 1984), a gang of savage robbers with military backgrounds from Mainland China are the protagonists but also the devils of the film. They kill, they rob, and they threaten the order of Hong Kong. Such scenes that associate military/physical strength with ultraviolence provoke

fear, anger and even hatred among the audience. They do not possess the nobility of the *wu xia* warriors or the scholarly charm; their political approach is different from the Confucian tradition of humbleness and submission. The counter-examples of feminisation that will be discussed in Chapter Five, such as *Walking on the Wide Side*, will reflect the rebellious spirits in understanding Chinese masculinity and political positioning.

Secondly, since the two main foci of this research is a woman-made masculinity and the power hierarchy in defining the relationship between man and the system he inherits, sexual identification has not been included in the discussion of masculinities in Chinese films. For example, *Red Sorghum* (*Hong gaoliang* 红高粱, dir. Zhang Yimou, 1987) depicts a community of macho outlaw men and a woman. The sedan-bearer (played by Jiang Wen 姜文), who is supposed to kill the leper husband of the female protagonist played by Gong Li (巩俐), comes to the winery and becomes her husband. In this film, individual sexual desires of both men and women, are fully recognised. The sedan-bearer pursues the female protagonist who accepts his pursuit with acquiescence, and the consummation of their love in an open sorghum field is celebrated as the sexual liberation of Chinese men and women by many critics.<sup>155</sup> Sexuality and masculinity in Chinese film certainly need extensive study in another research scheme.

From a sexual approach, feminisation is often linked with homosexuality, but queer theory and homosexual themes will not be discussed further. Films with homosexual themes, such as *Happy Together* (*Chunguang zhaxie* 春光乍泄, dir. Wong Kar Wai 王家卫, 1997) and *Lan Yu* (蓝宇, dir Stanley Kwan, 2000), are important in understanding the homosexual aspect of masculinity, which deserves a separate research project.

---

<sup>155</sup> For example, Wang, Yuejin's "Red Sorghum: Mixing Memory and Desire," in *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema*, ed. Chris Berry (London: BFI Publishing, 1991).

Castration crisis is another underlayer that is often associated with the conventional definition of feminisation. Such association is built on the Oedipus complex in defining masculinity that emphasises competition, confrontation and patricide, and such confrontational positioning emphasises feminisation as crisis and failure. Certainly, the linkage of masculinity and patricide has been depicted in Chinese cinema, with Zhang Yimou's Red Trilogy<sup>156</sup> as excellent examples. However, the definition of feminisation in this thesis is based on a feminine logic argued by Baudrillard, in which feminisation is some form of acceptance and obedience. In the examples chosen to be discussed in the later chapters, Oedipus complex is not a major theme, even in the next Chapter on son warriors and Chapter Four on father warriors. Chinese philosophy on benevolence and submission will be compared with the Western philosophy on patricide in Chapter Two and Four.

It is not the ambition of this research to draw a complete picture of Chinese masculinity and philosophy. Instead, only a number of examples are chosen here in order to look at the warrior characters and the multilayers of feminisation in Chinese films beyond the research period. Some other voices are mentioned just to substantiate some other possible directions toward which further insightful research can be conducted. It is impossible to include a full list of all possible directions. The limited examples are just a glimpse of other research aspects that might be taken besides the approach of the current project.

## 1.7 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has looked at the definitions of femininity and masculinity, expressed the hypothesis of a female gaze and focused on an intensive and extensive discussion of multilayers of feminisation, thus established the theoretical framework of this research project. The discourse of feminisation in this research is built on the base of Baudrillard's

---

<sup>156</sup> The Red Trilogy includes *Red Sorghum*, *Ju Dou* and *Raise the Red Lantern*.

---

theory on the consumer society and his theory on a feminine logic. The seductive power of sign and appearance is closely connected with the brand names in the consumer society, whereas such seduction of appearance, according to Baudrillard, is based on a feminine logic. With metrosexual culture as an example, it has examined this aspect of feminisation in the postmodern consumer society from a global context, as well as their persistence in Chinese cultural roots. Contemporary gender politics in Chinese language films cannot escape from the globalisation drive, nor can it be separated from the perseverance of its own cultural heritage. As shown in this chapter, Chinese traditional philosophy and power discourses have their intriguing resonance with theories of postmodern consumer society, even though neither is the nemesis of the other.

Secondly, feminisation in this research also used as a gender metaphor to understand a softer strategy to construct cultural identities and political positioning under an established power order. A feminised strategy is not to challenge, but to accept the established power order and play the assigned role of object rather than the subject; therefore, it is a submissive approach. However, the submissive here is not disempowered, but is celebrated as a new popular strategy to obtain a voice without being silenced before being heard.



## Chapter Two

### Docile Son Forever

#### The Feminisation of the Son Warriors

##### 2.1 Introduction

This study first focuses on the feminisation of the warriors from the perspective of sons because the role as sons are the first stage of masculine identify. Images of sons presented in films can be feminised in two aspects: first, feminised to be the object for the gaze (from both the auditorium and the diegesis), second, feminised in the sense that he is forced into an inferior position within the father-son relationship. According to the *yin-yang* relationship between son and father defined by Han period Confucian scholar Dong Zhongshu's *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals*, "the father is *yang*, the son is *yin*."<sup>1</sup> Such a Confucian discourse disempowers the son and places him on a subjected and feminised (*yin*) position in which obedience and self-denial are coded as "filial piety" while empower the father by glorifying his control, constraints, and prohibitions as his philanthropism towards the son. Sun Lung-kee demystifies this charming masquerade of filial piety and philanthropism, redefining them as "filicide" and "infantilisation"<sup>2</sup>, two idiosyncratic complexes in Chinese cultural legacies concerning father-son relationship.

This chapter uses two films *A Battle of Wits* (dir. Jacob Cheung, 2006) and *Playboy Cops* (dir. Jingle Ma, 2008) as examples in order to discuss the male idols' role as erotic

---

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 1, note 127.

<sup>2</sup> Sun, *Zhongguo wenhua de shenceng jiegou* (The Deep Structure of Chinese Culture), 179 and 185.

objects for the fan gaze, and also to deconstruct the two complexes: filial piety/ filicide, and philanthropism/infantilisation in Chinese traditions. These two films are chosen primarily because their male images fit into the theme of this chapter: son warriors as the feminised Other. Also, both of them are quite popular among the audience, proven by their box office, thus justifying their significance in understanding the audience reception and the popularity of the feminisation themes embedded in these films. *A Battle of Wits*, which was still showing in 2007, ranked number five, number four and number four in the 2006 box office in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan respectively.<sup>3</sup> If the 2007 revenue had been counted, it could have ranked even higher. *Playboy Cops* did not achieve a good box office return in Hong Kong, but its Mainland China's box office return nearly reached 1.8 million U.S dollars, exceeding ten million Yuan in Mainland China. As a film with a moderate budget, more than ten million Yuan box office is considered a good success. The director was happy with its financial returns and even planned a sequel.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the film *A Battle of Wits* is a good example to demonstrate the connection between Chinese traditional male codes and contemporary society because it is a film about the mythical China of the past made by a present-day director who would definitely interpret history in his special way. *Playboy Cops*, on the other hand, is a niche example of the metrosexual culture illustrated in the Introduction of this research. These two films can cover the theme of son warriors in this chapter and connect with the theoretical frameworks established at the beginning of this research.

<sup>3</sup> According to the statistics in *Huayu Dianying 2006* (Chinese Language Films 2006) edited by Yu Xiaoyi, the 2006 box office revenue for *A Battle of Wits* was 61 million Yuan in Mainland China, about 15 million Hong Kong dollars in Hong Kong and 16 million New Taiwan Dollars (NTD) in Taiwan. According to *International Box Office Essentials* website [www.iboe.com](http://www.iboe.com), its global revenues reached \$91,319,035 Hong Kong dollars.

<sup>4</sup> According to Box Office Mojo official website, the total gross of *Playboy Cops* is U.S. \$2,123,844, with U.S. \$1,893,993 from Mainland China and U.S.\$18,617 from Hong Kong market. Even with the depreciation of U.S. dollars, its total gross income converted to Chinese Yuan still reached ¥12,423,646 RMB (at a rate of 1 USD = 6.55950 RMB). "Huahua xingjing: neidi shouzhou piaofang baojie" ("*Playboy Cops*: great box office success at the opening weekend"), accessed 04 February 2010, <http://trans.wenweipo.com/gb/paper.wenweipo.com/2008/03/07/EN0803070026.htm>.

*A Battle of Wits* is adapted from a popular Japanese comic series *Bokkou* by Hideki Mori (森秀树), which describes a war between the small kingdoms of Liang (梁) and Zhao (赵) in 370 B.C.E during the Warring State period (475 -221 B.C.E). The king of Liang pleads for help from the Mohist warriors who are experts in defence, but only one warrior comes, Ge Li (革离 played by Andy Lau [Liu Dehua] 刘德华). He is joined by the Crown Prince (played by Choi Siwon 崔始源) and the Liang soldiers to fight the colossal army of Zhao.

*Playboy Cops* depicts a contemporary drama of an investigation of a murder case, in which a dandyish Hong Kong police officer, Michael Mak (麦可民, played by Shawn Yue[Yu Wenle] 余文乐) links up with Lin Heng (林亨 played by Chen Kun) who comes to Hong Kong to search for the murderer of his brother.

No English/ Western academic criticism can be found on these two films, even though *A Battle of Wits* was promoted beyond China's border to other Asian regions with some Korean cast and original inspiration from Japanese comics. In Chinese resources, *Playboys Cops* induces no serious critique at all. Amidst the limited reviews in Chinese of *A Battle of Wits*, the core of concern is, firstly, its depiction of the philosophy of Mohism, such as Zhang Chencheng's "The Arts of City-defence in *A Battle of Wits*" and Ju Chuanyou's "Unscrambling the Cultural Connotation in *A Battle of Wits*"<sup>5</sup>; and secondly, its aesthetic defects. For example, Li Cheuk-to mourns the shabbiness of its special effects in comparison with the *Lord of the Rings* series.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The Chinese original sources for these two articles are Zhang Chencheng, "Mogong: mo jia cheng shou sixiang de yinmu tixian" ("A Battle of Wits: The Screen Representation of Mohist's Defence Tactics"). *Dianying pingjie (Film Review)* issue 10, No. 24 (2007): 24; Ju Chuanyou, "Mogong wenhua neihan de shenceng jiedu" ("An In-depth Reading of the Cultural Significance Embedded in A Battle of Wits"). *Dianying Pingjie (Film Review)*, issue 2, No.35 (2009): 35.

<sup>6</sup> Li, Cheuk-to, "Mo gong fuzi de yinyou" ("The Hidden Trouble of *A Battle of Wits* and *After This Our Exile*"), in Yu, ed., *huayu dianying 2006* (Chinese Language Films 2006), 180-182.

The current critique does not centre on the ontological aesthetics of either *A Battle of Wits* or *Playboy Cops*, or on the central plots of either film (the battle of defence and Mohism in the case of the former and the crime investigation in the latter), but rather on the two son warriors: the Crown Prince of Liang played by Korean young idol Choi Siwon in *A Battle of Wits*, and an apparent prodigal son Michael Mak in *Playboy Cops*, who squanders money to pay informants to help him to solve criminal cases.

Both Choi Siwon who is chosen to play the role of the Crown Prince and Shawn Yue as Michael Mak are promising young idols worshiped and supported by a loyal fan community. Their participation in these two films attracted fan gaze and support. As son, the Crown Prince is subjugated and tamed to be a docile son by his father, epitomising “filial piety” or, quoting Sun Lung-kee’s configuration, the depressing, darker “filicide” complex. Michael, in contrast, is a pampered, self-indulgent son who is subject to the father’s philanthropism, or, in Sun’s words, “infantilisation”. However, such infantilisation, instead of being a tactic or conspiracy of the father to tame the son, is subtly manoeuvred by the son to sketch out a metrosexual masculinity in the postmodern consumer milieu.

## **2.2 Feminisation Aspect 1: The Male Actor as a Spectacle for the Fans**

The prevailing phenomenon of actors being objectified as erotic spectacles for the female gaze from the auditorium is the first connotation of feminisation discussed in this research. It is a common phenomenon concerning not just the two films selected for discussion in this chapter, but all the film texts in this research. However, a conspicuous common feature in these two films is the absence of a female lens character in the narrative who can act as a gaze agent for the female audiences.

When Mulvey analyses the relation between the spectator in the auditorium and the fetishistic spectacle, she emphasises a process of the spectator’s identification with the male

protagonist who works as the agent of the gaze, “[b]y means of identification with him, through participation in his power, the spectator can indirectly possess her too.”<sup>7</sup> Even though she re-states the existence of female spectator in her afterthought on visual pleasure, she emphasises the female search for identification, and does not provide further explanation for her seeking visual pleasure from her direct gaze toward the actors.<sup>8</sup> An audience gaze at the actor does not necessarily require a gaze agent in the film narrative because the audience assume the role of active agents themselves. Chapter One has analysed this view with the help of Gramman’s argument that the female gaze is not necessarily confined to films produced by women and a woman lens character as the main protagonist to lead the story.<sup>9</sup> Paul Clark, as discussed in Chapter One, unveils an example of an extraneous gaze without an agent from the narrative in admiring female images; similarly, the absence of a female agent in *A Battle of Wits* and *Playboy Cops* does not prevent the girl fans from chasing after the screen personae of their idols.

The non-necessity of an agent for the fans to gaze at their idols is justified by the fact that they have profound prior knowledge of their idols before entering the cinema. The visual media and internet constantly offer countless images of the actors, and such prior knowledge is constantly worked into the formation of various characters. The directors often incorporate the charisma of the real actor into the character he embodies. For example, an actor who is renowned for his kung fu is often invited to play roles of martial art masters in action epics. In other words, a character is often partly encoded by filmmakers, and partly by the actor.

Furthermore, researches have shown that female audience tend to collect more prior knowledge before entering the cinema, for they show more interest in entertainment news. For example, as early as 1995, The Academia Sinica of Taiwan put out a report on the

---

<sup>7</sup> Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, 42.

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter One, note 34.

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter One, note 48.

newspaper reading habits between men and women, which demonstrated that women show more interests than men in the columns of performing arts (1.8% to 1.0%), literature (5.4% to 1.3%) and television-film entertainments (15.1% to 4.8%).<sup>10</sup> Such reading habits indicate that women accumulate more prior knowledge of the actors and actresses from the entertainment tabloids. They bring this information with them into the cinema, where they form a more ‘intimate’ relationship with the actor they go to watch than their male counterparts do, because the women in fact ‘have known him better.’

John Ellis identifies the film star as “a marketing device” that “... is the invitation to cinema, posing cinema as synthesising all the disparate and scattered elements of the star image.”<sup>11</sup> Choi Siwon plays the role of the Crown Prince in *A Battle of Wits*, his film debut. Originally, Choi was a member of a popular Korean boy band “Super Junior”<sup>12</sup>, who were publicised for their cartoonish cuteness and handsomeness rather than their musical talents. Choi’s popularity in China was proven by his inclusion in the sub-group Super Junior M<sup>13</sup>, which was formed by Korean Cultural Technology to target the Chinese music industry. The director’s choice of Choi was made seemingly out of consideration for the popularity of Super Junior as well as the popularity of Korean pop culture in China.

At a first glance, Choi’s role in *A Battle of Wits* is constrained in two aspects: firstly, he is merely playing a supporting role compared with the mega-star Andy Lau who plays the male protagonist Ge Li in the same film;<sup>14</sup> secondly, he is depicted in an old-fashioned way

<sup>10</sup> Xin, Dai, ed. *Xin Hao Nanren: Taiwan Nanren De Biaomao Yu Qushi* (New good men: transformations and new tendencies of Taiwanese men) (Taipei: Shibao wenhua chuban qiye youxian gongsi, 1995), 218.

<sup>11</sup> John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London and New York: Routledge 1982; Reprinted 2003), 97 and 108.

<sup>12</sup> Super Junior is a pop Korean band formed in 1995 and one of the members of super Junior is Chinese singer Han Geng (韩庚).

<sup>13</sup> M stands for Chinese official language Mandarin.

<sup>14</sup> In fact, considering Andy Lau’s popularity in Chinese society, even in Asia, his role as the luring fetishistic object for the female gaze is even more prominent in this film, but this chapter only analyses Choi’s image in order to maintain the focus on “son warriors.”

that follows the prosaic style of an asexual filial son warrior, which, on the one hand, undermines his heroism and attractiveness, and, on the other hand, induces an absence of romance and a vacuum of sexual relations in the narrative. Predictably, no female character in the film serves as his love object or as a surrogate agent of the gaze for the audience.<sup>15</sup> However, Choi's presence itself is enough to serve as a luring fetish to seduce his female fans flocking to the cinema to admire and enjoy gazing at him, and to extract visual pleasure from his screen persona. Choi's appealing power is proved by the fan craze and screaming in the film's premiere tours in Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong.<sup>16</sup>

Compared with *A Battle of Wits*, director Jingle Ma introduces in *Playboy Cops* a relatively more significant female protagonist Lisa (played by Linda Chung [Zhong Jiaxin] 钟嘉欣) as the love object of the two main male characters. However, romance is only a subplot of the film, and the director lays more emphasis on the development of comradeship between the two male protagonists; her presence is more significant in ensuring the heterosexual context of the film rather than in assuring the importance of women. Her film presence is limited so that her character is not strong enough to serve as an ego-subject for the female audience to identify with. Consequently, her role as a gaze agency is severely hindered. Her inability to act as the gaze agent does not diminish the fans' fascination over two young actors, Shawn Yue and Chen Kun, who are two heartthrobs in Chinese popular culture. Since Chen Kun is the male protagonist in another film *The Knot* to be discussed in Chapter Three, his actor charisma will not be discussed in detail here. Shawn Yue, a model turned actor and singer, is a popular idol worshipped by fans who set up fan clubs to support their idol.<sup>17</sup> A fan

---

<sup>15</sup> The only significant female character Yiyue (逸悦) is in love with Ge Li, and her gaze is conclusively directed toward Ge.

<sup>16</sup> *A Battle of Wits*, dir. Jingle Ma, 133min., Sundream Motion pictures Ltd and Huayi Brothers pictures, DVD special features.

<sup>17</sup> Both of them have their fan website or blog, such as <http://www.dearchenkun.com/> and Shawn Yue's facebook page with more than 390 thousand fans, <http://www.facebook.com/sy>.

website maintained by Chen Kun's fans collects various resources about *Playboy Cops*, including the film's premiere and film reviews, while in the fan forum, fans express their craziness toward the charming charisma of Chen and Yue without particular reference to the female character.<sup>18</sup>

The director highlights the visual presence of these two young male protagonists without a conspicuous female gaze agent within the screen scene. In the opening scene introducing Shawn Yue/Michael Mak, the director glamorises the actor by highlighting his fashionable sunglasses, trendy suits and luxurious Ferrari convertible, so that the audience's gaze is fixed upon him. In the scene of Michael's first encounter with his future buddy Lin Heng, their identical attire draws both their gazes toward each other as well as the audience's gaze upon them. A shot-reversed-shot, followed by a tilt shot, reveals the two characters scrutinising each other's identical apparel. All these shots draw the audience's attention to the visual charm of the two actors. Furthermore, the director frequently reminds the audience of their visual attractiveness through slow-motion shots of them stepping out of their luxurious cars. Such cinematographic techniques glamorise the two actors, tingeing them with a romantic aura to serve as fetish spectacles to satisfy the voyeuristic gaze of the audience. According to Mulvey, such a role of fetish spectacle used to be assigned to actresses. It is in the sense that a male actor is 'feminised.'

However, such feminisation of the male image could be a result of a female gaze or a male gaze. On the one hand, these cinematographical tactics are employed to emphasise the elegant demeanour of the actors, catering to a female gaze for male spectacles. On the other hand, even though the heterosexual relationship is the main concern of this research, the masculine-masculine gaze between the two male protagonists and the gay audience's gaze at

---

<sup>18</sup> Fan forum held by Chen Kun's fans, <http://www.dearchenkun.com/chenkun/viewthread.php?tid=9415&extra=page%3D1>, accessed 21 May 2009, the link was missed in July 2011, but this fan website is still running.



the male protagonists cannot be ignored. Steven Durkman says, “a gay spectator could detect ‘reality’ about sexual pleasure even when obfuscated by a smokescreen of ‘appearance’.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, even within a film without any homosexual theme, a gay spectator can still deliberately ignore the heterosexual setting and obtain visual pleasure from the screen images.<sup>20</sup> Within this queer gaze, the actor is still objectivised and therefore feminised; except that such feminisation of the male image co-exists with the screen persona as source of identification. Durkman notes that the gay gaze towards the male image results in two different pleasures: he looks at the male image as a spectacle offering voyeuristic pleasure as well as a subject to identify with. Under the gay gaze, the actor in the film text serves both as a visual object and a male ego to be identified with.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, as long as the actor functions as a visual object, he is still feminised, be it a result of a female gaze or a queer male gaze.

## 2.3 Feminisation Aspect 2: the Culture of Filicide (*A Battle of Wits*)

### 2.3.1 Filial Piety vs. Docility

The male actor as a visual object is only one aspect of his function as a spectacle. The directors also manipulated him as a cultural device to present their cultural politics. Since the two chosen films are Chinese language films mainly targeted at a Chinese audience,<sup>22</sup> the Chineseness of the male spectacle would easily touch the right chord of that audience. Both

<sup>19</sup> Steven Durkman, “The Gay Gaze, or Why I Want My MTV,” in *A Queer Romance: Lesbians, Gay Men and Popular Culture*, eds. Paul Burston and Colin Richardson (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 87.

<sup>20</sup> Such a queer reading towards a heterosexual story proved the power of the audience as an active decoder and the director’s powerlessness to control the interpretation of his or her filmic events. Such a theme will be discussed in detail in the last chapter of this research on the ‘death of the director’.

<sup>21</sup> According to Durkman, the ego identification of the gazing audience is more complex than a gay man identifying with men. He is in constant flux between the woman and the man, trying to balance his gender identification.

<sup>22</sup> *A Battle of Wits*, released in China as well as Korea, Japan and Singapore, was targeted at the Asian market, but all these targeted audiences had at least one thing in common: their own culture has been influenced by the Chinese civilisation at various stages of their history. Therefore, the incorporation of another Asian country might be regarded as a cultural assimilation experiment.

directors seemingly made use of Chinese elements, including ancient Chinese history and Chinese moral concept of *xiao* (filial piety), and it was such common elements that connected these two utterly different films in this discussion.

Cinema, as a form of entertainment, in John Ellis's words,

...has to provide something that will produce curiosity or expectancy. This is perhaps the most difficult ideological calculation in the whole of the film industry: not what to make a film about, but how to offer that film as wide as possible a range of curiosities without losing the specification of the film itself. The narrative image therefore confines itself to known and safe ideological trends in society...<sup>23</sup>

That is to say, the director often attempts to search for a balance between choosing from some common knowledge that the target audience share and something original and surprising to satisfy the spectator's curiosity. The attempt to choose a new and shocking element is a risky strategy that could either end up in great success or complete disaster, but these two films are good examples of safe strategies: their plots that are not too difficult to predict and the cultural elements are familiar to the Chinese audiences.

As son warriors, the first aspect of their Chineseness in these films is the son code of "*xiao*" (filial piety). *Xiao*, according to Chinese etymology, refers to "those who serve their parents well".<sup>24</sup> The next subsection will include a critical analysis of this concept, but the main argument here is that the Chinese audience is familiar with the concept of "*xiao*" so that they easily identify with the screen persona embodying such recognisable values.

In *A Battle of Wits*, the prince's *xiao* to his father is best illustrated in his efforts to save the face of his father and preserve his dignity. When the king is drunk and unconscious, and fails to receive Ge Li who comes to help his kingdom, the Crown Prince conceals his father's disgrace by telling Ge Li: "my father has been ill from constant overwork. Your

<sup>23</sup> Ellis, 78-79.

<sup>24</sup> Chinese original: Xu Shen, *shuo wen jie zi jin shi* (Chinese Etymology): "孝，善事父母者也。" (1152)

request to see him has to be postponed. ” In a discussion about knocking down the palace wall in order to use the material to build a bulwark, the Crown Prince opposes such a proposal because he firmly believes the palace wall as an insignia of the king’s dignity, the damage of which would desecrate the name of his father.

In *Playboy Cops*, Michael is initially depicted as a prodigal son squandering his father’s money on fancy cars and buying over informants, but he repents with the advance of the plot. When he learns about his father’s bankruptcy, Michael apologises to his father for his extravagance and unfilial behaviour. More significantly, he puts together all the cash he has and puts most of it into his father’s hand, promising to serve his father<sup>25</sup>, returning to the origin of the spirit of *xiao* (to ‘feed’ the parents).

Another male protagonist Lin Heng also practices this *xiao* code in a sense that he searches for the murderer of his elder brother. A Chinese idiom ‘to treat one’s eldest brother as one’s father (长兄为父)’ indicates that the younger brother has filial obligations towards the elder brother and as his heir at the same time.

The ancient concept of *xiao* has drawn a rosy picture of the father-son relationship, which needs to be re-examined in terms of its power imbalance. The two son characters, the Crown Prince and Michael Mak, might act heroically and filially, but they are feminised by the authority of their fathers. Under the sway of their fathers, they are either overshadowed or overprotected. Such opposite complexes are identified as “filicide” and “infantilisation” in these two films respectively. *A Battle of Wits* depicts a subjugated, filial son oppressed by a father with a “filicide complex”, which will be dealt with in this subsection, while the infantilisation of *Playboy Cops*, which portrays the repentance of a prodigal son, will be examined in the next subsection.

---

<sup>25</sup> He uses the word “yang 养” which means “to raise, to feed”. Its meaning can be expanded to “support”.

The Crown Prince's bowing and kneeling to the father are customary subservient gestures toward the patriarch. Those simple postures of the Crown Prince are so trifling in the film that some might consider them negligible in the plot development, but such snapshots indicate a remote, centuries-old bodily etiquette of genuflexion. Kowtow and bowing are signs and ceremonies of the father's imposition of power over his son. Body gestures, according to Foucault, contain political connotations reflecting the power relationship, "the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold on it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs."<sup>26</sup> Thus, the power hierarchy between son (the Crown Prince) and father (the king) is patent in the son's kneeling down. As a son, the Crown Prince defers to his father.

The inferiority of the Prince is further exposed in the language game between him and his father. In the first shot of the prince at the beginning of the film, his courageous statement "father, we must fight!" is completely ignored by his drunk father. In a later court scene where the prince admits his appreciation of the warrior Ge Li who comes to help defend Liang, the king remarks to his royal ministers after his son retreats, "keep an eye on him. Do not let him lose his way." Thus, even though the king is constantly absent (as most scenes of the prince are shot without the presence of the king), the prince is under his father's close surveillance. He is further disempowered by the father who refuses to grant him military power. When his country is under attack from Zhao, his father seeks help from a Mohist warrior clan and entrusts a Mohist warrior Ge Li with the mission of defence, ordering the Crown Prince to obey Ge's command.

The Crown Prince makes no attempts to defy his father. Such a docile behaviour has been sanctified as a ritual for sons since Confucius' times. In his *Analects*, Confucius insists, "in serving his father and mother a man may gently remonstrate with them. But if he sees that

---

<sup>26</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 25.

he has failed to change their opinion, he should resume an attitude of deference and not thwart them.”<sup>27</sup> He must forever play a supporting role in the family under the authority of the father. He must be filial and submissive to his father even though his father is a self-indulgent, corrupt, and despotic fool.

The feminisation of the Crown Prince, from his humble body gestures to his self-consciousness to protect the father’s name, euphemistically called “filial piety”, resonates with Foucault’s introduction of the “docile body” in his *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of Prison*. The son’s filial piety, in a Foucauldian sense, is the result of disciplines. The behaviour code of “filial piety”

...defined how one [father] may have a hold over others’ [sons’] bodies, not only so that they [sons] may do what one [father] wishes, but so that they [sons] may operate as one [father] wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one [father] determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, ‘docile’ bodies.<sup>28</sup>

The Crown Prince is an embodiment of such docility, and such princely masculinity has been a typical cliché in Chinese traditional literatures and performance arts. Robert Ruhlmann provides an intriguing summary of it: “popular fiction often represents its typical prince as fundamentally a weak personality,... something of a figurehead.”<sup>29</sup> The fate of the prince is a miniature of a feminine side of Chinese masculinity: as a son, he is susceptible to his father’s surveillance and subjugation. He is disempowered, feminised, so that the father can maintain his privileged position. Feminised and disciplined under the good name of filial regulations, the son will not jeopardise the rule of the father or challenge his authority.

<sup>27</sup> Chinese Original: 《论语·里仁第四》十八：子曰：事父母，几谏，见志不从，又敬不违。 Translation is based on Arthur Waley, trans., *The Analects*, 45.

<sup>28</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 138. The words in [ ] are my insertions.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Ruhlmann, “Traditional Heroes in Chinese Popular Fiction,” in *The Confucian Persuasion*, ed. Arthur F. Wright (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1960), 161.

### 2.3.2 Filicide vs. Patricide

Such a cultural mentality of filial piety in engendering a subservient, weakening but filial son resonates with Sun Lung-kee's observation of Chinese deep cultural structure as one that is established on the basis of a "filicide complex". Sun concludes that if "patricide" is the metaphor of the pivot of Western masculinity developed out of Oedipus Complex, an intrinsic complex of Chinese masculinity is evolved out of an act of "filicide", or 'nipping the son in the bud', which is a conspiracy for stopping the son from growing up. According to Sun, the "filicide complex" masquerades with a ritual of "filial piety" to which a son has to submit in order to escape from the predestination of being "killed" by the father. Sun compares this culture of "filial piety" with Western intergenerational relationships with such words:

*Rupture* is the best word to describe inter-generational relations in the West: each individual endeavours to establish an absolute mature self, allowing his sexuality to bloom to the full; the sons completely overthrow their fathers' generation, declaring themselves the new masters of the superior status occupied by their fathers.... However, the pivot of the Chinese inter-generational relations is based on unconditional surrender of the son generation to the father generation. Only when the son recognises the father's authority to the full will his filial piety be proven.<sup>30</sup>

Sun continues to observe that the codes of "filial piety" nourish a masculine identity emphasising males as children, not as men; thus Chinese civilisation is "a culture of the weak (弱者的文化),"<sup>31</sup> where humbleness, obedience, submission, and docility are euphemised and glorified as noble virtues. The discipline of "filicide" produces humble heirs to the father's legacy, embodying a fundamental Chinese cultural mentality of ancestor worship, in which the younger generation and the inferior is not allowed to eclipse their elder generation.

<sup>30</sup> Sun, *Zhongguo wenhua de shenceng jiegou* (The Deep Structure of Chinese Culture), 176-179. Translations mine.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 239.

The “filicide complex” requires the most energetic son to repress his inner autonomy in order to subordinate to the order of the father, even though the order is in decay. A derived rule of this philosophy is that a son (and the loyal subject) overshadowing the father (king) is considered a crime. This is further revealed in the arbitrary de-glamorisation of the substratum beneath the father in order to sustain the ‘greatness’ of the father. This “filicide” mentality punishes the subordinates in order to maintain the name of the father. In *A Battle of Wits*, Ge Li is the key to success in the defence against the Zhao invaders. His charisma eclipses the king who hides and indulges himself in hedonism in his palace. Ge Li’s glory is a great offence to the king who cannot be outshined by his subordinate subjects; therefore, he issues a decree to have Ge arrested and executed, but he escapes death through help from the Crown Prince and some slaves.

Admittedly, when the director Jacob Cheung depicts a despotic father and king, his intention is not to glorify a tyrant but to disclaim him. He concludes *A Battle of Wits* with an epilogue of the tragic death of the king of Liang executed by his own subjects, purging a tyrannical patriarch through off-screen patricide (as the murder of the king is silently narrated in written words rather than in visual pictures). The death of the king in this film can be compared with another blockbuster *Hero* (2002) in order to understand the audience’s attitude towards depiction of tyrannical patriarchs. In 2002, Zhang Yimou directed his first martial arts blockbuster, *Hero*, attempting to sanctify the first emperor Qin Shihuang (秦始皇) as a legendary founder of Chinese nation and a superhero worshiped by all. But to the Chinese folk imagination, Qin is a despot notorious for his atrocities, such as the Great Confucian Purge (焚书坑儒) in which many Confucian scholars were buried alive and many precious classics were burned to ashes. Zhang’s glorification moves away from the audience’s imagination. Film critic Chen Mo argues, “a displacement of popular belief with

the glorification of dictatorship disgruntled numerous audiences and some critics alike.”<sup>32</sup>

Even though the film *Hero* performed well in terms of box office, it did not win applause from the audiences.

Although Cheung mentions at the end of his film that China was finally unified by Emperor Qin, he juxtaposes the unification by Qin (221 B.C.E) with Ge Li's lobbying of his philosophy of peace (370 B.C.E and after) in his ending, deliberately ignoring the diachronic sequence. The story ends with the altruistic Mohist Ge Li leading a group of war orphans (thus becomes a surrogate father) toward a better future with his determination to preach his philosophy of peace. Such juxtaposition restores a philanthropic patriarch to keep the nascent patriarch Qin under surveillance. The film's advocacy of a philanthropic patriarchy becomes clear when we juxtapose the prologue with its epilogue: they are two scenes of the same innocent orphan girl. At the beginning of the film, she is a powerless child, intimidated by a tyrannical father who cares for nothing else but his own desire (Still 2-1), but she is finally rescued by a benevolent surrogate father at the end (Still 2-3). Such a surrogate father is represented by Ge Li, a devotee to Mohism, whose essential doctrines are “Universal love” and “non-attack.”<sup>33</sup> In fact, the philanthropic patriarchy is one of the key themes in the first decade of the second millennium Chinese language cinema, which will be dealt with in Chapter Four. In *A Battle of Wits*, when patricide does happen, it takes place off-screen and the replacement of a tyrant with a non-official patriarch as Ge Li resonates with films like *Assembly*, which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

---

<sup>32</sup> Chen, *Zhongguo wuxia dianying shi* (The History of Chinese Martial Arts Films), 287.

<sup>33</sup> For the original texts, please refer to Book 4 and Book 5 of *Mozi*, <http://chinese.dsturgeon.net/text.pl?node=101&if=en&remap=gb>, accessed 28 May 2009.





Still 2-1



Still 2-2

Still 2-1: opening (in grey hue and melancholy mood)

Still 2-2: ending (repeat of opening Still 2-1, but in a warm hue)



Still 2-3: last shot of the film: the 'father' and the lonely girl holding hands

Ge Li in fact is a Mohist, whose philosophy has been originated from a concern of the grass-roots from the bottom up, in contrast with the philosophy of '*xiao*' that has worked as a doctrine from top-down to repress the sons and the grass-roots. The Chinese title of *A Battle of Wits* is *Mo gong*, while the word *Mo* refers to the philosophy of the Mohist School founded by Mo Tzu (墨子, c.a. 479-381 B.C.E). The Mohists were regarded as the descendants of the ancient "*xia*" and their philosophy became the professional ethics of Chinese "*xia*". Fung Yu-lan notes in his historical studies on Chinese philosophy, in the prime days of the Zhou dynasty (1046-256 B.C.E.),<sup>34</sup> that the feudal lords and the princes had their own military experts who were hereditary warriors with respective titles and positions, but the disintegration of the feudal system in the latter days of the Zhou Dynasty destroyed their social status. The warrior group became landless errant knights who made a living by

<sup>34</sup> The Zhou Dynasty is divided into Western Zhou (1046-771 B.C.E.) and Eastern Zhou (770-256 B.C.E), the division of which is depended on the relocation of the capital city to present day Luoyang in 770 B.C.E. Eastern Zhou is further divided into Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.E) and The Warring State Period.

offering their services to anyone who could afford to employ them<sup>35</sup>, and were known as the *xia* or *you xia* (wandering knight).

*A Battle of Wits* is chosen to be the first major film in this thesis also because of its connection to the origin of *xia*, the Chinese equivalent for the word “warrior”, which is a key word of this thesis. The etymology of this Chinese character ‘侠’ (*xia*) reflects practices of benevolence and righteousness and contempt for luxury. Eastern Han (25-220 C.E) etymologist Xu Shen explains that “*xia*, viz ping; *ping*, viz warrior, refers to those who disregard money.”<sup>36</sup>

The Mohists were originally from such *xia* (warriors) who practiced professional ethics improved by Mo Tzu and his followers. Mo Tzu, according to Fung Yu-lan, was the first opponent of Confucius, because they represented different social strata. The Confucianists were mostly well-educated gentlemen from the upper or middle class, whereas the Mohists held views of the lower class, thus the ‘non-official’ views. Even though Mo Tzu criticised Confucius for his stress on ceremonial duties and music as luxury and waste of people’s wealth and energy, he embraced the Confucian ideals of *ren* (benevolence) and *yi* (righteousness),<sup>37</sup> and developed them into the essential Mohist doctrines of *jian ai* (兼爱 universal love) and *fei gong* (非攻, non-attack or condemnation of offensive war).

The Mohist warrior Ge Li, who is the male protagonist in *A Battle of Wits*, is a perfect representative of these *xia* spirits. Director Ma also celebrates the long life of Mohism and dims the glory of the *xiao* (filial piety), declaring the final triumph of a grass-root philosophy rather than the top-down rule. Here, the director affirms the rule of the father with the depiction of the final survival of the Mohist Ge Li, but injects more

<sup>35</sup> Fung, Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Derk Bodde (New York: The Tree Press, 1966. Third printing 1968), 48-50.

<sup>36</sup> Xu Shen, *Shuo Wen Jie Zi jin shi* (Chinese Etymology): 侠, 俌也 (1086); 粤, 侠也。三辅谓轻财者为粤。(635)

<sup>37</sup> Fung, 50.

maternal, feminine elements (non-attack and universal love) into a philanthropic patriarchy, colouring his action epic (understood as masculine genre) with a tone of feminine sensibility.

## **2.4 Feminisation Aspect 3: Hail to the Metrosexual Son (*Playboy Cops*)**

### **2.4.1 A Son Who is not Weaned Yet**

Interestingly, opposite to the despotic father in *A Battle of Wits*, the second film, *Playboy Cops*, depicts a philanthropic father who pampers his son with both love and wealth. Michael is financially dependent on his father, squandering his father's money to buy clues for crime investigations. Furthermore, his ruthless conduct as a police officer induces numerous complaints, but his father often speaks for him among the high ranking personnel in order to secure his job as a police officer, even though his son feels incompetent because of this. The son's dependence on his father, in terms of balance of power between masculine (*yang*) and feminine (*yin*), is classified as feminine (*yin*). It is in this sense that the son is feminised by the father.

The father is absent for most of the film. He appears in only one scene, but he is omnipresent in Michael's life. Throughout the films, Michael's mobile phone functions purely as a prop to amplify the father's omnipresence and remote control. Michael either receives calls from his father or attempts to call his father several times, but when he calls, his calls are either answered by his stepmother or diverted to voice messages. He can never get through to his father directly. Through their telephone conversation at the beginning of the film, Michael reveals his dissatisfaction with his father's constant absence from his life. His displeasure toward his father does not result from antagonism and resentment, but from emotional dependence.

This sentimental attachment to and dependence on the father in *Playboy Cops* seem further to prove Sun Lung-kee's observation of a deep Chinese cultural structure that is in contrast with the Freudian Oedipus Complex. The hostility toward the father in the Oedipus Complex is replaced by a sentimental attachment, which is conceptualised as "infantilisation" by Sun.<sup>38</sup> In other words, the father, in order to consolidate his power, tends to discourage the son's virility by nourishing a sense of dependence between parents and sons. Sun explains,

[when parents] endeavour to "define" the status of their next generation, in order to prevent a complete separation between them and their children, they are inclined to "play some trick" on their children, so that they can nourish, in the spiritual world of their children, a sense of dependence and LEARNED HELPLESSNESS.<sup>39</sup>

Sun argues that the Chinese are "*A people not yet weaned*"<sup>40</sup>, where an adult is constantly treated as an immature juvenile. If it could be said that the atrocious father in *A Battle of Wits* debunks the cruel side of the "filicide complex", then the over-protection of the father in *Playboy Cops* is a sugar-coating masquerade to constraint the son's maturity and independence.

Such a fatherly discourse of infantilisation often produces prodigal sons. The first two characters of the Chinese title of the film *Playboy Cops* "*hua hua*" express precisely such a cultural connotation, referring to young dandies from wealthy or influential families, who idle around, indulging in hedonism. Michael's role as *son* secured through his father's over-protection and a pampering culture gives him a justifiable *raison d'être* to embrace a childish narcissism. As a son financially supported and pampered by a father with no one depending on him, Michael in *Playboy Cops* is free of familial responsibilities and duties. Thus, he can afford to indulge himself in a responsibility-free utopia. Nonetheless, Michael is not a target of condemnation, and this acquittal to his narcissistic behaviour will be examined from two

<sup>38</sup> Sun, *Zhongguo wenhua de shenceng jiegou* (The Deep Structure of Chinese Culture), 185. Translation mine.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 265. Translation mine. The phrase in capitals quoted from the original text.

<sup>40</sup> Sun, *Wei Duannai De Minzu* (A people that yet to be weaned) (Taipei: Juliu tushu gongsi, 1995).

aspects. This prolonged freedom of self-indulgence in fact is part of the features of metrosexual culture, which will be dealt with in the following subsection, and he is redeemed by his death as a sentimental hero, which is in contrast with a good-for-nothing playboy image, will be analysed in his untimely death at the last section of this chapter.

### 2.4.2 Producer vs. Consumer

The infantilisation complex in Michael's father produces a pampered son, although such a pampered image is nurtured by a deep Chinese tradition as discussed above, Michael's responsibility-free spirits also embody a new male identity: metrosexual masculinity. Mark Simpson, the originator of the term "metrosexual", defines "[t]he typical metrosexual is a young man with money to spend, living in or within easy reach of a metropolis....he has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference" and the metrosexual is willing "to go against macho norms."<sup>41</sup> Although the term "metrosexual" is invented by a Westerner for the Western world, the Chinese metropolis reveals similar 'symptoms'. *Playboy Cops* is set in Hong Kong, where metrosexual masculinity is widespread. There, says Can Ran:

men appear to be cooler, more handsome, cleaner and tidier; they change their clothes at least once or twice a day, and they will never wear the same clothes for two consecutive days. ...As regards to dressing up, Hong Kong men can compete with those from any other places, including Tokyo, Paris, and Korea. When you open the fashion magazines, male fashion, shoes, hats, jewellery, male skin care products and perfumes, are much more numerous than any other city.<sup>42</sup>

Director Jingle Ma sincerely explains his consideration of trendy 'fashion' as a key distinction of his film, "I have included 'off-beat' elements in *Playboy Cops*. No one has

---

<sup>41</sup> Simpson, "Meet the Metrosexual".

<sup>42</sup> Can, 138.

connected ‘fashion’ with ‘police officer’ in the same genre of film before (I did).”<sup>43</sup> Michael in *Playboy Cops* embodies the emergence of metrosexual culture in Chinese metropolis, such as Hong Kong, while this masculine ethos has been referred to as “feminised form of masculinity.”<sup>44</sup> Such a feminine ethos concurs with Baudrillard’s configuration of the vital characteristics of consumer society. He employs the “feminine model” and “masculine model” to categorise the behavioural codes of various societies, in which the masculine logic emphasises challenge and valour, whereas the feminine logic stresses that women were “called on to gratify themselves in order the better to be able to enter as objects into the masculine competition.”<sup>45</sup> He continues to argue that in contemporary consumer society, men are called upon to indulge themselves, while women are encouraged to choose and compete, thus foreseeing “the emergence of a ‘third’, hermaphroditic model, ... a sexually ambiguous, narcissistic model, but one much closer to the feminine model of self-indulgence than the demanding masculine one.”<sup>46</sup> It is on such conceptualisation that the modern man is feminised.

Michael’s feminised form of masculinity is exposed on his meticulousness about his appearance. When he meets Lin Heng for the first time in the police headquarters, he is irritated at Lin because Lin is wearing the same attire as him. “If you don’t know what to wear, do not copy me! Even that tie is the same as mine. Damn it!” (Still 2-4) Both he and Lin Heng are constantly depicted in stylish glasses, luxurious cars and trendy attire. (Still 2-5) They are moving into the aspirations of self-indulgence and narcissism.

<sup>43</sup> Yu, Shu, “Huahua xingjing dazao linglei jingcha, chenkun Yu Wenle shuaiqi nengda” (“*Playboy Cops*: off-beat policemen in the making; handsome actors in action.”), accessed 4 November 2009, <http://ent.sina.com.cn/m/c/2008-02-19/14391916341.shtml>.

<sup>44</sup> Edwards, 113.

<sup>45</sup> Baudrillard, *Consumer Society*, 97.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 98.



Still 2-4



Still 2-5

The pursuit of a beautiful male body in this metrosexual culture in the Chinese context must be further examined within the context of China's promotion of male beauty in its own cultural roots. Chapter One argues that the metrosexual icons are often 'misread' by the Chinese as scholar elegance, the male protagonists in this film are also linked with Chinese scholar masculinity by the audience. For example, one Internet fan critic analyses Chen Kun's image in the film:

He is never separated from culture (*wenhua*). In *Playboy Cops*, even though he screams with a ferocious expression: fight, fight, blood; I want blood, his overall charisma is still scholarly elegance (*ruya*). From his fixed image, he develops a new Chen Kun unknown to the audience, and he ends up creating a charming scholar general (*rujiang*) Lin Heng that softly kills all his fans.<sup>47</sup>

As I have argued in Chapter One, the female gaze "varies by society, by social group and by historical period"<sup>48</sup>, Chinese audiences find it easy and comfortable to read these metrosexual male icons packaged with Western suits and ties as representing charming scholar masculinity. Even though, traditionally, according to Confucian scholar Xun Zi, scholar masculinity is identified in the close relationship between knowledge of literature and a cultivation of a 'beautiful body', the sinicised reading of metrosexual male images as

<sup>47</sup> Anonomous, "huahua xingqing zhi sizijing" (*Playboy Cops: Four words Idioms*), <http://bbs.tianya.cn/post-filmtv-218436-1.shtml>, accessed 7 March 2013. Chinese original: "他始终是与'文化'脱离不开的，《花花型警》中，就算他面目狰狞的喊到'打，打，血，我要血'，他的基本气质仍旧是儒雅的。.....从一个固定的陈坤中挖掘出一个新鲜的不为人知的陈坤，便造就了《花花型警》中倾倒终生的儒将——林亨。"

<sup>48</sup> John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990, second edition, 2002), 1.

scholars has moved away from the scholar's original pursuit of literature knowledge. The audience does not need any true indication of book or literature knowledge to substantiate a scholar male image. It is not the sign of a scholar that 'tips off' the audience that they need to read the image as a scholar, but the audience re-defines the sign with their own cultural background. If it could be said that metrosexuals represent a tendency of globalisation, as it is not easy to search for local features in the Westernised metrosexual men, such as those depicted in this film, one way to resist the globalisation is to decode such Westernised images with Chinese characteristics.

As discussed in Chapter One, scholar masculinity is a femininised version of Chinese masculinity and the audience of this film tend to read these action heroes as scholar generals. Such a reading leads the attention back to the beauty and elegance of these male images rather than their physical power. Even though this film is still marked as belonging to the action genre, but the above example of reading shows that the heroes' kung fu and their warrior status are played down by the audience. They are still recognised as warriors, but as exemplified by the reading above, they are scholar generals coated with *ruya* (learned and refined) charms.

The feminised metrosexual masculinity embodied in Michael and Lin Heng is not only revealed in their appearance, it is bequeathed to the objects associated with them. *Playboy Cops* stands out in comparison with conventional action films in the relationship between the warrior and the objects around him. In a typical action film, while focusing on the actor's dexterity and acrobatics, all the props in the film around him become his weapons either for defence or to defeat his enemy. For example, in *Once upon a Time in China* series, Wong Feihung (played by Jet Li) turns his umbrella into a powerful sword (episode one), and changes his cheongsam into a swift whip (episode 3), whereas his opponent wrings a large



piece of cloth into a lance (episode 2). The warrior masculinises the objects associated with him, transfiguring ordinary household utensils into armaments.

In contrast, the objects associated with Michael not only lose their practical purposes, but are feminised to become non-violent, decorative devices. The first shot introduces Michael driving a Ferrari convertible; in order to apologise to his former girl friend, he buys her a brand-new Volkswagen Beetle convertible decorated with a huge bouquet of beautiful flowers. Later Michael drives a Lamborghini convertible to investigate his cases, accentuated by dashing shots of him stepping out from the car. Fast cars are essential elements in police-gangster films, and as *Playcops* is still commodified as an example of action films, so cars are still in the spotlights. Cars in action films are often used as phallic symbols to enhance the protagonists' masculine power. However, all these cars in this film function purely as ornaments, and none is used as a weapon, sharply contrasting with typical scenes in action films where cars are used in the battle of chasing and escaping. In other words, these cars function as genre tags, rather than useful tools for battles. Even the gun Michael uses to stop one of the murder suspects of the case he and Lin Heng are investigating is a toy gun.

Such a relational change between man and the objects associated with him (and thereby the environment surrounding him) reflects a fundamental change in contemporary cultural ideology. Traditional action films with men changing ordinary utensils into weapons obviously reflects man as a creator, inventor and producer, the conventional masculine roles, which is identified by Simone de Beauvoir as "*homo faber*" (man the smith or man the maker): "*Homo faber* has from the beginning of time been an inventor: the stick and club with which he armed himself to knock down fruits and to slaughter animals became forthwith instruments for enlarging his grasp upon the world."<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (Published by Jonathan Cape, 1953; Reprint, London: Vintage, 1997), 95.

However, the objects associated with Michael stop functioning as “instruments for enlarging his grasp upon the world.” Instead, one of the essential common points of these gadgets is that they serve the body decoratively rather than functionally, satisfying the need of self-indulgence rather than performing as instruments to conquer and produce. The decreasing emphasis on an object’s practical function reflects what Baudrillard announces as “the end of the era of production”<sup>50</sup> in which “the worker’s strategic function slides towards consumption as obligatory social service.”<sup>51</sup> In a society that pivots on consumption, the ‘body’ is no longer signified as “*Homo faber*” or as inventor, or producer. According to Baudrillard,

In this long process of sacralization of the body as exponential value of the *functional* body – that is to say, the body which is no longer ‘flesh’ as in the religious conception, or labour power as in industrial logic, but is taken up again in its materiality (or its ‘visible’ ideality) as narcissistic cult object or element of social ritual and tactics – beauty and eroticism are two major leitmotifs.<sup>52</sup>

In such contexts, while the male identity since industrialisation has been defined as the ‘producer’ around men’s role in the production and as the ‘breadwinner’ in the separation of domestic space and public place, the postmodern man is defined through his participation in the consumer market. Man’s role as ‘producer’ is banal; instead, man is a generous consumer.

This masculine ethos upholds the elegance of the outward look, intoxicating men in narcissistic admiration of themselves rather than violent antagonism towards others, linking back to Baudrillard’s concern on the collapse between the private and public space.

Baudrillard argues the media and the news brought to us through television weave the social

---

<sup>50</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant, Theory, Culture & Society (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993. Reprint, 1998), 8.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>52</sup> Baudrillard, *Consumer Society*, 132

into private home and form a closed circuit.<sup>53</sup> Such changes of circumstances in society transform our way of contact with others and the way we identify ourselves. Baudrillard implies, “[t]here not even an ‘Other’ at the other end”.<sup>54</sup> Everyone becomes a particle of this closed circuit and one is not to identify oneself as in the myth of Oedipus where “a dual or agonistic relation”<sup>55</sup> clarify the boundary between men-women, one-the Other, private-Public. Instead, Baudrillard moves on to the myth of narcissus, but he gives the narcissus myth a new meaning, in which he is not falling in love with his own image, but rather the “confusion of the self and the not-self...distinguishes the plight of Narcissus.”<sup>56</sup> In other words, with the collapse of the boundary of private and public, the boundary between the self and not-self becomes blur and the need to fight in order to stand out die down but the desire to follow the models offered by the media becomes more intense.

In a society pivoting on consumption and image, the narcissistic aspiration in men stimulates their desire to consume, and thereby reinforces their utility in consumer economy. On the other hand, when they indulge in self-satisfaction, they have fewer demands to make outwards. In Baudrillard’s words, such a code “prevents real social revolution. That type that it does permit – fashion revolutions – not only are harmless but serve to prevent genuine social revolutions.”<sup>57</sup> Revolutionary spirits are often regarded as threats and challenge to established institutions; therefore, the pro-feminine metrosexual masculinity intoxicates men who are allowed and even encouraged to indulge in harmless narcissism and infantile hedonism, so that their aggressiveness can be pacified.

---

<sup>53</sup> Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 163.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 165.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>56</sup> Christopher Lasch, *The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Trouble Times*, quoted in Mark Fisher, “Flatline Constructs: Gothic Materialism and Cybernetic Theory-Fiction”, accessed 20 July 2011, <http://www.cinestatic.com/trans-mat/Fisher/FC2s6.htm>.

<sup>57</sup> Baudrillard, *Consumer Society*, 7.

However, the depiction of Michael's metrosexual masculinity also exposes the limitations of such a new masculine ethos. A common feature of the objects associated with Michael in *Playboy Cops* is their luxurious nature. Ferrari, Volkswagen and Lamborghini are extravagant products that few people can afford. Baudrillard quotes such deluxe objects as emblems of an elite in consumer culture, as he indicates,

an elite is revealed that is not a bearer of values nor of power, but of objects, of a panoply of deluxe gadgets... [t]he indices of the ensemble that divide group A (upper groupings, liberal professions, heads of industry and commerce) from group non-A are: luxury equipment... luxury foods, comfortable living quarters and automobile, toiletries for women ... male toiletries ...!<sup>58</sup>

Tim Edwards observes that the luxurious tendency embodied in metrosexual masculinity is a form of value consciousness belonging to the consumer society which “tended to target the young...and affluent or city man”.<sup>59</sup> Additionally Baudrillard also explains, “originally the consumption of goods (alimentary or sumptuary) does not answer to an individual economy of needs but is a social function of prestige and hierarchical distribution.”<sup>60</sup> The feminised metrosexual masculinity is promoted as a sign of wealth and nobility, as one needs to be wealthy enough to afford a more decorative and feminine look. Susan Bordo argues, “[a]ttention to beauty was not associated with femininity but with a life that was ...privileged...”, which could remind the elite who can afford to make themselves look feminine that “they were highly civilized beings, not simple peasant ‘animals.’”<sup>61</sup> Metrosexual masculinity as depicted in *Playboy Cops* reflects a noble man in a wealthy society, which represents a desirable stage that the audience might dream for. This might be

---

<sup>58</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981), 58-59.

<sup>59</sup> Edwards, 111-112.

<sup>60</sup> Baudrillard, *Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 30

<sup>61</sup> Bordo, 201.

regarded as an “Ideal I” in the “mirror image”, to borrow from Jacques Lacan.<sup>62</sup> Laura Mulvey, basing her argument on Lacan, observes that the spectator “imagines his mirror image to be more complete, more perfect than he experiences his own body.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, the metrosexual idol in this film reflects some genuine social change in the postmodern society on the one hand, and draws a rosy picture of a more perfect world on the other. The dark side behind this picture will be dealt with in Chapter Five to compare the class hierarchy in the metrosexual culture.

## 2.5 Feminisation Aspect 4: the Triumph of Sentimentalism

Although these two films are completely different in style and historical context, (one is a retrospection of Chinese philosophy of Mohism, while the other is on the metrosexual male culture in a world flooded with consumer goods), one theme links them in an intriguing way: both son warriors die in accidents. The “docile” prince in *A Battle of Wits* dies in an extremely unheroic and accidental manner: he is shot dead by archers by mistake when they launch an operation to arrest Ge Li after he forces the Zhao army to retreat. Michael in *Playboy Cops* is fighting with the murderer they have been tracking when he accidentally bumps his back into a steel beam sticking out from the wall, and it penetrates his skull. Both accidents are difficult to explain in terms of plot development, that is, neither death is vital for the narrative to continue or conclude. Li Cheuk-to, for example, regards the death of the prince as a plot error.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function,” in *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink (London and New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 4.

<sup>63</sup> Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, 31.

<sup>64</sup> Li, “Mogong fuzi de yinyou” (“The Hidden Trouble of *A Battle of Wits* and *After This Our Exile*”), 180-182.

The accidental deaths here, indisputably, stand in sharp contrast with traditional heroic death displayed in battles, conquests and rebellions. De Beauvoir denotes such a conventional masculine heroism:

[t]he warrior put his life in jeopardy to elevate the prestige of the horde, the clan to which he belonged. And in this he proved dramatically that life is not the supreme value for man, but on the contrary that it should be made to serve ends more important than itself.<sup>65</sup>

Such masculine heroism is gone in the accidental deaths of the Crown Prince and Michael, who die extremely unheroic manners.

Their deaths do not function to bring to light their heroism, but to stimulate a form of sentimentalism among the viewers. Rey Chow, in her recent book *Sentimental Fabulations, Contemporary Chinese Films: Attachment in the Age of Global Visibility* defines “the sentimental as an affective orientation/tendency, one that is often characterized by apparent emotional excess, in the form of exaggerated grief or dejection or a propensity toward shedding tears.”<sup>66</sup> The deaths of the Crown Prince and Michael serve as events that trigger a sense of loss, orientating to a state of grief and mourning. Mourning, according to Freud, is “the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction...”, while “[t]he loss of a love-object constitutes an excellent opportunity for the ambivalence in love-relationship to make itself felt and come to the fore.”<sup>67</sup> Specifically speaking, the deaths of the two characters conjure up sympathy and surging affections among the viewers, in particular, the supportive fans who have admired their idols all along the way.

---

<sup>65</sup> De Beauvoir, 95.

<sup>66</sup> Rey Chow, *Sentimental Fabulations, Contemporary Chinese Films: Attachment in the Age of Global Visibility* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 15

<sup>67</sup> Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), *Collected Papers*, vol.4 (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1949), 153 and 161.

Such sentimental cathexis, argues Chow, “for many still carries derogative meanings such as effeminacy,”<sup>68</sup> namely, a feminised tone, but this feminised tone does not disempower the son heroes. On the contrary, their death and disappearance glorify their presence, drawing the viewer’s respect, compassion and affections toward them. Such feminisation does not aim at aggressive accusation of the patriarchy or other forms of power structure, but rather it assumes the status of the weak and the vulnerable to attract approval and to grip the hearts of the audience.

The death of the son heroes, together with their filial piety, the Crown Prince’s subservience to the father, the promising dissemination of the doctrines of “Universal love” and “non-attack” at the ending of *A Battle of Wits*, Michael’s reconciliation with his father, as well as the infantilisation complex of Michael’s father, all orientate the films to a regime of sentiments, which is often stigmatised as a feature of women’s genres.<sup>69</sup> However, such feminine sentimentalism lures us into a game of seduction in which the feminised party on the screen provokes sympathy, love and respect from the spectators who cannot resist it but lavish their compassion on the “feminised objects.” In fact, the death of the male protagonist is a common strategy of the films chosen for discussion in this research, including *An Empress and the Warriors* in Chapter Three, *Assembly* and *Run Papa Run* in Chapter Four, and *Exiled* in Chapter Five. The deaths in these films all share the similar meaning of the triumph of sentimentalism.

---

<sup>68</sup> Chow, *Sentimental Fabulations*, 16.

<sup>69</sup> Christine Gledhill, ed., *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman’s Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1987).

## 2.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has been devoted to understanding Chinese masculinity in terms of the representation of sons. The attractive young actors who are given the role of the son warriors are the obvious visual objects for the fan gaze with different gender identification implications, and are therefore feminised by the spectators' gazes. Furthermore, as two films mainly targeted Chinese audiences, the directors attempted to search for a balance between originality and satisfying the audience's wish to fulfill their expectations. Thus, the Chinese ancient ideals of filial piety (*xiao*) and knightly spirits (*xia*) have been included to make the audience 'feel at home'.

Furthermore, director Jacob Cheung plays a safe game in *A Battle of Wits*, where the Crown Prince is presented as an old-fashioned, obedient son subjugated by a tyrannical father. His role as a docile son is a role thus feminised by the regulations of "filial piety," which, in essence, is formulated through a "filicide complex" in Chinese tradition. Director Jingle Ma employs a mixed strategy in *Playboy Cops*, where the son character Michael is depicted as a feminised metrosexual son infantilised by the father. However, metrosexual images are read and Sinicised by Chinese audiences when they encounter such images. The beautiful young metrosexual heroes can easily be read by the Chinese as *ruya*, that is, genteel and cultured elegance, while the word *ru* refers to scholar in its original meaning. Thus, the Chinese audience excavates the scholar masculinity out of the metrosexuals, but the postmodern consumer society also functions as a platform for such a feminised form of metrosexual masculinity to develop. Metrosexual masculinity embodied in *Playboy Cops* reflects a change of masculine ethos in our postmodern society, glamorising a new docile male body and challenging the hegemony of compulsory heterosexuality. Butler argues, "[t]he



---

heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine,’ where these are understood as expressive attributes of ‘male’ and ‘female’.”<sup>70</sup> A metrosexual man has upset this heterosexual dichotomy, because he voluntarily takes on the feminine features, thus beautifying his body in order to enjoy his new role as a narcissistic consumer rather than a producer. Perhaps this beautiful body as a glamorous spectacle for the gaze is only a by-product of his ecstasy of narcissistic indulgence.

---

<sup>70</sup> See Introduction, note 8.

## Chapter Three

### Warriors in Love

#### The Feminisation of Warriors as Lovers

### 3.1 Introduction

#### 3.1.1 New Wine in an Old Bottle: Film Selection

The previous chapter accentuated the feminisation of son warriors in their subordination to their fathers. As sons, they are assigned an inferior, feminised (*yin*) position in the primal relationship they are involved in – the familial relationship. Such a feminised (*yin*) position of the son is the lowest point of the masculine role, according to Dong Zhongshu's *yin-yang* hierarchy.<sup>1</sup> From this chapter onward, the thesis looks at how men with a *yang* position are feminised in different contexts, starting with men as lovers in heterosexual romances.

In a prototypical male-centred order, the lover-dichotomy is constantly revealed as male-subject/female-love-object, but this chapter, as a challenge to this male-centred logic, will start with the desires of the females, to feminise the warriors in the sense that they perform the role of “love objects” subjected to the female gaze, thus to female desire. This chapter expands the analyses of the female gaze while acknowledging possibilities of other gazes towards warrior lovers, so as to further dissect masculinity and its association with feminisation.

This chapter will expatiate on the following three films: *An Empress and the Warriors* (dir. Ching Siu-tung, 2008), *A Chinese Tall Story* (dir. Jeffrey Lau, 2005) and *The Knot* (dir.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter One, note 125.

Yin Li, 2006). One criterion of selection of these films is that they represent common and relatively popular productions of Chinese films: even though they are not the biggest blockbuster hits, they were comparatively successful in terms of box office. *An Empress and the Warriors*' box office record is RMB 43,000,000 Yuan in Mainland China, ranking number ten of 2008.<sup>2</sup> It was nominated for some minor prizes, such as Best Art Direction and Best Costumes & Make-up Design, in the 2009 Hong Kong film Awards, although it did not win. Similarly, *A Chinese Tall Story* ranked number six at Mainland China in 2005 box office with a revenue of RMB32,000,000 Yuan<sup>3</sup>, and it was nominated in some less important categories at the same Award in 2006, including Best Sound design and Best Visual Effects, but did not win any of the nominations. *The Knot* achieved a box office of RMB 32.32 million Yuan, ranking number eight of the box office chart in Mainland China in 2006.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, they are either new interpretations of old concepts or new adaptations of classical novels for the new audience in the new era; therefore, they are excellent examples for comparison in order to understand the socio-political and historical context of the time-frame of this research. However, not enough attention has been given to them while limited criticism is found on *The Knot*<sup>5</sup>, no serious critique can be found for *A Chinese Tall Story* and *An Empress and the Warriors*, except tabloid gossips and promotional news and reports.<sup>6</sup>

*An Empress and the Warriors* shares the same Chinese title 江山美人 as a 1959 film directed by Li Han-hsiang. Therefore, their different interpretations of the same concept can

---

<sup>2</sup> Wang, Xiaoyu, "Dujia pandian: 2008 nian quanqiu dianying piaofang paihangbang" ("Exclusive Report: The 2008 Box-office of the Global Cinema"), accessed 24 September 2009, <http://indus.chinafilm.com/200901/1953998.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Wei, Xidi, ed. *2005 Huayu Dianying (Chinese Language Films 2005)* (Guilin: Guangxi shifan chubanshe 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Yu, Xiaoyi, ed, *Huayu dianying 2006 (Chinese-language Film 2006)* (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 2007), 372.

<sup>5</sup> For example, two short essays on this film can be found in Yu Xiaoyi ed., *Chinese-language Film 2006* (Chinese-language Film 2006), 78-83.

<sup>6</sup> For example, some of these resources can be found in <http://bjyouth.yynet.com>.

identify the different historical contexts when each film was made. *A Chinese Tall Story* as a postmodern adaptation of a classical Chinese novel *Journey to the West* can also reveal the different social contexts when the film was made. *The Knot*, as one belonging to the genre of leitmotiv films which can be traced back to the beginning of the establishment of Communist China, is also an excellent example for studying the social context of the period when this film was made from the new features introduced in the film.

### 3.1.2 Film synopsis and chapter outline

*An Empress and the Warriors* is a historical epic about a princess - Yan Fei'er (燕飞儿, played by Kelly Chen [Chen Huilin]陈慧琳) - who is crowned as the new empress. With the help of a courageous warrior Murong Feihu (慕容飞虎, played by Donnie Yen[Zhen Zidan]甄子丹), she fights hard to protect her kingdom after the death of her father who is murdered by Yan Huba (燕胡霸, played by Guo Xiaodong 郭晓东) during the Warring States period (476 to 221 B.C.E). As a subplot, the director also depicts a romantic relationship between the Empress and a handsome young hermit Duan Lanquan (段兰泉, played by Leon Lai [Li Min]黎明).

*A Chinese Tall Story* is a fantasy adopted from an eminent classical novel, *Journey to the West* by Wu Cheng'en (c.1504-1582). The original novel depicts the adventurous pilgrimage of Sanzang, the Tang Priest (唐三藏)<sup>7</sup> to the world of Ultimate Bliss to bring the sacred Buddhist sutras back to China, accompanied and protected by four disciples. Director

---

<sup>7</sup> “唐三藏” is a pious monk in the Tang Dynasty who is a grandmaster in disseminating Buddhism in China and also the famous character in the Chinese classical novel *Journey to the West*. I have referred to two English versions of this novel to choose ‘Sanzang’ as the English translation of his name. Arthur Waley’s translation is entitled *Monkey* (Penguin Books 1961). He gives the priest’s name as Hsüan Tsang (玄奘) before his pilgrimage and as “Tripitaka” (san zang, referring to three stores of Indian Scriptures). W.J.F. Jenner’s version is rendered *Journey to the West* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1982), where the pinyin of “三藏” (sanzang) is used as his name. In this version he is referred to as “Sanzang” for the sake of simplicity.

Jeffrey Lau exerts his visionary imagination to transfigure a story about this Tang priest Sanzang's pilgrimage into a legendary love story of Sanzang (played by Nicholas Tse). Sanzang's disciples are captured by an atrocious demon, so he sets out a journey to seek help, during which he falls in love with an ugly girl Yue Meiyang (岳美艳, played by Charlene Choi[Cai Zhuoyan]蔡卓妍) who later on discovers her true identity as a noble woman warrior from outer space. She uses her magical power to change into a stunning Tinker-Bell-like fairy beauty and rescue Sanzang and his disciples. However, during their journey, Sanzang and Yue Meiyang mistakenly kill some celestial guards and have to face the gods' judgment. Yue claims all the responsibility and submits herself to the court of heaven so that Sanzang might be spared, but Sanzang decides to prove his love by rampaging through the court of the gods to rescue Yue.

*The Knot* is adapted from an semi-autobiography by the vice-president of National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), Zhang Kehui (张克辉), telling a love story between a student-turned-military-doctor Chen Qiushui (陈秋水) from Taiwan and two women, Wang Biyun (王碧云 played by Vivian Hsu 徐若瑄) and Wang Jindi (王金娣 played by Li Bingbing 李冰冰). He falls in love with Wang Biyun when he is a medical student in Taiwan, but he is forced to escape to Mainland China in 1947 because he joins the rebellion against the KMT government in The February 28 Incident in Taiwan.<sup>8</sup> He meets Wang Jindi in the Korean War and marries her after years of efforts to locate Wang Biyun fails and loses all hope of seeing his first love again.

---

<sup>8</sup> This incident took place during the first stage of KMT's takeover of Taiwan after Japan's defeat in 1945. Briefly speaking, the local Taiwanese were unhappy with the government monopoly of daily life necessities that ranged from rice to tobacco, while a lot of goods were smuggled into Taiwan and sold on the black market. On Feb 27, Monopoly Bureau staff brutally beat up a cigarette vender who sold smuggled tobacco. The next day, some angry Taiwanese gathered around the Bureau to protest. A riot broke out and the soldiers guarding the Bureau shot at the crowd and killed one unarmed citizen. This incident ignited demonstrations asking for reform.

---

Although Chapter Two has analysed the phenomenon of males serving as “erotic objects”, it merely touches on the objectification of male images with feminine charisma without female agents in the film narrative. This chapter, however, delves deeper into two new points of male functioning as “erotic objects”: the macho warriors and the female agent within the enclosed narrative.

Although this research acknowledges a queer gaze towards these warriors, I will concentrate on a female gaze towards the male warriors, because the heterosexual romances of the male warriors depicted in the selected films is the main theme of this chapter. Recognising the female protagonist as the passionate ‘suitor’, this chapter aims to deconstruct the female audience’s identity as a gazer, and the cultural and social roots that nourish the female gaze and her preference as well as the obstacles a girl hero has to struggle with.

The feminisation of these warrior lovers is not only presented in their roles as love objects, but also in their infirmity and passivity in comparison with their female counterparts. These fragile warrior lovers are either passive victims awaiting the rescue from his female lover (as in the case of *A Chinese Tall Story*) or awaiting for the return of his beloved woman (as demonstrated in *An Empress and the Warriors* ) or simply writhing at waiting in despair for a re-union with his first love (in *The Knot*).

However, acknowledging women’s preference for feminised warriors as an example of women-made masculinity does not necessarily demean male status. This chapter will argue that a feminised form of masculinity has not only re-defined masculinity, it is also an ideal, noble form of masculinity.

## 3.2 A Gazer's Discourse

Before the discussion of the female gaze on the male warriors in this Chapter, it is necessary to clarify the directors do not confine their films to a singular possibility of a female gaze. The traditional male gaze that objectifies women's bodies in Mulvey's model can still be detected in shots such as that of the sexy dancer in the film *A Chinese Tall Story*. Even though the male protagonist is the main example as spectacle in the discussion of this chapter, woman looking at woman is another aspect that is depicted in this film<sup>9</sup>. The director introduces a lesbian princess who travels through times and falls in love with Yue at first sight. While these two aspects are also significant, they are related to women as images, which is not the main theme of this research.

### 3.2.1 Female gaze with Female agents: "Men beautify themselves for the women who love them"

There is a common Chinese proverb "*nü wei yue ji zhe rong*"<sup>10</sup>, which could be translated as "women beautify themselves for the men who love them"; in the film *A Chinese Tall Story*, the opposite is an essential message, which highlights "men beautifying themselves for the women who love them", clearly catering to a female gaze. Director Jeffrey Lau illustrates Sanzang as a spectacular object from two levels: for the spectators within the auditorium, that is, the audience, and for the characters within the narrative. Firstly, Sanzang is played by a popular icon Nicholas Tse who is a superstar enjoying solid support from his loyal ardent fans. Tse is son of Hong Kong actor Patrick Tse and actress Deborah Lee, born in 1980. He is a singer, composer and actor. It is fair to say that he has been living in the spot

<sup>9</sup> As this research focuses on the male images, it is out of its scope to study the aspect of women looking at women. For reference of the study on such an aspect, Jackie Stacey's "Desperately Seeking Difference," in Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment, eds. *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture*. Seattle: The Real Comet Press, 1989) is a good article to refer to.

<sup>10</sup> Chinese original: 女为悦己者容.

light of the pop culture kingdom and a favourite target of the paparazzi since he was born. No matter what character he plays in the film, he will be one of the magnets that invite his fans to flock to the cinema to peer at their idol. To put it simply, a large number among the audience go to watch not the film, but Nicholas Tse<sup>11</sup>.

Director Lau must have been fully aware of Tse's magnetism, and he endeavours to satisfy the fans' hunger for visual pleasure with lavish depiction of Tse's 'beauty' in the opening scene in which Sanzang and his disciples arrive at an exotic castle. Sanzang first appears in a fixed posture with his disciples. The next scene cuts to a carnival in the castle when Sanzang narcissistically indulges in dancing. A series of medium or medium long shots lights up Sanzang's performing body as a dancer. Medium close-ups are also manoeuvred to enhance his charms: the camera captures Sanzang glancing back with a flirting smile with medium close-ups of his face (Still 3-1). In this shot, the director also arranges a shallow focus to isolate Sanzang's image in the foreground from the rest of the blurry background to distinguish Sanzang's presence. Elegant dances, flirtations, and coquetry are all emblems of seductive women, but they are manoeuvred to introduce the male hero who now assumes the role of spectacle. Even though female dancers are also part of the spectacle, their presence is shadowy compared with that of Sanzang, as shown in Still 3-1.

---

<sup>11</sup> He has released many music albums and active in acting in films and television dramas. He is regarded one of the rare gifted young actors and was awarded Best Supporting actor in 2010 Hong Kong Film Award for his brilliant performance in *Bodyguards and Assassins* (2009) and eventually Best Actor in *The Stool Pigeon* (*xianren*, dir. Dante Lam, 2010).





Still 3-1 Sanzang's flirting glance back



Still 3-2 Yue's point-of-view shot of Sanzang

The second level of Sanzang serving as an erotic object is revealed in the objective gaze of the female protagonist Yue Meiyao. For example, when she and Sanzang set out to rescue his disciples, they come to a shangrila-like village. Sanzang is introduced by Yue's point-of-view shot (Still 3-2). In this shot, Sanzang's image is first objectified by Yue's female gaze, and second, his image is decorated with pink peach blossoms at the background; that is, he is further feminised by his association with the feminine symbols embracing him. Thirdly, his coy smile, which is often stigmatised as girly gesture, is admired as his charisma by Yue. All these cinematographic tactics cast the limelight on Sanzang's body, rendering him as a desirable love object of Yue. This female desire towards the body of Sanzang is

further proven by another scene in which Yue Meiyan is sexually aroused when she helps Sanzang to put medication on his bruised body: her touch on his skin makes her so excited that she has to rush out of the room to calm herself down.

### 3.2.2 The Craving for Romance: “Feminine Man is Her Cup of Tea”

The catering to a female gaze directly refers to the growing female audience whose growing economic power enables them to become a pivotal force in the consumer society. Data show that at the beginning of twenty-first century, around 100 million Chinese women live in the urban regions of China, among which forty percent are women between the age of 20 and 40, and ninety percent of this group are career women.<sup>12</sup> A rough calculation based on these data indicates that more than thirty-six million Chinese women form a colossal consumer market. Lu Taihong in his research on the behaviour of Chinese consumer concludes that “the twenty-first century is labelled as ‘her century’, i.e. an era of women dominating consumption.”<sup>13</sup>

The pivotal status of women in the film market is no empty talk; it is proven by social reports. Research done on the connection between women and television programmes in Mainland China in 2000 indicates that women are the underpinning of the entertainment industries, because the choice of entertainment programme is mostly controlled by women. Data shows that 61.9 % of the women respondents hold the television controls at home or flat while the ratio for their boyfriends (or husbands) is merely 9.8%.<sup>14</sup> As this research focuses on the commercial entertainment industry, it is reasonable to deduce that, on the basis on the

<sup>12</sup> Lu, Taihong et al. *Zhongguo Xiaofeizhe Xingwei Baogao* (Chinese Consumer Behaviour) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe), 2005), 120.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>14</sup> Zhang, Tongdao, etc. “Beijing qingnian nüxing shiye zhong de dianshi yule jiemu diaocha baogao” (“The Television Entertainment Programme in the Eyes of Beijing Female Audience”), *Dangdai dianying* (Contemporary Cinema), issue 3 (2001): 92.

above data proving women outnumbering and dominating the choices of entertainment programmes, women become the crucial audience that the filmmakers need to cater to.

This blooming expansion of female consumers has caught the eyes of many film practitioners. For example, prominent Hong Kong film director Johnnie To recalls,

[b]y 2000, the theatrical audience took another turn as young women rose to prominence, filling a void left by teenage boys, who migrated to video games and pirated DVDs...young women in their twenties attend films as part of a social occasion, either with friends or partners, and their tastes are decidedly different from their younger male counterparts.<sup>15</sup>

With such awareness in the film industry, filmmakers gradually produce films catering to female audiences, even though mainly for financial exploration, they at least, produce a pro-female discourse on the basis of the female gaze.

Both *Chinese Tall Story* and *An Empress and the Warriors* explicitly demonstrate women's desire for romantic men. In *Chinese Tall Story*, director Lau arranges an incident where Sanzang is captured by a horde of elves who have mistaken Sanzang for his disciple Sun Wukong (孙悟空). The female sprites are enthralled by Sun, remembering his unquenchable passion towards Fairy Zixia as depicted in Jeffrey Lau's *A Chinese Odyssey Part II: Cinderella* (*Dahua xiyou zhi xianlü qi yuan* 大话西游之仙履奇缘, 1994), which could be regarded as a prequel to *A Chinese Tall Story*. The female sprites gaze at Sanzang with yearning eyes, marvelling at his infatuation for a woman, "Sun Wukong? Is he the one who fell madly in love with Fairy Zixia five hundred years ago?" Immediately afterwards, they start reciting Sun's confession of love depicted in *A Chinese Odyssey Part II*, "if the emperor of heaven endows me with a second chance, I would say three words to this girl: I love You! If I had to set an expired day for my passion, I hope it is in 10,000 years..." Even his incomparable weapon, the golden staff, only works under the magical spell of "love you

<sup>15</sup> Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: the Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2007), 255.

for 10,000 years!”<sup>16</sup> This incident remoulds Su Wukong into a saint of love, who is an asexual monkey king in the original classic *Journey to the West*. The lady sprites thoroughly forsake the conventional image of Sun as an intrepid warrior with immeasurable magical power boasting of being a great saint on a par with the emperor of heaven, but rather imagine him as a legendary lover. A similar transfiguration in *Chinese Tall Story* revokes Sanzang’s conventional image as a pious monk devoid of all secular desires, remodelling him as a passionate lover for Yue.

Certainly, for outsiders who have no understanding of the prototype of Sun Wukong and Tang Sanzang, the director’s message constructed on his transformation is lost. For people who could not share the cultural insights, Tang is just another fragile lover with lovesickness, but the Chinese audience’s familiarity of the characters of Tang Sanzang and Su Wukong enable them to identify the contrast between convention and the director’s innovation. The story of Tang San Zang has been adopted in many different versions, from the early oral literature in the Tang dynasty to the written literature in Ming dynasty, to the comic books, anime, television series, and films in the last century. According to the widely-known literary creation of the character of Sanzang in the novel by Wu Cheng’en, Sanzang is a monk who takes on the adventure for an emperor and for his country, a typical male loyal subject, but the film transforms the original loyal pilgrim into as a passionate lover. This comparison gives more strength of the argument of the importance of female audience.

*An Empress and the Warriors* portrays two potential men, the intrepid warrior Murong Feihu and the romantic hermit Duan Lanquan, for the empress Yan to choose. Clearly, Yan lavishes all her passion on Duan, while, for Murong, she harbours pure

---

<sup>16</sup> This slogan of confession of love is a cross-reference to Sun Wukong in *A Chinese Odyssey* series, but in fact, director Jeffrey Lau “borrows” it from his best friend, a well-known art-house director Wong Kar Wai. In Wong’s signed work *Chong king Express* (重庆森林) in 1994, one of the male protagonists Ho Chi-wu (何志武) sets “love you for 10,000 years” as the password for his pager. He later on also murmurs it to himself, mourning the expiration of things, and wishes that if memory could expire, it would only expire in 10,000 years.

reverence. The depiction of Murong follows the conventional prototype of the warrior who harbours duties to save the world while suppressing his personal desires. He wants to love Yan, but romance is marginalised in his mottoes; thus the girl he loves is put behind in a subordinate corner. By comparison, Yan Fei'er is the hub, the axis, the centre of Duan's life. Duan immerses himself not in his ambition but in demonstrating his love to Yan, such as nurturing the wounded Yan Fei'er with remarkable gentleness, and designing a hot balloon so that he could take Yan to a romantic trip. This thoughtful, gentle and feminised warrior lover is courageous, but more importantly, tender, caring, affectionate, sensitive, and ready to pamper the lady he loves, like Duan Lanquan; he is a perfect icon to enchant the female protagonist, catering to the fanaticism for romantic heroes.

The importance of romantic male heroes is not just emphasised in the two films selected in this chapter, it is part of a popular tendency since the beginning of the 2000s. The images of soft, effeminate men like Sanzang in *Chinese Tall Story* seem to be a favourite choice of the filmmakers, as is demonstrated in many action epics released in the past ten years. For example, the female protagonist Helen (played by Charlene Choi) in a magical fantasy *Twins effect* (*Qian ji bian* 千机变, dir. Dante Lam [Lin Chaoxian] 林超贤 and Donnie Yen, 2003) falls in love with the pale-faced, effeminate vampire prince Kazaf (played by Edison Chen [Chen Guanxi] 陈冠希) who awaits Helen's rescue; the kung fu girl Shangguan Lingfeng (上官灵凤 played by Cecilia Cheung [Zhang Baizhi] 张柏芝) in the kung fu comedy *My Kung Fu Sweetheart* (*Yeman Miji* 野蛮秘笈, dir. Wong Jing, 2006) cannot take her eyes of a frail young man Ku Lone<sup>17</sup> (古龙 played by Leo Ku [Gu Juji] 古巨基) who similarly demands protection from the female protagonist.

---

<sup>17</sup> In fact, the female protagonist's name refers to a real eminent female actor in martial arts genres in the 1960s Hong Kong cinema, who often personified fantastic women warriors. On the other hand, the male protagonist refers to a prominent martial arts novelist.

Romantic heroes rather than tough guy models become the new tactics for financial revenue since 2000 in Hong Kong. One of the major production companies, the Milkyway Images (银河影像), offers an example: its post-1997 productions can be divided into two phases: 1997 to 2000, focusing on macho genres of gang and action movies, such as *Too Many Ways to be number one* (*Yige zitou de dansheng* 一个字头的诞生, dir. Wai Ka-Fai [Wei Jiahui] 韦家辉 1997), *Running out of Time* (*Anzhan* 暗战, dir. Johnnie To, 1999) and *The Mission* (*Qianghuo* 枪火, dir. Johnnie To, 1999). Even though it is out of our scope to study them in detail, their titles have already revealed their connection with competition and battle. In the second phase this company switched to a women-oriented romantic comedy for financial revenue, with the same director Johnnie To making *Needing You* (*Guman guanü* 孤男寡女, 2000), a film about the heroine choosing between her lover and her own future. The film had a high box office of HK\$35,000,000 in Hong Kong, becoming the champion in Hong Kong box-office in 2000, and setting a new record for romantic comedies. Johnnie To kept up such a success of urban romance in the following year by making *Love on a Diet* (*Shoushen mannü* 瘦身男女, 2001), which enjoyed a box office of HK\$40,000,000, occupying the second place in the Hong Kong box office in that year.<sup>18</sup> Both the strategic change to romantic comedies and their financial success prove a new craving for romance in the film market in Hong Kong.

These effeminate heroes share a common personality: a gentle, considerate, caring handsome man who often *mothers* the female protagonist back to health or comforts her broken heart when she suffers from an unhappy relationship. They are often not the most powerful men in the films, and even constantly fail to protect themselves. However, he

---

<sup>18</sup> For detail analysis of Milkyway Images, see Pang Laikwan, "Post-1997 Hong Kong Masculinity," in *Masculinities and Hong Kong Cinema*, ed. Pang Laikwan and Day Wong, 35-55 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005)

prepares to sacrifice himself to protest the woman he loves, and it is their willingness to die for the women that are attractive to the women.

Such a demand for romantic heroes has fascinated some scholars who claim that “one of the critical responsibilities of male actors and public figures is to endeavour to personify ‘nanny-dads’ images.”<sup>19</sup> “Nanny-dad” may be an exaggerated term, but the romantic ethos has become the type of “New Good Man” in the twenty-first century. “New good men are those who have been liberated from the desire to conquer and dominate;” “New good men are those who have full knowledge of romance and true love;” “New good men have a considerate heart to women.”<sup>20</sup> All these definitions of “New Good Men” introduce an element of softness into the ideal male image. In 2005, Pang Laikwan and Day Wong edited *Masculinities and Hong Kong Cinema*, in which Day Wong carries out a survey based on interviews with female viewers of mainstream Hong Kong films and discovers that “[t]he local female audience, however, did not seem to admire this hypermasculinized form of hero.”<sup>21</sup>

This preference for romantic and effeminate heroes is confirmed by social surveys on Chinese women. Shanghai Academy of Social Science sponsored research entitled “Studies on the Quality of Chinese People’s Marriages” from 1996 to 1999, which reveals that more than fifty percent of the respondents admit that they regretted the lack of romance in their lives.<sup>22</sup> Xie Pengxiong, in his article about men’s aesthetics in Taiwan, argues in a rhetorical

<sup>19</sup> Liao, Hemin, “hui faliang de shitou doushi zhuan shi ma?” (“Are All Shinning Stones Diamonds?”), in *New Good Men: Transformations and New Tendencies of Taiwanese Men*, ed. Xin Dai, 49. English translation mine.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Lin Xinhua (林欣华) and Fang Lingyuan (方凌圆), in *Nanren: Taiwan Nanren De Biaomao Yu Qushi* (New Good Men: Transformations and New Tendencies of Taiwanese Men), ed. Xin Dai. English translation mine.

<sup>21</sup> Day Wong, “Women’s Reception of Mainstream Hong Kong Cinema,” in *Masculinities and Hong Kong Cinema*, eds. Laikwan Pang and Day Wong, 254.

<sup>22</sup> Gu, Wentong, “A Giant Step for Chinese Women within Their Families,” *Women of China*, issue 7, (2006): 29.

question, “if you ask a woman: what sort of personality you want to love most in a man? The answer often is *gentleness*.”<sup>23</sup>

The overwhelming production of effeminate warriors in romantic narratives indeed caters to attract and even flatter the female consumers, but such awareness has not broken away from the conventional patriarchal order. Janice Radway has made a close observation of women readership of romance, combining her findings into an influential work *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*, in which she argues, “[the female readers] prefer to see the heroine desired, needed and loved by a man who is strong and masculine, but equally capable of unusual tenderness, gentleness, and concern for her pleasure.”<sup>24</sup>

Such craving for male tenderness reflects the lack of true male gentleness in a patriarchal society. Feminist critic Nancy Chodorow examines the production of gender roles in societies and points out that “[t]here is a fundamental asymmetry in daily reproduction. Men are socially and psychologically reproduced by women, but women are reproduced (or not) largely by themselves.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, women give birth to men who, through their lives, are nurtured and loved first by their mothers, and later by their wives. Women, implacably, shoulder their duties as live-givers and love-givers, and they crave that men should play the same roles to them. If such a wish is difficult to fulfill in reality, they at least can indulge themselves in the imaginary universe – the romance in novels and films, for example – for psychological comfort.

The social statistics shows women’s indulgence in relational bonding with the others (idealised by a romantic hero) and Chodorow explains the psychological urge behind this

---

<sup>23</sup> Xie, Pengxiong, “Nanren de meixue?” (“Male Aesthetics”) in *New Good Men: Transformations and New Tendencies of Taiwanese Men*, ed. Xin Dai, 41.

<sup>24</sup> Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 81

<sup>25</sup> Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1978), 36.



preference. This craving for romance, according to Chodorow, is an important feature of a feminine personality. She notes, “[t]he basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate.”<sup>26</sup> This argument can be expanded further that a feminine sense of self seeks concord and co-existence, while the masculine self pursues independence and tends to cause discord and conflict. These romantic warriors share this feminine personality and they all search for identification through relationship. The popularity of the feminised men discussed in this research thus can be read a suggestive sign of a feminine discourse has gained its strength and social prestige.

### 3.2.3 What about the Macho warriors?

If we could argue that the romantic warriors are the desired objects sought by the desiring female gaze, what happens to the macho warriors who do not win the affection of the female protagonists? The brawny macho warriors with ferocious physical prowess might not enthrall the female audiences who craze for romance, but they are nevertheless objectified in front of the camera, therefore in Mulvey’s terms, feminised. The *wu* hero as spectacle has been touched upon in Chapter One, where examples show that the *wu* hero is often desexualised in Chinese history and is deprived of personal romance. Such a tradition could still be seen in *An Empress and the Warriors*.

This phenomenon can be exemplified by the depiction of the courageous general Murong Feihu in *An Empress and the Warriors*, whose martial arts skills function more as spectacular performance than as an impetus to the narrative development. On the one hand, the actor playing the role of Murong is Donnie Yen, who has achieved stardom because of his martial arts skills. Prior knowledge of him allures the audience to focus on how he fights more than whom he plays. In other words, the audiences expect to see an extraordinary

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 169.

martial arts ‘performance’ by Yen, fixing his body as a spectacle. Audience’s prior expectation of the kung fu body as a spectacle is best illustrated by the Jet Li vs. Jackie Chan complex. When these two action stars took part in the same film *The Forbidden Kingdom* (*Gongfu zhi wang* 功夫之王, dir. Rob Minkoff, 2008) for the first time, it was advertised in a website as “Jet Li vs. Jackie Chan: who is the king of kung fu?” thus leading the audiences’ attention toward the performance of the kung fu bodies.<sup>27</sup> In other words, the audiences are looking forward to appreciating the martial arts performance of these two stars rather than their roles in the narratives.

In order to satisfy such audience expectation, the director takes every possible opportunity to present Murong /Yen’s marvellous martial arts skills. In the scene where Murong meets Duan Lanquan for a second time, even though Murong comes with an urgent mission to persuade Duan to leave with the princess because of the chaos in the country, the director still takes time to pause the narrative development and arrange a duel between Duan and Murong from various angles to accentuate their kinetic bodies. To use Mulvey’s words, their swordplay performances “freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation.”<sup>28</sup> In addition, the duel is carried out in a reclusive waterside with no one as witness either within or outside the frames, thus eliminating any possible character as agent of the gaze. The absence of gazer agent does not prevent the male body from being objectified. Instead, without an agent as a guide, the gender identity of the gaze is passed on to the audience, the composition of which, presumably, is a mixture of heterosexuals and homosexuals, males and females, old and young, all deriving varied visual pleasure from the

<sup>27</sup> For example, one of the most popular websites in China, Tengtun QQ, which has 290 million active registered members ([http://www.qqtn.com/article/article\\_3063\\_1.html](http://www.qqtn.com/article/article_3063_1.html)) hosts a whole section for this film, and a savour of “duel” permeates the whole section (<http://ent.qq.com/a/20080312/000295.htm>, accessed 27/03/2011); “Jet Li vs Jackie Chan: who is the true king of kung fu?” is one important concern. The same website also set up an online survey “Who do you think should be crowned at the king of kung fu, Jet Li or Jackie Chan?”

<sup>28</sup> Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, 40.

kinetic macho bodies. These kinetic warriors show a great mastery of their body movement: somersaulting and flying which seems to be free from the restraint of gravity. Their gymnastic skills demonstrate their superheroic qualities, which fascinate the audience. Their swordsmanship here is highlighted as a staged performance to seduce the audiences rather than affirmation of their manhood.

Toward the end of the film, Murong rampages single-handedly into the rebel forces, foreboding a savage battle that gives birth to a glorious warrior. A typical masculine action epic in traditional Chinese cinema, with kung fu cult director Chang Cheh as a god-father figure, would venerate the warrior by depicting his formidable strength in ‘turning the tables’ at the last minute on the verge of death. He might sacrifice his life, but he is the ultimate victor. However, Murong dies an untimely death before his goal to defeat the throne-usurper is achieved, and the final combat is fought between the usurper and the girl hero Yan Fei’er. With all his miraculous martial arts skills foredoomed to fruitlessness, the lavish shots on his gymnastic body, including slow motions, close-ups, pan shots and high angle shots, ominously spectacularise his screen persona. Notwithstanding a courageous warrior, his fruitless fatal combat is reduced to a mere performance – he is a gladiator trapped in the arena, unable to escape from his predestined role as a spectacle.

### **3.3. Girl Power in a Hostile Regime**

#### **3.3.1 The girl messiah in action**

In *An Empress and the Warriors*, the director arranges an untimely death for the macho warrior and presents the female protagonist Yan Fei’er as The One who kills the usurper Yan Huba and restores peace. This depiction of a girl messiah figure further proves the improving status of the women. The directors not only present romantic heroes to cater to a female gaze, to charm young women into the cinema, but also further flatter the female

audiences by creating girl heroes as positive role models. This construction of girl heroism is accomplished through two techniques: diminishing her danger of falling into an “erotic object” role and asserting her desire and power as a conscious subject.

It needs to emphasise here that, even though both male and female characters cannot escape the destiny of being objectified once they are captured by the camera, the director still has some initiative to either diminish or enhance the character’s role as spectacle. In the case of Yue’s presence in *A Chinese Tall Story*, director Jeffrey Lau weaves a plot in which Sanzang falls in love with Yue when she is still an ugly, hunchbacked girl with dry, frizzy, disordered hair, pock-marked face, and protruding teeth stained yellow. With her later transfiguration into a beautiful fairy (even though the director cannot prevent audiences from drawing voyeuristic pleasure from her beautification), she is here not beautifying herself for the man who loves her, as she has already enchanted him before her transformation. On the contrary, her transformation is a restoration of her true identity as a noble warrior from outer space, thus recovering her invincible magical power, enabling her to play the role of saviour.

Secondly, the female protagonists not only rebel against their fate as passive love objects, but boldly challenge a patriarchal taboo by claiming men as their “love objects”. The male as a love object, in the particular context of China, is not solely an acknowledgement of female desire, but more significantly, it challenges and subverts the convention of asexual warriors in Chinese tradition. According to Chinese historian Yi Zhongtian, Chinese conventional heroism determinedly desexualises a warrior, whose identity is constructed in multifaceted interpersonal relationships but not gender relationships. Yi observes, “there is one omnipresent rule in Chinese civilisation: a true hero should and must abnegate his sexual libidos.”<sup>29</sup> Hence, a virtuous warrior belongs to the tribe (as elaborated by De Beauvoir cited earlier), to the community (for example, the imaginary world of *jianghu* in Chinese

---

<sup>29</sup> Yi, *Zhongguo de nanren he nüren* (Chinese Men and Women), 8.

vernacular literature), or to the King/Nation (for example, patriotic soldiers), whereas men revealing their sexuality are demonised and condemned as “worthless men,” “cream-like (effeminate) men”, or “feminised men”.<sup>30</sup>

However, the amorous warriors under discussion in this chapter belong to women, and their feminisation here serves as confirmation of women’s desire and power. In *A Chinese Tall Story*, a cultural icon of a pious Buddhist monk Sanzang who has refrained from any worldly and sensual matters is re-modelled as a romantic lover for a vivacious girl; in *An Empress and the Warriors*, a brutal warrior Duan Lanquan becomes a docile lover for the princess-turned-empress.

The girl heroes are not only depicted as female subjects claiming their own love objects; they are further empowered by shedding off their stigmatic role of passive victims. The girl heroes are transformed into saviours, whereas such roles have been constantly reserved for males. Jack Zipes’ interpretation of fairy tales is useful here to understand such role-switching. In *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: the Classical Genre for Children and Process of Civilization*, Zipes points out that a prototypical male-centred fairy tale is structured along the format that “[t]he male acts, the female waits.”<sup>31</sup> The narrative of girl heroism in the two films in this chapter completely subverts such a masculine motto into a “female-acts-male-waits” formula.

*A Chinese Tall Story* is such a “girl power”<sup>32</sup> fairy tale: Yue rescues Sanzang with her immeasurable magical power. When Sanzang risks his life to rescue his disciples, he is tortured by the monsters before Yue flies to his rescue, as is captured in a medium long shot in Still 3-3, in which Sanzang half kneels on the ground, looking up admiringly to his saviour

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>31</sup> Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: the Classical Genre for Children and Process of Civilization* (New York: Methuen, 1988), 25.

<sup>32</sup> “Girl power” feminism is an important ramification of the third wave feminism. For detailed criticism see Susan Hopkins, *Girl Heroes: the New Force in Popular Culture* (Annandale: Pluto Press Australia, 2002)

Yue. Sanzang is the feminised victim, the passive sufferer and the frail man stranded in the debris of the battlefields; Yue is the audacious saviour, the active liberator, and the free woman warrior flying into the battle zone to protect her lover.



Still 3-3 Sanzang waiting Yan's rescue<sup>33</sup>

Girl Power advocate Susan Hopkins observes, “[t]he current generation of girls and young women won’t accept submissive, weak and dependent role models.”<sup>34</sup> The infirm man here serves as the protected object to enhance the empowerment of the girl hero Yue. Her story is one of empowerment of a girl hero, working as an icon for girls to look up to, and shedding the stereotypical image of a girl who only serves as her lover’s stooge waiting for rescue.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The image of the angelic wings of the female protagonist is an imitation of Christian angel images, but the religious undertone is not the main point here. This film mainly targets Chinese audience in Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. The majority of Chinese audience do not understand Christianity at all, so it seems to me that it is not common that Chinese audience will interpret such images in a Christian way. I do not believe that the director uses it in Christian reference and expects his audience to pick up the religious message. If this film can be released internationally, such an image might be easily picked up as religious implication by the overseas audience. If there is connection with Christian angel images, it can be said that the angel is feminised on the transformation of a masculine origin to a girl who has fallen in love.

<sup>34</sup> Hopkins, 3.

<sup>35</sup> In Chinese language, such female character is referred as “vase” (花瓶), who is beautiful to look at, but extremely vulnerable and constantly calls for protection. Maggie Cheung (张曼玉)’s role as Jackie Chan’s girlfriend May in *Police Story I* (*Jingcha gushi* 警察故事, dir. Jackie Chan, 1985) is a typical example.

While Yue rescues her lover, Yan Fei'er in *An Empress and the Warriors* rescues her kingdom by charging into a man's sphere. Hong Kong film critic Zhang Weixiong stresses that this film is "a fairy tale of (girl) surpassing men."<sup>36</sup>

The Chinese title of this film "jiangshan meiren" literally means *The Kingdom and the Beauty*, while as early as 1959, Li Han Hsiang had directed a film with the same Chinese name. It depicts a young emperor who disguises himself as an ordinary scholar and falls in love with a commoner girl. He reveals his true identity and promises to marry her, but after he returns to his palace surrounded by beautiful women, he soon completely forgets about her, leaving the commoner girl waiting in vain with their illegitimate son. The emperor repents three years later and sends his loyal guards to escort his love to the capital city, but she dies of illness on the way. Li interprets this Chinese idiom (*The Kingdom and the Beauty*) as an emperor's libido and majesty, with the female protagonist as an amorous object. Director Ching Siu-tung subverts this patriarchal definition and sets up the princess Yan Fei'er as the head of the kingdom; thus the traditional idiom "jiangshan meiren" is given a new meaning "a beauty and her kingdom." It is she who is espoused to become the empress; it is she who finishes arduous military training to become a skillful swordswoman; it is she who leads the army to defeat the invaders of her kingdom and brings peace to her people; it is she who defeats the usurper to her throne, Yan Huba, and avenges her father's death. This film concludes with a zoom-in shot of her in magnificent royal gowns, followed by a medium close-up of her face, inaugurating a woman's victory in her kingdom.

---

<sup>36</sup> Zhang, "Cheng Xiaodong, Xi Zhongwen de 'shengman tonghua' " ("Ching Siu-tung and Yee Chung man's Fairy Tale of Female Surpassing the Male"), *Xianggang dianying* (Hong Kong Film), issue 6, (08/April/2008): 104.

### 3.3.2 The Glass Ceiling?<sup>37</sup>

Although both Yue Meiyang in *A Chinese Tall Story* and Yan Fei'er in *An Empress and the Warriors* assert their girl power by playing the role that used to be reserved for men, they are still living in world ruled by male-dominated, patriarchal motifs. Ching does not attempt to subvert the gender order of the 'kingdom', as Yan Fei'er is the only female character crossing the gender boundary into the masculine space of battle and blood. Chodorow examines the patriarchal demarcation of masculine/feminine space, arguing that, according to patriarchal separation, the public sphere is a

competitive world of work.... the public sphere, and not the domestic sphere, forms "society" and "culture"—those intended, constructed forms and ideas that take humanity beyond nature and biology and institute political control. Men's location in the public sphere, then, defines society itself as masculine.<sup>38</sup>

Examples like Mulan and the female warriors of the Yang family saga<sup>39</sup> are great role models of virtuous women crossing the domestic sphere into the public sphere of war front, the masculine space, in order to carry on the missions of their fathers or husbands. However, they would face punishment or animosity if they challenged the sacredness of the male order.

In *A Chinese Tall Story*, Yue Meiyang and Sanzang mistakenly kill the guards of the emperor of heaven during their journey to rescue Sanzang's disciples. After Yue, together with Sanzang's disciples, has defeated the demonic monsters, the court of heaven is determined to interrogate Yue and Sanzang for the murder of the guards. Yue could have

---

<sup>37</sup> The term was first used to refer to the invisible barrier that hinders the advance of American women in their career by Carol Hymowitz and Timothy D. Schellhardt in their article "The Corporate Woman (A Special Report): Cover --- The Glass Ceiling: Why Women Can't Seem to Break The Invisible Barrier That Blocks Them From the Top Jobs." *Wall Street Journal*, March 24, 1986, Eastern Edition. It has been widely used in referring to sex and race discrimination.

<sup>38</sup> Chodorow, 5 and 9.

<sup>39</sup> Mulan is a girl warrior who disguises herself as a man answering a conscription order for her father, originally from a traditional Chinese ode *The Ballad of Mulan* during the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534 C.E); the women warriors of the Yang family are characters of a series of plays and novels on the Yang family in the Northern Song dynasty, who brandish their swords to fight the invaders after the death of the husbands.



used her magical power to return to her own planet, but she chooses to submit herself to the emperor of heaven, claiming full responsibility of killing the guards so that Sanzang will be cleared of the charge. However, this self-sacrificing female protagonist is punished at the end of the film. Why is she punished? According to the verdict, she has a seductive power over Sanzang, motivating him to choose to preserve his 'selfish' love for one woman and neglect his duties as a monk giving altruistic love for humankind; in order to be with Yue, he violates all rules in the kingdom of heaven, forgetting his public duties to search for sutra and universal salvation. His immersion in romance (i.e. the domestic sphere) rather than social responsibilities goes against the masculine ethos revealed by Jack Zipes who argues "the heroes...are all ambitious and work their way up the social ladder:... that social success and achievement are more important than winning a wife."<sup>40</sup> Therefore, both Yue and Sanzang are punished for their romantic indulgence and neglecting their social duties in a masculine social order: Yue is reincarnated as a horse to accompany Sanzang to start his pilgrimage all over again.

The transfiguration of a woman into a horse while the man is still in his dignified human form overtly privileges the male. This male privilege is present like a 'glass ceiling' that hinders the advance of women in the society. Such a mentality of setting a glass ceiling to hold back the women's seductive power is understood by Baudrillard as the fragility of masculinity: since he is powerless to resist feminine seduction, he has to set up institutions to protect himself from falling before the invincibility of feminine power:

The phallic fortress offers all the signs of fortress, that is to say, of weakness....One can hypothesize that the feminine is the only sex, and that the masculine only exists by a superhuman effort to leave it. A moment's distraction, and one falls back into

---

<sup>40</sup> Zipes, 25-26.

---

the feminine. The feminine would have a decisive advantage, the masculine a definite handicap.<sup>41</sup>

Applying Baudrillard, Yue has to be punished because the patriarchal order is afraid of her seductive power which would ‘bewitch’ the male warrior into neglecting his masculine missions. Intriguingly, the director of *A Chinese Tall Story*, while revealing the persistence of patriarchal values in the society, sympathises with the lovers being punished. He closes his film with a lamentation that “the greatest distance that divides us...is that we love each other, but fate will forever keep us apart.”

Likewise, Yan Fei’er in *An Empress and the Warriors* does not suffer such severe punishments: instead of subverting the masculine order, she accepts it in acquiescence. Even though she is the only child of her father, her father designates Murong Feihu as his successor, not because he does not love his daughter, two of them showing great affection toward each other, but the dying king believes Murong has the true charisma to be king in a masculine sphere. She accepts this arrangement without objection. Furthermore, she constantly depends on male rescue and male leadership. Duan Lanquan nurtures her back to health when she is poisoned by the assassins sent by her major competitor—her cousin Yan Huba. Murong is her master who trains her to become a woman warrior. All in all, she is a woman warrior dependent on masculine models to empower herself. She never challenges her father’s power, and her actions actually follow a very conventional woman warrior model dictated by the Mulan syndrome in which women fight to protect the legacy and dignity of their father and country. Her boundary-crossing performance is not a rebellious act to break the glass ceiling. Dai Jinhua points out, the woman warrior legitimacy “stems precisely from the fact that the story’s dominant device is a woman’s commitment and utmost loyalty to her

---

<sup>41</sup> Baurillard, *seduction*, 16.

family and country.”<sup>42</sup> Yan Fei’er’s conduct, as a matter of fact, follows a masculine norm that is “not the norm created by men for women but the norms created by and for men”.<sup>43</sup>

Julia Kristeva’s understanding that women’s assumption of executive power does not change the gendered nature of this power can clarify the gender imbalance here:

women promoted to decision-making positions suddenly obtain the economic as well as the narcissistic advantages refused them for thousands of years and become the pillars of the existing governments, guardians of the status quo, the most zealous protectors of the established order.<sup>44</sup>

Even though she follows male norms, she helps to feminise, or soften the macho characteristics of the masculine picture. For example, after Yan Fei’er and her army capture the king of Zhao who invades her kingdom, her generals favour an execution of the king of Zhao, but Yan releases him and promises to stop conquest and revenge. In the monologue of Yan at the end of this film, she expresses her determination to stop all wars in order to bring peace to every corner of her kingdom. She adopts a non-violent, non-competitive approach to lead her kingdom. Referring to Chodorow who observes that social space is defined as masculine, to de Beauvoir who infers that conquest and subjugation are masculine momentum,<sup>45</sup> and to Zipes’ critiques that to compete to “work their way up the social ladder” is a masculine attribute, it is possible to conclude here that the empress Yan has feminised the masculine social space with her soft strategies. Such soft strategies are equally adopted by our male heroes, which will be discussed further in the next sub-sections.

<sup>42</sup> Dai, Jinhua, *Cinema and Desire: Feminist Marxism and Cultural Politics in the Works of Dai Jinhua*, trans. and ed. Jing Wang and Tani E. Barrows (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 104.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 103. The contradictory singular and plural form of “norm” is in the original text.

<sup>44</sup> Kristeva, “Women’s time”, trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, *Signs*, Vol.7, No.1 (Autumn, 1981): 26.

<sup>45</sup> De Beauvoir, Part two “History”, chapter one “The Normads”.

### 3.4 A Feminised Masculinity: Past and Present

#### 3.4.1 A Lover's Discourse: "A man is feminised because he is in love."

While women are seen crossing boundaries into the masculine space, their warrior lovers voluntarily cross over to the feminine side, to soften their masculine identity by playing with a feminine discourse, which, to borrow from Roland Barthes, is identified as a "lover's discourse."<sup>46</sup>

Love, in traditional narratives, is not attributed to masculine discourse, but has been categorised as a feminine discourse of passivity. According to Barthes' observation, a lover's discourse is a one embraced by the woman in her waiting for the absent man:

Woman is sedentary, Man hunts, journeys: Woman is faithful (she waits), man is fickle (he sails away, he cruises). It is Woman who gives shape to absence, elaborates its fiction...; she weaves and she sings; the Spinning Songs express both immobility (by the hum of the wheel) and absence (far away, rhythms of travel, sea surges, cavalcades). It follows that in any man who utters the other's absence something *feminine* is declared: this man who waits and who suffers from his waiting is miraculously *feminized*. A man is not feminized because he is inverted but because he is in love.<sup>47</sup>

The male lovers in these three chosen films are all perfect examples of sedentary lovers in faithful waiting. As Sanzang's waiting has been dealt with in previous section and the faithful waiting of the male protagonist in *The Knot* will be analysed in the following section, the discussion here will focus on Duan Lanquan in *An Empress and the Warriors*. He is identified as a "perfect lover" (完美情人) in a review on the film's premier,<sup>48</sup> in which Director Ching indicates that he is making "a film of love transcending everything; its martial

<sup>46</sup> Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (London, New York, Victoria, Toronto and Auckland: Penguin Books, 1990).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 13-14. Italics mine.

<sup>48</sup> Wang, Jin, "Jiangshan meiren shangying bei pi: mutou meiren pei banlao yingxiong" ("The 'Bombardment' of *An Empress and the Warriors*: a Marionette Beauty for a Semi-senile Warrior"), <http://bjyouth.ynet.com/view.jsp?oid=28874636>, accessed 11 August 2009.

arts ethos merely serves as a package.”<sup>49</sup> Duan is living in seclusion in a shabby cottage when he saves Yan Fei'er from being assassinated by her cousin. They fall in love, but it is the Empress Yan who “*sails away*” after she recovers, leaving Duan in “*faithful*” waiting. When Yan comes back for an ephemeral reunion before leaving a second time to save her kingdom, it is Yan, not Duan, who utters the passionate words, “please wait for my return.” It is the warrior here who suffers from the absence of his lover.

Such waiting is the male protagonist Duan's voluntary choice. For Duan, awaiting the love of a woman is more important than assuring any “manly virtues” or any social achievements. Conversely, he lives as a hermit, completely forsaking the masculine society, burying his sword which was an emblem of his identity as a member of a clan of ferocious warriors, determinedly separating himself from the public world and renouncing all his social responsibility. Even if marriage is not Duan's immediate goal, it is domestic bliss and romance he is seeking. He does take up his sword to fight again, but tries only to defend his domestic sphere when a group of assassins intrude on his ‘love nest.’ To borrow Barthes' lover's discourse, it could be said that Duan feminises himself, but he is rewarded by love. Their love, to borrow Baudrillard's maxim on love, “is a challenge and a prize: a challenge to the other to return the love”.<sup>50</sup>

This “lover's discourse” shares one thing in common with Baudrillard's observation of feminine power analysed in the preceding chapters: both of them refer to non-hierarchical, non-violent form of discourse, of the mutual attraction/ seduction between two “weak” parties: the female and the feminised men. According to Baudrillard, “it is seduction that prevails in the long term because it implies a reversible, indeterminate order.”<sup>51</sup> The

---

<sup>49</sup> “Jiangshan meiren meizi dangtong” (“*An Empress and the Warriors: Beauty is the Word*”), accessed 11 August 2009, <http://bjyouth.yynet.com/view.jsp?oid=28806297>. Original text: “这部戏是爱情至上，只是拿一个动作片来包装而已。” Translation mine.

<sup>50</sup> Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 22.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

feminised man embodies a utopian aspiration for peaceful co-existence between men and women, binding with each other with ‘love’. ‘Love’ is also the impetus of the self-sacrifice of Duan and Murong. Duan is shot by a poisoned dagger when he tries to save Yan Fei’er. When Murong decides to carry out a suicidal mission to thrust into the rebel army, he deliberately sends Yan away, attempting to keep her out of danger. These feminised but noble warriors in love basically become the privileged “new men.”

While “feminised” forms of the masculine prevailed, the evaluation of macho masculinity also underwent a tremendous shift. John MacInnes brings up the ideas of the bad reputation of masculinity:

What were once claimed to be manly virtues (heroism, independence, courage, strength, rationality, will, backbone, virility) have become *masculine vice* (abuse, destructive aggression, coldness, emotional inarticulacy, detachment, isolation, an inability to be flexible, to communicate, to empathize, to be soft, supportive or life affirming.)<sup>52</sup>

The villain Yan Huba in *An Empress and the Warriors* is such a hyper-masculine devil who harbours misogynous and cynical feelings towards women in charge. On one occasion, he grumbles, “a woman in charge? Absolutely ridiculous!” Director Ching depicts Yan Huba’s world as one full of conspiracies, assassination, ambitions, and one inhabited by destroyers and invaders. Such a derogation of his hypermasculine sphere provokes repellent feelings among the audience, thus guiding them to refuse to identify with these negative masculine values.

This condemnation of military spirits and romanticisation of the personal relationship reflects the popularity of a feminine personality. According to Chodorow, this “[f]eminine personality comes to be based less on repression of inner objects, and fixed and firm splits in

---

<sup>52</sup> MacInnes, 47. Italics mine.

the ego and more on retention and continuity of external relationships.”<sup>53</sup> Following such a logic, a person now relates to the world not in an antagonistic logic, but rather yearns to merge with it. Such a yearning to merge, therefore to love, is closer to a feminine logic, thus linking the themes of lover’s discourses back to the basic argument of this thesis: the rise of a feminine power.

### 3.4.2 Homecoming Ceremony for the Feminine Power

So far, the retreat of the warrior lover to a feminine space has been analysed and studied with the help of Western contemporary theories, including the argument of the lover’s discourse by Barthes as well as Baudrillard’s theory of love. However, the feminine features of the male culture embodied in *A Chinese Tall Story* and *An Empress and the Warriors* are tinted with Chinese characteristics.

The Chinese characteristics of the feminised warriors in these films are first revealed by their Chinese names. The name of one of the male protagonists “Duan Lanquan” in *An Empress and the Warriors* contains the word “lan (兰)”, referring to orchid, cymbidium. The reference to flowers has indicated a feminine connotation, whilst *lan* is also combined with other words to construct specific female-related concepts. For example, *lan gui* (兰闺) refers to a lady’s chamber. In *The Knot*, the Chinese name of the male protagonist “Quishui” (秋水) literally means “autumn’s water”, but it is commonly used to refer to limpid eyes, especially those of women<sup>54</sup>. The words “*qiu*” (autumn) and “*shui*” (water) are poetic words and common images for sentimental expressions.

While feminine names for men are not an unusual practice, Chinese etymology shows that the Chinese identify a ‘soft’ self-image. As discussed in Chapter One, the character of

<sup>53</sup> Chodorow, 169.

<sup>54</sup> It also refers to the Chinese idiom “wang chuan qiu shui (望穿秋水)”, which describes the eagerness of one who is longing to see his or her loved ones in a distant place that is too far away for them to meet.

“self-image” is “yi 義”, which is composed of “羊”(sheep) “我 (I)”. “羊” refers to “beautiful things”, but it also signifies a docile animal – the sheep/goat.<sup>55</sup> That is, in an allegorical imagery, the Chinese identifies his or her cultural inner ego as a docile “lamb”, not a savage beast, such as lion or tiger. With such a self-identity as the weaker party, the Chinese embraces a way of survival for the weak in their cultural philosophy.



Still 3-4 the ‘sheep/goat/lamb’ image in *An Empress and the Warriors*

In fact, Duan keeps sheep/goats as his companions in his hermitage. It seems that this arrangement further intensifies Duan’s softness. Also, Duan voluntarily buries his sword and retreats to the woods and gives up his warrior status, which is a Taoist practice.

According to Lao Tsu:

A good captain does not exhibit his martial prowess. A good warrior does not get himself angry. A good conqueror of enemies does not instigate a combat. A good employer of people puts himself below them. This is called the power of non-contention.<sup>56</sup>

Duan, with his retreat to the woods, practices this non-competitive philosophy, resembling more the sheep-like behaviour of docility rather than lion-like aggressiveness.

<sup>55</sup> This idea was from a discussion with my supervisor Adam Lam.

<sup>56</sup> Translation by Chen, *The Tao Te Ching: A New Translation with Commentary*, 211. Chinese original: 《老子》第六十八章：“古之善为士者不武；善战者不怒；善胜敌者不与；善用人者为之下。是谓不争之德。”



Lamb-like gentleness is also embodied in the male protagonist in *The Knot*. Even though further discussion of this film will be conducted in the next section, its male protagonist Chen embodies traditional feminine features in Chinese masculine identity. The first half of the plot in *The Knot* is a vivid mimicry of a *scholar-beauty* (*Caizi Jiaren* 才子佳人) narrative, a typical plot of which would be a poor but handsome and gentle young scholar falling madly in love at first sight with a beautiful girl from an affluent family. Chen is intelligent, but sensitive, fragile, easily breaking down in tears, resembling a fragile scholar (*caizi*). All these details bring to light his soft, maternal and feminine side, embodying the *wen* (cultivated, literary skills) aspect of scholar masculinity, while his *wu* (military) aspect is diminished to near absence except for his military uniform that reminds the audience of his warrior status. The downplaying of military aspects and the valuing of literary achievements have always been part of the Chinese masculine ideal.

### 3.5 Leitmotiv Discourse: Feminised Warrior, Masculine Motif

The discussion so far has analysed the feminised warriors both as directors' strategy to cater to women's demand for romance as well as to present the feminine side of Chinese masculinity that is constructed in the mixture of women-made manhood and Chinese tradition. This section will continue to tackle the issue of how the feminine features of a romantic hero are adopted by directors to promote a patriarchal ideal, by looking at a unique cinema in Mainland China – Leitmotiv cinema, with *The Knot* as an example.

#### 3.5.1 Commercialisation of the Leitmotiv Cinema

*The Knot* belongs to a unique genre of films in China – Leitmotiv films, which offers an official or officially-approved version of the past or contemporary society to promote official ideologies, with an emphasis on patriotism and nationalism. Leitmotiv films, named as

*Zhuxuanlǜ diányǐng* (主旋律电影) in Chinese, depict an official or officially-approved version of the past or contemporary society, embodying progressive official ideologies, with an emphasis on patriotism and nationalism. This genre itself is not new, referred to as ‘mainstream’ (*zhuliu*) films before the new term “leitmotiv film” was coined in the official policy. Films aforementioned, such as *From Victory to Victory*, belong to this category, but the term “*Zhu xuanlǜ*” (leitmotiv) was first promoted by the Film Bureau in February 1987 to re-endorse cinematic presentations of Communist ideology.<sup>57</sup> The leitmotiv slogan was reinforced once again after the Tiananmen Square Incident. In October 1989, Li Ruihuan, head of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, announced a cutback in production to ensure greater Party control, but sixty percent of films had to be of the leitmotiv variety.<sup>58</sup> In 1996, the government reinforced its endorsement further by promising financial support for ten leitmotiv film productions each year in its ninth five-year- economic plan.<sup>59</sup>

Up to the 1980s, a common characteristic of such films was that they glorified, enshrined and perpetuated genderless war heroes; women soldiers were masculinised, whereas male soldiers were desexualised, which have been analysed in Chapter One. The leitmotiv films did not rely on ticket sales for survival, as they were subsidised by the government. A common practice was that the state-owned companies and organisations such as schools distributed tickets to the workers and students for free.<sup>60</sup> A Communist discourse

<sup>57</sup> Wang, Yichuan, “Zhuxuanlu yingpian de ruxue hua zhuanxiang” (“The Confucian turn in the master-cantus Film”). *Dangdai diányǐng* (Contemporary Cinema) 142, No. 1 (2008):15.

<sup>58</sup> Chris Berry, “A Nation T(W/O)O Chinese Cinema(S) and Nationhood(S),” in *Colonialism and Nationalism in Asian Cinema*, ed. Wimal Dissanayake (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 45-46.

<sup>59</sup> Zhang, Yingjin, *Chinese National Cinema* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 282.

<sup>60</sup> Personal experience: I still remember that all the students of my primary school walked to the cinema in town to watch *The Birth of the Nation* with tickets handed out by the teachers.

that the films were “supposed to reflect and publicise Party policy and its achievements”<sup>61</sup> was questioned by the people’s reluctance to participate voluntary viewing in the 1980s. One ticket seller notes that there were only thirteen customers at the premiere of one particular film in 1987.<sup>62</sup> Chris Berry indicates that the box-office fall-out in the 1980s might reflect “the broad masses were less desirous of education than the cadres assumed.”<sup>63</sup>

In the 1980s Mainland Chinese audiences enjoyed a much wider range of choices, discovering more appealing commercial films from Hong Kong and Taiwan. The ‘mainstream’ status of propaganda films was challenged by commercialisation and an artistic turn towards romance and martial arts/ kung fu genres. Chinese film journal *Contemporary Cinema* revealed that from 1986 to 1988, the top-ranking films had been martial art films, followed by comedies and police stories. In 1993, compared to previous year, film production decreased by fifty percent, the number of audience decreased to forty percent.<sup>64</sup> Such a dramatic financial loss urged the state-owned film industry to reform. Meanwhile, although the political turmoil in 1989 forced the central authorities of Mainland China to strengthen their authoritarian control of social discourses, since the early 1990s, Chinese government had endeavoured to divert the social discourse to economic reforms and to improve people’s living standards. In 1992, at its 14<sup>th</sup> National Congress, the Chinese Communist Party outlined its detailed plan for nationwide market economy; from 1993, in the film industry, the monopoly of the Chinese Film Corporation was dissolved and gradual commercialisation of the film market was initiated.

---

<sup>61</sup> Chris Berry, “Market Forces: China’s ‘Fifth Generation’ Forces the Bottom Line,” in *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema*, ed. Chris Berry, 115-116.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 116

<sup>64</sup> Statics are from Ding, Yaping, *Yingxiang Shidai: Zhongguo Dianying Jianshi* (A Brief History of Chinese Cinema) (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 2008), 267.

As part of this reform towards market orientation, from the second half of the 1990s, leitmotiv filmmakers, in order to draw the Chinese audience back to leitmotiv cinema, employed a “brand name” strategy to achieve a celebrity effect by inviting megastars to join their film projects. Feng Xiaoning depicted Ning Jing<sup>65</sup> (宁静) in two films of his leitmotiv trilogy: *Red Valley* (*Hong he gu* 红河谷, 1997) and *A Lover’s Grief over the Yellow River* (*Huanghe juelian* 黄河绝恋, 1999). Ye Daying (叶大鹰) invited Leslie Cheung who was a superstar throughout Asia for his pop music and his acting, to play a underground revolutionary in the 1930s in *A Time to Remember* (*Hongse lianren* 红色恋人, 1999). Cheung is a legendary figure in both art house and commercial cinema, and his acting in *Farewell, My Concubine* (1993) and *Happy Together* (*Chunguang zhaxie* 春光乍泄, dir. Wong Kar Wai, 1997) are just two of the many apogees works of his life. These actors were not just well-known for their looks, but more importantly for their artistic charisma, whilst the directors obviously intended to strengthen the aesthetic tinge of their films.

The celebrity effect brought the leitmotiv films back into the limelight of Chinese cinema within the postmodern world that is dominated by the “Brand Name”<sup>66</sup> phenomenon. Celebrities, both male and female, play the role of seducers (that is, erotic objects to cater to the desire of the audience) in the postmodern popular cultural arena, enhancing the selling points of leitmotiv films.

However, the leitmotiv films as commodities since the 1990s should not be dismissed simply as a financial concern. The outdated practice of distributing free tickets revealed leitmotiv films as propaganda tools, not commodities, but commodities could be extremely

<sup>65</sup> Ning Jing is a famous actress in Mainland China. Her representative works include *In the Heat of the Sun* (阳光灿烂的日子, dir. Jiang Wen 姜文, 1994).

<sup>66</sup> Baudrillard, *Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 68.

effective means of propaganda. As objects for consumption, they indicate an even more powerful collective ideology than tendentious panegyrics in propaganda films.

According to Baudrillard, consumption is not simply presented as “generalized individual gratification,” but “as a social *destiny* affecting certain groups or social classes”.<sup>67</sup> In other words, consumption’s function is “*an immediately and totally collective one*,”<sup>68</sup> bonding the consumers with a collective identity. Thus, when the new type of leitmotiv films rekindled Chinese audiences’ interest, and they voluntarily returned to the leitmotiv cinema this time, all the “collective identities” permeating the leitmotiv films would exert into the consumers’ (audiences’) minds.

Therefore, the commercialisation of the leitmotiv films should be seen as a clever tactic to lure the audience back to the cinema to enjoy the film. Unlike the older generation who were often forced to watch propaganda films, they now can voluntarily walk into the cinema to see their idols. When they are enjoying the film, they are simultaneously exposed to the ‘collective identities’ that the directors work hard to promote. These ‘collective identities’ are packaged in a colour more favourable to the audience. The box office success of *The Knot* indicates that leitmotiv films now sell better in the market. Leitmotiv films as commodities are not simple strategies to popularise the leitmotiv films out of financial concern; their foremost function as propaganda pieces remain unchallenged, but, as popular commodities, the collective identities embodied also sell better.

### 3.5.2 Love Me Tender: the Tactics of Feminised Warrior

*The Knot* presents a feminine warrior as the leading role and as the desired object to seduce the audiences. However, the delineation of the feminine warrior can have little to do

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>68</sup> Baudrillard, *Consumer Society*, 78. Original italics.

with female power, but rather is a cunning narrative strategy to animate an official discourse, in this case, an extremely conservative patriarchal motif.

First of all, the feminisation of the male protagonist Chen Qiushui is achieved through different steps: first, he is impersonated by Chen Kun, an actor well-known for his feminine look and his portrayals of tender lovers, such as his roles as a handsome dandy in television series *The Story of a Noble Family* (*Jinfen shijia* 金粉世家, dir. Liu Guoquan and Li Dawei, 刘国权、李大为 2003) and a passionate lover in *Endless Love* (*Xin bu liao qing* 新不了情, dir. Derek Yee 尔东升, 2008). His feminine bearing and amorous nature become stereotypical emblems of his screen persona, whose role as a spectacle for visual pleasure fits with the preceding discussions of men as object of the gaze.

Additionally, Chen Qiushui is a man of tears. The film introduces him in the establishment sequence with a zoom-in shot of his melancholy face with tears in his eyes; when he is tortured by love-sickness as Wang Biyun's mother opposes his relationship with Wang, he is captured by the camera in medium shots in mournful depression; he is moved to tears when Wang walks to his village to meet him; he is driven to sobbing when he has to leave Wang and Taiwan because his involvement in the rebellion against the government in 1947 makes him a target of the police. Such melancholy expressions, tears, weeping and sobbing continue in the second half of the film when he meets another woman Wang Jindi in Mainland China. Tears become his stigma throughout the whole story.

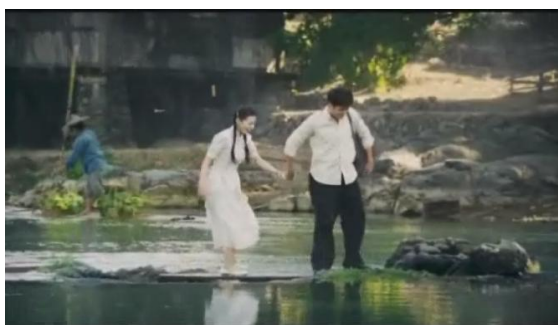
A third aspect of feminisation of this leitmotiv warrior is revealed in his scholarly charisma. He is still defined as a *warrior* because he devotes himself to fighting for democracy, for freedom and for a national course. He remains to serve in the army for the rest of his life. However, he is in no way a radical or masculine militant. Even though Chen is part of the rebel army that fights against the government, he is constantly depicted as a talented singer, a patient tutor, a tender lover who would gently wash his lover's hair (still 3-

5). In the second half of the film, he is a noble military doctor who saves life rather than taking lives.



Still 3-5

Such a sentimental, tearful but elegant and noble warrior not only wins the heart of two women in the films: Wang Biyun and Wang Jindi, but also woos the viewers with his lover charisma. The director further enhances the romantic atmosphere with the frequent use of warm, bright light and romantic images such as stream, ancient trees and wooden bridge. (still 3-6 and 3-7) Such a mise-en-scène has visually romanticised the characters and this blissful aroma around the male protagonist embellishes his magnetism to enthrall the audience. Consequently, the audiences who love this enchanting character would not find the official ideologies he embodies antipathetic.



Still 3- 6



Still 3-7

Romantic setting of *The Knot*

Director Yin Li cunningly uses the romantic warrior in his film to glorify an official hero, re-inventing a *feminine* gentleman as a reincarnation of Chinese officialdom. He accomplishes the connection between a beautiful young man with a lovable officialdom by basing his story on a semi-biography of the vice-president of National Committee of the

Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, so that the male protagonist is easily identified as the avatar of the officialdom. This approach undoubtedly enjoys endorsement and blessings from the government, which is proven by the attendance of officials and their speeches dedicated to this film at its premiere.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.5.3 To Unmask the Feminised Warrior

Although the feminisation of the male protagonist in *The Knot* to some extent reflects the commercialisation of leitmotiv films, such a feminisation strategy works as a self-defence act of Communist China which is constantly stigmatised as a one-party autocracy. In view of its tormented political struggles in the past few decades, with the Cultural Revolution and the Tian'anmen Square Incident<sup>70</sup> as two periods of a stigmatic "dark age", the regime is constantly stereotyped as an intimidating masculinised state.

The scholarly, refined disposition of Chen Qiushui serves to de-militarise the representation of Mainland China. Chen's tearful persona resonates with Maurizia Boscagli's critique of "masculine tears". She points out that a melodramatic depiction of male emotions valorises "what is culturally coded as feminine" so as to redefine masculinity, and "their transgression of gender roles, together with the particularity of male tears, is universalized as 'humanity' and deployed to reinstate an aura of authenticity for the subject."<sup>71</sup> Director Yin Li lavishes feminine elements, including vulnerable tears and passive waiting, on to the characterisation of the male warrior in *The Knot*, highlighting the "humanity" aura of the male protagonist. With this feminisation in 'form', the director paves the path to promoting an extremely conservative masculine motif.

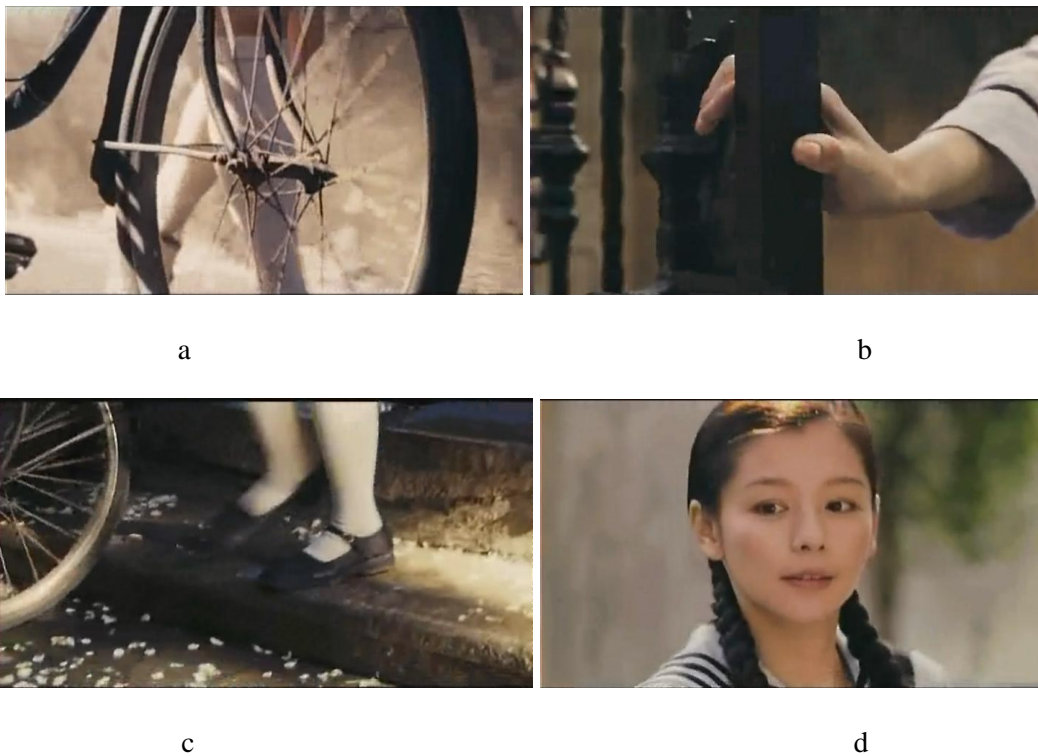
<sup>69</sup> *The Knot*, dir. Yin Li, 117min, 2006, DVD special features.

<sup>70</sup> 2009 is the 20th anniversary of this Incident; *Time* magazine published articles commemorating this incident and continues to criticise China for its atrocity. Adi Ignatius, "A Chinese Reality", *Time*, (June 26- July 2009): 56-59.

<sup>71</sup> Maurizia Boscagli, "A Moving Story: Masculine Tears and the Humanity of Televised Emotions," *Discourse* 15.2, (winter 1992-93):74.



First of all, the cinematographic tactics expose the masculine tone of his film. While it is true that both the male and female protagonists cannot escape from being objectified by the gaze from the audience, the gaze within the diegesis of *The Knot* is conspicuously directed to male desire. In the frames that introduce Chen's first love Wang Biyun, her image (therefore the image of the actress Vivian Hsu) is fragmented by the camera: a low angle shot of her legs is followed by a shot of her hand pushing the gate, then cut to another shot of her legs before moving to a medium shot of her shoulders and innocent face beaming in warm sunshine (still sequence 3-8a-d). As Mulvey argues, such a female image "is a perfect product, whose body, stylised and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look."<sup>72</sup>



Still sequence 3-8 The fragmentation of the female protagonist

When Biyun comes to Chen's village for the first time, Chen meets her under an ancient tree. It is Chen's point-of-view shot that introduces the image of Biyun, while there is no parallel point-of-view shot from the angle of Biyun. Biyun is covered by mud on her way

<sup>72</sup> Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and narrative cinema", 43.

walking to the village; Chen's mother helps her freshen up. At this particular scene, a tilt shot displays Biyun's body from toes to head (she is wrapped in quilt), whereas Chen is standing outside the room, suggesting a scopophilic pleasure of the male spectator. Later that night when they are engaged in a romantic reunion, it is once again Chen's Point-of-view shot that reveals Biyun in Chinese traditional clothes. More cunningly, when Chen utters "let me have a good look at you", Biyun closes her eyes, relinquishing her gaze back to Chen, thus denying a female gaze within the film narrative. (Still 3-9)



Still 3-9: Chen's POV of Wang Biyun who avoids returning her gaze

Secondly, not only does the cinematography expose the male-centred motif of this film, the design of the characters also follows a typical masculine motif, lodging a patriarchal classification of the masculine/feminine dichotomy on the identities of the characters.

According to Jean Bethke Elshtain, a conventional male-centred discourse on war

...assumes an affinity between women and peace, between men and war....  
Thus, ... men and women – locked in a dense symbiosis, perceived as beings who have complementary needs and exemplify gender-specific virtues – take on, in cultural memory and narrative, the personas of Just Warriors and Beautiful Souls.<sup>73</sup>

During a conversation with Biyun, Chen defines himself as a warrior, "I am what Lun Xun<sup>74</sup> described as... a rebel, a brave fighter." Undauntedly, he undertakes the mission of "to

<sup>73</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 4.

<sup>74</sup> Lu Xun (25 September 1881- 19 October 1936) was a prominent writer and critic in twentieth-century China as the titular head of the Left-Wing writers in 1930s China. His works exert exceptional influence in the

make more people live a life with more dignity.” His feminised appearance – his sentimentality, his emotional breakdowns and his vulnerable tears—does not obscure his virility. He does not only participate in the rebellion against the government when he is in Taiwan, he joins the army again to defend the country when he is Mainland China. He volunteers to garrison the most difficult outpost in Tibet; he thus constantly proves himself to be a brave fighter.

In contrast, the director depicts Biyun as a conservative, narrow-minded and naïve girl in terms of public duties. When she learns of Chen’s involvements in underground activities, she reacts in an innocent but somewhat indifferent way, “Left and right for me are just names. I don’t care about politics. What I look for is a peaceful life that I can call my own.” She is a beautiful angel nailed to the domestic place, confined to her role as conventional “Beautiful Soul.” She keeps her chastity by spending her life as a spinster, playing the role of filial daughter-in-law to take care of her lover Chen’s mother. Even though she is not a direct victim on the war front, her determined loyalty to her lover fulfils one of the two women stereotypes discussed above: she spends her whole life waiting for a man to rescue her, in this case, not from death, but from the agony of love.

Another woman protagonist in the film, Wang Jindi, emerges first of all as a typical patriotic woman warrior loyal to her Father Nation. Nevertheless, she embodies a sense of girl power because she actively pursues the male protagonist. Superficially speaking, she ‘gets what she wants’ at the end by marrying Chen. However, the portrayal of her girl power is not as straightforward as it seems. She changes her name to “Wang Biyun”, the name of the male protagonist’s first love. Her wedding vow is that she would take good care of Chen until he meets with his first love again. She voluntarily plays the role of the shadow of Chen’s first love and continues the myth of woman as “Beautiful Soul”. From Chen’s perspective, he

---

history of Chinese literature and is reneved as an iconic figure. He was a versatile writer - *Call to Arms* (呐喊, 1923) and *Wondering* (彷徨, 1925) are two of his well-known collections.

---

wins the love of two women, and his second woman Wang Jindi serves more as a reward and comfort for him rather than a role model of female identification.

The plot of *The Knot* follows the conventional narrative in which the woman is immobile in waiting while the warrior sails away. The film leader ushers in a scene of a furious ocean in a stormy night, followed by a shot of a ramshackle boat sailing against the rough waves, on which a melancholy young man is setting off to a journey. The film closes with a solemn visit to this warrior's tomb, when a crane shot zooms out to a satellite map of China.<sup>75</sup> Such a structure formulates an epic of a warrior, a national hero, a legend of a perfect man.

### 3.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has examined feminised warriors' role as lovers, recognising a female subjectivity on the one hand, and discerning a feminised form of masculinity on the other. Feminisation is no longer identified with inferiority or disempowerment, but rather as a strategy for both women and men. Women endeavour to search for their subjectivity without relinquishing their feminine tributes, which are embodied in the female protagonists in *A Chinese Tall Story* and *An Empress and the Warriors*, while men adopt feminine factors to be New Good Men, embodied in the characters of Sanzang, Duan and Chen Qiushui in the above selected films, who harbour an incurable infatuation towards the female protagonists and are willing to sacrifice themselves for the women they love.

Such imagery of feminised New Good Men on the one hand reflects a growing demand for romantic heroes among the female audience whose expanding financial status has caught the attention of film practitioners; on the other hand, as macho masculinity has lost its high esteem in a postmodern society that disfavours violence and prefers peace, a feminised

---

<sup>75</sup> This map shows Taiwan and Mainland China as an integrated unity, indicating a wish for re-unification.

---

form of masculinity based on love and compassion is proven a wise choice as a new male identity.

However, such feminised men are nothing new at all in the Chinese context, because China has accepted femininity in men in its long history of Confucianism and Taoism. The feminine, soft and retreating side of Chinese masculinity reflects the fact that the Chinese people have been immersed in a philosophical mentality of identifying themselves as the weaker party. They constantly seduce the strong with their love, their gentleness and soft power.

Cunningly, femininity in men is not necessary equal to the acknowledgement of female power and subjectivity, but rather, a discourse of femininity is equally interwoven into the formation of masculinity to promote male-centred motifs, which is revealed in the officially promoted leitmotiv film *The Knot*.

A discourse of feminine power and a discourse of masculine motifs are both actually above gender delineation; they can be manipulated or mastered by men or women for their own sake. The discourse of feminine power is a favourite choice nowadays because the postmodern consumer society has prepared a favourite platform for it to come back from hibernation.

## Chapter Four

### The Flag of the Fathers

#### The Feminisation of Our Father(ly) Warriors

#### 4.1 Introduction

##### 4.1.1 Family Romance: The Flag of our Fathers<sup>1</sup>

Chapter Two dealt with the son images with most *yin*/feminine/disempowered positions (*yin*/feminised in comparison to father, the elder and the nation), to understand the implication of their obvious feminisation. Chapter Three dealt with lover warriors from their *yang*/masculine status in heterosexual romance, to discuss how their *yang*/masculine status is feminised as girl power is on the rise. This chapter will focus on the father warriors and surrogate father figures. The father is a sacred role in patriarchal society, who enjoys much more power than the warrior as lover. If he is also feminised, this can be very difficult to be identified.

It is out of the scope of this research to explore extensively the transfiguration of the representation of the fathers in Chinese cinema history. Nevertheless, in retrospect, the past three decades since the new wave movements in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in the 1980s<sup>2</sup> have demonstrated that a revolution from a son-centred discourse to father-centred reconfirmation has taken place.

Looking back to the 1980s Mainland Chinese cinema, Sheldon Lu remarks:

---

<sup>1</sup> I was thinking in the Chinese term *fubei de qizhi* (父辈的旗帜) when I tried to think of a title for this chapter, I realised the Clint Eastwood has made a historical epic with this name in 2006. In 2008, a television series with the same name was also released in CCTV in China. This research acknowledges the existence of these film and television productions, but they will not be used in the analysis in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'New Wave' is commonly used in the criticism of Hong Kong and Taiwan cinema in the 1980s, but it has never been used in Mainland China, where the descriptions often refer to generational division. Both the Fourth and the Fifth generations have produced significant works in the 1980s. Chapter Two has provided detailed analyses of the 1980s Chinese language film industries of these three regions.

[b]oth domestic and international audiences of the New Chinese cinema are familiar with how the Chinese father has been represented on-screen. Very much a ridiculed or hated figure, the father is often used to stand for patriarchy, feudalism, political oppression, and dysfunctional masculinity.<sup>3</sup>

The fifth generation filmmakers such as Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige are representatives of this son discourse, as Dai Jinhua observes, “[t]he art of the Fifth Generation is the art of the Sons.”<sup>4</sup> Sheldon Lu wittily points out, “their art is characterized by a search for origins, beginnings, foundations, in other words, fathers. At the same time, it is necessary to slay the fathers and ancestors in order to stage their own appearance.”<sup>5</sup> Zhang’s red trilogy (*Red Sorghum*, *Ju Dou* [1990] and *Raise of the Red Lanterns* [1991]) are classic representatives of this son discourse, in which patricide is often a significant theme. What they do is to clear up the residues of the tyrannical disorder and to re-establish a new order, while this new order is still recognised as a patriarchy.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, Hong Kong cinema in the 1980s was dominated by the virility of the sons. Jackie Chan’s rise as a new cultural icon reflects the vitality of a younger generation. Even though he still needs paternal guidance at times, such as the enlightenment by his master Su Qi’er (苏乞儿 played by Siu Tien Yuen[Yuan Xiaotian]袁啸天) in *Drunken Master* (dir. Woo Ping Yuen, 1978), he but not the fatherly figure is the centre of his films. Furthermore, many critics identify the 1980s Hong Kong cinema to be dominated by brotherhood rather than fatherhood. For example, Nick Browne remarks, during the 1980s,

<sup>3</sup> Lu, *Chinese Modernity and Global Biopolitics*, 140. Lu is of course deliberately use the Oedipal Complex here to understand these films. For a detailed example of the Oedipal Complex in Chinese cinema, see Sheldon H. Lu, “National Cinema, Cultural Critique, Transnational Capital: the Films of Zhang Yimou,” in *Transnational Chinese Cinema: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*, ed. Sheldon H. Lu.

<sup>4</sup> Dai, Jinhua, *Cinema and Desire: Feminist Marxism and Cultural Politics in the Works of Dai Jinhua*, trans. and ed. Jing Wang and Tani E. Barrows (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 14.

<sup>5</sup> Lu, “National Cinema, Cultural Critique, Transnational Capital”, 112.

<sup>6</sup> The simultaneous killing of and searching for the Father are best demonstrated in Zhang Yimou’s *Red Sorghum*, a story about one man’s “grandpa” and “grandma”. “Grandpa” is a sedan-bearer who is ordered to send “grandma” to her future husband – a leper who owns a winery, but “grandpa” kills the leper, which symbolises an act of parricide, and assumes the role of “grandma”’s husband and the new master of the winery, which is an allegory of a new patriarchy.

traditional Chinese patriarchal social structure and its associated ethical culture have been nearly liquidated. The familial order has been replaced or put in abeyance by a new, largely masculine culture of corporate brotherhood.<sup>7</sup>

Another critic Li Cheuk-to also indicates a transformation “in the paradigm of Hong Kong cinema – from father to friend, from family ethics to a code of brotherhood”.<sup>8</sup> John Woo’s *A Better Tomorrow* series, analysed in Chapter One, are emblems of these brotherhood ethics.

Taiwan new wave cinema might not exude such dynamism of the younger generation, yet its avant-garde members such as Hou Hsiao-hsien and Edward Yang often deliver their ideas from the sons’ perspective. Hou depicts in *A Time to Live, a Time to Die* a boy witnessing the death of his father, mother and grandmother. These deaths of the older generations imply the end of one era and the beginning of a new one with the young men at the centre, no matter whether the new era is a dark or bright one.

Such a retrospective review of the New Wave Cinema in all three regions that are the geographical spheres of this research demonstrates a common discursive feature: the son’s discourse in the 1980s questions the order of the Father. Filmmakers in this period therefore often create vital son and daughter characters to challenge and even intimidate the paternal gaze.

However, in the past ten years, affirmation of the authority of a heroic patriarch has become a favourite theme in Chinese language films in *liang’an san di* (i.e. Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China); therefore, I identify these ten years as ‘the decade of the Father’. Since coproduction has become a common practice between the three regions, some outstanding coproduction works are picked up here to illustrate this. In *Rob-B-Hood* (*Baobei jihua* 宝贝计划, dir. Benny Chan, 2006), a coproduction by Emperor Motion Pictures (Hong

<sup>7</sup> Nick Browne, “Introduction,” in *New Chinese Cinema: Forms, Identities, Politics*, eds. Nick Browne, Paul G. Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack and Esther Yau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2005, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Li Cheuk-to, “The Return of the Father”: Hong Kong New Wave and Its Chinese Context in the 1980s,” in *New Chinese Cinema: Forms, Identities, Politics* (see note 7 above), 177.



Kong), JCE Movie (Jackie Chan's production company) and Huayi Brothers (Mainland), Jackie Chan plays the role of a compulsive gambler and burglar, but during his involvement in kidnapping a tycoon's grandson, he is utterly overwhelmed by the innocence and cuteness of the infant. Instead of asking for ransom, he busies himself with nappy changing, bottle-feeding and cloying lullabies.

Another biographical epic *Ip Man* (*Ye Wen* 叶问) coproduced by Time Antaeus Media Group (Mainland) and Mandarin Films Distribution Co. (Hong Kong) and directed by Wilson Yip (Ye Weixin 叶伟信), who invited Donnie Yen to play the martial arts grandmaster Ip Man. Director Yip constructs Ip as an exceptional martial artist, courageous nationalist, genteel gentleman, caring husband and last but not least, amiable father. In other words, Ip embodies a perfect male icon and faultless masculinity. This film has proven extremely popular and highly acclaimed in various groups: it was awarded the Best Film in Hong Kong Film Award in 2009; in 2009 Beijing Student Film Festival, director Yip was chosen as the "favourite director" in the Student's Choice Award and Donnie Yen who plays Ip Man was awarded "Best Actor" in the Jury Award. The film proved so successful that both a sequel and a prequel were produced in 2010<sup>9</sup>.

In many other films, the central theme might not be fatherhood, but paternal elements are often explicit or implicit supplements. Zhang Yimou's 2002 action fantasy *Hero* is an example, centring on an imaginary assassination of the tyrannical emperor Qin Shihuang in the Qin Dynasty, while at the end Zhang justifies Qin's survival by indicating that he is a symbolic father who ensures the country's unity. While this chapter was being drafted, an action drama *Overheard* (*Qieting Fengyun* 窃听风云, dir. Alan Mak [Mai Zhaohui] 麦兆辉 and Felix Chong [Zhuang Wenqiang] 庄文强, 2009), coproduced by Sil-Metropole

---

<sup>9</sup> The sequel *Ip Man 2* is also directed by Wilson Yip with the same main cast. The Prequel *The Legend Is Born: Ip Man* (叶问前传) is directed by Herman Yau (邱礼涛), with Dennis To (杜宇航) as Ip Man.

Organisation (Hong Kong), Polybona Entertainment (Mainland China) and other production companies, was released in New Zealand. It is a sophisticated story about male bonding, revenge and love, but the directors do not ignore the significance of man as father, describing one male protagonist played by Louie Koo (Gu Tianle 古天乐) as a self-sacrificing father who infringes the law in order to make money to pay for exorbitant medical bills to save his dying son.

The list of honourable patriarch icons in Chinese language films in the past decade could continue at length, reflecting a dominant theme in the Chinese cultural arena: the reconstruction of the patriarchy. Since this research concentrates on warrior images, the examples selected are mainly limited to the action genre.<sup>10</sup> Even though Father figures are still occasionally portrayed as stereotyped malicious sources of repression, such as *The Curse of the Golden Flower* (dir. Zhang Yimou, 2006), a noticeable feature is that a father-centred discourse based on the reaffirmation of the order of the Father is gaining momentum, and father images are produced to attract a son/daughter gaze.

The sons in Chapter Two represent new ‘filial sons’ but not the Oedipal son haunted by the patricide complex. Both *A Battle of Wits* and *Playboy Cops* discussed in Chapter Two end with a re-affirmation of the Father: when the father is demoniac, he would be replaced by a new lenient father as in the case of *A Battle of Wits*; when the father is protective, the son willingly returns to infantilisation to indulge himself under the protection of the Father, as in the case of *Playboy Cops*. Both these obedient sons and Oedipal sons of the 1980s do share

---

<sup>10</sup> Other genres are also imbued with extraordinary father(ly) icons. Stephen Chow, who is a godfather figure in the genre of carnivalesque *wu-lei-tou* (nonsense) films which often parody social hierarchy and make fun of official ideologies in Hong Kong cinema, depicts himself as a deprived but diligent and dignified father who exhausts himself to support his son in his science-fictional epic *CJ 7* (长江 7 号). Taiwanese director Wei Te-Sheng (魏德圣), in his highly-acclaimed works *Cave No. 7* (海角 7 号, 2008), which was awarded “outstanding Taiwanese film of the year” at 2008 Golden Horse Award, depicts a considerate surrogate father for the young male protagonist Aga.

one thing in common: the Symbolic Order governed by the Name of the Father<sup>11</sup> remains in power, only that the Oedipal sons keep that order by usurping the throne of the father, while the obedient sons prolong their status as sons. The Symbolic order does not just refer to a gender aspect, but should also include race, class, religious and other social reality, in which a father figure is often used as a metaphor of the law and order. Various critics have further elaborated the ineluctability of this symbolic order. Fredric Jameson argues that the individual subject cannot escape from this symbolic order and therefore “invents a ‘lived’ relationship with the collective systems which otherwise by definition exclude him insofar as he or she is born into a pre-existent social form and its pre-existent language.”<sup>12</sup> That is to say, the son-centred discourse might idolise the son warrior, while the father discourse glorifies the father image, but the symbolic order of the patriarch (the father-son dyad) is reserved, which is identified as “the discourse of the circuit” by Lacan:

It is the discourse of the circuit in which I am integrated. I am one of its links. It is the discourse of my father, for instance, in so far as my father made mistakes which I am condemned to reproduce....I am condemned to reproduce them because I am obliged to pick up again the discourse he bequeathed to me, not simply because I am his son, but because one can't stop the chain of discourse, and it is precisely my duty to transmit it in its aberrant form to someone else.<sup>13</sup>

However, this circuit of discourse does not deny a local context. Even though these examples above with a common theme of father heroes are all coproductions between Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, it does not mean that regional distinction formed out of their unique socio-political context is insignificant. The following sections will be devoted to elaborate how the symbolic order of the Father is reserved within multifaceted

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Lacan, “On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis”, in *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink (London and New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> Fredric Jameson, “Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan: Marxism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, and the Problem of the Subject,” *Yale French Studies*, No.55/56, Literature and Psychoanalysis (1977), 394.

<sup>13</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 89.

father images and their regional colours, with the following three Films as examples: *The Incredible Special Agent* (aka *Spy Dad* dir. Wong Jing, 2003), *Assembly* (dir. Feng Xiaogang, 2007) and *Run Papa Run* (dir. Sylvia Chang, 2008).

The selection of these three films was roughly based on an idea of regional difference: Wong Jing is a Hong-Kong-based director and his *Spy Dad* is a typical Hong Kong comedy; Feng Xiaogang is a Mainland-based artist, with *Assembly* as a story questioning the Mainland historical narratives. The most difficult choice is a Taiwan example. The last chosen film *Run Papa Run* is not a story about Taiwan, although Sylvia Chang is a Taiwan-born director. No appropriate examples of Taiwanese father heroes could be found until I finished writing this chapter. Among those new releases, such as *Monga* (*Mengjia* 艋舺, dir. Doze Niu Cheng-tse, 紐承澤 2010),<sup>14</sup> the painful experience of the lack of a father is often one highlighted theme; this theme and the father complex in Taiwan will be discussed further in the next chapter through the story of gangster brotherhood.

The selection of *Run Papa Run* is appropriate in the sense that Sylvia Chang deals with the lack of a father in the social psyche of Taiwan by telling a story of a father elsewhere. In addition, she invited one hundred fathers to attend this film's premiere in Taiwan, making it a significant affair of Taiwan fatherhood.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, her telling a Hong Kong story as a Taiwan director does not stir up any concern, but she has to deal with censorship barriers when she approaches the Mainland market. These different experiences of

<sup>14</sup> It is a gangster drama set in the 1980s with a poetic tint and nostalgic tone, about five blood-brothers (Monk, Mosquito and three other) forming the Gang of Prince and enjoying their freedom in the streets of Monga. After they kill the cousin of the head of their rival gang, things start to run wild. The dark secrets about their father generation have been leaked out, in which the father of one of the five young gangsters had been crippled by the father of his closest buddy in his gang. This cruel fact tears the five blood-brothers apart. With the encroaching of the mainlander gang, Monga tumbles into more chaos and the story ends with death of Monk.

<sup>15</sup> "Dianying yige hao baba teyinghui" ( "Run Papa Run: Taiwan Premiere." ), accessed 21 January 2011, <http://6.cn/watch/4553691.html>

her film made it an appropriate example for looking at the commonality between Taiwan and Hong Kong and their common problems with the Mainland.

*Spy Dad* embodies two consistent connotations of feminisation analysed so far: the objectification of the male body and his feminine personality. The father, the sacred image in the patriarchal order, unavoidably becomes a spectacle as soon as he is presented on the screen. However, director Wong Jing rescues the spectaculised father from disempowerment by packaging the feminisation of the father in a carnivalesque comedy. This film will be analysed with Bakhtin's theory on carnival in which he argues the carnival allows people to break the rules temporarily but the ultimate purpose is to re-solidify them.

Then *Assembly* is taken as a counter-example of these feminisation connotations, with an emphasis on masculine ethos. However, the Foucauldian correlation between discipline and body may be used, in which even the toughest warrior is under the surveillance of an authoritarian gaze that has a disciplinary power over the hero's body. The director of *Assembly* might exert himself to eradicate the 'danger' of the male body for an erotic gaze, uplifting the masculine imagery by introducing invincible heroes, but they are still feminised by an authoritarian gaze.

In addition, this authoritarian gaze transcends gender gazes, superintending the film censorship, with *Run Papa Run* as an example. Even though this film should be regarded as a film directed by a woman for women on the ground that it depicts 'what women want in a man' from three aspects: the male hero is converted by three most important women in his life – his mother, wife and daughter, an authoritarian gaze manifests itself in supervising the release of this film. Sylvia Chang had to modify her film title in order to pass the Mainland Chinese censorship. Additionally, with male involvement in the production, the claim that *Run Papa Run* is a 'film directed by a woman for women' becomes questionable. One

question remains: with the authoritarian gaze peeping on, to what extent can a woman director really make a film about what women want?

#### 4.1.2 Film synopsis

*Spy Dad* is a parody comedy by a director renowned for his talents in parody comedies, depicting a father Jimmy Bong<sup>16</sup> (詹二邦, played by Tony Leung Ka Fai [Liang Jiahui] 梁家辉) who is a glamorous actor well-known for his personification of invincible warriors, such as the James-Bond clone, but a hopeless coward off screen. His wife divorces him because of his infirmity and he is struggling to win the true respect of his two daughters. The situation becomes complicated when an Interpol agent Tit Nam (铁男, literally means 'iron man', played by Jordon Chan) wanders into his house during his mission of tracking down a terrorist organisation which plans to blackmail the government with a fatal virus created by an eerie scientist. However, the Interpol agent is infected by the virus and his intelligence regresses to a three-year old child. Bong manages to babysit the Interpol agent and summon up his courage to fight the terrorists, transforming himself from a cowardly father and husband to an intimidating warrior.

*Assembly* is a war epic devoted to honouring the soldiers who sacrificed themselves during Chinese Civil War (1945-1949), directed by prominent Mainland director Feng Xiaogang. In one decisive military campaign – the Huaihai Campaign – in 1948, Guzidi (谷子地, played by Zhang Hanyu 张涵宇), Captain of the Ninth Company infantry, together with forty-seven soldiers, is assigned to defend a coal mine until they hear the assembly bugle signal for retreat. However, the bugle call never comes, and his forty-seven soldiers die one after another. He buries all his fellow soldiers in the mine before he faints in the battlefields.

---

<sup>16</sup> Cantonese pronunciation is adopted for the character names in *Spy Dad* to emphasise their Hong Kong features.

As the sole survivor, Guzidi sadly finds that neither his nor the dead soldiers' identities are recognised. He spends the rest of his life striving to solve the mystery of the bugle call and to achieve recognition for his honourable soldiers. The ugly truth of this scenario is that the authority that gives out this order intends to *utilise* Guzidi and his soldiers to secure their own retreat, cruelly abandoning them to wait for a bugle that would never be sounded.

*Run Papa Run* is a combination of gangster genre and family drama. A fearless and self-indulgent triad leader Lee Tin-yan (Li Tian'en 李天恩, played by Louis Koo) marries his girlfriend Mabel Chan (Chen Meibao 陈美宝 played by Rene Liu [Liu Ruoying] 刘若英) reluctantly after she gets pregnant. In order to bring up their daughter in a normal and healthy environment, Lee desperately tries to hide his triad life style and identity from his daughter. His nagging mother, beautiful wife and adorable daughter gradually transform him into a family man.

## 4.2 In Search of a Father: *Spy Dad* and Hong Kong

### 4.2.1 During the Carnival: Feminise Daddy to the Full

In view of both aesthetic and commercial values, *Spy Dad* was a complete failure, which is mocked as a "Classical flop"<sup>17</sup> by some audiences; however, this film is chosen for discussion for three reasons. First, its father figure is a typical feminised warrior that is a lynchpin of this research. Secondly, in spite of its poor quality, it represents an important filmic tradition – the carnivalesque parody comedy – in Hong Kong cinema and its director Wong Jing is still recognised as one of the leaders at least of the Hong Kong film industry, even though the myth of his box office appeal is far less dazzling than his golden days in the

---

<sup>17</sup> "Shenyong tie jingang: lanpian dianfan" ("*Spy Dad*: The Icon of the Flop")  
<http://www.babeijiu.com/babeijiu51/1411/31855372a.htm>, accessed 16 September, 2009.

1980s and 1990s.<sup>18</sup> Thirdly, a film with meagre box-office and poor quality could equally expose as many issues as successful blockbusters.

Putting aside the quality issue, *Spy Dad* is a typical Hong Kong parody comedy with carnivalesque spirits. The carnivalesque spirits, according to Mikhail Bakhtin,

were sharply distinct from serious official, ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonials. They offered a completely *different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect* of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life *outside of officialdom*...<sup>19</sup>

The carnival allows the people for a time to enter “the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance.”<sup>20</sup> Considering Hong Kong’s colonial experience and its voiceless status in the political negotiations between Britain and Mainland China, it is not difficult to see the popularity of these parody comedies in Hong Kong as wishful dreams for a different world outside officialdom.

As a film released in October 2003, Wong’s hilarious jokes in the film, such as a coward young man pretending to be a statute in order to hide from the villains chasing him, led the Hong Kong audience to enter the carnival-spirited “utopian realm of community”, but in reality Hong Kong was ‘a city of sadness’ during the first half of 2003. The SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) epidemic struck Hong Kong in March. The virus threat depicted in the film uncannily refers to the SARS virus disaster. In April, the suicide of pop icon Leslie Cheung augmented the feelings of sadness. Hong Kong had not recovered from the 1997 financial crisis, with shops being closed down and its unemployment rate remaining high. It was estimated that the unemployment rate among young people was as high as thirty

<sup>18</sup> De, Mi, “Yige zitou de dansheng: xianggang daoyan 10 nian fushihui.” (“Portrait of Directors”), *Dianying shijie (Movie World)*. No.13/14. (2007): 67

<sup>19</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 5-6. Italics mine.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 9.



percent in 2003.<sup>21</sup> Wong Jing has attempted to bring comfort to his Hong Kong audience by depicting blessing happiness and optimism, especially the effortless transformation of the wimpy father to a dragon warrior: he miraculously becomes an invincible martial art master, imitating Bruce Lee's (the little dragon) gesture and movement, defeating the villains with Bruce Lee style high kicks.

This film is more than a pain reliever. A carnival, according to Bakhtin, "celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions."<sup>22</sup> Wong Jing suspends the hierarchal rank and privileges the fathers normally enjoy to depict a feminised father, but toward the end of his film, he will restore the "established order" to a conservative patriarchy, which will be dealt with in the next subsection. He temporarily liberates his film characters from the established order of the father by designing Bong as an object for the gaze. Bong in *Spy Dad* is best known for his mimicry of legendary screen warriors, such as James Bond in the 007 series and Neo in the *Matrix* series. His Cantonese name in the film, Jim Yih Bong (詹二邦), is a counterfeit name of James Bond, because the latter is translated as Jim Si Bong (詹士邦) in Cantonese.

As Bong becoming a glamorous spectacle in the film and the actor Tony Leung who plays the role of Bong becomes a spectacle for the audience, the male image becomes a spectacle both on- and off-screen. Bong's assistant played by Teresa Mo (Mao Shunjun 毛舜筠) has constantly revealed her sexual desire for Bong. Even though such a desire is dealt with in a hilarious way, the male protagonist in the film unavoidably becomes a sexual object. Guy Debord, who inspired many contemporary theorists, including the pivotal philosopher

<sup>21</sup> "2003 nian dashi huigu", ( "A Retrospection of the Major Events of 2003"), *Youtube*, accessed 22 January 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rf1eIKV2vYY&feature=related>

<sup>22</sup> Bakhtin, 10.

who inspires the present project, Baudrillard, has argued that our society has become one consisting of spectacles: “THE WHOLE LIFE of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation.”<sup>23</sup>

Secondly, director Wong Jing further suspends the father privileges by caricaturing Bong as a limp-wristed wimp. Even though Bong in the film is nicknamed “iron man” for his public mien and screen persona, off-screen he is known as pusillanimous and spineless, constantly ridiculed for his cowardice throughout the film. He faints when he encounters two burglars hiding in his house; that is why his wife is sick of his pathetic behaviour and divorces him. His daughter Cream (played by Gillian Chung [Zhong Xintong] 钟欣桐) is bullied by a girl gangster at school. Bong tries to reason with the girl’s father, but as soon as the man gesticulates with his tough fist, Bong calls off the negotiation in fear. Bong and his wife are imprisoned by a group of terrorists who intend to blackmail the government with some new viruses. When Bong and his wife manage to escape from the terrorists’ prison, his wife urges him to fight; he returns within a few seconds, mumbling fearfully, “it is too dark outside.”

Wong Jing not only depicts Bong as a feminised father through highlighting his faint-hearted personality, but also deliberately portrays two other male characters who misrecognise Bong as “mother”. Bong’s brother-in-law Kwan Yan<sup>24</sup> (关仁, played by Chapman To [Du Wenze] 杜汶泽) is accidentally injected with a virus that causes amnesia at an accidental encounter with the terrorists. Because of his amnesia, he starts to behave in bizarre manners and misrecognises Bong as “mother”. The Interpol agent Tit Nam is infected

<sup>23</sup> Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994. Reprint, seventh printing 2002), 12. Original Capitalisation and italics.

<sup>24</sup> This name is written as *Guan Ren* in Pin yin and also implicitly refers to the God of War Guan Yu, the masculine ideal in Chinese culture.

by the virus he has taken from the hands of the terrorists and his IQ deteriorates to that of a three year-old child who has not been weaned. He keeps calling Bong “mum” as if he cannot tell the difference between mother and father, while Bong ‘naturally’ responds in a pretended voice.

The director introduces all these feminised traits in a teasing, hilarious, bizarre and carnivalesque tone. As a carnival “offered a ... nonofficial ... aspect of the world, of man and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom”<sup>25</sup>, Wong Jing offers the feminised father as a different image “outside officialdom”. It temporally suspends the sacredness of the patriarchy, permitting the father to be teased, ridiculed, and laughed at, whilst normally such ‘humiliation’ of the father is not allowed in the orthodox patriarchal hierarchy.

#### **4.2.2 After the Carnival: A Dragon Dad Holding Back the Dragon Ladies**

While the father is feminised in the carnival, the women are masculinised and sexualised. Dragon ladies and sexual kittens are given some space in the film. As in a carnival, everything returns to ‘normal’ once the carnival ends, director Wong Jing quickly restores his vision of a ‘normal’ order at the ending of this film. When one interviewer asked director Wong Jing what kind of breakthrough he has made in this film, Wong emphasised that his *Spy Dad* is by no means merely a carnivalesque comedy, and that he has added some familial sentimentalism, with a benign father at the centre.<sup>26</sup> His strong defence of the patriarchy is reflected in his hasty restoration of a dragon dad. No matter how feeble the father is, toward the end of the film when the ‘carnival’ is about to finish, director Wong

---

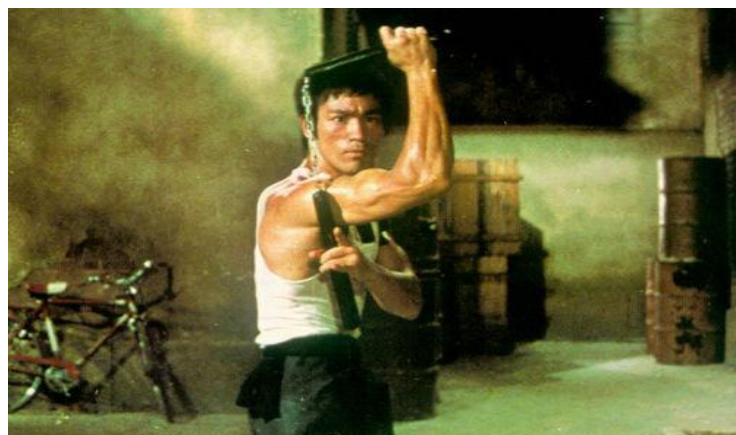
<sup>25</sup> Bakhtin, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Sun, Yuan, “Wang Jing xinzuo shenyong tiejingang: guochan gaoxiao ban 007” (“Wong Jing’s Latest Film *Spy Dad*: A 007 Parody”), accessed 7 October 2009, <http://www.people.com.cn/BIG5/yule/1080/2138903.html>

reasserts a patriarchal order by remasculinising Bong into a Bruce Lee clone (Still 4-1<sup>27</sup> in comparison with Still 4-2). He restores his patriarchal privilege by defeating the terrorists with his kung fu intuition. Director Wong generates a myth here that a Bruce Lee or a tough guy spirit is hibernating in every ordinary Chinese man who only needs to wake him up in emergency. This restoration of the father after the carnival assures the stabilisation of the normal social order, as Bakhtin argues that after the feast, it “asserted all that was stable, unchanging, perennial: the existing hierarchy, the existing religious, political, and moral values, norms, and prohibitions.”<sup>28</sup> Therefore, by the end of the film, Bong is seen as a dragon dad with heroic deeds on his record, which wins him a happy family and a beautiful wife: Bong proposes to his ex-wife again at the end of the film.



Still 4-1

Still 4-2 Bruce Lee in *The Way of the Dragon* (猛龙过江, dir. Bruce Lee, 1972)

<sup>27</sup> His mirror image in his transformation also mimicks Robert De Niro modelling himself as a tough guy in *Taxi Driver* (dir. Martin Scorsese, 1976).

<sup>28</sup> Bakhtin, 9.

Wong Jing's portrayal of the quick transformation of a dragon dad is in juxtaposition with his sexualisation of the dragon ladies in his film, which further reveals his conservative gender views. In carnival the participants are allowed to cross the boundary and behave in illicit and forbidden manners, including the sexualisation of women warriors. The opening sequence is an imitation of the 007 opening sequence, with female silhouettes dancing in erotic poses. This opening is followed by a beautiful woman in a sexy bikini walking toward the camera, a standard shot catering to the male gaze. He depicts the assistant of the terrorist head as a sexy woman warrior. The police officer from Mainland China come to assist the Interpol agent is another gorgeous woman fighter. They both appear in seductive bikini suits in various occasions: fearless fighters they might be, they are typical "killer women as sex kitten"<sup>29</sup> intended to cater to the male gaze, according to Sherrie Inness.

If this sexualisation and empowerment of women in carnivals is understood in Bakhtin's terms as a temporary suspension of all hierarchical ranks, privileges, norms and prohibitions, director Wong Jing has to put an end to this carnival and restore the patriarchal hierarchy at the final scene of his film. He wraps up the whole carnival by inserting a white fade-out to the last shot of the two main male characters' high kick. He conducts an official feast in the disguise of carnival.

After the white fade-out that concludes the carnival, Wong Jing briefly portrays the normal life of the official order, where all the seductive women warriors simply disappear as if they had never existed before, as if to indicate that these seductive women warriors should not exist in the official world outside the carnival. With the official world restored, women are supposed to be chaste prudes who are kept away from sexual impurity and flirtatious manners.

---

<sup>29</sup> Inness, *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1999), 69.

Such conservatism in the film is uttered through Bong the husband and father. When his ex-wife returns home to see their daughters for the first time after their divorce, Bong irritably complains that her clothes are too revealing. When he learns that his eldest daughter Cream is friends with a young boy Ronald (played by Edison Chen), his greatest concern is that his daughter would lose her virginity. His exaggerated concern over women's chastity and sexuality permeates the whole film as he constantly eavesdrops on his daughter and Ronald.

When Foucault endeavours to clarify the correlation between power and the supervision of sexuality, he notes, “[p]ower is essentially what dictates its law to sex”:

The primary concern was not repression of the sex of the classes to be exploited, but rather the body, vigor, longevity, progeniture, and descent of the classes that “ruled.” ...it has to be seen as the self-affirmation of one class rather than the enslavement of another...<sup>30</sup>

The surveillance over women's sexuality is repressive to women, but its even deeper secret is eventually to affirm male status quo and the longevity of his 'rule'. Here the “the self-affirmation of one class” is no doubt the reconsolidation of the order of the Father, as Wong Jing concludes this film with Bong as the respectable family head ‘living happily ever after’ with his obedient wife and cute daughters.

However, Wong Jing's impetuosity to reaffirm the male rule and patriarchal order lures him to a ‘more haste, less speed’ embarrassment, tricking him into both financial loss and aesthetic flop. He concludes this film with a happy man whose male dignity is restored, but he is so precipitate to reinstate the Name of the Father that he totally overlooks all other factors that are outside Bong's image. He never tells the audience whether the virus-infected Interpol agent has been cured or not, nor does he mention what happens to the women warriors who simply disappear from the scene. Even the gang of fighters which surrounds

---

<sup>30</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, 123.

Bong miraculously vanishes at the end of the film so that the terrorist leader is fighting hopelessly alone, when Bong defeats him easily with one flying high-kick.

Not surprisingly, due to these gaps and defects in the narrative as well as its misogynistic tones, the film was sure to be a ‘flop’. Even though this film is attractive and promising in terms of cast, with the versatile actors Tony Leung Kar Fai and Teresa Mo and the rising young idols of Edison Chen and Gillian Chung, it merely achieved a meagre box office of \$5.4 million Hong Kong dollars. By comparison, another film with Edison Chen and Gillian Chung in the same year, *Twins Effects* that celebrates girl power and increasing women’s status in Hong Kong, occupied the second place in the Hong Kong box office chart in 2003 with a revenue of \$28.4 million Hong Kong dollars.<sup>31</sup>

### 4.3 The Seduction of Iron Men: *Assembly*

The inclusion of *Assembly* as an example of feminisation seems to be obscure and unconvincing because this film is a war epic full of bloodshed, machine guns, and military strategies. However, the following arguments will investigate two aspects of feminisation that are hidden underneath the ultimate violence of the film. One is that the iron male heroes in the film are feminised by the system that treats them as dispensable pawns and puts them in a powerless, inferior position that shares some similarity with women under patriarchy. The other aspect of feminisation lies in the responding attitude of these iron men toward their feminised positioning: they adopt a feminine logic of submission and acceptance.

In sharp contrast with Wong Jing’s efforts to reaffirm a patriarchy with a carnivalesque comedy, director Feng Xiaogang constructs his version of patriarchy in an opposite way in *Assembly*. Wong allows his father figure to be teased, to be feminised in a

<sup>31</sup> The exact figure is \$28,423,960 Hong Kong dollars; sources from [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_46e14d320100073b.html~type=v5\\_one&label=rela\\_nextarticle](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_46e14d320100073b.html~type=v5_one&label=rela_nextarticle), accessed 23 October 2009. My MA thesis has an intensive discussion on *Twin Effects* as an example of girl power feminism.

carnival before strongly re-affirming his solemn masculinity at the conclusion of such carnivals. Feng, by contrast, depicts a reverent veteran who devotes his whole life to restore the names of forty-seven martyrs, and thus constructs a new surrogate national father. However, this surrogate new national father endeavours to seek acknowledgement within the system he inherits rather than replacing it with his own power.

#### **4.3.1 Iron Men in the Cage of Authoritarian Gaze**

Before further discussion, one must justify the inclusion of this film as a case of the feminisation of fatherly warrior in this chapter, to justify Guzidi as a “fatherly” warrior. As a captain of the Ninth Company infantry, Guzidi performs the role of a surrogate father for his fellow soldiers. Wang Jincun (王金存), a young innocent and fragile weakling, is not courageous enough to fight, but Guzidi (Gu hereafter) offers him parental guidance to overcome his cowardice to become a glorious warrior. He then assumes a paternal role to restore the names of his soldiers. When he is standing in front of the graves of the anonymous martyrs, he laments, “parents have given them names, how come they become anonymous children now?” He spends his whole life retrieving the names and the bodies of his forty-seven soldiers whose existence and identity were lost because of the restructure of the military system. A conversation between Gu and Zhao Erdou (赵二斗, played by Deng Chao 邓超) who becomes Gu’s best mate in the Korean War, also demonstrates his role as a surrogate father.

Gu: “forget it, you aren’t my son, for what I have to stay with you?”

Zhao: “I take you as my surrogate father, ok?”

His fatherly status is further solidified by the audience’s identification of him as the ego of their fathers. In a press conference for the film in Nanjing, director Feng particularly mentions a touching response from a young girl who told Zhang Hanyu, the actor who plays



Gu, that *Assembly* changed her feelings towards her own father. She used to feel detached and look down upon her father, a veteran of the war in Vietnam, but after watching the film, she was overwhelmed by emotions and she would embrace her father when she gets back home.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, this film inspires a son/daughter gaze towards the heroes, in particular, the male protagonist Gu who comes to embody a new Father. As a film about warriors and sacrifice around the time when the People's Republic of China was founded, director Feng creates a nationalistic myth in *Assembly*, where he avoids mentioning Communism but concentrates on the sacrifice and suffering of the national heroes (and of course heroines) of new China. These suffering heroes are recognised as the founding fathers of a new China.

Even though he is idolised as a fatherly hero, Gu as well as his soldiers are still feminised, but their feminisation here differs from its connotations in the previous chapters, which have highlighted the feminisation of the warriors in that they are objectified as erotic spectacles for the gaze and are docile, delicate in personality; but the connotation of feminisation in this film is revealed in a new angle above gender.

What the director endeavours to accomplish with *Assembly* is to minimise a sexual aspect of the gaze. Only one female protagonist is given a clear identity, Sun Guiqin (孙桂琴), the young widower of one of the forty-seven martyrs Wang Jinqun. She later remarries Zhao Erdou who becomes a regiment commander after the Korean War. She serves, obviously, as a "love object" and "beautiful soul" in the narrative, but she does not appear until more than half of the narrative is over, after the forty-seven soldiers have died and their bodies are lost. On the first meeting between her and her future husband, no point-of-view shots are emphasised. Moreover, their marriage ceremony is depicted in a very simple manner, where no erotic or exotic gaze is explicitly depicted.

---

<sup>32</sup> "Feng Xiaogang Jijiehao Nanjing xuanchuan meiti jianmianhui" ("Assembly Press Conference in Nanjing"), accessed 19 October 2009, [http://v.youku.com/v\\_show/id\\_XMTQ4MjU3NjQ=.html](http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTQ4MjU3NjQ=.html)

A female gaze is also deliberately discouraged. The male bodies are often covered in mud and blood, diminishing a romantic attraction of these male bodies (Still 4-3). Even the guest appearances of young male idols who are worshiped for their feminine look are desexualised to trim down their glamour as romantic spectacles; for example, the male actor Ren Quan (任泉) is often remembered for his performance as handsome scholars, such as his performance in television series *The Young Detective* (*shaonian baoqingtian* 少年包青天), is invited to play a co-leader with captain Gu in the first battle scene. His character's body is exploded into halves with blood streaming down from his trembling mouth (Still 4-4). Such a sorrowful moment dismisses the signs of romantic appeal derived from the young idol's body.



Still 4-3



Still 4-4

Even though the audiences might still have derived visual pleasure from these heart-rending male images, Feng Xiaogang endeavours to guide such pleasure towards the strength of men's physique. Male comradeship, a small group of soldiers fighting a horde of enemies,

and their courage in facing the cannons and death form part of real man virtues. Director Feng proudly informs the journalists in a press conference that the film shows us “how a real man would act!”<sup>33</sup>

Superficially speaking, such a militarisation of the male body is not a new invention; Mainland Chinese audiences should be familiar with it in the early war epics made in the late 1940s and 1950s and to some extent in the model plays during the Cultural Revolution. Paul Clark observes,

A cult of the physical and the body during these years was part of the militancy of official culture. The heroes of the model operas all show a toughness that expressed a rejection of reliance on the cultivated mind of traditional intellectuals and a need for physical endurance and risk taking.<sup>34</sup>

Both women and men are masculinised, but in a typical pro-official film of the 1940s and 50s, such militancy and risk taking are voluntary acts to die for Communism. “Fight for Communism! Long live the Communist Party!” has been a typical slogan to conclude a film at a moment when the protagonists sacrifice themselves for their country, as seen in films like *Daughters of China* (*Zhonghua nüer* 中华女儿, dir. Ling Zifeng 凌子风, 1949, still 4-5 and 4-6).



Still 4-5



Still 4-6

<sup>33</sup> Chinese original: “男人就应该是这样!” quoted from “Assembly Press Conference in Nanjing”.

<sup>34</sup> Clark, *Chinese Cultural Revolution*, 253.

Even though *Assembly* destroys such a myth of blind commitment to Communism, Feng does not take Communism as his specific target to criticise. The masculinisation phenomena of Chinese propaganda cinema mentioned above obliterate an individual voice, where everyone speaks the same language as the officialdom required. In Spivak's "Can the Subalterns Speak?", she discusses about "epistemic violence"<sup>35</sup> that if subalterns are allowed to speak, they are to speak in a language that is not their own in origin.

Even though the soldiers are invincible iron men in the battlefield, their invincibility is not motivated by any (Communist) belief, but by an *order*. They are *ordered* to fight on until they hear a bugle for retreat, while the nasty truth behind this order is that their bodies are utilised as expendable cannon fodder by the disciplinary power they serve. According to Foucault, "[d]iscipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)."<sup>36</sup> Discipline requires them to succumb to an order that requires them to *masculinise* their bodies to a maximum extent so as to be used as tools. The tougher they fight, the more they succumb to their *order*. That is, their 'masculinity' in this discussion is a de facto form of 'feminisation'. 'Feminisation' here has nothing to do with feminine beauty in men, male fragility, or men performing the role of spectacles for the female (erotic) gaze, but rather the result of an authoritarian gaze.

As discussed in Chapter One, the authoritarian gaze assigns the role of perceived objects to the citizens under its surveillance. This authoritarian gaze intensifies its grip over the individuals in order to achieve a victory of a collective course, engendering a collective disciplinary code. In this film, the courageous soldiers perform their assigned roles as the lure of the enemy to cover the rest of the army to retreat. However, the soldiers themselves have no knowledge of their tragic destiny; they accept their task without questioning. Even Captain

<sup>35</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the interpretation of Culture*, eds. Gary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 280.

<sup>36</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 138.

Gu knows that their task is an impossible mission, he does not challenge its oddity.

Therefore, unlike the masculine logic with an “agonistic” value, Gu and his men vigorously fulfil their duty as required. Their response to the authoritarian demand is closer to a feminine logic under Baudriallard’s argument.

These soldiers are the abandoned Other, deprived of their own voice. Their military skills, bloodshed, bravery, and stamina are all symbols of staunch masculinity. Thus, it seems obscure to look at them as examples of feminisation. However, it is the staunch masculinity that is needed by the authorities; in other words, they are forced to play tough, without any free space to express their own voice. The best example to explain the contradiction between the role of tough guys imposed from above and the internal desire of the soldier is Wang Jincun in the film. The battlefield is hell for him and he is imprisoned because of his cowardice in his first act in battle. He is assigned the role of a soldier, but he is just an intelligent fragile scholar who longs to see his newly-wedded young wife. For him, to be a feminised scholar blessed with domestic felicity might be his true desire. Under the nonchalant, demanding authoritarian gaze from above, the soldiers are shovelled into a disempowered and disadvantaged position, to a “*yin*” (feminine) statue quo, completely deprived of all power to determine their own fates.

#### **4.3.2 Iron Man as Sufferer**

These soldiers are not merely feminised by the disciplinary power of the authorities, but are also feminised in the sense that their bodies suffer and according to Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, suffering has been stigmatised as a “feminine” narrative. He endeavours to demarcate masculine and feminine paradigms in film genres, explaining that action and passion produce

a demarcation of forms between those in which there is an active hero, inured or immune to suffering, and those in which there is a hero, or more often a heroine,

---

whose role is to suffer.... The contrast active/passive is, inevitably, traversed by another contrast, that between masculine and feminine.<sup>37</sup>

In *Assembly*, the only female protagonist Sun Guiqin suffers from the loss of her loved one, but she does not suffer constantly, because she is ‘rescued’ from grief by a young official and ‘lives happily ever after’. Her role in the film is more like a witness to male suffering.

The whole plot of this film is to highlight male suffering embedded in their dramatic wounds and life loss. The opening scene where Gu and his soldiers are engaged in a violent combat is a catastrophic mutilation of male bodies. This scene, more than ten minutes long, displays a merciless cannon bombardment, where mangled corpses fly up or blow up right beside those still alive. A bomb blasts Gu’s ‘buddy’ and co-leader in two and he dies in the arms of Gu who weeps over his amputated body. Every scene after the battle is a death toll count, till Gu is the last one standing. Toward the end of the film, a flashback brings the audience back to the final shots of the forty-seven soldiers, but what the director leads the audience to see is their mangled lifeless bodies covered in blood and mud.

The feminisation of the suffering soldiers can be further compared with typical pathetic women ‘dumped’ by their husbands after he accomplishes fame and wealth. It is from the resemblance between the male sufferers in this film and a virtuous woman being exploited and abused that they may be canonised as feminised warriors.

This metaphoric juxtaposition of war heroes with women is not a nascent allegory here, but it has been interpreted by different critics. Dai Jinhua observes that two mirror images of women in Chinese dominant discourse on women are Hua Mulan and Qin Xianglian (秦香莲).<sup>38</sup> Conventional *leitmotiv* films depict virtuous warriors out of the Mulan

---

<sup>37</sup> Nowell-Smith, “Minnelli and Melodrama,” in *Home Is Where the Heart Is*, ed. Christine Gledhill, 72.

<sup>38</sup> Dai, Jinhua, *Cinema and Desire: Feminist Marxism and Cultural Politics in the Works of Dai Jinhua*, trans. and ed. Jing Wang and Tani E. Barrows (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 102.

mode who is a virtuous young maiden extremely loyal to her father and her country. Kam Louie's discussion on the 1950s war epics in Mainland China draws an interesting picture of such warrior images:

they were portrayed like the virtuous women of traditional China. That is, they were good-looking, extremely loyal (in the case of traditional women, loyalty to their lovers, but in these men, to their comrades) and most importantly, they die young. In fact, they die with their virginity intact, ensuring that they were devoid of any pollution and not tainted by any capitalist ideas.<sup>39</sup>

The heroes in *Assembly* are loyal to their comrades and their superiors, but more importantly, they are abandoned, which is reminiscent of the misery of a second stereotype: Qin Xianglian. Many traditional operas, television series and films in China have adopted this story of Qin and her unfaithful and ungrateful husband Chen Shimei (陈世美). Varied in form and contents, a common plot goes as: during the Song Dynasty, Chen Shimei's virtuous wife Qin Xianglian takes care of their children and her senile parents-in-laws so that he can travel to the Capital city to participate in the imperial exams. However, he deserts his wife and family after his success in the national exams and marries a princess. He shows no sign of remorse and refuses to recognise his faithful wife when she manages to meet him at the Capital city. He even attempts to get rid of her with malicious conspiracies. He is eventually executed by the wise judge Bao Zheng (包拯). Just as Qin is exploited, abused and abandoned by her husband, the forty-seven soldiers suffer in a similar way: exploited, abused and abandoned by the ungrateful authorities (Communist party/ husband) they serve.

While the forty-seven abandoned soldiers resemble Qin Xianglian the woman sufferer, after the death of his men Gu turns from a macho hero to the role of a desperate but powerless father. With no power in hand to reclaim justice for his men, he can only appeal to the authorities and waits in vain. He sobs when he hears the news that the file of the army he

---

<sup>39</sup> Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, 107. Brackets in original.

and his forty-seven soldiers belonged to has been found. He wails in front of the grave of Liu Zeshui, the regiment leader who has given him the deadly order to defend the mine field, that is, the man who has sent them to death. He weeps once again on the commemoration at the end of the film. His sobs, wails, weeps and tears consist of the strength of his screen persona resembling an emotional mother.

This war epic, packaged in a powerful tearjerker where soldiers suffer tremendously and sacrifice themselves, has a seductive power over the audience as well as the critics. From its first day of release on 20th December 2007, it brought in a revenue of 180 million Yuan in eleven days in Mainland China.<sup>40</sup> On 15th January 2008 when director Feng discussed this film with three film critics, he pointed out that the box office revenue had reached 230 million Yuan.<sup>41</sup>

Not only do people flock to the cinema to watch this film, but it also engenders a sensational mourning of our heroes, which generates a powerful consistent response among the audience who have been moved by the film. “To be moved to tears” is a common expression constantly used by the audiences after watching this film. Director Zhang Yang<sup>42</sup> enthusiastically remarks, “everyone, including the VIP audience in the auditorium, stood up applauding. I was so touched [by the film] that I wept like a baby.”<sup>43</sup>

The death of the forty-seven soldiers and Gu’s desperate struggle not only move the audience to tears, but also induce them to lavish their eulogistic comments on this film.

Zheng Dongtian, an eminent film critic from the Beijing Film Academy, acclaims *Assembly*

<sup>40</sup> Yin, Hong and Zhan Qingshen, “2007 Zhongguo dianying chanye beiwang” (“The Memorandum of Chinese Film Industry 2007”), *dianying yishu* (Film Arts), No.2 (2008):14.

<sup>41</sup> Feng, Xiangang et al, “jijie hao” (“Assembly”), *dangdai dianying* (Contemporary Cinema), No.2 (2008): 54.

<sup>42</sup> Zhang Yang (张杨, 1967-) is a famous young Chinese director. Among his works, *Shower* (Xizao 洗澡, 1999) is a highly acclaimed film.

<sup>43</sup> Liu, Yan, “Dianying shiping jijiehao: cheng Zhongguo zhanzheng dapian de xin lichengbei” (“Assembly: the New Milestone of Chinese War Epics”), accessed 19 October 2009, [http://ent.cctv.com/20071225/100443\\_1.shtml](http://ent.cctv.com/20071225/100443_1.shtml).



as “the best blockbuster ever!”<sup>44</sup> Feng Xiaogang remarked in a discussion panel with three well-known film critics in 2008, “I have come across many reviews on this film, most of which are written in a surge of emotions; they are particularly affective and humane, generously pardoning me for the technical errors I have made in the film.”<sup>45</sup> Such sensational sentimental attachment lavished on to this film is generated from the death and sacrifice of the characters. Baudrillard has wittily argued “[w]e seduce with our death, our vulnerability, and with the void that haunts us.”<sup>46</sup> People who have watched the film bestow it with affection, admiration and veneration, but seldom depreciation.

### 4.3.3 A New Loving Symbolic Father

Not only are ordinary audiences enchanted to watch the film, but intriguingly, the Communist government also chose to endorse it through China’s official television network. Chinese Central Television (CCTV) in its 7 o’clock Evening News, a programme that has been widely recognised as the ‘mouthpiece of the Communist Party’<sup>47</sup> had a favourable report on the film’s premiere on 21st December 2007. Many Chinese audiences are shocked by this CCTV promotion of the film, because the story is about soldiers betrayed and abandoned by the Communist Party, but one should not be surprised if one is sharp-eyed enough to see that the film serves to consolidate a non-official nationalism in spite of its condemnation of an official one.

<sup>44</sup> Qiao, Yaqiong and Ding Lilei, “Zhanzheng zhong de renxing zunyan: kan yingpian jijiehao” (“Humane Dignity in Wars: On Assembly”), *dianying pingjie* (Film Review), No. 10, (2008): 39.

<sup>45</sup> Feng, et al, “jijie hao” (“Assembly”), 54.

<sup>46</sup> Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 83.

<sup>47</sup> CCTV is an organisation directly under the control of State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, while this Administration is under direct control of the State Council, the highest executive organ of China. In its official website, it makes the statement that “CCTV is an important news media of China, which serves as the important VOICE of the (Communist) Party, the Government and its people” (中央电视台是中国重要的新闻舆论机构, 是党、政府和人民的重要喉舌) <http://cctvenchiridion.cctv.com/04/index.shtml>

Feng Xiaogang responded in a press conference that this film became a popular topic that inspired *unitary* and phenomenal passion of the audience, conjuring up such touching passions as patriotism, hero worship and admiration towards the Father, making it worthy to be promoted in CCTV News.<sup>48</sup> In other words, even though this film is in no way flattering to the Communist Party, it conjures up a popular national cohesion based on the love of a heroic but caring patriarch.

Homi Bhabha, in the introduction to *Nation and Narration* speaks of “[t]he nation’s ‘coming into being’ as a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social *life* rather than the discipline of social *polity*”.<sup>49</sup> Suffering and anguish in particular are extremely powerful parts of the social life in this formation of a nation. French philosopher Ernest Renan pointed out as early as 1882 in his influential lecture “What is a nation?” that

...suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort....A nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future.<sup>50</sup>

These “griefs” are engendered by the victimisation of the male bodies. According to Dai Jinhua, “[t]he experience of victimization in historical and practical terms was another origin for the strengthening of nationalistic identification.”<sup>51</sup>

Bhabha’s concept of nation, Renan’s “what is a nation?” and Dai’s victimisation all refer to a collective and unifying identity based on suffering and victimisation, while the suffering provides an opportunity for the nation to grieve, to mourn and to identify with the powerless, the weak, the feminised and the subaltern group. Feng constructs one such identity

<sup>48</sup> “Feng Xiaogang Jijiehao Nanjing xuanchuan meiti jianmianhui” (“Assembly Press Conference in Nanjing”).

<sup>49</sup> Bhabha, “Introduction: Narrating the Nation”, 2-3.

<sup>50</sup> Renan, “What Is a Nation” trans. Martin Thom, in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Bhabha, 19

<sup>51</sup> Dai, “Behind Global Spectacle and National Image Making” *Positions* 9:1 (2001): 171.

of the weak and powerless group with Gu, a surrogate father. Feng's version of a symbolic Father is a 'feminised' form of Father, because, from the very beginning of the film, he is under the surveillance of an authoritarian gaze.

As discussed in Chapter One, under the surveillance of the authoritarian gaze, there are two ways of survival, one is to submit to the surveillance, the other to rebel. While the latter will be discussed in the next chapter, the submissive approach is recognised as a form of feminisation according to Baudrillard's feminine logic. Gu never aims at replacing the system but fighting for acceptance instead, and according to Baudrillard's understanding, acceptance of a ready-made mode is a feminine logic. The second half of the film is a non-violent pursuit of justice and Gu pursues it within the system. He does not fight against the system but rather seeks recognition by the system.

Gu carries out a personal crusade to fight for justice for his soldiers within an existing hierarchy, but he does not revolt against it. Instead, what he searches for is an official sanction of the victim status of his soldiers. He writes letters of appeals to the officials; he waits for further news while working all sorts of humble jobs around the burial place of his soldiers. His humble characteristics are often read as Confucian spirits. Wang Yichuan, for example, stresses the Confucian ethos of *ren* (benevolence) when he discusses the film with the director Feng Xiaogang.<sup>52</sup> Chapter One has indicated that in Chinese beliefs, humbleness, obedience, submission, and non-competition are emphasised and glorified as noble virtues. These humbleness, obedience and Confucian spirits work as the "Dominant Fiction" of Chinese society, to borrow Kaja Silverman's term:

The dominant fiction neutralizes the contradictions which organize the social formation by fostering collective identifications and desires,... Social formations

---

<sup>52</sup> Feng, et al, "jijie hao" ("Assembly"), 59.

---

consequently depend upon their dominant fictions for their sense of unity and identity.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, director Feng carves a Chinese nation by integrating such Chinese cultural roots with a common memory of the history of victimisation of its people. The CCTV promotion of the film becomes understandable, as it consolidates a non-official nationalism above political discrepancies by hoisting a dominant fiction shared by its people. Additionally, the humble image of Gu not only is easily accepted by the Chinese people who have inherited Confucian thinking, but is also regarded as a controllable subject by the government, who could be ‘soothed by stroking’ rather than by direct suppression. This “docile body” represented by Gu is a harmless subject who never challenges the *legitimacy* of the authority that betrays him and his soldiers. Instead, he strikes for the recognition granted by such a power. The government thus ‘leniently’ soothes Gu by canonising the forty-seven soldiers as sacred martyrs with a solemn commemoration *held by the government*. While the folklore of Qin Xianglian is concluded with the execution of the malicious husband by a wise judge and honourable patriarch Bao Zheng, these martyrs are finally honoured by the government that betrayed them previously. Such reconfirmation of the established order of the Communist polity is certainly welcomed by the Communist Party, which chose to endorse the film in its propaganda agenda.

Unlike conventional war epics where the Communist Party is recognised as the people’s saviour, director Feng constructs and glorifies Gu as the real hero and Patriarch of New China.<sup>54</sup> He is not a national father in a political sense, but a respectable patriarch inheriting the Confucian spirits so that all his descendents can lavish their love and

---

<sup>53</sup> Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 54.

<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, when Teddy Chan made *Bodyguards and Assassins* in 2009, the actor who played Gu (Zhang Hanyu) was invited to be a special guest appearance in the film to play the role of Sun Yat-sen who is the forerunner of Chinese revolution overthrowing the Qing government. It seems that Gu/ Zhang HuanYu is molded into this patriarch figure.

admiration on him, proudly declaring themselves as progeny of this honourable father. The tears of this fatherly figure and the audiences bond them together, while such bonding fastens a national unity based on grief and suffering rather than political rhetoric. This national unity is a goal that the Communist Party of Mainland China desires so desperately that it could not resist endorsing the film even though the myth of Communism as the Saviour is challenged.

#### 4.4 A Special Case of a Woman Director: *Run Papa Run*

So far, all the films selected in this research are directed by male directors. The current research limits its film selection on the action genre which has often been stigmatised as masculine in style; few women directors have devoted their energy to this genre. Furthermore, the main subject of this research is male protagonists, while most female directors' foci are on women's issues, whether or not their films can be called feminist works. The gender ratio in filmmaking has never been balanced, with males conspicuously outnumbering females; even if a woman director comes to be in charge of a film project, the male members in her crew greatly exceed the number of females, which makes a label such as "woman's film" (whether it refers to a film by women, a film of women or a film for women) debatable.

The term "women's film" first appeared in feminist film studies, such as *Notes on Women's Cinema*<sup>55</sup>, and it is sometimes recognised to be compatible with "women's cinema", "The Woman's Film"<sup>56</sup> and "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema"<sup>57</sup>. It was formed alongside the development of the second wave feminism. Women's films cannot be given a singular conception. As it is defined from different aspects, it refers to different

<sup>55</sup> Claire Johnston ed., *Notes on Women's Cinema*, (Britain: the Society for Education in Film and Television, 1972).

<sup>56</sup> Molly Haskell, "The Woman's Film", in Thornham ed. *Feminist Film Theory*, 20-30..

<sup>57</sup> Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema", in Thornham ed. *Feminist Film Theory*, 31-40.

implications. It could refer to a film made by a woman, which might cater to female spectators with a purpose to counteract the patriarchal designation of women. This is its early conservative definition by the feminist filmmakers in promoting a counter-cinema to challenge the construction of women within the patriarchal system. But films made by women directors are easily identified as “women’s films”, no matter whether the films focus on women’s issues or not. Women’s films are not identical to films made by women, and *Run Papa Run* is better to be classified as a film made by a woman director rather than a “woman’s film”.

All the above proofs explain the scarcity of women directors discussed in this project. However, even though such directors are marginal in number, they are still present with high quality works that could not be neglected. Sylvia Chang’s *Run Papa Run*, a nominee for “Best screenplay” in the 2009 Hong Kong Films Award, is such an excellent example. Chang is renowned for her productions with female subjects, but she declared in a news conference for *Run Papa Run* that “people always say that I make women’s films; therefore I decided to make one about men this time.”<sup>58</sup> She chooses the gangster genre which is known for its hypermasculine intonation, but what she does is to feminise it, including this genre and her male protagonist.

#### 4.4.1 What Do Women Want?

Even though this film is directed by a woman director, the subject is a macho gang lord and his triad life, and it is construed as ‘his story’ from the perspective of the male protagonist Lee Tin-yan. Lee’s voice-over narrates the whole story in a flash-back manner, giving this film an aura of a male autobiography. However, the male protagonist is gradually

---

<sup>58</sup> Yan, Yunfei, “Zhang Aijia jiangshu nanren gushi, Gu Tianle yanyi yige hao baba” (“Sylvia Chang Tells a Man’s Story; Louie Koo Play a Good Papa”), accessed 11 August 2009, <http://ent.sina.com.cn/m/c/2008-03-21/02501955875.shtml>,

manipulated to reform himself by the women he loves; such a plot development of a man changing for women, according to Janice Radway, is a conventional format of romance, which has been proven to be a genre for female readership and audience.

Radway remarks that a conventional ideal romance defines two gendered worlds with clarifying oppositions, with the male one “dominated by competition, the desire for wealth, and the quest for social position,” and the female one “characterized by the value placed on love and intimate human interactions.”

She continues to elaborate that

[p]reoccupied with the goals of the typical male quest, he [the hero] has no time in the beginning for sensitivity and tender gestures. In the course of the story, however, he learns the value of such things because he almost loses the heroine. In a sense, *he is converted by the heroine into an occupant and proponent of the female world of love and emotional commitment.*<sup>59</sup>

The storyline of *Run Papa Run* slides from the catastrophe of the masculine world to the vitality of a soft feminine world. It begins with Lee’s funeral, introducing his background as a gang lord, but the mourning ritual already serves as an inauspicious omen of his tragic destiny in the triad world, a world known for the hyper-masculine paradigm of competition, toughness, violence and ferocity. After the funeral scene, the director leads the audience back to Lee’s adolescent days when he and his gang buddies expand their underground sphere by ferocious fists. He boasts of his masculine prowess and invincibility. All these initial obsessions with the expansion of the ‘sphere of influence’ of his triad kingdom cohere with what Radway described as “the goals of the typical male quest”.

However, his masculine enterprise and his male quest are gradually diverted to a female quest. The rest of the story is propelled by what the women characters want, including

---

<sup>59</sup> Radway, “Interpretive Communities and Variable Literacies”: the Functions of Romance Reading,” in *A Cultural Studies Reader: History, Theory, Practice*, ed. Jessica Munns and Gita Rajan (London and New York: Longman, 1995), 347. This article was first published in *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 1974. Italics mine..

his wife, his daughter and his mother, rather than the male protagonist's own wishes. The male protagonist Lee Tin-yan 'is converted by' three heroines, as the director herself stresses in a Hong Kong news conference, "what I attempt to explore is to see how the three most important women in a man's whole life – his mother, his wife and his daughter – transform and influence him."<sup>60</sup> Such a plotting schema might be the reason one reviewer declares that Chang makes this film in an extremely womanly way.<sup>61</sup>

Lee succumbs to feminine power. First, Mabel's seductive power overwhelms him, leading him into a marriage that he has never prepared for. Their first encounter is introduced by shot-reverse-shots, followed by a medium shot of both of them standing at opposite sides of the frame, occupying equal proportions of the frame. They are given equal opportunities to cast their own subjective gaze on each other. This first encounter disallows either male privilege or female preference. However, the first love scene of Lee and Mabel is followed by a scene of Mabel returning home in a state of euphoria, imbued with sexual fulfilment. Their sexual relationship is no longer depicted as a power game of man triumph over woman to get what he wants – woman, but the other way round – man becomes an object of desire. Mabel 'tricks' Lee into a relationship and later a marriage that she desires, transforming this gang lord into a family man.

Lee is then manipulated by his daughter's 'baby girl power' and becomes a feminised, nurturing father. The central theme of the film's posters for commercial promotion was father-daughter affections, with great emphasis on the daughter overpowering the father. For example, the poster (figure 4-7) captures a happy moment of the father (Lee) playing with his daughter. Lee wears a pair of boxing gloves, indicating his fighter identity, but he lies down

<sup>60</sup> Yan, "Zhang Aijia jiangshu nanren gushi, Gu Tianle yanyi yige hao baba" ("Sylvia Chang Tells a Man's Story; Louie Koo Play a Good Papa").

<sup>61</sup> Huang, Ailian, "Yige hao baba: zhang Aijia paide hen 'nüren'" ("Run Papa Run: Sylvia Chang Makes it in a Really Womanly Way"), accessed 23 September 2009, <http://stars.zaobao.com/pages6/zhangaijia080410.shtml>, accessed 23 September 2009.



on the ground with his daughter lying on top of him and also wearing boxing gloves. When she is still sleeping in cradle, her innocent cries soften Lee's heart, forcing him to give up his masculine pride to humble himself to lull her back to sleep with gentle whisper like a loving mother. He insists on singing lullabies to his daughter over the phone before some lethal conflicts with other gangs. In addition, he transfigures his self-image from a ruthless macho gang lord to a genteel businessman by changing his dress style: he puts on glasses and wears decent suits to create a scholarly (*wen*) self-image. When his daughter is frightened by his tiger tattoo over his shoulder, he has it modified into a cute Mickey Mouse.

Furthermore, his daughter's voice echoes above him when he gets involved in gangster scuffles, reminding him of his responsibility for moral guidance as a father. Therefore, in order to provide a healthy and normal family for his daughter, he desperately tries to withdraw from criminal activities and violent fights. He voluntarily assumes a more *wen*, thus more feminine mien and abandons the *wu* (military) thus more masculine charisma in order to play the role of a good father.



Figure 4-7, from <http://ent.cctv.com/20080211/100450.shtml>, accessed 11 August 2009

Although Lee's mother seems to fail to prevent her son from plunging into the triad world, she does succeed in converting him into a "proponent of the female world of love and emotional commitment", to quote Radway again. Lee's mother dies of illness and he passionately confesses in his elegiac speech that he only shed tears twice in his entire life: the first time was when he was born, and the second time is for his mother's death. I argue in Chapter Three that man's tears are the ingredients that humanise men, thus making them more 'lovable'. Under the manipulation of his mother, wife and daughter, Lee's masculinity is actively shaped and transformed toward a more genteel, more feminised version.

#### 4.4.2 Is It Really What Women Want?

Admittedly, the entire film seems to elaborate a story of a macho man (*wu*) converted to a family guy who submits to female desires, which seem out of tune with the argument of the flag of the father in this chapter. However, when we leave the film narrative *per se* to look at some anecdotes behind the scenes about this film, this film is an interesting example to further develop the authoritarian gaze that has been discussed in *Assembly*. This film was based on a novel *Hei Shehui Baba* (黑社会爸爸 *Gangster Papa*, which literally means *Black Society Papa*) by a male writer Li Shun Yan (Li Chun'en 李纯恩), but its official title for release and distribution in Chinese is *Yige Hao Baba* (一个好爸爸 *A Good Papa*).

Obviously, all the gangster connotations have been banished.

There are two major anecdotes in its name-changing scenario. One anecdote goes that the producers of this film decided to alter its name after they watched the unedited print of the film. They read the film as Chang's successful attempt to scrutinise the gangster world with feminine sensitivity, discarding its beastly violence and bringing out remarkably touching sentiments. Therefore they figured that the word "*hei* (black, referring to gangsters)"

would be misleading; henceforth, they replaced the original title with “*A Good Papa*.”<sup>62</sup> The producers impose their own reading on the film. Whether their reading is with or against Chang’s original intention, they unavoidably inflicted their *own* interpretation on to the film before its completion and consciously attempted to lead the audience into their version. Thus, besides the director herself, the producers (the majority of whom are males) consciously endorse this film as an ‘ideal father’ saga. Although women might claim the credit for transforming the male protagonist, his perfection simultaneously embodies a glorification of an ideal man by men, and for men. The replacement of “black papa (*hei baba*)” with “good papa” resembles Freud’s argument of a male child fanaticising to replace his parents with “grander people”. Like a child whose “whole effort at replacing the real father by a superior one is only an expression of the child’s longing for the happy, vanished days when his father seemed to him the noblest and strongest of men”<sup>63</sup>, these male producers long for securing the Father’s name by highlighting his nobility.

However, the director did not angrily revoke these outside influences, but sought to incorporate them into her work wisely. She frankly acknowledges that because this film involves gun fights and other scenes unique in the gangster genre, she invited a male director to assist her filming. She also mentions many on-site modifications to her script as she constantly sought suggestions from her male crew on a truly male perspective.<sup>64</sup> Hence, even though the previous section argues that this film centres on ‘what women want’, the male

---

<sup>62</sup> Liu, Yan, “Gu Tianle ‘chu wei renfu: yige hao baba isyue quanqiu shouying” (“Louie Koo as a First Time Father: the Premiere of *Run Papa Run*”), accessed 11 August 2009, <http://ent.cctv.com/20080211/100450.shtml>.

<sup>63</sup> “Family Romances” (1909[1908]), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol.IX (1906-1908)*, trans. James Starchey and Anna Freud (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1959), 240-241.

<sup>64</sup> Yang, zi, “Zhang Aijia yige hao baba fabuhui, shoupai nanren huati yingpian” (“*Run Papa Run* News Conference: Sylvia Chang as a First-timer on Male Themes”), accessed 9 October, 2009, <http://www.chinanews.com.cn/yl/dyxx/news/2008/03-21/1198770.shtml>

involvement hinders the director from a complete free-play of making a film about ‘what women want’.

Gender politics are by no means the only issue involved in this name-changing scenario. It is reported that Chang has to change the name from *Hei Shehui Baba* (*Gangster Papa*) to *Hei Baba* (Black papa) and finally to *Yige Hao Baba* (*A Good Papa*) in order to obtain the approval of the film bureau in Mainland China to release the film in the Mainland market.<sup>65</sup> The original title contains the phrase “*hei shehui*” (triad world) and the word “*hei*” connotes some sensitive content that the State Administration of Radio Film and Television (国家广播电影电视总局) might not approve of. The 2001 Film Management Regulation (Decree No. 342 of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China), states in Item 25:

the following contents are forbidden to be included in film works: ... (6) those disturbing social order and destroy social stability; (7) those promoting obscenity, gambling, violence or instigate illegal activities... and (10) other contents that violate the State’s laws and administrative regulations.<sup>66</sup>

*Run Papa Run* depicts a gang lord (involved in illegal activities, including gambling, piracy and brothels) as the central character in a positive light. It of course is easily seen as an infringement of Item 25 (its condition 6 for example) of the Film Management Regulations, even though the regulations sound ambiguous to some extent.

When Chang’s film was finally allowed to release in Mainland China in May 2008, the film title was changed to *Our Family* (*women zhe yijia* 我们这一家). This film, as one

---

<sup>65</sup> “Yige hao baba” (“*Run Papa Run*”), accessed 9 October 2009, <http://et.21cn.com/topic/star/ume/photo/2008/04/30/4667040.shtml>.

<sup>66</sup> Chinese original: 《电影管理条例》:第二十五条 电影片禁止载有下列内容: (一) 反对宪法确定的基本原则的; (二) 危害国家统一、主权和领土完整的; (三) 泄露国家秘密、危害国家安全或者损害国家荣誉和利益的; (四) 煽动民族仇恨、民族歧视, 破坏民族团结, 或者侵害民族风俗、习惯的; (五) 宣扬邪教、迷信的; (六) 扰乱社会秩序, 破坏社会稳定的; (七) 宣扬淫秽、赌博、暴力或者教唆犯罪的; (八) 侮辱或者诽谤他人, 侵害他人合法权益的; (九) 危害社会公德或者民族优秀文化传统的; (十) 有法律、行政法规和国家规定禁止的其他内容的。State Administration of Radio Film and Television, accessed 9 October 2009, <http://www.chinasarft.gov.cn/articles/2007/02/16/20070913144431120333.html>. Translation mine.

directed by a Taiwan director with a crew mainly from Hong Kong, to be released in Mainland China with a legitimate title “Our Family”, seems to refer to a true ‘family romance’ between these three regions, all “longing for the happy, vanished days” of a ‘sweet home.’

However, the name-changing process has clearly revealed the discord within. The name-changing scenario about its gangster theme is a headline concern for the film’s entering Mainland Chinese market, but no such concern was raised in Hong Kong or Taiwan. *Run Papa Run* goes far beyond as a representation of a female director telling a story from a female perspective or a Taiwan director recounting a Taiwan experience, but rather is a example to warn those who have to be cautious when facing the authoritarian gaze of the Mainland Chinese censorship.

*Run Papa Run* is not an exceptional example that faces Mainland Chinese censorship. Many other films with gangster themes made in Taiwan and Hong Kong have to face the same obstacle. The Taiwan gangster film mentioned at the beginning of this Chapter *Monga* was less lucky than *Run Papa Run*. *Monga* was not officially released in Mainland China except in a Taipei movie week held in Shanghai, even though the director openly promised that he could revise his film according to the censor requirements. The sensitivity in Mainland China towards the word “*hei*” and the gangster contents often affects Hong Kong films to be released there. Johnnie To’s *Hei Shehui* (literally ‘black society’, English title *Election*, 2005) had to be renamed as *Longcheng Suiyue* (龙城岁月, *The Days in the Dragon City*) with revision in order to get the permit for release in Mainland. Another gangster film *Triad Underworld* (*Jianghu* 江湖, dir. Wong Ching-Po [Huang Jingpu] 黄精埔 2004) failed to pass the Mainland censors and has never been released there officially.

To some extent, the film texts in Chapter Two and Three, as coproductions between Hong Kong, Mainland China and Taiwan, reflect a common commitment towards common

Chinese cultural roots, contributing to the construction of cultural nationalism. However, the Mainland Chinese censorship is one source of discord, thus reflecting present-day discontent within one aspect of a pan-Chinese cultural nationalism. Renan notes that two types of social capital comprise the soul of nation: one is a common legacy of memories of the past, while the other is “present-day consent... and of having, in the future, [a shared] programme to put into effect”.<sup>67</sup> However, the censorship has become a present-day blockade programme that discourages unity.

Unlike some Chinese directors in the past few decades who deliberately exploited the censors and exported their films to international film festivals and the global market, disregarding the domestic market<sup>68</sup>, Chang has a clear vision of embracing Mainland China as her target market. She henceforth readily altered her title in order to break into the Mainland market. Presumably, she has to make sure her film content will not offend the Chinese authorities and so can be granted permission for release. Her strategy of acceptance belongs to that of the feminine logic that this research has tried to prove.

Chang’s strategy is reminiscent of Foucault’s argument that in our world it is “not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated within it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies.”<sup>69</sup> The film *Run Papa Run*, therefore, is Chang’s careful fabrication, “according to a whole technique of forces and bodies”, including the disciplinary power of Mainland China and the male perspectives she voluntarily listens to.

The result of this fabrication is a masculine image reminiscent of the “regulatory ideal”, according to Butler. Butler, borrowing from Foucault, explains that a regulatory ideal

---

<sup>67</sup> Renan, 19.

<sup>68</sup> For example, films like *Blue Kite* (蓝风筝 dir. Tian Zhuangzhuang 田壮壮) and *East Palace, West Palace* (东宫西宫, dir. Zhang Yuan 张元, 1996). See Adam Lam, *Tradition and Globalism: Post-cultural Revolution Chinese Feature Films 1977-1996* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2008).

<sup>69</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 217.

“not only functions as a norm, but is a part of regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, a power to produce.”<sup>70</sup> That is to say, director Chang consciously embraces regulatory practices from male viewpoints to political awareness to produce her characters; she turns these male viewpoints as well as censorship issues into a productive force, creating a “regulatory ideal” with her male protagonist Lee and her film about “a good father”.

Butler identifies this kind of productive act as a kind of “performativity”, which she defines as “not a singular ‘act’, for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms.... Performativity is *neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation*; nor can it be simply equated with performance.”<sup>71</sup> Understanding such interwoven performativity, the father’s masculine identity in *Run Papa Run* is far from single-sided “free play” manipulated by female desires, but rather, it is an amalgam of “a set of norms”, including female wishes, male pursuits and intervention, as well as negotiations with the laws and order of the potential markets.

## 4.5 Chapter Conclusion

Chapter Four has concentrated on the construction of fatherhood and the order of the symbolic father. A craving for a new order of the Father is conspicuous in the past decade in Chinese language films, while different directors endeavour to handle such a craving with various techniques. Director Wong Jing attempts to feminise the father figure in a frantic contemporary carnival in order to drag the world back to an orthodox patriarchy after the carnival. However, his over-hasty attitude made his film *Spy Dad* a dumb movie for dumb people. What is more, his reconfirmation of the order of the Father is based on a conservative

---

<sup>70</sup> Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 1.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 12 & 95. Italics mine.

paradigm of supervising the sexuality and chastity of women rather than on questioning the problem of masculinity and patriarchy. Its meagre box office and negative response suggests that his male favouritism is out of favour.

*Assembly* is taken as a counter example to *Spy Dad*. It introduces macho martyrs and veterans as the spiritual ancestors of New China, who have written a traumatic history with their blood and anguish. Macho and heroic as they are, they are, nevertheless, ‘chess pieces’ on a chess board monitored, and possibly feminised, by an authoritarian gaze. However, such feminisation rightly exposes the meaning of death and agony of men. Ordinary audiences, critics, and celebrities are all moved to tears by the film and lavish their affection and idolisation on it. Even the Communist Party that has been attacked by the film for its betrayal of its soldiers chooses to endorse it, as it conjures up a new cohesive Nationalistic order based on men’s tears and suffering.

Recognising the fact that the symbolic order of the Father is still the “dominant fiction” of contemporary China, women directors’ film works are rendered intriguing, and Sylvia Chang, with *Run Papa Run*, does make efforts to produce a story of ‘what women want in a man’. However, an authoritarian gaze constantly monitors her production and demands her to modify her work accordingly. In addition, male involvement in her projects is essential because filmmaking is team work, and women are still a minority group in this domain. In order to carry on her pursuit, she compromises and modifies her work when necessary in order for it to reach to a wider audience. Her case resonates with Butler’s famous doctrine that gender is performativity according to a “regulatory ideal”. Nonetheless, her strategy of compromise is still a feminine one.

The three films idealise a father figure, even though they accomplish such an end from different aspects. The final destination of such idealisation is to fulfil the desire for a father. Ostensibly, this craving seems to be a paradox of the research, as I argue that



---

contemporary society is moving to a more feminine discourse where the feminine, the weak have gained power. However, if being fragile and being feminised is no longer a disadvantage, being protected should be a 'perfect plus', a 'bonus'. If the order of the father is no longer one of oppression and exploitation, but of compassion and affections, then, for this very reason of being weak, we should enjoy following 'the flag of the father' wholeheartedly. Henceforth, a self-image of being weak and a craving for a symbolic order of the Father co-exist in peace.

## Chapter Five

### **In search of a *Better Tomorrow* and a *Better Place***

#### **– Anti-heroes' Resistance against Feminisation**

### **5.1 Introduction: Feminisation as Crisis?**

#### **5.1.1 Anti-feminisation and Counter Examples**

In the previous chapters, I have looked through the multifarious forms of warriors as the feminised Other, including personal, socio-cultural and discursive aspects, in both contemporary and historical contexts. Multilayers of feminisation have been studied in a range of different film texts. According to these findings, the consumer society encourages a feminine logic of “narcissistic concern for one’s own welfare”<sup>1</sup>, and such a feminine logic is incorporated into a feminised form of masculinity best represented by the flowery boys and the metrosexuals. Furthermore, when women’s role as consumers is on the rise, male bodies have become ‘commodities’ in high demand in the commercial film market, and such men as women’s love objects are often cherished by women for their gentleness and scholarly elegance in the case of Chinese cultural sphere. The feminine side of men became an important component of woman-made masculinity. Thirdly, a submissive approach to accept the ready-made system is another feminised strategy in searching for identity and political positioning in China, which includes the political submission to the Communist surveillance.

While the previous chapters have dealt with these sophisticated layers of feminisation in the warrior representations, the other side of the coin – the well-established male privilege based on repulsion of femininity in men – has not been paraphrased. Feminisation which emphasises a submissive strategy is easily equal to disempowerment, castration and crisis.

---

<sup>1</sup> See note 77 in Chapter One.

Pierre Bourdieu argues, “*Manliness*, understood as sexual reproductive capacity, but also as the capacity to fight and to exercise violence (especially in acts of revenge), is first and foremost a *duty*”<sup>2</sup>, whereas such male courage springs “from the *fear* of losing the respect or admiration of the group, of ‘losing face’ in front of one’s ‘mates’ and being relegated to the typically female category of ‘wimps’, ‘girlies’, ‘fairies’, etc.”<sup>3</sup>. A submissive strategy is the opposite of the fighting spirits that is essential to define manliness.

This last chapter of this research will focus on some counter-examples of feminisation, with an emphasis to counteract the submissive strategy. Filmmakers have never relinquished the creation of macho, muscular, militant, sadistic, violent male protagonists/antagonists, in particular, in the genres of action films, including gangster and adolescent rebellion films. These films constantly highlight the hero/ anti-hero’s confrontation with manhood crises, which often inflames him to an altruistic response to allege self-control of his fate, to counteract the degeneration of masculine power. A fraction of critics regard this macho tendency as a desperate response to reclaim masculine dominance. When Martin Fradley discussed the presentation of masculinity in Hollywood cinema, he emphasised in 2004 that an emergence of “a near-hysterical (hyper) masculine is a response to the perceived ‘feminisation’ of men within postmodernity”<sup>4</sup>, in which “the narrative drive towards remasculinsation is structured on a prior feminisation”<sup>5</sup>.

There are different layers of countering feminisation in the film examples in this chapter. First of all, there are counter-examples of the flowery boys and men as love objects, and the male characters desperately reclaim their subjectivity and demonstrate their valour

---

<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu, 50-51. Original italics.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Fradley, “Maximus Melodramaticus: Masculinity, Masochism and White male Paranoia in Contemporary Hollywood Cinema,” in *Action and Adventure Cinema*, ed. Yvonne Tasker (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 239.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 240.

and strength. Secondly, these masculine anti-heroes adopt masculine positioning to challenge the system rather than submissive acceptance as the feminised warriors did in the previous chapters.

Like the multilayers of the connotations of feminisation, the counter-feminisation also includes multiple approaches. In this chapter, three different approaches to challenge and oppose feminisation will be discussed with three film examples: revolutionary, romantic and reformatory approaches. When Steve Neale discusses the contradiction between the construction of masculinity and the patriarchy, he points out, “[i]t is the contradiction between narcissism and the law, between an image of *narcissistic* authority on the one hand and an image of *social* authority on the other.”<sup>6</sup> The narcissistic approach is regarded as a revolutionary one because it is one that completely denies social authority. The counter-example in this case is a rebel or an outlaw who confronts and replaces a tyrannous social authority. It is the anti-feminisation approach in the strongest sense. A second milder approach is less rebellious than the revolutionary one, in which case the rebel takes contemporary responsibility to take over the social authority until “a proper enunciator of the law of the father can replace him.”<sup>7</sup> In this case, the rebel does not want to be the narcissistic authority forever, but instead looks for an ideal male ego or political system to follow. He craves for a more romantic relationship with the system. The third approach is least rebellious in the sense that he lodges a complaint rather than challenging the system. The rebels are looked at with criticism and disagreement. In other words, unlike the former two approaches that their target of criticism was the system, this third approach of anti-feminisation focuses on the disapproval of the rebellious acts against the system and relies on the system to offer a solution to rescue the lost souls of the rebels.

---

<sup>6</sup> Neale, “Masculinity as Spectacle,” 14.

<sup>7</sup> Ina Rae Hark, “Animals or Romans: Looking at Masculinity in *Spartacus*,” in *Screaming the Male*, 163.

However, the macho identity in films from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China has been tainted with local colours, and the local features reflect the three different approaches of anti-feminisation, thus opening a door to observing the regional differences that persist within the pan-Chinese filmmaking industries.

### 5.1.2 Film Synthesis

Three films are used to look at the opposite side of the feminisation phenomenon: *Exiled* (dir. Johnnie To, 2006), *Walking on the Wild Side* (dir. Han Jie, 2006), and *The Best of Times* (dir. Chang Tso-chi, 2002).

*Exiled* is set in Macau three days before it returns to Mainland China in December 1999. Wo<sup>8</sup> (played by Nick Cheung 张家辉) is a gangster who quietly returns to Macau with his wife (Josie Ho 何超仪) and their newborn baby. Boss Daifay (Simon Yam 任达华), whom Wo once attempted to kill, sends two of Wo's childhood friends (the nameless leader is played by Anthony Wong 黄秋生) to kill Wo, while his other two childhood mates (Tai played by Francis Ng 吴镇宇, Cat by Roy Cheung 张耀扬) come to save him. These four friends are sympathetic to Wo and decide to cease fire to help Wo get a lump sum of money for his wife and baby, but Wo is killed when they attempt to assassinate one Macau gang lord for \$500,000 potential reward. The four hit-men manage to escape and begin their aimless exile, but accidentally bump into a shoot-out between two groups fighting for one ton of gold. They help the driver transferring the gold to kill every robber to share the gold. However, when Boss Daifay takes Wo's widow and son as hostages, the four hit-men give up the gold and go back to rescue the widow and son, and they become martyrs in this fatherly mission.

---

<sup>8</sup> I deliberately use the Cantonese pronunciations for all the names in *Exiled* in order to highlight its local features.

*Walking on the Wild Side* is a semi-documentary film about a ruthless youngster trio – Xiping (played by Bai peijiang 白培将), Liuliu (played by Guo Qian 郭乾) and Erbao (played by Hou Jing 侯京), who loiter away their lives in an over-exploited coal mining area in China's Shanxi Province at the end of the 1990s. Liuliu, son of a wealthy mine owner, rapes his female friend Zhao Guangxiu; he is punished and beaten by another hooligan leader in the neighbourhood (the girl's classmate) Xiaosi.<sup>9</sup> Together with his two buddies, Liuliu has his revenge by clubbing Xiaosi unconscious. Thinking Xiaosi is dead, the trio of youngsters run away into exile, but Erbao betrays them by running away with all their money and Liuliu's car. Xiping and Liuliu attempt to rob a taxi driver, but Xiping ends up killing Liuliu accidentally with a stolen gun. With Liuliu dead, Xiping returns to his village all by himself, only to find out that the boy they have beaten up has survived and he himself is confused with his own future.

*The Best of Times* is a story about two young gangsters, nineteen-year old Xiaowei (played by Wing Fan 范植伟) and Jie<sup>10</sup> (played by Gao Meng-jie 高盟杰), two intimate cousins and friends living with their widower fathers and problematic siblings in suburban Taipei. They work for for a gang lord as debt-collectors, but they are forced to run to hide after Jie accidentally shoots a gang-boss. They sneak back home because Xiaowei's twin sister Min is dying from leukaemia, so Jie is shot dead before Xiaowei's eyes. Xiaowei, feeling extremely guilty for failing to fight for Jie's life, attempts avenge Jie by attacking the gang lord on the street. A déjà-vu-like moment occurs when Wei comes on to the scene of Jie's death: he finds him alive and waiting. They run into a dead end with their attackers

---

<sup>9</sup> Guangxiu is played by Lu Jie and Xiaosi is played by Tian Zhaoting,

<sup>10</sup> The director takes one character from the first names of the two actors to name the two male protagonists respectively. This tactic has given a more realistic tone to the films, as the actors and the characters they come to play are often merged into one because of their names. Such technique of linking the actors's and characters' names is not a new technique foregrounded by Chang, but it has been practiced at the very early stage of cinema history. A famous example is Shen Xiling's *Crossroads* (1837), where one of the male protagonists played by Zhao Dan (赵丹) is named with his last name Lao Zhao (老赵).

approaching, so they jump into the water and the film ends with the two protagonists swimming in the water like fish in the borderless ocean as if they are finally free from the purgatory of reality to live in a fairyland, a utopia.

The three films share one common feature: they are all emphatically masculine texts focusing on the gangster male protagonists living in a world governed by violence and macho ethos. Contrary to the soft power in the previous chapters, such as lover's discourse, seduction and romantic sentimentalism, these gangster films are a male world filled with bloodshed and revenge, with women either as conquered objects or protected victims.

As a special genre of action films with guns, gangster films are widely recognised as a male genre.<sup>11</sup> The directors minimise the male role as erotic object for the female gaze with different techniques, including sidelining women characters in the narrative, natural lighting in a dark room and backlighting where the male bodies become opaque, long shot and extremely long shots where the human bodies become less significant than the ambience they are in, while enhancing a masculine-masculine identification through the focus on male bonding in the stories.

Both *Exiled* and *The Best of Times* are highly proclaimed in Hong Kong and Taiwan respectively, receiving prestigious awards in their own locality, but *Walking on the Wild Side* did not enjoy the same luck. *Exiled* won the Best Film Award and Best Director Award at the 12<sup>th</sup> Hong Kong Golden Bauhinia Film Awards.<sup>12</sup> *The Best of Times* won the Best Film, Best Taiwanese Film of the Year and Viewer's Choice Award in the Taipei Golden Horse Film

<sup>11</sup> For example, Richard Dyer in his article "Action!" in Jose Arroyo (ed.), *Action/Spectacle Cinema: A Sight and Sound Reader* (London: British Film institute, 2000), argues that an action film "does contribute to the reproduction of a masculine structure of feeling." (p.18); Jason Jacobs in "Gunfire" (from the same edited book) also notes that gunfire is gender-specific. "Gunfire sequences offer particular pleasure for men, pleasures which often cannot be found elsewhere." (p.12)

<sup>12</sup> The Chinese name of this award is 香港电影金紫荆奖. It was established in 1996, organised by the Hong Kong Film Critics Association.

Award<sup>13</sup> in 2002. Both *Exiled* and *The Best of Times* were sent to the Venice Film Festival, even though they did not take home any awards. Although *Walking on the Wild Side* won the Golden Tiger Award in the 2006 Rotterdam International Film Festival,<sup>14</sup> this award is overseas rather than domestic recognition. In addition, it was produced with the help of foreign funds. It has never been officially released in China.

Such difference in the reception towards the films under discussion actually reflects distinctive local features. Despite the fact that it becomes extremely difficult to categorise a Chinese language film in terms of regions, local distinctions are still revealed in the film texts that are set in a distinctive locality.

In terms of cinematic styles, the three films also show their connection with their local cinema. *Walking on the Wild Side* is quasi-documentary style set in the destitute areas of China, mirroring other Mainland Chinese filmmakers, such as Jia Zhangke, the producer of this film. *Exiled* demonstrates a legacy of Hong Kong gangster cinema tinted with colonial colours.<sup>15</sup> The angry youngsters in *The Best of Times* are coloured with Taiwan characteristics. The director Chang Tso-chi was an assistant director for the fatherly figure of Taiwan's New Wave cinema of the 1980s – Hou Hsiao-hsien<sup>16</sup>; therefore Chang's cinematic style reflects a heritage from Taiwan's New Wave.

The three films in this chapter are set in Macau, in a marginal community in Taipei and in a small village in rural China respectively. Delivered in local dialects, they conjure up

---

<sup>13</sup> Taipei Golden Horse Film Award is Taiwan's equivalence to the Academy Awards in Hollywood. It was established by Government Information Office in 1962 and it is one of the prestigious film awards for Chinese language films.

<sup>14</sup> The Rotterdam International Film Festival is one of the larger film festivals in Europe, less prominent than but alongside Cannes, Venice, Berlin, and Locarno. This film festival uses a tiger as its mascot. Its first festival was called "Film International", organised in June 1972 under the leadership of Hubert Bals. Since 1995, the Tiger Awards were introduced, which are three yearly prizes for young filmmakers who make their first or second film.

<sup>15</sup> For further reading on Hong Kong gangster films, see Martha P. Nochimson, *Dying to Belong: Gangster Movies in Hollywood and Hong Kong*.

<sup>16</sup> Chang was assistant director for Hou in his award-winning epic *A City of Sadness* (1989).



subtle historical residues and connections typical to their specific localities. Section 3 to 5 will discuss the local features of the representations in these anti-heroes in order to identify their distinctive anti-feminisation significance.

## 5.2 Hypermasculinity: Anti-Heroes' Self-made Maleness

An intriguing common feature of these three films is that the male protagonists represent social outlaws struggling against a hostile situation. The previous chapters focus on the glamorous bodies of the warriors as desirable commodities who simultaneously enjoy their new role as an image. The metrosexual culture represents such ecstasy of men as consumers who could afford to indulge themselves; the romantic heroes are catering to the female audiences with potential consumption power; the lovable fathers still uphold the flag of the patriarchy. However, there are others who do not fit into these roles and have been left out and forgotten by the glamorous consumer society.

While Mainland China celebrates its blooming economy (thud the economic platform for metrosexual culture) and international influence over the past two decades, Xiping and his 'royal' friends in *Walking on the Wild Side* muddle in an isolated and destitute coalmining village. When the sovereignty of Macau was returned to Mainland China (thus the restoration of the Chinese flag in a lost territory), the male protagonists in *Exiled* could not find a home they could return to. While Taiwan is well-known for its glamorous metrosexual culture (such as the F4 sensation discussed at the previous chapters), Xiaowei and Jie live in a shabby, filthy corner of Taipei. None of them can find his place of belonging or identity by connecting with the collective mainstream. All the male protagonists in these films seem to be out of pace with the swift transformation of the environment they are living in; therefore, their existence is 'at risk'. As anti-social rogues involved in murders and criminal acts, they are "villains", but they are always not complete villains, and thus they are closer to "villain

hero”, another name for “anti-hero” by Percy Adams, who argues that an anti-hero “is sometimes able to feel pricks of conscience.... This ‘villain hero’ is nearly always a man of intellectual powers, a dominating person who brooks no opposition and is capable of cruel, sometimes unholy, schemes, even murder.”<sup>17</sup> These “villain heroes”, or “anti-heroes”, according to Philip Thody, are those “who cannot deal effectively with the problems and dangers with which life presents him in the real world.”<sup>18</sup> These characters suffer from a cultural dislocation and are desperate to reclaim an identity for themselves. Anita Harris argues that in an era when a subject has to negotiate his or her own identity in a risky hostile environment means

[t]hey must develop individual strategies and take personal responsibility for their success, happiness, and livelihood by making the right choices in an uncertain and changeable environment. The benchmark for achieving a successful identity is ... a capacity for self-invention.<sup>19</sup>

Peter Kelly also shares similar argument:

youthful subjects are constructed as responsible for future life chances, choices and options within institutionally structured risk environments.... The subject is

<sup>17</sup> Percy G. Adams, “The Anti-hero in Eighteenth-Century Fiction,” in *The Anti-hero: His Emergence and Transformations, Studies in the Literary Imagination*, eds. Lilian R. Furst and James D. Wilson, Vol. IX, No.1, (Spring 1976), (Atlanta: Georgia State University), 38.

<sup>18</sup> Philip Thody, “The Anti-heroes of Sartre and Camus: Some Problems of Definition”, in *The Anti-hero: His emergence and Transformations*, 115. “Anti-hero” is most commonly used to refer to the protagonists in picaresque novel that started in Spain in the sixteenth century. *Lazarillo de Tomes and of His Fortunes and Adversities* (1554) is regarded as the first true anti-hero narrative. Miguel de Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* is probably the most famous example. Its concept is evolving constantly and variations of different types of anti-heroes appear at different literatures in different historical backgrounds. Literarily, anti-hero is the anti-thesis of the hero and is often depicted in a satirical parody. While a traditional hero is one who is devoted to a just cause, fighting for the honour and glory of his personal dignity, or his country or his religion, an anti-hero is often an anti-social picaro/rogue, whereas the honour of glory of traditional heroism becomes absurd hypocrisy. Anti-hero is also the protagonists of horror, Gothic novels, thrillers and *film noir*. For detailed examples of variations of anti-heroes, refer to Lilian R. Furst and James D. Wilson, eds. “The Anti-hero: His Emergence and Transformations”, *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, Vol. IX, No.1, (Spring 1976). .

<sup>19</sup> Anita Harris, *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 4-5.

---

compelled to prudently manage...his or her own DIY [Do-It-Yourself]-project of the self.<sup>20</sup>

The self-inventions of masculine subjectivity in these three films are all directed towards killing and exile. Xiping and his buddies in *Walking on the Wild Side* are local hoodlums easily provoked into fighting, stealing and even killing. Killing is the profession of the male protagonists in *Exiled*. Both Jie and Xiaowei work for a gang lord in *The Best of Times*. Phallus symbols, such as guns, daggers, and unicorn (which will be further examined in latter sections) permeate in these films. The violent ‘hard’ body challenging both the laws and their own physical limits is their central characteristic.

To show that these three films are counterexamples of the “feminised” warriors, this section focuses on three different aspects:

### 5.2.1 Intimidation vs. Pleasure

In previous chapters, the feminised warriors exude some romantic ambience pleasant to the female gazers, but, in contrast, the directors of these three films utilise multiple methods to deglamorise the anti-heroes. The directors’ choice of actors is an important starting point for discussing the unattractiveness of these anti-heroes. All the actors in *Walking on the Wild Side* are untrained, amateur actors unknown to the audience; therefore, the actors are not the high point of the film. Han Jie also comments that the three male actors he has chosen were really local hooligans: “of course they can’t really act, so it’s important to get them drunk and turn on the camera at the right moment.”<sup>21</sup> Although the two male actors in *The Best of Times* are students in a performing school in Taiwan, they are relatively fresh

---

<sup>20</sup> Peter Kelly, “Youth at Risk: Process of Individualisation and Responsibilisation in the Risk Society,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 22, no.1, 2001: 23-33”, 30, quoted in Harris, Anita. *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-first Century*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Jeroen Groenewegen, “Between Social Realism and Kawaii Virtuality,” accessed 21 Jan 2010, <http://www.asiaarts.ucla.edu/090206/article.asp?parentID=104383>.

new faces in films; therefore, no frenzy fans chase after them, yet. Only in *Exiled* do the audience who are familiar with Hong Kong cinema see some recognisable faces, but all the characters are well-known for their talented performance in gangster films as ruthless gang lords and hit-men, not for their handsome physical attractiveness.<sup>22</sup>

The costume designs are another way to diminish the physical appeal of the male images. In contrast with the typical metrosexual warriors discussed in Chapter Two or with warriors in stylish costumes, an everyday tone of costume style is set in both *Walking on the Wild Side* and of *The Best of Times*. All the male characters are dressed in inexpensive, homely and sometimes shabby clothes. In *Walking on the Wild Side*, all are uncombed, unwashed, and with nails stained with mud-like dark marks. Such untidy images could be understood as a unique kind of spectacle for specific audiences, as will be dealt with in later sections, but speaking from the female gaze aspect in this research, such dull and gloomy male images lack romantic appeal.

Besides the uninviting costumes, light arrangement is another of the directors' means to obscure the male images. In *The Best of Times*, natural light dominates the whole film. All the indoor scenes are shot in dimly lit rooms so that the characters are constantly in the dark. Furthermore, director Chang Tso-chi has a penchant for long shots and extreme long shots; as a result, the mise-en-scène often overshadows the human figures. In *Exiled*, the director arranges a series of shots with low-key light and backlight to imply intimidating feelings, diminishing the pleasure side of the images.

Furthermore, these intimidating feelings are intensified with the guns in men's hands, with which they are constantly on the verge to open fire to kill, threatening the characters in

---

<sup>22</sup> Among the five male actors, Francis Ng and Roy Chang are well-known (or notorious) for their performance as vicious gang lords in *Young and Dangerous* series; Anthony Wong is well-recognised talented actor who has a list of psychopaths and bizarre characters under his name, whereas Lam Suet (林雪) who plays Anthony Wong's follower is the ugly, obese side-kick in almost all of Johnnie To's films; Nick Cheung might be more like a popular idol in a sense, but he is now often well-recognised for his portrayal of gangsters and hit-men. Simon Yam plays so many gang lords in Hong Kong cinema that his name becomes eponymous with "gang lord".

the narratives as well as the audience with death. In *The Best of Times*, Jie is obsessed with the gun given to them by the gang leader Gu, regarding it as signal to conquer. When he learns that his father has been beaten up by an angry man during gambling, he rushes to revenge by beating up the offender, but he is easily provoked to divert his anger towards the other mediators to the point of drawing out his gun threatening to open fire at anyone in his way (Still 5-1). In *Walking on the Wild Side*, Xiping is depicted aiming at a taxi driver whom they attempt to rob, with a gun that they have stolen from a mine owner (Still 5-2). The camera is placed to the same side of the driver, so that Xiping is pointing the gun directly at the audiences who can feel the threat and anger zooming out of the male protagonist on the screen.



Still 5-1



Still 5-2 “You don’t want to live any more?”

In *Exiled*, the men are constantly depicted with gun in hands, backlights shot from behind, while their faces are in shadows (Still 5-3 and 5-4).



Still 5-3



Still 5-4

The director assembles a wide range of shots of these gloomy images to emphasise these male assassins’ intense coldness, in contrast with the gentle smile of feminised warriors

and the romantic tint analysed in previous chapters. These intimidating male images may serve as special spectacles, but the pleasure based on physical attractiveness, glamour and their romantic appeal in heterosexual bonding has been minimised.

### 5.2.2 Man Loves (Wo)Man

The audiences are threatened by the male images on screen rather than indulging in voyeuristic pleasure, while a lack of female lens characters acting as gaze agents is a common feature of all of three films.

Women characters in these films function either as typical sexual objects or conventional nurturing mothers. In *Exiled*, two female characters, a seductive prostitute and Wo's wife, fit well into these two categories respectively. In *Walking on the Wild Side*, Xiping's mother is a woman left behind by a husband working in another city, but her husband has basically abandoned his family back home and lives with another woman in another city, leaving her stuck in a hopeless village waiting for his financial support. The main plot is the three young men's fleeing away from their crime, while the women they meet on the road are either a superstitious stupid lady or prostitutes or urban girls who scorn them.

None of these female characters acts as a bearer of the gaze. The young wife who commits adultery with Xiping In *Walking on the Wild Side* is always depicted from Xiping's point of view shots and low key shots. The audience can seldom have a clear view of her facial expression or her emotional status.

In *Exiled*, major events of the film include the five men's assassination job and the gun-fight with Daifey's gang, all of which take place with no female characters involved or after the female character is escorted out of the scene. Admittedly, a seductive prostitute is depicted in various occasions stealing a few glimpses at the men; she gazes at them when

they come to seek help from a dark market doctor after Wo is wounded, and she appears again after the final gunfire atrocity, but it always turns out that the object of her gaze is the cash involved rather than the men in front of her. In the doctor's house, Dayfei's gang and Wo's group meet once again and the whole scene develops into another frenzy shoot-out, but the prostitute takes this opportunity to take as much cash as she can from the doctor's bedroom. After the final shoot-out, she sneaks out to grab as much gold as she can and walks away.<sup>23</sup>

In *The Best of Times*, Xiaowei's twin sister is an important female character, but she is a bed-ridden patient dying from an incurable disease, while the rest of the narrative is conducted as two young men's drama.

With female gaze minimised, the masculine-masculine gaze has been given more emphasis in this chapter. According to Sean Nixon, the masculine-masculine gaze "concerns the bifurcation between identification and the pleasure in looking at the image posited within the psychoanalytic conception of spectatorship."<sup>24</sup> In this gaze formula, the intimidating, de-romanticised, dark male image might have diminished the pleasure of looking, but the man with intimidating charisma might be a powerful "ego-ideal."

The recognition of such an "ego-ideal" resonates with E. Ann Kaplan's definition of traditional male stars who

...did not necessarily (or even primarily) derive their "glamour" from their looks or their sexuality but from the power they were able to wield within the filmic world in which they functioned; these men became ego-ideals for the men in the audience, corresponding to the image in the mirror.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Such portrayal of women as practical 'gold digger' can be developed further into another aspect of Johnnie To's gender politics, but the argument will be simplified in this research in order to focus on the masculine aspect.

<sup>24</sup> Nixon, *Hard Look*, 179.

<sup>25</sup> E. Ann Kaplan, *Women and Film*, 29.

The unbound, ruthless anti-heroes demonstrate a rebellious momentum. The intimidating hard body represented by these daring anti-heroes basically functions as the avatar of the (male) audience who could imagine they become the fearless anti-hero with a gun in hand.

In both *Exiled* and *The Best of Times*, such “ego-ideals” are neatly embodied by those tough men who stand up to protect their ‘mates’. In *Exiled* Wo’s childhood friend Tai decides to protect Wo no matter what it takes, while another such friend who is sent to kill him ends up protecting Wo and his family. In *The Best of Times* Brother Zhe (Xiaowei’s sister’s ex-lover) offers Xiaowei and Jie a haven after they shot a rival gang leader. These intimidating anti-heroes shine through their ruthlessness, establishing themselves as the hypermasculine ego-ideals.

In *Walk on the Wild Side*, a lack of such ideal of male-bonding becomes a strong political gesture. That Such a lack exposes one of the regional differences that are to be dealt with in the following sections. One of the cinematic techniques in this film for undermining the “ego-ideal” is its use of shots from the backs of the characters so that they are not mirror images as Kaplan has categorised. This will be discussed further in section 5.5.

### **5.2.3 Undisciplined, Hard Bodies vs. Docile, Soft Bodies**

According to Kaplan’s notion, the key point of this “ego-ideal” is “power,” whereas this ‘power’ is revealed in their undisciplined ruthless boundary-crossing conducts. These male anti-heroes ferociously exert controlling and conquering power, walking a thin line between social morality and a bohemian-like freedom. In *Exiled*, all the male characters, except two cowardly policemen, are ferocious hit-men and gangsters. They steal a car right under the noses of two police officers and drive away with arrogance. In *Walking on the Wild Side*, even though the young rebels are by no means depicted as powerful “ego-ideal”, they



consciously proclaim themselves to be gang lords above law and order. They eagerly pick fights with other ruthless teenagers in their neighbourhood to prove their superiority. Their male ego inflates in conquering women. The corpulent boy Liuliu rapes his village neighbour girl Guangxiu. On their way of running away from police pursuit, they continue the same conquest of women by patronising prostitutes.

In *The Best of Times*, the two male anti-heroes are not just boundary-crossers joining the gang world; the director deploys magical realist tactics to present his male protagonists crossing the boundary of death. After Jie is shot death, Chang arranges an epilogue in which Xiaowei finds Jie still alive, waiting for him on the very spot where he is shot dead. After they jump into the river, all Jie's wounds are miraculously healed, and they plunge into the water, unscathed.

In their boundary-crossing valour, these anti-heroes are often wounded, either by guns, daggers or fists, but the wounds inflicted on their bodies are marks of glorious manhood. In the final chaotic frenzied shootout of *Exiled*, all of the male protagonists are covered in their own blood and dying of numerous gunshot wounds, but they die with dignified and smiling faces, invoking a sense of pride in their fatal wounds. According to Dawn Heinecken, a bruised male body is a sign of true manhood: “[a]t once bleeding and bruised, his chiselled sinews belie the hero's suffering by evoking a ‘hardness’ that exists beyond the physical. The hardness of the hero's body works to define him – as *man*, as master over his environment.”<sup>26</sup>

These undisciplined, intimidating male bodies constantly covered by their own blood in these gangster and young rebel films provide prototypes of counterexamples to what Foucault defined as “docile bodies”. The previous chapters have argued, with the theoretical support of Foucault's discipline and Butler's regulatory body, that social prohibitions, obligations and regulatory rituals exercise on the bodies various forms of discipline,

---

<sup>26</sup> Dawn Heinecken, *The Warrior Women of Television: a Feminist Cultural Analysis of the New Female Body in Popular Media* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 1. Italics mine.

demanding the body to perform according to these regulatory conventions. Foucault draws an analogy between human body and machine:

[o]ne of these poles...centred on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls...<sup>27</sup>

The son's filial piety to the Father discussed in Chapter Two, the New Man with a lover's discourse in Chapter Three and the patriotic soldiers in Chapter Four, are various forms of useful and docile bodies. However, there are always those who refuse to accept the roles of "docile bodies" in the first place. As Butler observes, "prohibitions do not always "work", that is, do not always produce the docile body that fully conforms to the social ideal".<sup>28</sup>

The valiant anti-heroes under current discussion belong to the exploited and oppressed group, embodying a self-made manhood that stands out firm against the popular ideal "docile body" of feminised metrosexual masculinity. They, in fact, represent the poverty-stricken and unprivileged underclass who cannot afford to become feminised metrosexual men enjoying luxurious lifestyles. Michael Flocker defines the metrosexual with four key characteristics, "1: twenty-first century male trendsetter. 2: straight, urban man with heightened aesthetic sense. 3: man who spends time and money on appearance and shopping. 4: man willing to embrace his feminine side."<sup>29</sup> Obviously, in order to be a metrosexual, consumption power is the essential tool to secure his class privilege. According to Baudrillard:

Consumption, like the education system, is a class institution: not only is there inequality before objects in the economic sense (the purchase, choice and use of objects are governed by purchasing power and by educational level, which is itself

<sup>27</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol.1, 139.

<sup>28</sup> Butler, *Bodies that matter*, 64.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Flocker, *The Metrosexual Guide to Style: A Handbook for the Modern Man*. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003).

dependent upon class background, etc.) – in short, not everyone has the same objects, just as not everyone has the same educational chances – but, more deeply, there is radical discrimination in the sense that only some people achieve mastery of an autonomous, rational logic of the elements of the environment (functional use, aesthetic organization, cultural accomplishment).<sup>30</sup>

In comparison with the trendy flowery boys in the Introduction and the elegant young warriors in the *Playboy Cops*, the gangster anti-heroes struggle with financial difficulty. The hierarchy between the urban wealthy society represented by the metrosexuals and the poor underclass (the unemployed teenagers in rural China, the hitmen in Hong Kong and the underlings of the ganglords in Taiwan) reflects class limitation of the power of the feminine discourse. To be able to celebrate the feminine side is a privilege of the men from the urban wealthy class, who pay more attention to how they look rather than what they do. Yet, the particular attention to their appearance is a significant sign of their “purchasing power”. On the contrary, the anti-heroes discussed here could not enjoy such privileges when masculinity is defined by purchasing power. They become representatives of “marginalised masculinities”<sup>31</sup>, to borrow Connell’s term. The co-existence of the glamorous postmodern feminised men and these destitute tough guys completes the picture of a postmodern world “where developed and developing, rich and poor, exploiters and exploited coexist,”<sup>32</sup> according to Adam Lam’s diagnosis.

---

<sup>30</sup> Baudrillard, *Consumer Society*, 59.

<sup>31</sup> R. W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 30.

<sup>32</sup> Adam Lam, “Nostalgia and Dissatisfaction: Reading Zhang Yimou’s *The Road Home* and *Not One Less* as Postmodern Texts”, in *Asian Futures, Asian Traditions*, ed, Edwina Palmer (Folkstone: Global Oriental, 2005), 410.

### 5.3 *Exiled*: The Wrath of the New Father

#### 5.3.1 Devils at the Doorstep<sup>33</sup>

Johnnie To depicts in *Exiled* the opposite in Hong Kong/Macau, where the protagonists redeem themselves and become the One saving the Other (woman and child). *Exiled* is chosen to represent a revolutionary approach of anti-submission. The gangsters' self-proclaimed redemption is closely related to scepticism towards the saving power of the authorities from outside, which are often demonised as 'devils at the Doorstep' who come to oppress or even torture Hong Kong/Macau's local subjects. Facing the invasion from the devil at the doorstep, the gangster anti-heroes in this film are determined to establish themselves as the noble savages to guard the door.

Cunningly, in order to tell a story about Hong Kong, director To chooses a mirror replica of Hong Kong – Macau. Hong Kong and Macau, both ports remote from the imperial centre, are on the periphery compared with Mainland China, as a "Central Plains Syndrome" has for centuries dominated the Chinese cultural scene, which "represented a hierarchy of cultural differentiation derived from geographic, territorial, and cultural boundaries between the mainland core and the outlying periphery."<sup>34</sup> The geographical and cultural marginality of Hong Kong and Macau was accentuated by their colonial suffering. To cleverly hints at the common destiny of Hong Kong and Macau through a car registration plate (Still 5- 5). After they fail in their assassination of a Macau gang, the five protagonists escape by driving away with a stolen car. The plate number is "MF-97-99", alluding to the years Mainland China reclaiming Hong Kong (in 1997) and Macau (in 1999) respectively. By linking the common

<sup>33</sup> The term is a translation of a Chinese proverb "guizi lai le" (鬼子来了). This term is quite a common term in many of the early anti-Japanese war epics made in the 1950s and 1960s, which refers to the awareness and fear of the approaching of Japanese soldiers. "Guizi laile" is a dialogue line in *Landmine Warfare* (地雷战 dilei zhan, dir. Tang Yingqi 唐英奇, Xu Da 徐达, Wu Jianhai 吴健海, 1962). Jiang Wen's film *Devils on the Doorstep* in 2000 borrows the Chinese term.

<sup>34</sup> Poshek Fu, "Between Nationalism and Colonialism: Mainland Émigrés, Marginal Culture, and Hong Kong Cinema 1937-1941," in *Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*, ed. Poshek Fu and David Desser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 208.

fate of Hong Kong and Macau together, To can tell a story of Macau in order to tell a story of Hong Kong because they are in the same ‘car’ chased by the devils. The fact that they are in a stolen car metaphorically refers to their illegitimate status.



Still 5-5 “MF-97-99”

*Exiled* is not an isolated case of such a theme, but represents a common feature of Hong Kong gangster films, in which their protagonists discover the “terrifying truths behind the glittery promises of modern, industrialized democracies”.<sup>35</sup> Thus, while divulging the imperfections, or even the defects in the authorities and their laws, *Exiled* bets on self-governance. To in *Exiled* redeems his gangster protagonists, proclaiming their hypermasculinity as a sine qua non for being the new patriarch.

However, in order to justify the gangster anti-heroes’ revolution to replace the law and order, To lures the audience into the deep-rooted mistrust toward authorities with his political indicators. To sets his story on the three days before Macau’s returning to China on 20 December 1999. In order to understand the fear of imposing governments as ‘devils at the Doorstep’, one must look back on to the colonial history of Macau. When the Portuguese established a permanent settlement in Macau in 1557, paying the Ming Dynasty some annual rent, Portugal initiated its colonial encroachment to acculturate Macau and took over the authority of this land, depriving the Macau people of their home. Eventually, on 1 December

---

<sup>35</sup> Martha P. Nochimson, *Dying to Belong: Gangster Movies in Hollywood and Hong Kong* (Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 4.

1887, the Qing government was forced to sign the Sino-Portuguese Treaty of Amity and Commerce, under which the Qing Government ceded to Portugal the right of perpetual occupation and government of Macau, making Macau Portugal's official colony. In 1928, after the 1911 Revolution overthrew the Qing government, the Kuomintang government abrogated the treaty and signed a new Sino-Portuguese Friendship and Trade Treaty with Portugal, in which the Portuguese governance of Macau remained unscathed. It was not until 1987 when the Joint Declaration on the Question of Macau was signed by the Portuguese and Chinese governments that the full framework of the sovereignty transfer on December 20, 1999, was decided.

None of these treaties were signed after consulting the local people who are haunted by an ordeal of being betrayed again and again. First of all, their Fatherland<sup>36</sup> – China – has betrayed them more than once; since the nineteenth century, every time a new administration government came into power, they rewrote a treaty without consulting the Macau people, whose voice was muffled throughout the whole prolonged process of colonisation. They were marginalised to become the voiceless subalterns deprived of the right to decide their own fate.

After years of drifting without protection of a Father Nation, they are now claimed back by the Communist Chinese government that is equally untrustworthy because the people under its governance have suffered enormously during the past few decades. In fact, the Tiananmen Incident, also known as June Fourth Massacre, happened just two years after the Joint Declaration was signed. Even though the *Basic Law of Macau* stipulates that Macau operates with a high degree of autonomy until 2049, fifty years after the transfer, people in Macau, like their counterparts in Hong Kong, are suspicious about the promise of the Communist government and the possibility of a true autonomy.

---

<sup>36</sup> See Chapter One for a more detailed analysis of Chinese identification of nation as “fatherland”.

Their suspicion over the ‘autonomy’ granted to them by the Communist party is cunningly substantiated by the farfetched amendment to this particular film. This film has not been publicly screened in Mainland China, but ‘thanks’ to piracy and illegal download over the internet, various Mandarin versions are still available to the mass Mainland Chinese audience. Even in one of such pirate versions, two frames with simplified Chinese characters are inserted as the preamble and finish of the film. (Stills 5-6 and 5-7)

特区政府要转运大量黄金, 不料消息走漏, 黑帮大飞一伙闻讯蠢蠢欲动, 警方对此并无察觉. 万分危急之时, 警方“放逐”计划悄然启动....

The government of the (Macau) Special Administration Region of People’s Republic of China needs to transfer a large amount of gold. Unfortunately, this news is sneaked out and the gangs led by Daifay are urged to rob the gold. The police are unprepared, but they swiftly handle the emergency with a plan code-named “Exiled”

Still 5-6 the preamble

与此同时, 陈队长汇合执法人员赶至现场, 将静母子救出, 警方“放逐”计划安插在“大飞”身边的卧底 “火”, 不幸殉职. 黄金最后全数归还特区政府.

Official Chen, joined by the police force, arrives at the fighting scene on time and saves the widow and her son. The undercover policeman “Fire” sent into Daifay’s gang under the operation of Plan “Exiled” dies on duty. All the gold is safely returned to the Macau government.

Still 5-7 the Finish

These two imposed frames are problematic; firstly, all other credits are written in traditional Chinese characters while these two frames are in simplified Chinese; secondly, anachronism is exposed in this insert, as the Special Administration Region it refers to has not been set up yet at the time of the film narrative. Thirdly, the police officers it mentions, including the crucial undercover police, are never clearly depicted in the film. The main purpose of such an imposition of these two frames is to contort a gangster film into a police eulogy, reinstating the police as the HERO and glorifying the final victory of social law and order,<sup>37</sup> while the anti-social elements have to be put behind bars or fastened.

<sup>37</sup> Chinese censorship has been particularly sensitive towards gangster films as they often expose negative images of law and order. The State Administration of Radio Film and Television has re-emphasised its 2006 Film Management regulation in 2008 that films that “deliberately derogate the images of the People’s

The whole story is set at a time *before* the transfer of sovereignty, so it can be deduced that the chaotic gangs world reflects the failure of the colonial government, not Mainland China. This film should be harmless, but it could not break away from the iron hand of Mainland China's censorship. So, when such a minor case as a gangster film, an entertainment piece, could cause sensitive concussion, what would happen in a graver political circumstance? Hong Kong/ Macau people's anxiety about the Communist rule is substantially justified by such arbitrary treatment of a gangster film.

Admittedly, the anxiety and crisis are not merely triggered by Mainland China. To repeatedly reveals mistrust towards all those ruling over Macau in his film. First of all, the Portuguese colonisers are untrustworthy. Even the most obnoxious gang lord in *Exiled* has seen through the ugly truth of authorities, as the gang-boss Daifay says to a Macau gang-boss, "right now all the Portuguese are only packing their own staff to run for their own lives."<sup>38</sup> The Portuguese are abandoning their colony's citizens and they by no means behave better than the Communists.

Secondly, the local authorities that are supposed to protect Macau are extremely unreliable. To reveals the untrustworthiness of the local authority through the mouth of an informant who reveals a potential opportunity for robbing a gold-trafficking van, whispering that some high-ranking official is fleeing Macau with one ton of gold.<sup>39</sup> The local government represented by such corrupt high officials basically abandons Macau people to the mercy of anyone who wants to claim Macau back, while they are fleeing with the resources and wealth of the Macau people.

---

Liberation Army, the Police or the juridical administration must be revised," accessed 26 January 2011, <http://www.chinasarft.gov.cn/articles/2008/03/07/20080307155320180354.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Original lines: "那些葡萄牙人都赶着收拾东西走人。"

<sup>39</sup> In a Mandarin version, this gold is merely described as "illegal money" that needed to be transferred, completely erasing the reference to officialdom involvement.



The police officer played by Hui Shiu Hung (许绍雄), who represents the law enforcers of the local community, completely ignores his duties as a law enforcer and drives away in cowardly fashion when he runs into gang shootouts. On the first occasion, he calls Daifay, “I come across your hit-men shooting. I don’t want to be involved. I am just a passer-by. ... It is only three days left before I retire.” On the second occasion, he only utters, “I’m only a passer-by. None of my business. None of my business. It is only twenty-seven hours left before I finish my job.”<sup>40</sup>

An authority-phobia is deeply imprinted in the social psyche of the people in Hong Kong and Macau. Such fear of the Communist take-over fell back to the colonisation history of Hong Kong and Macau. Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in the 1842 Treaty of Nanking following the Qing government’s defeat in the First Opium War (or First Sino-British War, 1839-1842). After the Qing Government’s defeat in the Second Opium War (1856-1860), part of Kowloon Peninsula (south of present day Boundary Street) was ceded to Britain under the Convention of Peking signed in 1860. In 1898, Britain and the Qing Government signed the Convention between Great Britain and China Respecting and Extension of Hong Kong Territory, the rest of Hong Kong, including the New Territories and the remaining rural areas, was leased to Britain for 99 years.<sup>41</sup>

Hong Kong was basically a place abandoned by the Qing empire, and later as a place of self-exile for those who migrated to Hong Kong to escape the political turmoil in Mainland China since the end of the 1940s, while the British government did not close and guard the

---

<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, in a Mandarin version, the police officer’s line has been changed to “Do not do anything rash. Do not do anything rash”. He and his partner swiftly drive away. In the Cantonese version, this happens in silence, but in the same Mandarin version, additional lines are added, “a wise man does not fight when the odds are against him. Let’s go back to the police station to make a careful plan to arrest them.” Such additional information is meant to polish the image of the police officer.

<sup>41</sup> See Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2004).

border of Hong Kong out of considerations of economic speculation.<sup>42</sup> Neither Britain nor China offered Hong Kong national protection. Therefore, Hong Kong scholar Liu Shaolin sadly describes it as a “colony that falls into the crevice between two giant nations.”<sup>43</sup> Hong Kong’s marginal status was further intensified after the Sino-British negotiations for the returning of Hong Kong began in 1982. Both China and Britain negotiated and signed the most important document regarding Hong Kong’s destiny after 1997- The Sino-British Joint Declaration, without giving any chance for Hong Kong local people to express their own view.

Without any chance to speak their minds, Hong Kong people realise, in Ming K. Chan’s words,

that the people of Hong Kong have not been, and cannot be, masters of their own fate. They were excluded from the Sino-British negotiations and are still pawns in the discord and struggle for control between two sovereign powers...[T]he feeling of helplessness and pessimism reinforced a pervasive sentiment of bitterness and mistrust toward officialdom in both London and Beijing.<sup>44</sup>

Such mistrust towards the authorities, as Stephen Teo indicates, makes Hong Kong people generally feel “a loss of confidence in the colonial government’s ability to defend Hong Kong’s interests, cynicism towards the rule of law now...has crept into the public psyche.”<sup>45</sup>

Hong Kong people felt that they have been marginalised by the law that was made by Mainland China and Britain without their own consent. The gangsters represent a marginal

---

<sup>42</sup> For more detailed discussion on British’s attitude towards Hong Kong, please refer to Liu, Shaolin. *Xianggang de zhimindi youling: cong zhimindi jingyan kan jintian de xianggang chujing* (The colonial phantom of Hong Kong: contemporary Hong Kong from its colonial experience) ( Hong Kong: Shoucong she, 2005).

<sup>43</sup> Chinese original: “大国夹缝中的香港殖民地”, Liu, *Xianggang de zhimindi youling*, 21. (see note above)

<sup>44</sup> Ming K. Chan, “Hong Kong: Colonial Legacy, Transformation, and Challenge,” in Alan W. Heston, Max J. Skimore, Neil A. Weiner, eds, *The Future of Hong Kong* (Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage Periodical Press, 1996), 19-20.

<sup>45</sup> Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*, 240.

group that stand against law and order, struggling for justice outside law and order. Hong Kong people share some of the sentiments with these gangsters, as they crave for real happiness outside the Britain colonial control as well as the Communists authorities. For them, the returning to Communist China is not a homecoming reunion, but rather being alerted to the Communist China as the devil at the doorstep. The first half of the film focuses on such anxiety, as the 'devil' authority is enclosing Macau, and the Macau (Hong Kong) people are given two choices (to stay or not to stay) they do not ask for; therefore, they do not really know what to choose. Coin-tossing becomes the only option left for the male protagonists. After Wo dies, the four friends drive to an intersection facing two roads, but none of them knows which way to take and they have to resort to tossing a coin to decide. (Still 5-8 "Which way") When they arrive at a deserted hill and run into a shootout over one ton of smuggled gold (they know about this gold van from the informant who arranges their assassination mission), they rely on coin-tossing once again to decide whether to rob that gold or not.



Still 5-8 "Which way?"

### 5.3.2 Noble Savage<sup>46</sup>: “I’m the Father.”

The bafflement at the crossroad severely damages male confidence based on “the need to rise to the challenge of the opportunities available to him to increase his honour by pursuing glory and distinction in the public sphere.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, Stephen Teo remarks that such a blow to male pride in *Exiled* is a form of feminisation of men facing the crisis of masculinity.<sup>48</sup> He illustrates the character played by Anthony Wong (the leader sent to kill Wo) as a typical feminised male sufferer:

His whole body is literally made to suffer – in those several scenes where he is shot in the chest but survives because he is wearing a bullet-proof vest and in the scene where he is repeatedly slapped in the face by Boss Fay for failing to carry out his orders to execute Wo.... Wong takes the violence meted out to him like a woman who takes the symbolic violence of male domination...<sup>49</sup>

Teo’s theory of male crisis as a form of feminisation differs from the feminisation in men discussed in the previous chapters, which stress femininity in men as a seductive strategy without any ambition to overthrow the masculine institutions. However, the ‘feminisation’ as a crisis comes from social collective expectations for men. Bourdieu wittedly declares, “[m]ale privilege is also a trap, and it has its negative side in the permanent tension and contention, sometimes verging on the absurd, imposed on every man by the duty to assert his manliness in all circumstances....”<sup>50</sup>

*Exiled* actually reflects men dreaming of a temporary relief from such a masculine trap so as to enjoy an ephemeral feminine moment of life. At the beginning of the film, the five male gangsters hold fire and help Wo set up his new home. They move the furniture up,

---

<sup>46</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and the Discourses*, trans. G.D.H Cole (London: Everyman’s Library Telos Press, 1973. Reprint, 1993), 102.

<sup>47</sup> Bourdieu, 50-51.

<sup>48</sup> Teo, *Director in Action*, 194.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Bourdieu, 49.

cook a tasty meal and sit around the table to enjoy their homely bliss, all of which is accompanied by relaxed music and shot in warm light. This idyllic domestic moment reveals the true hankering of these gangsters: home, domestic bliss, which has been recognised as a woman's place.

Wo's childhood friend Tai who comes to protect him asks why he chooses to come back when he has already had a chance to run for his life; he replies sadly, "we spent years on the road. I wanted a home." After he is seriously injured, he keeps muttering, "home", while his last words before death are "let's go home!" Director To also emphasises the concept of "HOME" in the interview recorded in the special features of the film's DVD version.

However, with the 'devils at the doorstep', the five main male characters are pushed into a precarious crisis of losing their home, but at the same time, they are given a delicate opportunity to declare themselves as masters of their own fate. Hong-Kong-born scholar Rey Chow has disclosed such dichotomy of "crisis" in Hong Kong.

... those who live in Hong Kong realize the opportunistic role they need to play in order, not to "preserve," but to negotiate their "cultural identity"; for them opportunity is molded in danger and danger is a form of opportunity. Their diaspora is a living emblem of the cryptic Chinese term *weiji*, which is made up of the character for "danger" and "opportunity", and which means "crisis."<sup>51</sup>

The five main male characters in *Exiled* utilise the crisis to restore their male privilege. When they could not indulge themselves in the reverie of domestic bliss, they fall back on to the basic manly mission to "fight and to exercise violence"<sup>52</sup> and declare themselves, "I'm the Father!" The gangster (anti-)heroes in *Exiled* are designated as "noble savages" here for their hypermasculine defiance to protect their community.

<sup>51</sup> Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 25.

<sup>52</sup> Bourdieu, 50-51.

According to Rey Chow, “Rousseau’s savage is ‘self-sufficient’ because he possesses *nothing* and is in that sense indifferent and independent.”<sup>53</sup> Henceforth, the first feature of these “noble savages” is that they must distinguish themselves as indifferent and independent by denouncing a profit-driven social mainstream. Martha Nochimson argues that a Hong Kong noble gangster definitely brings “ancient principles of balance and honour into the fragmented, pragmatic modern world” and shows his “dark laughter at the material illusion.”<sup>54</sup> As the discussion of *A Better Tomorrow* has pointed out, Woo has already tried to draw the economy-driven society back to more traditional morals through the direct condemnation of the avarice of the evil gangs and injection of traditional values into his noble gangsters.

To inherits this theme of laughing at material gains in *Exiled* by redeeming his noble gangsters through their successful resistance to the temptation of material benefits. In the second half of the film, the four (Wo is dead) male protagonists accidentally run into a chance to share one ton of gold. As they are ready to take off towards freedom, they receive a phone call from Boss Daifay who has taken Wo’s wife and son as hostage. Eventually, they forsake their golden opportunity to run away with the gold but return to rescue the hostage. They walk haughtily into the hotel that Boss Daifay designates, lure him to release his hostage with the gold they stole, escort the widow and her baby son out of the hotel, shut the door behind them, and carry out their suicidal mission to perish together with Daifay’s whole gang. They all perish in a bloodbath, but they die after performing a feat of paternal heroic deed (protecting a mother and a child) with a satisfactory dark smile lingering on their faces.

However, unlike many other directors who often choose to enhance the ethnic colour of the gangsters by referring back to historical sites and icons, To does not choose to emphasise the connection between goodness and tradition. Woo emphasises the Chineseness

---

<sup>53</sup> Chow, *Writing Diaspora*, 49.

<sup>54</sup> Nochimson, chapter 5.

of his noble gangster through depiction of historical sites such as Temple of Mazu in his *A Better Tomorrow*. In the gangster films in the 1990s, which are represented by Andrew Lau's *Young and Dangerous* (*Guhuo zai* 古惑仔)<sup>55</sup> series, the noble gangsters are moral saints in the sense they still uphold the traditional values represented by the God of War, Guan Yu. However, To does not highlight the power of tradition,<sup>56</sup> but rather the power of individuals. He depicts none of his characters in *Exiled* as cultural defenders as their predecessors did in *A Better Tomorrow*, but at the last minute when they are preparing to run away with the gold, they are enlightened by some hidden universal humanity within themselves. The four gangsters' acts of helping Wo to make some money for his wife and child and later giving up their gold and an opportunity to run away at the end of the film, were both heavenly missions inspired by their paternal golden hearts. Kenneth Clatterbaugh who has done a thorough study on contemporary perspectives of masculinities says, from a conservative perspective, that "it is perfectly natural for men to be the providers and protectors of women".<sup>57</sup> In *Exiled*, the five male gangster heroes take up such a fundamental paternal task as their inner calling, their heavenly vocation. The five gangsters lose their lives, but they die with personal dignity and nobility.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the death of a warrior elevates the prestige of the clan he represents; thus the death of the gangsters in *Exiled* upgrades the self-esteem of the Hong

<sup>55</sup> The series of six films by Andrew Lau are *Young and Dangerous I* (古惑仔之人在江湖, 1996), *Young and Dangerous II* (古惑仔 2 之猛龙过江, 1996), *Young and Dangerous III* (古惑仔 3 之只手遮天, 1996), *Young and Dangerous IV* (古惑仔 4 之战无不胜, 1997), *Young and Dangerous V* (古惑仔 5 之龙争虎斗, 1998) and *Born to Be King* (胜者为王, 2000). Other spin-offs include *Portland Street Blues* (古惑仔情义篇之洪兴十三妹, dir. Raymond Yip Wai Man 叶伟民, 1998), *Young and Dangerous: The Prequel* (新古惑仔之少年激斗篇, dir. Andrew Lau, 1998) and *Those Were the Days...* (友情岁月之山鸡故事, dir. Raymond Yip, 2000).

<sup>56</sup> Before *Exiled*, he had made two highly-claimed gangster films *Election* and *Election 2*, with *Election* winning him the Best Director in Hong Kong Film Award in 2006. He has depicted his gangster protagonists taking a solemn oath in a magnificent religion-like ritual in *Election*. Even though he makes a positive depiction of the ancestral figure of the God of War and the conventional values of male honours, including such codes of *zhong* (loyalty) and *yi* (righteousness) that have been repeatedly discussed in this research, Johnnie To's characters are seen to keep breaking such codes.

<sup>57</sup> Clatterbaugh, 9.

Kong/Macau locality they represent. Even if the anti-heroes in *Exiled* do not win the affection of the audience in the beginning of the film because of their grim face and antagonism, they certainly change the audience's perception with their self-sacrifice at the end of the film.

This statement "I am the Father!" is not merely a reassurance of a conventional masculine identity, it may also be read as an allegory of the craving for a 'Father Nation' among Hong Kong/Macau people who are living in a time when they are tossed by two different sovereignties. Their defiance is in contrast with the feminised strategy of acceptance and submission that has been discussed in previous chapters. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Steve Neale's discussion on "*narcissistic authority*" emphasises the contradiction between narcissism and the law; the lingering smiles on the gangster's face at the end of the film is uncanny evidence of the anti-hero's pleasure to deny all authorities and appoint himself as the new authority. They have had enough of being tossed around like puppets. In contrast with many gangster film directors who habitually enhance the Chineseness of the noble gangster with traditional values, To presents his vision of a new patriarch with self-help determination but with no emphasis on Chineseness. He does not try to deny his ethnicity, but chooses not to highlight it so that the new patriarch he depicts for his Hong Kong audience will not be overshadowed by the Chinese factors.

#### **5.4 *The Best of Times*: The Longing for an Absent Parent**<sup>58</sup>

If the hypermasculinity in *Exiled* can be understood as a form of confident self-appointed patriarch which the Macau/Hong Kong people covet, and their anti-feminised strategy is a revolutionary upheaval to replace the devil authorities, the hypermasculinity of *The Best of Times* is an unwilling choice the young Taiwanese face at a time of catastrophe.

---

<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, Chang's new film in 2009 was *How Are You, Dad?* (爸, 你还好吗?), a compilation of different short stories of different fathers, full of tears and emotional moments. The central theme is not a search for a patriarchal authority, but a journey to build up compassionate bonding with the Father. The film is closed with different people saying "I love you, Dad," some with tears in their eyes, some choking with sobs.



Their anti-feminsed strategy to replace their father is not their ultimate goal, but they embrace a more romantic ideal to dream of a more powerful patriarch to replace the sick one.

#### 5.4.1 Legend of a Unicorn

Although the depiction of hypermasculinity is a common feature of the three films under discussion, the remarkable motif used to symbolise the ideal of hypermasculinity in this particular film text is a mysterious unicorn. There is a crucial scene in this film where Jie plays tricks to amuse Xiaowei's twin sister. He boasts of conjuring up whatever she can think of, as Xiaowei's sister closes her eyes to imagine, a unicorn-like animal walks past her window. They rush out of the room, taking that beautiful creature as a real unicorn for a few seconds before Jie touches the horn and it falls off. The mythological unicorn is, in fact, a white horse with an artificial horn stuck on its forehead (Still 5-9).



Still 5-9

In terms of narrative, this encounter with a “unicorn” is unnecessary, but the image is valued so highly that it appears as one of the two core images in the DVD box, forcing the viewers to re-evaluate the significance of this mythical animal. The unicorn is a phallic representation, as Jung has argued, the unicorn symbolises “the wild, rampant, masculine, penetrating force.”<sup>59</sup> Although Jung also points out Qilin (麒麟) as Chinese unicorn and its androgynous quality, as Qi is male and lin is female, it has been constantly used as sign of the

<sup>59</sup> C. G. Jung, “Psychology and Alchemy,” CW 12, Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham and Gerhard Adler, eds. and trans. R.F.C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 419.

birth of good emperors and great sages, which are obviously paternal in connotations.<sup>60</sup>

According to Michael Adams: “[w]hat constitutes the unicorn as ‘obvious symbol of virility’ is its one horn that protrudes so prominently from its forehead. The horn has a ‘horny’ implication, or phallic connotation, as a signifier of desire....”<sup>61</sup> Since unicorn used in the film is a horse form, while a common image of Qilin in Chinese mythology is often a deer in form, it seems that Chang borrows a Western unicorn to make his point of a desire for a virile masculinity embodied by the unicorn.<sup>62</sup>

However, the unicorn image is ushered in by a female character – Xiaowei’s twin sister Min. According to C. J. Jung, “every man carries with him the eternal image of woman”, which he names as the “anima”.<sup>63</sup> While in this film, Xiaowei’s twin sister obviously symbolises Xiaowei’s “anima”, the feminine side of his psyche. The director also takes pains to emphasise both their physical and spiritual connections. Xiaowei is depicted vomiting on the street or on his way home, because vomiting is one of the symptoms of his sister’s illness. On the night of his sister’s death, Xiaowei is so sick that he keeps vomiting without knowing why. Furthermore, both of them are obsessed with fish. Thus, the director creates a twin sister as Xiaowei’s subconscious feminine side, exposing Xiaowei’s subconsciousness through the eyes of his twin sister.

What she craves to see is a unicorn, a virile symbol, while this virile symbol is manifested in her ex-boyfriend, Brother Zhe. She chooses to break up with him because she

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 445.

<sup>61</sup> Michael Vannoy Adams, *The Mythological Unconscious* (New York and London: Karnac, 2001), 367.

<sup>62</sup> Unicorn seldom appears in Chinese mythology, and in some occasions when animal with horns appear, they did not take the shape of ‘horse+horn’ from. The closest mythical animal is often referred to Qilin, but the etymology indicates Qilin is closer to deer rather than horses. See Alain Le Pichon, *Dujiaoshou yu long: zhi xunzhao zhongxi wenhua pubianxing zhong de wudu* (Unicorn and dragon: misreading in the search for common roots between Chinese and Western cultures) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1995). Therefore, it is difficult to interpret the significance from a Chinese point of view.

<sup>63</sup> C. G. Jung, “The Development of Personality”, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham and Gerhard Adler, eds, translated by R.F.C. Hull (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), 198.

is dying from an incurable disease, but her affections--even obsessions--with him are strong as ever. Brother Zhe demonstrates his male charisma to Xiaowei in the episode when he comes to Taipei to visit Xiaowei to ask after his twin sister. Immediately after they part with each other, Xiaowei is harassed by a gang of young hooligans. Zhe instantly comes to Xiaowei's rescue and batters the hooligans with his iron fists until they lie prostrate begging for mercy. Zhe is a self-assertive, daunting and invincible man, but also caring, thoughtful and sympathetic, which makes him a faultless male role model for the young male protagonists of the film. Xiaowei and Jie go to Zhe for shelter after Jie shoots at a gang-boss during a debt collection task.

Another hypermasculine paragon in this film is represented by legendary kung fu star Bruce Lee. Chang emphasises Xiaowei's obsession with Bruce Lee by decorating his bedroom with Bruce Lee posters. He is constantly depicted as begging his twin sister to paint a Bruce Lee portrait for him. The director also depicts him practising Bruce Lee's signatred weapon – a three-section cudgel, or imitating Lee's emblematic skipping in his room in a narcissistic mood.

However, both these virile role models are either living in a faraway paradise or dead, neither of who is part of the real life of the male protagonists. Their real life male role models – their fathers— are “castrated”. Jie's father was a KMT soldier who came to the island as a displaced refugee, not as a member of the KMT ruling class. One of his fellow soldiers dies in solitude, leaving behind him a small box of junk while no one cares about him. Jie accompanies his father to pick up such pathetic relic and hears his father remark poignantly, “we spend forty or fifty years fighting for the nation, and end up in Taiwan without proper healthcare! Nobody cares if we die. This damned government never looked after him.” He weeps for his fellow soldier, but also foresees his own miserable end as a forsaken/castrated old soldier exploited by “this damned government.”

Xiaowei's father is no better off than the senile frustrated old soldier; he is a murky man belonging to the local Taiwanese underclass. As Chris Berry argues, Chang focuses "on the lower-class margins of Taiwan society, produced out of its modern transformation since the KMT took over from the Japanese colonizers in the late forties."<sup>64</sup> Their fathers are by no means the virile masculine role models for Xiaowei and Jie to look up to.

This witnessing of dreadful 'castration' curse inflicted on their fathers has struck the sons with horror. In the same scene of the unicorn encounter, Jie touches the horn and it falls off right away, indicating a castration anxiety.

Their fathers are both gamblers and drunkards living in their own past, who fail to protect or nourish their sons. Not only do they fail to act as role models for their sons, they also demand their sons be the patriarchal pivot of their families. With his father indulging in drinking away his wages, Xiaowei is the only person who is able to work to support his family, including his old grandmother, bedridden sister and other younger sibling. Although Jie is not the eldest son in his family, his elder brother is a mentally retarded son depending on him. He has to defend his father when he is beaten and humiliated during disputes over the gambling tables. In other words, they are pushed to play the roles of heroes and protectors, but they have no clue how to play them because they can find no role model to follow.

Not only do their familial duties require them to be a protector, the outside world also assigns them a hypermasculine manhood. Bourdieu has pointed out that male courage is in fact a collective expectation of men playing tough.<sup>65</sup> The imposition of responsibilities and duties results in an ambiguous masculine identity. On the one hand, they wish they could be heroic and 'tough' enough to shoulder their burden, to imitate their idols Bruce Lee and Brother Zhe. On the other hand, they are vulnerable and helpless and not 'ready for the job

---

<sup>64</sup> Chris Berry, "Haunted Realism: Postcoloniality and the Cinema of Chang Tso-chi," In *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*, edited by Darrell William Davis and Ru-Shou Robert Chen (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 46.

<sup>65</sup> Bourdieu, 51.

yet'; even the sight of an ordinary policeman on the street frightens them and makes them flee like terrified mice.

The co-existence of their toughness and their cowardice reflects the central features of the second approach of anti-feminisation addressed in this chapter. The two protagonists' virility and omnipotence are just untouchable phantasies, reflected by the illusion of the fake unicorn and the Bruce Lee posters. They question the authorities of their father and the system not because they suffer unbearable exploitation or suppression, but rather this reflects their disappointment of the weakness of the father. They assume the patriarchal authorities within their family out of reluctant burden rather than an internal calling to be the strong father.

Such an ambiguity in their masculine identity can be understood in combination with the uncertainty of Taiwan's national identity. Unlike the men in *Exiled* who make a clear statement for Hong Kong and Macau that they want to be the Master/Father of their own destiny, Xiaowei and Jie in *The Best of Times* represent a Taiwan in dilemma. Taiwan's international identity has been floating upon being an independent *nation* (that might or might not include the Sovereignty over Mainland China) or a *part* of Mainland China. Consequently, Xiaowei and Jie demonstrate on the one hand the wish to be self-made macho men (therefore representing a powerful independent *nation*) on the one hand, but also wish to return to the womb of the Mother (therefore becoming part of the Chinese *nation*).

#### **5.4.2 Return to the Feminine Sphere**

Even though the film does not attack the Taiwanese government in a direct manner, Jie's father's accusation of "this damned government" has unveiled the dissatisfaction with its failure to protect its subjects. Furthermore, the heavy burden as protectors falls on to the shoulders of the younger generation represented by Xiaowei and Jie. Bourdieu has suggested

that “men are also prisoners, and insidiously victims, of the dominant representation.”<sup>66</sup> The unbearable expectations have driven them to crave for a safe haven where they can be protected. Disheartened with their impotent fathers and frightened by the patriarchal responsibilities imposed on them, they yearn for protection, while in this case, maternal protection.

Apparently, Xiaowei is haunted by the misery of losing his mother, as his voice-over informs the audiences, “my mother died of cancer. My twin sister Min has a terminal illness too.” From Xiaowei’s voice-over, the audiences also learn about Jie’s solo pilgrimage to search for his mother: “I remember when he [Jie] was in junior high, he took a bus to Taichung all by himself to look for his mother, but she brought him straight back here. That was on Mothers’ Day. From that day on, he’s been the way he is now...” “The way he is now” refers to Jie’s obsession with playing magic tricks.

De Beauvoir argues that because of the closeness of the maternal body in her mysterious power of life-giving, woman in ancient beliefs is awed as the Other possessing the same dark power as in the earth, “because of the powers she holds, she is looked upon as a magician, a sorceress.”<sup>67</sup> Jie’s solemn pilgrimage to search for his mother reflects a desire to seek a magical power to release him from the reality of torture and suffering.

The maternal magical power of healing and life-giving continues to be summoned forth at the end of the film. After Jie is shot dead by the rival gangs, his brother mutters words “my brother has died” repeatedly to remind the viewers of his death. Xiaowei seeks revenge by attacking the gang boss who killed Jie and then runs back to his home. There he sees Jie, safe and sound, waiting for him at the same spot where he was killed. With the gang still tailing behind them, they run until they come to a dead-end, but now Jie and Xiaowei are

---

<sup>66</sup> Bourdieu, 49.

<sup>67</sup> De Beauvoir, 101.

reunited and ‘fly’ into the river close to their *home*. Once underneath the water, they are free and Jie’s bruises and stab wound are miraculously healed. What the act of jumping into the water fulfils may be interpreted as a symbolic wish to return to the maternal womb, to be protected and wait to be reborn into a new life.

This film’s magical realistic ending of a second life scenario at the finish is not an exceptional example in Taiwan cinema. In *West Town Girl* (终极西门, dir. Alice Wang 王毓雅, 2004), the two dead sisters come back to life and jog happily along the night street; it also recalls the ending of a sensationally successful film in 2010, *Monga*, which closes with a shot of the five blood brothers climbing over the wall, whereas according to the plot development two of them have already died.

This technique is identified as magical realism where the boundary between reality and the fantastic is dissolved. Scott Simpkins understands that in magical realism, “the use of magic is a self-conscious (perhaps painfully so) attempt to overcome significative loss, to bridge that space between the ideal and the achievable...”<sup>68</sup> Tony Williams defines such endings as “cinematic survival”, and such survivals “within different realms of body, space, and place, present one possible solution for a community facing a possible loss of identity and future physical and cinematic *diaspora*.”<sup>69</sup> Whether it is designated as “magical realism” or “cinematic survival”, their common argument is that such a tactic consoles a community for its laments over their loss and uncertainty of their future.

Chris Berry also comments that this magical realistic type of ending, with Jie miraculously returning to life to join Xiaowei, is a wish fulfilment: “the present is not

<sup>68</sup> Scott Simpkins, “Sources of Magic Realism: Supplements to Realism in Contemporary Latin American Literature,” in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, eds. Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 156.

<sup>69</sup> Tony Williams, “Space, Place, and Spectacle: the Crisis Cinema of John Woo,” in Poshek Fu and David Desser ed. *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 152.

haunted by the past, but by the better futures the characters have been cheated out of. Ghosts are not threatening FIGUREs that must be eliminated, but FIGUREs of wish fulfillment.”<sup>70</sup>

Since cinematic survival is a solution to suture the loss of identity, the wish fulfillment is naturally to secure an identity. Xiaowei is tortured by guilt for his failure to fight for Jie’s life when Jie is captured by the gangs, but when Jie is given a second life, Xiaowei is given a second chance to wipe out his disgrace by rushing to help Jie, thus reassuring his maleness that is based on “capacity to fight”, according to Bourdieu. Both are given a second chance to demonstrate their masculine power, linking the argument back to the first section of this chapter of them representing somewhat ideal male ego.

However, their suicidal jump is not just to realise their maleness, but also to imitate one of the most well-known patriotic poet – Qu Yuan (ca. 340 BCE – 278 BCE) of the southern Chu during the Warring States period, thus leading the audiences towards the cultural politics of the whole film. In fact, the film starts with the celebration of traditional Chinese festival – the Dragon Boat festival commemorating Qu Yuan who committed ritual suicide by drowning himself in the Miluo River (汨罗江) after Qin captured the capital city of his state. Legends go that the local people who admired him threw food into the river to feed the fish so that they would not eat Qu Yuan’s body. This is the origin of the traditional food of the rice cake zongzi cooked at the beginning of the film.

The film ends with the same suicidal ritual of drowning, paralleling the two young men’s bold jump to the legend of a Chinese cultural icon. This reference to an ancestral legion is a cultural strategy to construct a national identity for a community haunted by uncertain political future. Renan argues in “What is a Nation?”: “of all cults, that of the

---

<sup>70</sup> Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 40. Capitalisation in original.



ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory, this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea.”<sup>71</sup>

By following the steps of a recognisable ancestral hero, Chang declare himself as a patriot of a Chinese cultural nation, as well as its legitimate heir. Such a cultural bedrock is also nicely reflected in the cinematic style of this film. Chang, by following the path of both the forerunners of Taiwan cinema as well as the Chinese aesthetics, pose himself as a true heir to Chinese heritage with Taiwan characteristics, by using extremely long shots and empty shots, so that many frames of his films shared the visual similarities with Chinese traditional paintings.

The director recarnates the two male protagonists in the free ocean, connecting back to the traditional festival celebrated at the beginning of the film, which is a special occasion to commemorate the great poet Qu Yuan. Such connection brings out a unique Chinese characteristic in this counter-example of feminisation. The protagonists dream of the phallic icon such as the unicorn and staunch masculinity embodied by Bruce Lee and Brother Zhe, but they choose the same destiny as Qu Yuan, a typical icon of genteel scholar masculinity. They return to the feminine sphere of the nurturing oceanic water, following the step of the scholar icon who accepts his fate of loss and death.

### **5.5 *Walking on the Wild Side*: Save the Lost Children!**

Gangster films rarely incur obstacles in their release in Hong Kong and Taiwan, whereas they often have problems with the censorship in Mainland China, as shown in Chapter Four, where gangster films are often forced to change names, re-edited or fail to pass the censorship. Judging from the fact that Mainland China's film censorship is very sensitive on gangster themes, the inclusion of *Walking on the Wild Side* as an example for studying

---

<sup>71</sup> Renan, 19.

Mainland Chinese contemporary society becomes even more intriguing. Technically speaking, it is not a suitable case to study Mainland Chinese cinema because it has never been publicly screened there. It is a French-Chinese co-production between Les Petites Lumières and Xstream Pictures, with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Communication and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, Xstream Pictures is registered as a Hong Kong company in the film's opening credits which are written in only one language—English.

However, Han Jie eventually made a triumphant return to Mainland China after receiving recognition overseas. The DVD version of his film is available in China, with a list of its awards on the cover, projecting a sense of national pride. In other words, Han Jie might have chosen to rely on overseas financial support and markets, walking on the wild side, which would easily spark off the usual accusation of Orientalism and enmity towards Mainland China, but his international achievements won him domestic acceptance. More importantly, even though Han Jie chooses a sensitive issue to reveal the dark side of China's economic façade, winning a prestigious international film award enables him to bring his story back to the domestic audience. Therefore, access to this film becomes available domestically, enabling Chinese audiences to scrutinise their compatriots, which validates the following analyses on a “national gaze”. Under the national gaze, the violent rebels are disapproved as the denounced Other. However, his deeper motivation does not lie in the condemnation of the current government but rather in a philanthropic concern over China's ‘lost generation.’

---

<sup>72</sup> One of the soul figures of Xstream Pictures (北京西河星汇数字娱乐技术有限公司) is Jia Zhangke (1970-) who is acclaimed as one of the leading roles of the post-fifth-generation film directors in Mainland China. His works are frequently shown in international film festivals. He established his name in the world cinema with his hometown trilogy, i.d. *Xiao Wu* (小武, 1997), *Platform* (站台, 2000) and *Unknown Pleasure* (任逍遥, 2002). His *Still Life* (三峡好人, 2006) won the Golden Lion for the best film at the 2006 Venice Film Festival.

### 5.5.1 “Where Will We Be Tomorrow?”

The sense of being lost is brought forth in the DVD trailer: “we don’t know where we will be tomorrow. Anyhow, we are always on the run.”<sup>73</sup> This statement discloses a sense of perplexity among contemporary youth since the end of the 1990s, as the depiction of the internet bar in the film reveals the time period of the film is around the new millennium.<sup>74</sup>

Their bewilderment, first of all, is a typical ‘symptom’ of adolescents coming of age, which is termed “Initiation” by Isaac Sequeira:

Initiation is an existential crisis or a series of encounters in life, almost always painful, with experience during which the adolescent protagonist gains valuable knowledge about himself, the nature of evil, or the world. This knowledge is accompanied by a sense of the loss of innocence and a sense of isolation...<sup>75</sup>

Their “valuable knowledge about . . . the nature of evil” is gained from their witnessing of the widening social gaps and the avarice of the entrepreneurs. Director Han Jie describes the economic development that has stratified Chinese society into the poor and the rich, whilst the pursuit of money seems to be the only way to climb up the social ladder. Whereas the young wife in the village has to handwash the laundry in a small basin, Liuliu’s aunt in town lives in a luxurious house with a mini-golf course over the rooftop. In such a world, pragmatism predominates, and a money mania permeates throughout the whole film. After the three young rebels beat up Xiaosi, the whole incident is appeased with money, while Xiaosi is depicted extorting money from his fellow students. When Liuliu is beaten up by Xiaosi’s gang, he draws out a pack of 100 Yuan notes from his jacket pocket, swearing

<sup>73</sup> Original words: “我们不知道明天会在哪里，总之，我们在路上。”

<sup>74</sup> The first internet bar in China opened in Shanghai in 1996. (<http://www.cctv.com/pinpai/special/60brand/20081229/104231.shtml>). According to my personal experience in Beijing, internet bars became popular in around 1998. Therefore, it is logical to estimate that the spread of internet bars in small towns like the one depicted in the film would be later than Shanghai and Beijing. Thus the film should be set at the end of 1990s or early 2000s.

<sup>75</sup> Isaac Sequeira, *The Theme of Initiation in Modern America Fiction*, Mysore: Geetha, 1975, quoted in William Tay, “The Ideology of Initiation: The Films of Hou Hsiao-Hsien,” in *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*, edited by Nick Browne, Paul G. Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack, Esther Yau, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 151.

that money could buy him vengeance. When the local miners are killed in coalmine collapses, their lives are calculated into a pack of banknotes. In their self-exile, they learn from a small restaurant manager about a new coalmine mishap and are surprised that a coalmine is still operating in such sensitive times. The manager replies, “this mine owner is daring. He orders miners work night shifts.” The mine owners’ avarice has driven them to endanger the local miners’ lives to bring them exorbitant profits.

Such pragmatic attitudes and money acquisition must be understood in conjunction with the social context since the 1990s. After the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989, economic development became the safest domain for both the government and its people. Therefore, not only did the government fervently pursue economic reform, but its people also became obsessed in material gains. However, the money craze is a black hole of Chinese prosperity, dragging people into moral decadence, as is subtly disclosed in this film. The pragmatic attitude either forces people to work like machines isolated from their family (as in the case of the miners), or drives people to become stone-hearted misers indulging in their personal well-being (as with some mine owners).

This goalless generation in fact lacks a collective “historical trauma”, to borrow from Kaja Silverman. Silverman explains that such a trauma refers to “a historically precipitated but psychologically specific disruption, with ramifications extending far beyond the individual psyche”<sup>76</sup>, which brings a group of subjects into an intimate group. For example, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) has served as one of such “historical traumas” for those who suffered from it, to build up a collective identity.<sup>77</sup>

However, the materialism in the 1990s and the money craze have the priorities of the contemporary Chinese people. Luo Xu’s survey on Chinese university students actually

---

<sup>76</sup> Silverman, 55.

<sup>77</sup> This collective catastrophe has given the Chinese art cinema a common background in the 1980s, when active members of the 1980s Chinese cinema, mainly the fifth-generation filmmakers, meditated seriously on what went wrong in their traditions.

reflects this practical attitude with financial pursuit as the top priority of their lives among the young generation in the 1990s. Luo defines this generation as “a beat generation,” and a “generation of no theme”<sup>78</sup>. Li Zhenyuan describes the 1990s young people in China as “cultural orphans in a vacuum of values,” “having neither acquired the spirit of traditional culture nor adopted a new ideal and spiritual haven.”<sup>79</sup>

The film quotes Cui Jian’s song as background music, already revealing the anxiety of loss, because fans of Cui Jian constantly revere him as a symbol of painful loss. As one such fan writes, “[p]eople of our generation have nothing to our names. We have no beliefs; we are nihilistic. We don’t believe in anything. Neither do we conform ourselves with anything.”<sup>80</sup> In the film, the three young rebels are perplexed by a lack of objective goals in life. They are constantly depicted wandering aimlessly, dawdling away their life in gambling, drinking, playing video games and messing with prostitutes.

The vacuum of individual goals and personal objects have to be understood with the national goal of the 1980s and 1990s Mainland China. On the road of the self-exile of the three young male protagonists, a huge billboard of Deng Xiaoping, the chief architect of Chinese economic development and open-up policy, is captured by the camera. On this gigantic billboard, a typical slogan in the 1990s, “development is the iron truth”, was written in red paint along with Deng’s image. The central philosophy of growth and development implanted by the central government lay emphasis on the collective goals and needs. According to Baudrillard, “[i]n the growth-based order, there are, by this logic, no

<sup>78</sup> Luo, Xu, “Farewell to Idealism: Mapping China’s University Students of the 1990s”, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 13, (41), (November, 2004): 781.

<sup>79</sup> Li, Zhenyuan, “Xuanhua yu sadong: houxian daizhuyi yu xiaoyuan wenhua” (Uproar and ferment: postmodernism and campus culture), *Qingnian tansuo* (youth exploration), no.2 (1996), 8, quoted in Luo Xu, “Farewell to Idealism: Mapping China’s University Students of the 1990s”, 781.

<sup>80</sup> Zhao, Jianwei, *Cui Jian: zai yiwu suoyou zhong nahan* (Cuijian: Cries of the Dispossessed, Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 1992), 7, quoted in Xuelin Zhou, *Young Rebels in Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), 114.

autonomous needs and there cannot be any. *There are only the needs of growth*. There is no place for individual goals in the system; there is room only for the goals of the system.”<sup>81</sup>

As depicted in the film, the coalmine business needs to grow in order to provide the source of energy of economic development, but in reality, the grassroots are sacrificed for these collective goals above them. Families are broken either by coalmine collapses or long distance separation. Within the collective goal of growth, there is no space for individual goals and such a neglect creates a gap between the collective success and individual identity. The opening sequence of the film, shot in black and white, depicts a busy day at the coalmine in which loads and loads of coal are transported by trucks, but all the people around are voice-less with sluggish expressions. Although the economic success of China was not depicted visually in the film, in fact, Cui Jian’s song “*The Eggs by the Red Flag*”, used at the opening of the film, includes lines such as “the sudden open-up is in fact not that sudden. Now chance comes, but who know what should be done? .... Money is flying in the air, and we have no goals”. The lyrics of the song subtly insinuate the chasm between the collective material affluence and individual goals. The outcry in the song that no one knows what should be done; a sense of loss permeates the entire film. The three young anti-heroes in the film live with their fragmented family like aimless orphans.

Han Jie describes how in *Walking on the Wild Side* the male protagonists claim to imitate the gangsters and their motto of a spiritual male bonding to confront their destiny as “cultural orphans” and patch up their own family with sworn brotherhood. Their confrontational behaviour is an anti-feminisation approach as they attempt to break the law and order. The Chinese title of the film “*lai xiaozi*” is in fact a term referring to young gangsters. The English translation of the title also reveals that they “walk on the wild side”, infringing the laws to pursue illegal freedom. Liuliu introduces Xiping to an urban girl in a

---

<sup>81</sup> Baudrillard, *Consumer Society*, 65.

pub as his “*laoda*” (老大 big brother), which is a typical phrase to address gang lords; furthermore, Erbao declares himself as “*heishehui laoda*” (黑社会老大 the gang boss of the triad world) by painting those characters on the wall of the inn where they stay before he runs away with Liuliu’s car and money.

These three blood brothers take pains to prove their loyalty to each other by avenging Liuliu after he has been beaten up by other gangs in the village. They convince each other of their brotherhood by taking on an exile together. A great number of gangster films that depict ganglords, with John Woo as an example, glorify traditional values such as loyalty and righteousness through his portrayals of noble gangsters, in a hope for ‘a better tomorrow’, whereas Han Jie bitterly exposes that such ‘a better tomorrow’ is mere an delusion.

The three self-claimed gangsters in *Walking on the Wild Side* are proud of their ‘gangster’ status, but they merely cover themselves with the camouflage of an invincible gangster in order to pursue their swelling personal desire. They easily violate the quintessential moral codes of a noble gang and fail to defend this last residue of gangster dignity when facing the temptation of sex and money.

Unlike the noble gangsters who often abstain from sex in Woo’s *A Better Tomorrow*, the young men in *Walking on the Wild Side* are depicted constantly seeking to vent their anger and libido in fighting and sex. They are either constantly engaged in taking sexual advantage of their neighbours, or ‘caught’ in the act of masturbation. They set off their rebellion with their own bodies, calling up a Foucauldian rebellion which features “one’s own body against power, ... health against the economic system, ... pleasure against the moral norms of sexuality, marriage, decency.”<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Colin Gordon, ed. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977 Michel Foucault* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo and Singapore: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980), 56.

Additionally, the inflation of their selfish desires smashes their commitment and trust towards each other. Erbao boasts of his connection with other gangs so that he can shelter his sworn brothers, but in reality he betrays them by stealing Liuliu's money and car to pursue his own pleasure elsewhere. Furthermore, their violence is no longer the final resort to achieve justice, but rather a meaningless and aimless exposé of an unbridled outer ego. They proclaim seeking justice by trespassing on the campus to club Xiaosi to unconsciousness, but in fact Liuliu is beaten up by Xiaosi because Liuliu cruelly rapes a girl. Xiping is the soul of this gang of three admired by the younger children in his neighbourhood, but his shooting claims the life of his best mate, and he cannot come to a confession of his crime at the end. Such moral decadence stands in contrast with the repentance of the noble savage in *Exiled*, which has been dealt with in the previous discussions.

Han Jie strips off all the gangster nobility in his film, exposing the pathetic truth that a gangster inheriting traditional values for 'a better tomorrow' is nothing more than a deceptive dream. In *Exciled*, Johnnie To still glorifies the anti-heroes toward the end of the film for their revolutionary approach to establish themselves at the 'fathers of their land'. In other words, the gangsters still represent justice, integrity and righteousness, whereas the system they are forced to accept is criticised. However, in Han Jie's presentation, the rebels are deprived of the gangster glamour. Their rebellions to reclaim identity denied by the collective goal are shadowed with betrayals, selfishness and dishonesty. The target of criticism lies heavier on the rebels rather than the system they are in.

The authority of the father is never questioned in the film. The previous two films are counter-examples of feminisation in the sense that they do not passively accept the authorities, but rather resort to replace, even though contemporary in the case of *The Best of Times*. The direct dialogue in the films has pointed to straightforward criticism of the official authorities. The father authorities in *Walking on the Wide Side* do not face such dangers. The catharses



of animosity of the anti-heroes are led toward their peers and women. At the end of their exile, with one of them dead and another disappears, the only survivor continues his search for his father in vain.

### 5.5.2 National Gaze: “Save the Children!”<sup>83</sup>

Even though the accomplishment of the goals of the system was not depicted in this film made in 2006, the off-screen success in the later years indicated that China was on the rise in its economy. *Time* magazine observed, when China celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2009,

China is the world’s most populous and industrious nation, is the world’s third largest economy and trading nation, has become a global innovator in science and technology, and is building a world-class university system....China is now the world’s third largest economy, after the U.S and Japan, and recently surpassed Germany as the largest exporting nation. Its GNP is on course to overtake Japan’s by 2010 and perhaps that of the U.S. by 2020.<sup>84</sup>

However, this film does not focus on the winner of the grand project of national growth, but on the losers who have slipped through the national glamour. The senseless self-indulgence of personal gratification and morality decadence discourage any sympathy for these characters toward the end of the film. *Variety* critic Jay Weissberg observes, “[a]ll teens think they’re rebels with a cause, and while the unrelieved lives of tedium and hopelessness surrounding these kids would make anyone want to lash out, Xiping’s late bid for audience sympathy falls on deaf ears.”<sup>85</sup> By stripping all positive virtues off his male protagonists, Han Jie dissuades the viewers from lavishing sympathy towards the characters.

---

<sup>83</sup> Original quotation is the last sentence of Lu Xun’s novella, “Kuangren riji” (Diary of a Madman): “救救孩子”, in *Luxun quanji* (The Complete Works of Lu Xun), vol.1 “Fen, Refeng and nahan” (Grave, hot wind and call to arms) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2005), 455.

<sup>84</sup> David Shambaugh, “The Road to Prosperity,” *Time*, September 28, (2009): 22-23.

<sup>85</sup> Jay Weissberg, “Walking on the Wild Side,” accessed 21 January 2010, <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117929759.html?categoryid=31&cs=1>.

Such discouragement of sympathy is achieved with intriguing cinematic techniques. In order to hinder identification or emotional bonding with the young rebels, Han Jie poses himself as a nonchalant, objective observer who tries to diagnose what goes wrong in the male protagonists' efforts of releasing their own bodily libido. He detaches himself from the decadent characters so as to differentiate them as the corrupted Other who need to be cured.

This detached cinematographic tactic is in contrast with Woo's style in *A Better Tomorrow*, where Woo endeavours to depict the emotional states of his characters in close-ups (Still 5-10, 5-11, 5-12). The basic function of close-ups is "the better carrier of attitude. Love, hate, desire, and despair are most economically and effectively transferred through the close-up".<sup>86</sup> Still 5-10 is a snap shot from the film leader of one of the male protagonists waking up from a nightmare before the film title zooms out from the screen, whereas still 5-11 and 5-12 are the emotionally intense moments when the two men have to part forever. Woo brings his noble gangsters closer to the audience through such close-up techniques so that the audience 'can feel the pains of the characters.'



Still 5-10

Still 5-11

Still 5-12

Close-ups in *A Better Tomorrow*

In contrast, Han Jie endeavours to keep his distance as well as the audience's from the characters with his constant use of extreme long shots or shooting repeatedly from the backs of the characters (Still 5-13, 5-14, 5-15). For example, the last shot of the film (Still 5-15) captures Xiping walking away from the camera like a soulless zombie. Furthermore, many scenes are tracking shots with a handheld camera, which produce a quasi-documentary style and the camera is like a pair of nonchalant eyes that observe rather than participate in the

<sup>86</sup> Rod Whitaker, *The Language of Film* (Engle Cliff, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 43.

narrative. Such camera angles reveal the director's position as an observer rather than identifying himself with the characters.



A Mandarin interpreter for the International Film Festival Rotterdam, Jeroen Groenewegen, comments that directors like Han Jie “do not aim at, and in some cases explicitly avoid, psychological identification with any one of the characters.”<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless, by holding back both identification and sympathy with the characters, Han Jie diligently objectifies them as pure ‘objects.’ Although Han Jie attempts to detach from his characters, he registers himself as an insider informant, a genuine native who has the prerogative to firsthand resources, authorising him to speak for his fellow natives by setting the narrative on his hometown. It is a semi-documentary film in that the prototypes of the three characters are the director's personal acquaintances, and he went back to visit one of them when making this film.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, one of the actors in this film was hiding from the police while Han Jie was in Rotterdam receiving the Golden Tiger Award, which emphasises the realistic nature of Han Jie's film.

By distancing himself from the characters he portrays, and by posing himself as their speaker, he secures a privileged position as a viewing subject, “stabilizing, or empowering, the viewing subject's position with an inexplicable aesthetic and emotional pleasure”,<sup>89</sup> to use Rey Chow's comment. When Chow describes a Chinese spectator looking at images of

<sup>87</sup> Groenewegen, “Between Social Realism and Kawaii Virtuality”.

<sup>88</sup> <http://fanhall.com/group/thread/16518.html>, accessed 21/04/2010. The link was no longer active when I double checked it on 19 July 2011.

<sup>89</sup> Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 112.

China created by non-Chinese, she exemplifies that an ethnic spectator “identifies at once with the narrative movement, the invisible subject that ‘tells’ the story about modern China, and with the narrative image.”<sup>90</sup> Here, the Chinese audience is caught in a similar dilemma between identifying with the invisible narrator who tries to detach themselves from the story and the painful recognition of themselves as the images (Chinese) on the screen, even though they are watching a film by a Chinese director rather by a ‘foreign devil’.

Chow also defines such a sophisticated gaze as a “national gaze.” According to her, in contemporary China, a “national gaze” whose “object is more specifically China’s ‘rural population’ living in wretched conditions”<sup>91</sup> is constructed in many films set in the rural area.

Such candid exposition of the dark side of China is easily criticised as another form of Oriental’s Orientalism of self-displaying to cater to the taste of the Orientalists, as, according to Said, a stereotypical view of Orientalism is “[t]he Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’.”<sup>92</sup> Dai Jinhua notes that such films are constantly named as “underground films” in the West, and such works are popular there because they work as the “Other”, “complimenting Western liberal intellectuals’ pre-existent prolepsis of the cultural scenery of the 1990s China.”<sup>93</sup> In other words, such exposition is part of the drama of a backward and corrupt China, according to Western imagination.

However, this film cannot be underestimated as simple works pandering to Western taste. In fact such exposition of the ugly truth of contemporary China implies Han Jie’s defiance of a typical Chinese taboo, “*jia chou bu ke wai yang* (家丑不可外扬)”, which is

<sup>90</sup> Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: the Politics of Reading between West and East* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, third printing 2003), 24.

<sup>91</sup> Rey Chow. “*Not One Less: The Fable of a Migration*,” in *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes*, ed. Chris Berry (London: British Film Institute, 2003. Reprint, 2005), 149.

<sup>92</sup> Edward W Said, *Orientalism* (25th Anniversary edition. New York: Vintage Books, 1978; reprint, New York: Random House, 1994), 40.

<sup>93</sup> Dai Jinhua, *Wuzhong fengjing: Zhongguo dianying wenhua 1978-1998* (View in the Mist: Chinese Movie Culture 1978 to 1998) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 407.

translated as “Don’t air your dirty laundry in public” by Chow.<sup>94</sup> Chow emphasises that this Chinese phrase actually accepts the existence of “dirty laundry”, but the real taboo is “not the ‘dirty laundry’ itself but *wai yang*, the act of showing, brandishing, exhibiting (to the outside).”<sup>95</sup> By making a semi-documentary film, Han Jie paints an evil world where the younger generation gradually lose their souls because of the money craze and the inflation of personal desires. By showing such shame and dirt to the outside and then back to China, Han Jie forces the Chinese audience to confront the national shame themselves. It is not simply an act of showing the dark side to outsiders; more significantly, it provokes a national gaze to scrutinise its own shame. It takes great courage to ‘air one’s dirty laundry’ both to the outsiders and to his own compatriots so that the ‘dirty laundry’ problem, in this case, the degeneration of Chinese future generations, will be ventilated.

However, his use of cinematographic techniques discourages the audience from identifying with the anti-heroes in the film so that these lost souls can be identified as the targets of condemnation. The audience has the privilege to feel safe enough to distinguish themselves as witness rather than being the criminals. Occupying a more superior position, they are comfortable enough to be part of a national mission to save the lost generation.

This film thus provokes an urgent national mission of saving China’s next generation.

Chow argues,

the similarly fetishising and exploitative tendency of the media is underwritten not by the discourse of orientalism (read: depraved Western imperialist practice) but instead by the oft-repeated and clichéd discourse of national self-strengthening and concern for future generations (Save the Children!)<sup>96</sup>

Watching the young rebels who go astray and degenerate into soulless zombies, Han Jie emphasises the urgency of saving the children. He has the courage to “air the dirty

---

<sup>94</sup> Chow, *Primitive passions*, 153.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Chow, “*Not One Less*: The Fable of a Migration”, 149.

laundry” by exposing the lost generation in a pragmatic world, bringing forth a philanthropic concern for Mainland China’s future generations. Chow points out, “[a]s China becomes globalised at the turn of the twenty-century, the anthropological impulses of the 1980s films have given way to a sociological one” and such an approach is above all “*benevolence-driven-coercion*.”<sup>97</sup>

However, he cannot come up with a solution at the end of his film. Both Xiping and Liuliu are waiting desperately for a saviour. After the death of Liuliu, Xiping goes to search for his father, but he fail to meet him. He finds only an empty room with an old photo of him and his father standing side by side. Xiping’s unsolved anguish seems to be the result of his misfortune of having an absent father who evades his paternal duties. On the other side, Liuliu’s corpse is lying in the corn field, waiting for his father to bring him home. The director did not challenge the ultimate power of the father, but rather reaffirms it in a sense that the lost souls of the children are waiting for salvation from the fathers.

By making this docu-drama with his camera following the characters, Han Jie seems to detach himself from his characters in order to see them as the Other whose decadent souls need to be saved. However, it is never a true detachment for his Chinese audience who might respond, “yes, that is China”, and the soul depicted in the film that needs to be saved is a Chinese one.

## 5.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has included counterexamples of feminised warriors in order to study the reverse side of feminisation. The contradictory co-existence of fashionable feminised warriors and ultra-violent anti-heroes readily illustrates the multiple forms of masculinity.

---

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. Italics in original.

---

Unlike the previous chapters where the construct of masculinity is not merely for men, but also for women, the directors discussed in this chapter minimise women's participation so as to depict a self-made masculinity by men for men.

The self-made masculinity is constructed on the conviction of men's controlling power over his body and his environment, but such an ideal-ego is also understood as a trap that has imprisoned men in the cage of playing the role of the 'tough guy'. The collective expectation of manliness based on their performance of virility and courage have crushed the male protagonists who muddle about in the illusion of masculine strength, and who die or continue to suffer at the end in their act of restoring their masculine nobility.

This self-made masculinity is counter-examples of feminisation not only in the sense that they are opposite to the feminised metrosexual men, but they represent counter-examples of the feminised strategy of acceptance and submission embodied in the third layer of the definition of feminisation in this thesis. Different social contexts are still detectable even though the anti-hero's self-made subjectivity is a common theme in this chapter's films, whereas different approaches of anti-feminisation are resulted from the different social contexts in these films.

*Exiled* is a typical To gangster epic tinted with colonial colour. Because of Hong Kong/Macau's suffering in experiencing various power games from those governments forcing on to their communities, an authority-phobia toward any imposed order is deeply imprinted in the psyche of the local people. To depicts in *Exiled* an attitude of 'come-on-let's-perish-together' in the face of 'devils at the doorstep', crowning the anti-hero as the revolutionary Other who replaces the untrustworthy authority. The male violence and arrogance is admired with sublime respect, with the obvious smile of the dead body of the character played by Anthony Wong to display his triumph as the New Patriarch.

---

Although Chang has chosen to tell a story of two young men who have lost themselves in the unknown deserted corner of Taipei city, echoing the lost generation depicted in *Walking on the Wild Side*. The anti-heroes in this film rejected their fathers' silent acceptance of their fate, but their obtainment of virility is only an illusion. Even they are given a second life in their cinematic survival, they end up returning to the oceanic womb. Their anti-feminisation attitude takes a turn at the end of the film when they choose the same fate with a typical scholar icon.

Hypermasculinity in the younger generation in *Walking on the Wild Side* is displayed as a blunder made by a lost generation. In his maiden work, Han Jie boldly unveiled such a repulsive side underneath the façade of Chinese prosperity and won himself international recognition. This film has not been screened on the Mainland, but he was able to bring it back to his country in the form of a DVD, thus making it available for a national gaze and drawing attention to his concern for China's lost generation. His gangster characters are still looked at as the feminised Other by a national gaze. The anti-feminisation attitude of the anti-heroes is disapproved. The look at the decadent lost generation has given the gazer (i.e. the director) a sense of superiority so that he can cry out a sacred slogan to "save the children".



## Conclusion

### 6.1 Chinese Warriors as the Cultural Other

This research is a study of the warriors as the feminised Other in Chinese language films in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China in the past decade (2000-2009). Simone de Beauvoir identifies man as the Subject and woman as the Other.<sup>1</sup> Warriors in this research have been identified as ‘object’ rather than subject and therefore, are given the role of the Other. This research project has looked at Chinese language films mainly targeting Chinese audiences in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. When Chinese films are presented to foreign audiences, especially to the Western audience, the usual question of Orientalism and Chinese warriors as the cultural Other will require a more comprehensive study in the future.

Said coined the term Orientalism and defined it as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, the paradigm of the Orientalist gaze, following the format of the West as the ‘gazer’ and the East as the ‘spectacle’, deliberately belittles the East. According to Rey Chow,

... “the Chinese people” are displaced onto figures of the powerless...the powerless provides a means of aesthetic transition through which a certain emotional stability arises from *observing* the powerless as a spectacle. In this spectacle, the viewer can invest a great amount of emotional energy in the form of sympathy; at the same time, this sympathy becomes the concrete basis of an affirmative national culture precisely because it *secures the distance from the powerless* per se.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> De Beauvoir, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Said, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Chow, *Primitive Passions*, 112 and 135.

In other words, the West gazes at the backward, naïve and powerless East in order to stabilise and empower itself as the powerful subject. However, nowadays, although the Orientalist Gaze might still exist, China has shaken off its *powerless* stigma.

Chinese rapid development has been widely recognised around the world. With this material prosperity as the backbone, even though the Orientalist Gaze continues, it merely refers to the superficial diagram of the West looking at the East, while in this case, the object of this look – China – is no longer the powerless spectacle. China as a spectacle has crossed national boundaries into the West where it continues to be looked at, but such to-be-looked-at-ness possesses a gripping seductive power.

China now deliberately exhibits its flamboyant exoticism, which has been referred to as Chinese “soft power”, a diplomatic term first coined by Joseph Nye,<sup>4</sup> referring to “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments”,<sup>5</sup> in sharp contrast with “hard power” mainly composed of military and economic might. Shambaugh notes, “[t]his growing soft power of China was strengthened by the 2008 Olympics extravaganza,”<sup>6</sup> where Chineseness was exhibited to full: the classical music (drums), the luxurious ancient costumes, the water ink paintings, and the Four Inventions (paper, gun power, compass and printing technique).

Such cultural extravaganza is conspicuous in the ‘made-in-China’ international blockbuster films in the first decade of the 21st century. Chinese artists adopt a form of exhibitionism to self-display its culture and myths to seduce the West. This exhibitionism is referred to by Chow as the Oriental’s Orientalism.<sup>7</sup> The general director of the extravaganza

---

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 153.

<sup>5</sup> Young Nam Cho and Jong Ho Jeong, “China’s Soft Power: Discussions, Resources, and Prospects,” *Asian Survey* XLVIII, No. 3 (May/ June 2008):455.

<sup>6</sup> Shambaugh, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Chow, *Primitive Passions*, 171.

2008 Olympic Game Opening Ceremony, Zhang Yimou, had directed three such blockbusters in the past decade: *Hero* (2002), *House of Flying Daggers* (2004) and *Curse of the Golden Flower* (2006)<sup>8</sup>. From Zhang's blockbusters, to the Kung fu extravaganza *Kung Fu Hustle* (*Gongfu* 功夫, dir. Stephen Chow, 2004), to the ancient war epic *Red Cliff* (*Chibi* 赤壁 dir. John Woo, 2008-2009), Chinese elements, including martial arts, Chinese medicine, tea ceremonies, Chinese calligraphy, as well as many other exotic ingredients, are exhibited to the full.

Furthermore, according to Said, "latent Orientalism also encouraged a peculiarly...male conception of the world."<sup>9</sup> That is, the Orient is constantly feminised by the Occident who tends to have a stereotypical view on the East. The theme of feminisation should be expanded to the directors' creation of China as the cultural Other in their international blockbusters. Henceforth, the theme of feminisation is extended to describe the filmmakers. Chinese directors of such blockbusters marked with Chineseness assume the role of a 'seductress'<sup>10</sup> by feminising themselves with Oriental's exoticism to seduce the Westerners into the myth of Chinese culture.

While male spectacles in many of the Chinese blockbusters show globally are recognised as part of the trend to cater to a global gaze toward male bodies, their 'Chineseness' further intensifies their spectacle status. Mike Walsh creates a list of the elements that are regarded as Chinese "cinema of the spectacle":

(a) a period setting that mythicizes, or fantasizes, Chinese history, (b) a commitment to lavish spectacle, (c) the achievement of this spectacle in large part, by the extensive use of digital effects, (d) the use of internationally recognisable stars,... and (e) the inclusion of martial arts which stress their aesthetic value and

<sup>8</sup> These years refer to their release dates in Chinese markets.

<sup>9</sup> Said, 207.

<sup>10</sup> Chow in *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* has first referred Zhang Yimou as a "seducer". My naming of the directors as "seductresses" has been developed from her concept.

---

their fantasy aspects rather than foregrounding their speed, violence and athleticism.<sup>11</sup>

Many of the popular Chinese commercial films released overseas fit well into his list, with the male bodies decorated with spectacular ‘Chineseness’ so as to function not merely as erotic objects, but simultaneously as the Oriental Other for the Orientalist Gaze. Chow shows that China is constantly treated as a “spectacle” and thus “feminised” by the West: “China as a spectacle, as what facilitates the production of surplus-value in the politics of knowledge-as-commodity – this China becomes, in its relation to the West, ‘woman’”.<sup>12</sup> More and more Chinese filmmakers making films to seduce the global audience now consciously and voluntarily magnify the concept of ‘China as a spectacle.’

However, this aspect of feminisation in a global sphere is beyond the limit of the current project that concentrates on Chinese masculinity and political positioning within Chinese cultural context. Even though the Chinese warriors as the feminised cultural Other is another layer of feminisation, another systematic research project will be needed to understand both these directors’ self-Orientalism as a feminised strategy and the reading and misreading to Chinese films in global context.

## 6.2 The Dawn of the feminine vs. the Eclipse of the Masculine

The research redefines the conception of feminised men and masculinity within new sociocultural contexts. Feminisation and warrior seem to be a paradoxical pair, but this research has come to a conclusion that they are a perfect match, for feminisation is no longer referred to as castration, emasculation or disempowerment, but rather a whole new discourse

---

<sup>11</sup> Walsh, “*The Curse of the Golden Flower* and the Two Trends in Chinese Cinema,” *Metro Magazine*, 153, June (2007), 68.

<sup>12</sup> Chow, “Violence in the Other Country: China as Crisis, Spectacle, and Woman,” in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1991), 84.

based on feminine virtues is on the rise. Femininity is now regarded as a new privilege, a new power; therefore, it becomes a hot property that not only women, but also men are keen to pursue it.

The promotion of the feminine discourse must be understood in the context of today's world that is constantly referred to as the 'postmodern era' with a postindustrialist culture. Dawn Heineken describes this postmodern culture as "part of a global economy that is dominated by consumerism, fashion, advertising and new leisure industries."<sup>13</sup> Such a change reflects what Baudrillard has explained as "the end of production" in a society that is centred on consumption rather than production. The whole guiding measurement of values has switched from use value to exaltation of the glamorous symbolic value.

Under the postmodern value system, feminine power is recognised as seductive power in this research. The superficial meaning of feminisation of the warriors is referred back to the theory of "Gaze" by Laura Mulvey who points out that, in Hollywood films, women's role is to be the object of the Male Gaze. Following this logic, a man who functions as a sexual object plays the role of a woman, and therefore, is feminised. This research has demonstrated that male bodies as sexual object are a common feature in today's cinema, be it Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan or Hollywood. This feminisation is looked at as a strategy of seduction by appearance. To draw attention with a beautiful masquerade is no longer a shameful evil, but rather a popular scheme. The object and the gazer are engaged in a game of seduction, where the gazer derives visual pleasure from the object, whereas the object on display earns both fame and wealth through his self-exhibition of his looks; thus both parties are engaged in a game based on reciprocity, where 'each takes what he/she needs'.

---

<sup>13</sup> Heineken, 134.

However, this ‘to-be-looked-at-ness’ of these male images serves a double mission: both as the source of visual pleasure and as an ego-ideal for identification. Certainly, these male images can provide visual pleasure for both men and women with either homosexual or heterosexual ethos, but this research has centred on the heterosexual background in order to study the gender relationships between men and women. On the one hand, the current research has demonstrated the crucial role women play in consumption. That is why this research starts with the investigation of the audience, and in particular the female audience as gazers. The male images that flood the media satisfy the demands for visual pleasure from the female consumers. The megastars studied in this research, Andy Lau, Choi Siwon and Shawn Yue in Chapter Two, Chen Kun in Chapter Two and Three, Nicholas Tse, Leon Lai, and Donnie Yen in Chapter Three, Tony Leung Kar-fai and Louis Koo in Chapter Four, as well as the Hong Kong actors in the gangster films in Chapter Five, are all household names, who can cause a sensation and are welcomed by fan screams wherever they go.

On the other hand, the display of these lovable male images is by no means the sole purpose of catering to the female audience. They help to adjust a masculine identity that matches the socio-cultural context of a consumption-oriented society. The rising importance of symbolic meanings also influences the connotations of masculinity. Masculinity, as argued in this research, is a constructed concept. If ‘what men do’ is essential in production, ‘how men look’ is crucial in consumption. Metrosexual men discussed in Chapter Two are exemplary male role models, as consumers indulge in ‘how they look’ rather than involvement in ‘working’. Thorstein Veblen once said, “[c]onspicuous abstention from labor becomes the conventional index of reputability.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, metrosexual men now represent the new nobility in the postmodern world. Part of the glamour of the feminisation of

---

<sup>14</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Mentor, 1953), p.43, quoted by Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 76.

---

warriors actually reflects the glory of a consumer culture that embraces luxury, fashion and symbolic values.

Nevertheless, the feminisation of masculinity is more than a visual aspect. It represents a whole philosophy that is based on feminine values, that is, values that are derived from maternal sentimentalism, including tenderness, docility, (maternal) love, modesty and nurturance. All these virtues share at least one thing in common: they are non-militant, non-competitive in nature, related to the weaker party. They belong to a feminine logic that emphasises acceptance and submission. Instead of competition and confrontation, the feminine logic promotes coherence and cooperation. These maternal characteristics are incorporated into the structure of masculinity. Furthermore, this maternal thinking is acceptable as an ingredient of maleness because it is now given higher social status. The rise of a discourse of feminine virtues comes to pass as our contemporary world yearns for peace and coexistence, while denouncing violence, militancy and hegemony; masculine ethics based on violence, control and dominance are in decline. Connell has wittily argued:

Evidently, then, a strategy for peace must include a strategy of change in masculinities. This is the new dimension in peace work which studies of men suggest: contesting the hegemony of masculinities which emphasize violence, confrontation and domination, replacing them with patterns of masculinity more open to negotiation, cooperation and equality.<sup>15</sup>

A masculinity garnished with feminine virtues helps to tranquilise the belligerent spirits; with this popular acknowledgement of the soft side of men, they are no longer worried that showing their soft side is a sign of weakness. Instead, to be genteel and tearful is a sign of a new good man.

---

<sup>15</sup> Connell, 224.

---

### 6.3 China: Feminine Power as Part of Cultural Nationalism

The preference for feminine virtues and the popularity of the seductive power of femininity are more sophisticated when they are combined with the Chinese cultural traditions. Indisputably, this preference serves as a macro-environment for the changing conception of masculinity in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan today, but the acceptance of femininity in men is a historical fact in Chinese culture, rather than an imported new fashion. Femininity is always ‘in his blood’, and now a worldwide acceptance of it provides the Chinese with a friendly and prestigious platform to stage it with more confidence. Furthermore, with the growth of China’s national power, the self-exhibition of China’s ancient culture and exotic features is no longer the self-diminished Orientalism to flatter to the West, but a gesture of cultural pride in being the mysterious ‘cultural Other.’

Within Chinese tradition, a scholarly culture that highly values literary power overshadows a warrior culture based on military power. Thus, the construction of feminised warriors in Chinese language films has been done with recourse to this cultural legacy of feminine traits in manhood. Beauty in men is recognised as an expression of their *wen* (literary) talents, thus part of the scholarly masculinity. While ‘fragrant grass and beauty’ has been used as metaphor for the men from the gentry to the kings in ancient China, fragrance and glamorous appearance have now become an essential part of the male culture, including Chinese metrosexual men represented by the glamorous actors. Film directors have often incorporated the actors’ metrosexual attractiveness into the characters they play, thus harmonising the feminine features of the actors with their screen persona, including the warrior images.

These warrior images are further feminised by inherited Chinese philosophy, including Confucianism and Taoism that have laid heavy emphases on benevolence, love



---

(*ren*), submission (*xiao*) and non-competitiveness, traits which have been identified as “maternal thinking” in this research.

As active encoders, the directors discussed have deciphered this “maternal thinking” in Chinese masculine culture with their own codes. In Chapter Two, Jingle Ma, director of *Playboy Cops*, packages a son discourse based on Confucian motto of filial piety in his handling of the feminised metrosexual male culture. Jacob Cheung, director of *A Battle of Wits*, re-examines filial piety from a son’s angle, challenging the traditional viewpoint of gerontocracy that emphasised the son’s obedience for the benefit of the senile patriarch.

In Chapter Three, in *A Chinese Tall Story*, Jeffrey Lau deconstructs a classical story of a pious monk (thus desexualised) into a seductive (thus sexualised) romantic hero, thus depicting a male lover with feminine sentiments. The director’s recourse to traditions is not to copy, but to decode with his own vision. His wild imagination moves a familiar cultural icon out of his conventional cultural residence into a postmodern world, romanticising his hero for the female gazers who have constituted an essential part of film audiences. Yin Li, in *The Knot*, diligently instils the glamour of scholarly charisma into the image of a Communist soldier, thus combining the feminisation tradition in the special genre of scholar-and-beauty (*caizi jiaren*) in Chinese literature history with Communist China’s propaganda films, in order to construct a softened version of an official hero and thus a softened version of the government.

Chapter Three also shows that, in *An Empress and the Warriors*, Ching Siu-tung creates a hermit warrior while such a hermit life is a traditional practice of Taoists and non-competition is a Taoist maxim. Additionally, he plots the film in such a way that his female protagonist chooses a gentle, thus feminised lover over a macho hero, resonating with the Chinese cultural preference for scholars rather than warriors.

In Chapter Four on father warriors, Wong Jing makes a mockery of the feminisation phenomenon in men, making fun of the emptiness of screen persona, in which an iron man on screen is in fact a coward off screen. Sarcastic in tone, Wong still announces his participation in Chinese traditional culture by incorporating Chinese elements in his parody of fatherhood, including the image of the God of War, Guan Yu. Different from Wong Jing, Mainland Chinese director Feng Xiaogang rethinks the modern part of Chinese history by setting his film *Assembly* in the Chinese civil war at the end of the 1940s, basing a story of the birth of a nation on griefs rather than on the establishment of a Communist polity. The feminisation of the warriors in this film is understood as the result of an authoritarian gaze, but it is also related to the philosophy of non-violence persistence, submission and *ren* (benevolence) practiced by the male protagonist. Even though Feng does not redefine a cultural nationalism based on retrospect to a mythical past, he is indeed reconstructing a new nationalism outside the official history of Communist China.

Sylvia Chang in *Run, Papa, Run* conjures up the high value of a scholarly (*wen*) self-image through her male protagonist. The father in the film transfigures himself from a ruthless macho gang lord to an honest businessman by changing his dress style, so that his daughter can accept him as a gentle, lovable father. Her emphasis on a respectable man being a scholar rather than a militant fighter is compatible with China's tradition of scholarly masculinity.

In these three chapters on men's individual roles as son, lover and father, I have argued that the Chinese directors have constructed Chinese masculinity with some feminine features that are recognised for their Chineseness. All of the films selected in the three chapters are coproductions by filmmakers from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, while the recourse to common cultural roots helps to consolidate a cultural nationalism in spite of the political controversies and regional conflicts. Such cultural nationalism places

primary emphases on common cultural practices as determinants of community membership. This masculinity with Chinese characteristics, in fact, enhanced the cultural solidarity of Hong Kong, Mainland China and Taiwan, in spite of the political controversies. These Chinese directors' conscious or unconscious reference back to their cultural heritage in their depiction of Chinese masculinity is part of their journey to search for common grounds to form cultural nationalism while acknowledging local identities embedded in their gender politics.

However, the common search of cultural nationalism by these directors does not conceal the local colours within this cultural pan-unity which they help to consolidate. The name-changing scenario of *Run Papa Run* in dealing with Mainland China's censorship has already revealed the conspicuous gap between Mainland China and other Chinese communities. Chapter Five, "In search of a Better Tomorrow and a Better Place – Anti-heroes' Resistance against Feminisation", is devoted to identifying the local characteristics in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. In this chapter, I have endeavoured to 'walk around to the other side of the wall', to look at the feminisation phenomena from the opposite side, that is, from those who stand against the feminisation tendency. The films selected in this chapter are either local productions for local audience or local productions with foreign funding; therefore, the connotations of masculinity are certainly tinted with local colours.

Johnnie To does not linger on a sentimental attachment to Macau or Hong Kong's cultural heritage of either their Chinese roots or colonial imprints. In *Exiled*, he depicts the final roar of a group of lost gangsters who find their meaning of life in their roles as paternal saviours. To articulates his mistrust towards the Portuguese colonial government and the Chinese government, as well as the local authorities. Instead, he preaches a self-help attitude by calling up the noble spirits within the 'noble savages' in his films. His preaching of what

might be termed 'self-help elegance' in his male protagonists declares Hong Kong confidence as they take their fate into their own hands, rather than falling back on to their cultural legacy.

By contrast, Chang Tso-chi does not uncover such self-confidence in *The Best of Times*. Although Taiwan also has a history of being colonised, it has gone through a different journey of decolonisation. By depicting two young gangsters who struggle to take up the responsibilities as heads of the family but simultaneously yearn for a protector, Chang seems to describe a Taiwan dilemma: its people might want self-government, but there exists an anxiety that it might not be strong enough to protect itself. However, Chang has attempted to secure the 'Chineseness' of his cultural identity in his frame design and reference to Chinese traditional festivals, so as to justify Taiwan as a legitimate heir of Chinese legacies.

Han Jie from Mainland China produced his *Walking on the Wild Side* with French funding, indicating the difficulty of exposing the dark side of Mainland China within the country. Such an impasse is gloomily reflected in his depiction of the rebellious young generation. The ruthless youngsters in his film challenge law and order, but they have been under the national supervision for so long that they still dream of national salvation instead of individual revolution. At the end, the surviving hooligans long for paternal protection rather than facing the challenge with their own hands. However, the director chooses a semi-documentary style for his film and discourages the audience from identifying with his gangster characters, because these gangsters have abandoned the traditional virtues of *zhong* (loyalty) and *yi* (righteousness). In other words, the director laments their betrayal of their cultural roots.

---

## 6.4 “The Boys Are Back in Town”<sup>16</sup>?

The prominent Chinese poet Su Shi wrote, “The moon may be dim or bright, wax or wane; this has been going on since the beginning of time.”<sup>17</sup> This research can be concluded with a replacement of “the moon” with “a discourse”. In the timeframe within this research – the first decade of the new millennium, a discourse based on feminine attributes, including seduction, love and non-competition, are popular and thus glamorised. However, its opposites are never out of sight, but rather gain momentum where possible.

As this research was being completed, ‘tough guys’ films that were highly praised by critics made sensational box office hits. Hong Kong director Teddy Chan (Chen Desen 陈德森) created a historical epic *Bodyguards and Assassins* (*Shiyue weicheng* 十月围城, 2009), depicting a group of warriors protecting the revolutionary father Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the key figure in dethroning the corrupt Qing government, and the founding father of the Republic of China. The film was the biggest winner of the 29th Hong Kong Film Award, with eight different awards, including the Best Picture and the Best Director. In this film, the *wu* martial arts warriors are the heroes in the spotlight, protecting a *wen* hero Dr. Sun against the assassins. Personal romance and women are pushed to the sideline except for one tomboy character, while male heroism is the central theme, with a wide range of male characters, be they father or son, husband or orphan, master or servant, revolutionary or street vendor, beggar or business tycoon.

Taiwan director Doze Niu Cheng-tse created a sensational hit *Monga* in 2010, a gangster film that was awarded the Best Asian Film in the 2010 Hawaii International Film

---

<sup>16</sup> The title is taken from a theme song in *The Expendables* (dir. Sylvester Stallone, 2010), written by Philip Parris Lynott, performed by Thin Lizzy.

<sup>17</sup> Chinese original: 月有阴晴圆缺，此时古难全。 Chinese translation is based in Lee Sunyi, accessed 26/ July 2011, [http://www.51education.net/Article/HTML/Article\\_11797.html](http://www.51education.net/Article/HTML/Article_11797.html).

Festival. Even though it was not officially released in Mainland China, it was picked as one of the top ten films of the year by Mainland China's official English newspaper *China Daily*.<sup>18</sup> With women characters merely appearing as prostitutes and love objects, it is once again a male film on brotherhood and male identity.

Mainland director Jiang Wen produced his latest work *Let the Bullets Fly* (*rang zidan fei* 让子弹飞) in 2010, a major box office success, depicting a group of robbers fighting against a malicious local gang dictator in a remote county during the early days of the Republic of China. Women are only minor characters, whereas the whole film is imbued with a 'wild-west' style featuring horse-riding in the opening, gunfire in the mountains, and bullets flying across the air, overtly a high profile of machismo, male bonding, and male dignity.

Certainly, the new wave of tough guy images continues to bring in more shining male icons into the spotlight as spectacles for the gaze, be it queer or straight, and they still fit into this project of analysing male spectacles. However, they are in sharp contrast with the romanticised fragrant men. Many of the feminised warriors depicted in the films covered are romanticised, so that, as the Chinese would say, they have the time to 'indulge themselves in wind, flower, snow and moonlight.' In other words, the feminised warriors have the luxury to be at leisure; since metrosexual culture is a perfect mirror image of an affluent society, the feminised warriors often represent a more perfect and peaceful world.

However, the tough boys in these films are constantly in the risky situation of being tough or perishing. Does the popularity of the 'tough guy' partly reflect a world with an unpredictable future after the economic crisis at the end of the first decade of 2000s? Do the images of tough guys indicate that the signs of prosperity represented by the feminised male culture are just illusionary bubbles that are doomed to be broken? Are they the conservative reaction toward the feminised masculinity? Do they reflect what men really are or what men

---

<sup>18</sup> Raymond Zhou, "Movies for Keeps", *China Daily*, 28<sup>th</sup> Dec, 2010, page 18, accessed 09 January 2011. [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-12/28/content\\_11762716.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-12/28/content_11762716.htm).

---

should be? Further intensive research is needed to answers these questions. The return of the macho warriors further proves that masculinity is indeed an invented category that is constantly modified with specific historical moments. What a man is, what he wants to be, and what he should be are all barometers of the sophisticated world he is in.

---

## Bibliography

In English:

20<sup>th</sup> Hong Kong International Film Festival. ed. *The Restless Breed: Cantonese Stars of the Sixties*. Hong Kong: The Urban Council of Hong Kong, 1996.

Adams, Michael Vannoy. *The Mythological Unconscious*. New York and London: Karnac, 2001.

Alter, Ethan. "Curse of the Golden Flower", *Film Journal International* 110.1 (Jan 2007): 37(2). Accessed 17 July 2011.

[http://www.filmjournal.com/filmjournal/eseach/article\\_display.jsp?vnu\\_content\\_id=1003522937](http://www.filmjournal.com/filmjournal/eseach/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1003522937)

Anon. "A City of Sadness." *Cinema Space*. University of California, Berkeley. Accessed 28 July 2010. <http://cinemaspace.berkeley.edu/Papers/CityOfSadness/table.html>.

Anon. "Robert Pattinson: Cute in Japan." Accessed 17 August 2010.

<http://www.robsessedpattinson.com/2009/11/robert-pattinson-cute-in-japan-pictures.html>.

Anon. "Twilight: New Moon Premier in LA." Accessed 5 February 2010.

<http://www.3news.co.nz/Twilight-New-Moon-premieres-in-LA/tabid/418/articleID/130036/Default.aspx>.

Arroyo, José, ed. *Action/Spectacle: A Sight and Sound Reader*. London: British Film Institute, 2000.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Barboza, David. "A Leap Forward, or a Great Sellout?" *New York Times* (Late Edition; East Coast). New York, N.Y.: Jul 1, 2007. p. 2.7

Barmé, Geremie and John Minford, eds. *Seeds of Fire: Chinese Voice of Conscience*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1988.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." In *Image, Music, Text*, selected and translated by Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang. 1977.

-----, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*. Translated by Richard Howard. London, New York, Victoria, Toronto and Auckland: Penguin Books, 1990. First translation printed 1978, by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in the United States.



- 
- , *S/Z*. Translated by Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974. Twelfth printing, 1986.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998.
- , *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. Translated by Charles Levin. St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981.
- , *Seduction*. Translated by Brian Singer. London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1990.
- , *Simulations*. Translated by Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman Paul Foss. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.
- , *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. Translated by Iain Hamilton Grant. London Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993. Reprint, 1998.
- , *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*. Translated by James Bedit. London: Verso, 1993.
- Baumgardner, Jennifer and Amy Richards. "Feminism and Femininity: or How We Learn to Stop Worrying and Love the Thong" In *All about the Girl: Culture, Power, and Identity*, edited by Anita Harris, 59-67. New York & London: Routledge, 2004.
- , *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.
- Berry, Chris and Mary Farquhar. *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Berry, Chris. "A Nation T(W/O)O Chinese Cinema(S) and Nationhood(S)." In *Colonialism and Nationalism in Asian Cinema*, edited by Wimal Dissanayake, 42-64. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Berry, Chris, ed. *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes*. London: British Film Institute, 2003. Reprint, 2005.
- , "Haunted Realism: Postcoloniality and the Cinema of Chang Tso-chi." In *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*, edited by Darrell William Davis and Ru-Shou Robert Chen, 33-50. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.
- , "Market Forces: China's 'Fifth Generation' Forces the Bottom Line." In *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema*, edited by Chris Berry. London: BFI Publishing, 1991, reprint 1993.
- , ed. *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema*. London: BFI Publishing, 1991.
- Bhabha, Homi K.. "Introduction: Narrating the Nation." In *Nation and Narration*, edited by Homi K. Bhabha, 1-7. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.

- 
- ed. *Nation and Narration*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Birdwhistell, Joanne D. *Mencius and Masculinities: Dynamics of Power, Morality, and Maternal Thinking*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- Boorstin, Daniel J. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.
- Bordo, Susan. *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.
- Bordwell, David. *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 2000
- Boscagli, Maurizia. "A Moving Story: Masculine Tears and the Humanity of Televised Emotions," *Discourse* 15.2, (winter 1992-93): 64-79
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Masculine Domination*. Translated by Richard Nice. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Box Office Mojo*. <http://boxofficemojo.com/>
- Browne, Nick, Paul G. Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack, Esther Yau, ed. *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Browne, Nick. "Introduction." In *New Chinese Cinema: Forms, Identities, Politics*, edited by Nick Browne, Paul G. Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack and Esther Yau, 1-11. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Brownell, Susan and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, ed. *Chinese Femininities /Chinese Masculinities: A Reader*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002.
- Burston, Paul and Colin Richardson, ed. *A Queer Romance: Lesbians, Gay Men and Polular Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits Of "Sex"*. New York and London: Routledge, 1993.
- , *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 10th anniversary edition. New York and London: Routledge, 1999.
- Cai, Rong. "Gender Imaginations in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and the Wuxia World." *Positions* 13, No.2 ( 2005): 441-471.
- Chen, Yunxiang. *Representations of Chinese Women Warriors in the Cinemas of Hong Kong, Mainland China and Taiwan since 1980*. MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 2007.

- 
- Chen, Ellen M. *The Tao Te Ching: A New Translation with Commentary*. New York: Paragon House, 1989.
- Cheung, Gary Ka-wai. *Hong Kong's Watershed: the 1967 Riots*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009.
- Chiao, Hsiung-Ping. "The Distinct Taiwanese and Hong Kong Cinemas." In *Perspective on Chinese Cinema*. Edited by Chris Berry, 155-165. London: British Film Institute, first published 1991, reprinted 1997.
- Chin, Jachinson. *Chinese American Masculinities from Fu Manchu to Bruce Lee*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Cho, Young Nam and Jong Ho Jeong, "China's Soft Power: Discussions, Resources, and Prospects," *Asian Survey* XLVIII, no. 3 (May/ June 2008):453-472.
- Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1978.
- Chow, Rey. "Male Narcissism and National Culture: Subjectivity in Chen Kaige's *King of the Children*." In *Male Trouble*, edited by Constance Penley and Sharon Willis, 87-119. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- , "Not One Less: The Fable of a Migration." In *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes*, edited by Chris Berry, 144-151. London: British Film Institute, 2003. Reprint, 2005.
- , *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.
- , *Sentimental Fabulations, Contemporary Chinese Films: Attachment in the Age of Global Visibility*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.
- , "Violence in the Other Country: China as Crisis, Spectacle, and Woman." In *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Edited by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, 81-100. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.
- , *Woman and Chinese Modernity: the Politics of Reading between West and East*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, third printing 2003.
- , *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Chuang Tzu. *The Book of Chuang Tzu*. Translated by with Elizabeth Breuilly Martin Palmer, Chang Wai Ming and Jay Ramsay. London etc.: Penguin Books, 1996. Reprint, 2006.

- 
- Ciment, Michel. "Asking questions: Interview with Zhang Yimou." In Zhang Yimou: Interviews, ed. Frances Gateward, 15-24. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001.
- Clark, Paul. *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949*. Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- , *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008
- , "Filmmaking in China: From the Cultural Revolution to 1981." *China Quarterly* 94 (June 1983): 304-322
- Clarke, Roger. "Impossible Mission," *Sight & Sound*, July 2009, Vol.19. Issue 7
- Clatterbaugh, Kenneth. *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity: Men, Women, and Politics in Modern Society*. Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990.
- Cohan, Steven and Ina Rae Hark, ed. *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema* London & New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Cohan, Steven, "'Feminizing' the Song-and-Dance Man: Fred Astaire and the Spectacle of Masculinity in the Hollywood Musical," In *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*, edited by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, 9-22. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Cohan, Steven. "Masquerading as the American Male in the Fifties: Picnic, William Holden and the Spectacle of Masculinity in Hollywood Film." In *Male Trouble*, edited by Constance Penley and Sharon Willis, 203-32. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Collier, Joelle. "The Noir East: Hong Kong Filmmakers' Transmutation of a Hollywood Genre?" In *Hong Kong Film Hollywood and the New Global Cinema: No Film Is an Island*, edited by Gina Marchetti and Tan See Kam, 137-158. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Confucius. *The Analects of Confucius*. Translated by Simon Leys. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997.
- , *The Analects*. Translated by Arthur Waley. Beijing: Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe, 1998. Reprint, 5th print 2003.
- Connell, R. W. *The Men and the Boys*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.
- Corliss, Richard and Richard Schickel, "Holiday Movies." *Time*. Vol. 168, Iss. 25 (Dec 18, 2006): 128

- 
- , "10 Best Movies." *Time*. Vol. 168, Iss. 26 (Dec 25, 2006/Jan 1, 2007):181.
- Curtin, Michael. *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007.
- Dai, Jinhua. "Behind Global Spectacle and National Image Making." *Positions* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 161-86.
- , *Cinema and Desire: Feminist Marxism and Cultural Politics in the Works of Dai Jinhua*. Translated and edited by Jing Wang and Tani E. Barrows. London and New York: Verso, 2002.
- , "Invisible Women: Contemporary Chinese Cinema and Women's Films." *Positions* 3, no. 1 (1995): 255-80.
- Davis, Darrell William and Ru-Shou Robert Chen, ed. *Cinema Taiwan: Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Translated and edited by H. M. Parshley. Published by Jonathan Cape, 1953; Reprint, London: Vintage, 1997.
- Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: Zone Books, 1994. Reprint, seventh printing 2002.
- Doane, Mary Ann. "Clinical Eyes: the medical Discourse," in *The Desire to Desire: the Women's Film of the 1940s*, edited by Mary Ann Doane, 38-69. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Durkman, Steven. "The Gay Gaze, or Why I Want My MTV." In *A Queer Romance: Lesbians, Gay Men and Popular Culture*. Edited by Paul Burston and Colin Richardson, 81-95. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Dyer, Richard. "Action!" In *Action/Spectacle: A Sight and Sound Reader*, edited by José Arroyo, 17-21. London: British Film Institute, 2000.
- Edwards, Tim. *Cultures of Masculinity*. New York & London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006.
- Ehrlich, Linda C and David Desser, ed. *Cinematic Landscapes: Observations on the Visual Arts and Cinema of China and Japan*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.
- Ellis, John. *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video*. London and New York: Routledge, 1982. Reprint, 2003.
- Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Women and War*. New York: Basic Books, 1987.
- Evans, Caroline and Lorraine Gamman. "The Gaze Revisited, or Reviewing Queer Viewing." In *A Queer Romance: Lesbians, Gay Men and Popular Culture*, edited by Paul Burston and Colin Richardson, 13-56. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

- 
- Evans, Harriet. "Gender in Modern Chinese Culture." In *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Chinese Culture*, edited by Kam Louie, 68-90. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Fairbank, John King. *The Cambridge History of China: Republican China 1912-1949, Part 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Fisher, Mark. "Flatline Constructs: Gothic Materialism and Cybernetic Theory-Fiction". Accessed 20 July 2011. <http://www.cinestatic.com/trans-mat/Fisher/FC2s6.htm>.
- Flocker, Michael. *The Metrosexual Guide to Style: A Handbook for the Modern Man*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith. London: Tavistock Publications, 1973.
- , *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1979. First edition 1977.
- , *Essential Works of Michel Foucault*, vol. 3: Power. Edited by James D. Faubion. Translated by Robert Hurley and others. Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 2001.
- , *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Random House, 1978.
- Fradley, Martin. "Maximus Melodramaticus: Masculinity, Masochism and White male Paranoia in Contemporary Hollywood Cinema." In *Action and Adventure Cinema*, edited by Yvonne Tasker, 235-251. New York and London: Routledge, 2004.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Family Romances" (1909[1908]). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. IX (1906-1908). Translated by James Starchey and Anna Freud. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1959.
- , "Mourning and Melancholia", (1917). *Collected Papers*, vol. 4 (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1949).
- Fu, Poshek. "Between Nationalism and Colonialism: Mainland Émigrés, Marginal Culture, and Hong Kong Cinema 1937-1941." In *Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*, edited by Poshek Fu and David Desser, 199-226. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Fung, Yu-lan. *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*. Edited by Derk Bodde. New York: The Tree Press, 1966. Third printing 1968.

- 
- Furst, Lilian R. and James D. Wilson, eds. *The Anti-hero: His Emergence and Transformations, Studies in the Literary Imagination*, Vol. IX, No.1. Atlanta: Georgia State University, 1976.
- Gabbard, Glen, O. and Krin Gabbard. *Psychiatry and the Cinema*. second ed. Washington D. C. and London: American Psychiatric Press, Inc, 1999.
- Galasiński, Dariusz. *Men and the Language of Emotions*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Masmillan, 2004.
- Gamman , Lorraine, and Margaret Marshment, eds. *Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture*. Seattle: The Real Comet Press, 1989.
- Gamman, Lorraine, "Watching the Dectivies: the Enigma of the Female Gaze." In *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture*, edited by Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment. Seattle: The Real Comet Press, 1989.
- Gernet, Jacques. *A History of Chinese Civilisation*, translated by J.R. Foster and Charles Hartman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed, 1996.
- Gledhill, Christine, ed. *Home Is Where the Heart Is*. London: British Film Institute, 1987. Reprint, 1992.
- , "Pleasurable Negotiation." In *Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television*, edited by E. Deidre Pribram, 64-89. London and New York: Verso, 1988.
- Goleman, Daniel. *Emotion Intelligence*. New York, London, Sydney and Auckland: Bantam Books, 1995.
- Gordon, Colin, ed. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977 Michel Foucault*. New York, London. Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo and Singapore: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980.
- Grace, Victoria. *Baudrillard's Challenge: A Feminist Reading*. London & New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Groenewegen, Jeroen. "Between Social Realism and Kawaii Virtuality." Accessed 21 Jan 2010. <http://www.asiaarts.ucla.edu/090206/article.asp?parentID=104383>.
- Gu, Wentong. "A Grant Step for Chinese Women within Their Families." *Women of China* No. 7 (2006): 26-31
- Hall, Stuart. "Encoding/Decoding." In *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-1979*, edited by Dorothy Hobson Stuart Hall, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis, 128-38. London, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland, Johannesburg: Hutchinson, 1980.

- 
- , "The Spectacle of the 'Other'." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall, 223-90. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, in association with Open University, 1997. Reprint, 2001.
- , "Who Needs 'Identity'?" In *Identity: A Reader*, edited by Paul de Guy, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman, 15-30. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000, Reprint 2005.
- Hao, Dazheng. "Chinese Visual Representation: Painting and Cinema." In *Cinematic Landscapes: Observations on the Visual Arts and Cinema of China and Japan*, edited by Linda C. Ehrlich and David Desser, 45-62, translated by Douglas Wilkerson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
- Harris, Anita. *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-first Century*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Heinecken, Dawn. *The Warrior Women of Television: a Feminist Cultural Analysis of the New Female Body in Popular Media*. New York: Peter Lang, 2003.
- Heywood, Leslie and Jennifer Drake, eds. *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1997.
- Ho, Sam, "One Jolts, the Other Orchestrates: Two Transitional Shaw Brothers Figures." In *The Shaw Screen: A Preliminary Study*, edited by Wong Ain-ling, 105-25. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003.
- Hong Kong Film Archives*. <http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/HKFA/en/index.php>
- Hopkins, Susan. *Girl Heroes: the New Force in Popular Culture*. Annandale: Pluto Press Australia, 2002.
- Hu, Ying. "Beyond the Glow of the Red Lantern; or, What Does It Mean to Talk about Women's Cinema in China?" In *Redirecting the Gaze: Gender, Theory, and Cinema in the Third World*, edited by Diana Robin and Ira Jaffe, 257-282. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999.
- Huang, Yiju. "Weaving a Dark Parody: A Psychoanalytical Reading of Zhang Yimou's *Curse of the Golden Flower*," *Film International*, vol 6:2, (2008): 41-51.
- Ignatius, Adi. "A Chinese Reality." *Time*. (June 26- July 2009): 56-59
- Inness, Sherrie A. *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1999.
- International BoxOffice Essentials*. <http://www.iboe.com>
- International Movie Database*. <http://www.imdb.com>



- 
- Jacobs, Jason. "Gunfire" In *Action/Spectacle: A Sight and Sound Reader*, edited by José Arroyo, 17-21. London: British Film Institute, 2000.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on Postmodern, 1983-1998*. London, New York: Verso, 1998.
- , *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duham, London: Duke University Press, Verso, 1991.
- Jeffords, Susan. "Can Masculinity Be Terminated?" In *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*, edited by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, 245-62. London & New York: Routledge, 1993.
- , *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*. New Brunstick, N. J.: Rutger University Press, 1994.
- Johnson, Graham E. "Degrees of Dependency, Degrees of Interdependency: Hong Kong's Changing Links to the Mainland and the World." In *Hong Kong Reintegrating with China: Political, Cultural and Social Dimensions*, edited by Pui-tak Lee, 81-96. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001.
- Jung, C. G. "The Development of Personality" In *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*. Edited by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham and Gerhard Adler, translated by R.F.C. Hull. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954.
- , "Psychology and Alchemy." CW 12. Edited by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham and Gerhard Adler, translated by R.F.C. Hull. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1953.
- Kaplan, E. Ann. "Is the Gaze Male?" In *Feminism and Film*, 119-138, edited by E. Ann Kaplan. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Reprint, 2004.
- , *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera*. New York: Methuen, 1983.
- Koehler, Robert. "Curse of the Golden Flower," *Variety* 405.1 (Nov 20, 2006): 49(1).
- Kristeva, Julia. "Women's Time." Translated by Alice Jardine and Harry Blake. *Signs* Vol.7, No.1 (Autumn, 1981): 13-35.
- Ku, Yen-lin. "Feminist Movement in Taiwan, 1972-87." *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 21, (1989):12-22.
- Kurlantzick, Joshua. *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Lacan, Jacques. *Ecrits: A Selection*. Translated by Bruce Fink. London and New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002.

- 
- Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated by Sylvana Tomaselli. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988.
- Lam, Adam. *Identity, Tradition and Globalism: Post-cultural Revolution Chinese Feature Films 1977-1996*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2008.
- , "Nostalgia and Dissatisfaction: Reading Zhang Yimou's *The Road Home* and *Not One Less* as Postmodern Texts." In *Asian Futures, Asian Traditions*, edited by Edwina Palmer, 401-418. Folkstone: Global Oriental, 2005.
- Lam, Edward, "Lily Ho of Hong Kong." Translated by Teri Chan, In *The Shaw Screen: A Preliminary Study*, edited by Wong Ain-ling, 237-251. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003
- Lam, Michael. "The Mysterious Gayness in Chang Cheh's Unhappy World." Translated by Sam Ho. In *The Shaw Screen: A Preliminary Study*. Edited by Wong Ain-ling, 175-187.
- Lau, Jenny Kwok Wah, ed. *Multiple Modernities: Cinemas and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003.
- , "Globalization and Youthful Subculture: The Chinese Sixth-Generation Films at the Dawn of the New Century." In *Multiple Modernities: Cinemas and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia*, edited by Jenny Kwok Wah Lau, 13-27. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003.
- Law, Kar and Frank Bren. *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View*. Lanham, Toronto and Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2004.
- Law, Kar. "The Origin and Development of Shaws' Colour Wuxia Century." In *The Shaw Screen: A Preliminary Study*, edited by Wong Ain-ling, 129-43.
- , *Legend of Mulan: A Folding Book of the Ancient Poem that Inspired the Disney Animated Film*, trans. Lei Fan. New York: Welcome Enterprises, 1998.
- Leyda, Jay. *Dianying: An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China*. London: The MIT Press, 1972.
- Li, Chenyang. "The Confucian Concept of Jen and the Feminist ethics of Care: a Comparative Study," *Hypatia* vol.9, no. 1 (winter, 1994): 70-89.
- Li, Cheuk-to. "The Return of the Father: Hong Kong New Wave and Its Chinese Context in the 1980s." In *New Chinese Cinema: Forms, Identities, Politics*, edited by Nick

- 
- Browne, Paul G. Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack and Esther Yau, 160-179. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Lloyd, Genevieve. *The Man of Reason: 'Male' & 'Female' in Western Philosophy*. Edited by Jonathan Ree. second ed, *Ideas*. London: Routledge, 1993. Reprint, 1995.
- Logan, Bey. *Hong Kong Action Cinema*. Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press, 1996.
- Louie, Kam and Louise Edwards. "Chinese Masculinity: Theorizing Wen and Wu." *East Asia History* 8 (1994):135-148.
- Louie, Kam and Morris Low. Eds. *Asian Masculinities: the Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Louie, Kam. "Constructing Masculinity for the Modern World: With Particular Reference to Lao She's The Two Mas." *The China Quarterly*, No. 164 (Dec., 2000): 1062-1078
- , *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2002.
- Lu, Sheldon H. *Chinese Modernity and Global Biopolitics: Studies in Literature and Visual Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007.
- , "National Cinema, Cultural Critique, Transnational Capital: The Films of Zhang Yimou." In *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*, edited by Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, 105-36.
- , ed. *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997.
- Lui, Tai-lok and Yiu Wai-hung, "Intrigue Is Hard to Defend: The Conditions of Transition and the Prototype of Hong Kong Cinema." In *The Shaw Screen: A Preliminary Study*, edited by Wong Ain-ling, 161-173.
- Luo, Xu. "Farewell to Idealism: Mapping China's University Students of the 1990s", *Journal of Contemporary China*, 13, (41), November, 2004: 779-799
- Ma, Ning. "Spatiality and Subjectivity in Xie Jin's Film Melodrama of the New Period." In *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*, edited by Nick Browne, Paul G. Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack, Esther Yau, 15-39. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Mac an Ghaill, Máirtín and Chris Haywood. *Gender, Culture and Society: Contemporary Femininities and Masculinities*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.
- MacInnes, John. *The End of Masculinity: The Confusion of Sexual Genesis and Sexual Difference in Modern Society*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1998.

- 
- Marchetti, Gina. "Two Stage Sisters: the Blossoming of a Revolutionary Aesthetic." In *Transnational Chinese Cinema: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*. Edited by Sheldon Hsiao-peng, 59-80. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997.
- Martin Michael. "Glamor Shots Transform Chinese Women into Models." *Women of China*, No.1, (2008):60.
- McAleavy, Henry. *The Modern History of China*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967.
- McDonagh, Maitland. "Action Painter John Woo." *Film Comment* 29, no. 5 (1993): 46-49.
- , "Things I Felt Being Lost" (interview) *Film Comment* 29.5 (1993): 50-51.
- Mencius. *Mencius*. Translated by D.C. Lau. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970.
- Min, Jiayin, ed. *The Chalice & the Blade in Chinese Culture: Gender Relations and Social Models*. Beijing: China Social Science Publishing House, 1995.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Afterthought on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)" In *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, edited by Sue Thornham, 122-130. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.
- , "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In *Feminism and Film*, edited by E. Ann Kaplan, 34-47. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Reprint, 2004.
- Nayak, Anoop and Mary Jane Kehily. *Gender, Youth and Culture: Young Masculinities and Femininities*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Neale, Steve. "Masculinity as Spectacle: Reflections on Men and Mainstream Cinema." In *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*, edited by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, 9-22. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Neri, Corrado. "A Time to Live, A Time to Die: A Time to Grow." In *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes*, edited by Chris Berry, 160-166. London: British Film Institute, 2003. Reprint, 2005.
- Ngo, Hang-yue and Ngai Pun. "Gender, Work and Employment in the 'Global Condition.'" In *Mainstreaming Gender in Hong Kong Society*, edited by Fanny M. Cheung, 49-80. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2009.
- Nicholson, Linda J., ed. *Feminism/Postmodernism*. Edited by Linda J. Nicholson, *Thinking Gender*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990.
- Nixon, Sean. "Exhibiting Masculinity." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall, 291-336. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, in association with Open University, 1997. Reprint, 2001.

- 
- , *Hard Looks: Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption*. New York: St. Martin Press, 1996.
- Nochimson, Martha P. *Dying to Belong: Gangster Movies in Hollywood and Hong Kong*. Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2000.
- Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey. "Minnelli and Melodrama." In *Home Is Where the Heart Is*, edited by Christine Gledhill, 70-74. London: British Film Institute, 1987. Reprint, 1992.
- Nye, Joseph. *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. New York: Basic Books, 1990.
- O'Day, Marc. "Beauty in Motion: Gender, Spectacle and Action Babe Cinema." In *Action and Adventure Cinema*, edited by Yvonne Tasker, 201-218. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Pang, Laikwan and Day Wong, ed. *Masculinities and Hong Kong Cinema*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005.
- Pang, Laikwan. "Post-1997 Hong Kong Masculinity." In *Masculinities and Hong Kong Cinema*, edited by Laikwan Pang and Day Wong, 35-55. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005.
- Pappademas, Alex. "He's Hot, He's Sexy, He's Undead." Accessed 18 August 2010. <http://www.gq.com/entertainment/celebrities/200903/robert-pattinson-harry-potter-twilight>.
- Pfeil, Fred. *White Guys: Studies in Postmodern Domination and Difference*. London & New York: Verso, 1995.
- Pickowicz, Paul G. "Theme and Spiritual Pollution in Chinese Films of the 1930s." *Modern China* 17, No.1 (January 1991): 38-75.
- Pribram, Deidre, ed. *Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television*. London and New York: Verso, 1988.
- Radway, Janice. "Interpretive Communities and Variable Literacies: the Functions of Romance Reading." In *A Cultural Studies Reader: History, Theory, Practice*, edited by Jessica Munns and Gita Rajan, 333-350. London and New York: Longman, 1995.
- , *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984.
- Raphals, Lisa. *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.
- Renan, Ernest. "What Is a Nation." Translated by Martin Thom, In *Nation and Narration*, edited by Homi K. Bhabha, 8-22. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.

- 
- Rist, Peter. "Scenes of 'in-Action' and Noir Characteristics in the Films of Johnnie To (Kei-Fung)." In *Hong Kong Film, Hollywood and the New Global Cinema: No Film Is an Island*, edited by Gina Marchetti and Tan See Kam, 159-63. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Rodriguez, Hector. "Hong Kong Popular Culture as an Interpretive Arena: The Huang Feihong Film Series." *Screen* 38, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 1-24.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract and the Discourses*, translated by G.D.H Cole. London: Everyman's Library Telos Press, 1973. Reprint, 1993.
- Ruhlmann, Robert. "Traditional Heroes in Chinese Popular Fiction." In *The Confucian Persuasion*, edited by Arthur F. Wright, 141-76. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1960.
- Sacred Books of China: The I Ching*. Translated by James Legge. Sacred Books of the East, vol.XVI. New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1963.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*, 25th Anniversary edition. New York: Vintage Books, 1978; reprint, New York: Random House, 1994.
- Salzman, Marian, Ira Matathia & Ann O'Reilly. *The Future of Men*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Sandell, Jillian. "Reinventing Masculinity: The Spectacle of Male Intimacy in the Films of John Woo." *Film Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (1996): 23-34.
- Sek, Kei. "The War between the Cantonese and Mandarin Cinemas in the Sixties, or How the Beautiful Women list to the Action Men." In *The Restless Breed: Cantonese Stars of the Sixties*. Edited by The 20<sup>th</sup> Hong Kong International Film Festival. Hong Kong: The Urban Council of Hong Kong, 1996.
- Seno, Alexandra A. "F4 Boys in the Band." *Newsweek* (Pacific Edition), 9/22/2003, Vol. 142 Issue 12, 56-58, 3p. Accessed 20 August 2010.  
<http://www.newsweek.com/2003/09/21/the-boys-in-the-band.html>.
- Shambaugh, David. "The Road to Prosperity." *Time* (September 28, 2009): 22-23
- Silverman, Kaja. *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*. New York and London: Routledge, 1992.
- Simpkins, Scott. "Sources of Magic Realism: Supplements to Realism in Contemporary Latin American Literature." In *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, 145-159, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.
- Simpson, Mark. "Here come the mirror men." Accessed 06 October 2010.  
[http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/mirror\\_men.html](http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/mirror_men.html).

- 
- , *Male Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- , "Meet the Mettosexual." Accessed 05 October 2010.  
[http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/metrosexual\\_beckham.html](http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/metrosexual_beckham.html).
- , "Metrosexual? That rings a bell." Accessed 06 October 2010.  
[http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/metrosexual\\_ios.html](http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/metrosexual_ios.html).
- Song, Geng. *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the interpretation of Culture*, edited by Gary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271-313. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Stoller, Robert J. *Sex and Gender: On the development of Masculinity and Femininity*. London: 1968.
- Tay, William. "The Ideology of Initiation: The Films of Hou Hsiao-Hsien." In *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*, edited by Nick Browne, Paul G. Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack, Esther Yau, 151-1159. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Teo, Stephen. *Chines Martial Arts Cinema: the Wuxia Tradition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.
- , *Director in Action: Johnnie To and the Hong Kong Action Film*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007.
- , *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions*. London: British Film Institute, 1997.
- Thomas, Kevin. "Dazzlingly Decadent," *Los Angeles Times*, Friday, December 22, 2006, E.2  
 Accessed 17 July 2011. <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/dec/22/entertainment/et-curse22>
- Townsend, James. "Chinese Nationalism." In *Chinese Nationalism*, edited by Jonathon Unger, 1-30. Amonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996.
- Tozer, Warren. "Taiwan's 'Cultural Renaissance': a Preliminary View." *The China Quarterly*, No. 43. (Jul-Sep.,1970): 81-99.
- Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990, second edition, 2002.
- Vetterling-Braggin, Mary, ed. "*Femininity*," "*Masculinity*," and "*Androgyny*": *A Modern Philosophical Discussion*. Totowa, N. J.: Rowman & Allanheld Publishers, 1982.

- 
- Voigt, Kevin. "Women: Saviors of the World Economy?" Accessed 2 November 2009.  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/10/25/intl.women.global.economy/index.html>.
- Walsh, Mike. "*The Curse of the Golden Flower* and the Two Trends in Chinese Cinema." *Metro Magazine* 153 (2007): 66-71.
- Wang, Yuejin. "Red Sorghum: Mixing Memory and Desire." In *Perspective on Chinese Cinema*. Edited by Chris Berry, 80-103. London: British Film Institute, first published 1991, reprinted 1997.
- Weissberg, Jay. "*Walking on the Wild Side*." Accessed 21/01/2010.  
<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117929759.html?categoryid=31&cs=1>.
- Whitaker, Rod. *The Language of Film*. Engle Cliff, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970.
- Williams, Tony. "Space, Place, and Spectacle: The Crisis Cinema of John Woo." *Cinema Journal* 36, no. 2 (Winter 1997): 67-84.
- Wong, Ain-ling, ed. *The Shaw Screen: A Preliminary Study*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003.
- Wong, Day. "Women's Reception of Mainstream Hong Kong Cinema." In *Masculinities and Hong Kong Cinema*. Edited by Laikwan Pang and Day Wong, 239-260. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005.
- Wu, Cuncun. "Beautiful Boys Made up as Beautiful Girls: Anti-masculine Taste in Qing China." In *Asian Masculinities: the Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*. Edited by Kam Louie and Morris Low, 19-40. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Xu, Gary G. *Sinascapes: Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007.
- Yang, Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang, trans. "Li Sao (The Lament)". Accessed 14 July 2011.  
<http://www.chinapage.org/poem/quyuan/quyuan-e.html>.
- , *Selections from Records of the Historian by Szuma Chien*. Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1979.
- Yuefu Songs with Regular Five-Syllable Lines*, trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Language Publishing House, 2001).
- Zhang, Xudong. *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms: Cultural Fever, Avant-garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997.
- Zhang, Yingjin. *Chinese National Cinema*. New York and London: Routledge, 2004.



- 
- , *The City in Modern Chinese Literature and Film: Configurations of Space, Time, & Gender*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.
- , "Prostitution and Urban Imagination: Negotiating the Public and Private in Chinese Films of the 1930s" In *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922-1943*, edited by Yingjin, 160-180. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Zhang, Zhen. "An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: the Actress as Vernacular Embodiment in Early Chinese Film Culture." *Camera Obscura* 48, vol.16, no. 3 (2001): 229-263
- Zhou, Raymond. "Movies for Keeps." *China Daily*. ( 28th Dec, 2010): page 18. Accessed 09 January 2011. [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-12/28/content\\_11762716.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-12/28/content_11762716.htm).
- Zhou, Xuelin. *Young Rebels in Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007.
- Zhu, Aijun. *Feminism and Global Chineseness: The Cultural Production of Controversial Women Authors*. Youngstown, N. Y.: Cambria Press, 2007.
- Zipes, Jack. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: the Classical Genre for Children and Process of Civilization*. New York: Methuen, 1988.
- Zou, John. "A Chinese Ghost Story: Ghostly Counsel and Innocent Man." In *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes*, edited by Chris Berry, 39-46. London: British Film Institute, 2003. Reprint, 2005.

---

**In Chinese 中文资料:**

- 2001 Film Management Regulation (Decree No. 342 of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. 中华人民共和国国务院令（第 342 号）（电影管理条例）  
<http://www.chinasarft.gov.cn/articles/2007/02/16/20070913144431120333.html>
- 2008 Amendment to Film Management Regulation by State Administration of Radio Film and Television 《广电总局关于重申电影审查标准的通知》 Accessed 19 July 2011.  
<http://www.chinasarft.gov.cn/articles/2008/03/07/20080307155320180354.html>
- Anon. "Shenyong tiejingang: lanpian dianfan." ("Spy Dad: The Icon of the Flop") 《神勇铁金刚》：烂片典范”。 Accessed 16 September, 2009.  
<http://www.babeijiu.com/babeijiu51/1411/31855372a.htm>.
- Anon. "Huahua xingjing: neidi shouzhou piaofang baojie" ("Playboy Cops: Great Box Office Success at the Opening Weekend") 佚名, 《花花型警》：内地首周票房报捷. Accessed 04 February 2011.  
<http://trans.wenweipo.com/gb/paper.wenweipo.com/2008/03/07/EN0803070026.htm>.
- Anon.. "Chen Kun: Ruya neihan ("Chen Kun: Ruya Charisma") 陈坤：儒雅内涵。  
[http://photo.gmw.cn/2012-12/06/content\\_5925512.htm](http://photo.gmw.cn/2012-12/06/content_5925512.htm), accessed 28/02/2013.
- Anon. "Chenglong vs Li Lianjie zhi dianfeng duijue, shui shi gongfu zhi wang?" ("Jet Li vs Jackie Chan: who is the true king of kung fu?") 佚名, “成龙 VS 李连杰之巅峰对决 谁是功夫之王” Accessed 27 March 2011. <http://ent.qq.com/a/20080312/000295.htm>.
- Anon. "Huahua xingqing zhi sizijing" (*Playboy Cops*: Four words Idioms), 佚名, 《花花型警》之四字经. Accessed 7 March 2013. <http://bbs.tianya.cn/post-filmtv-218436-1.shtml>,
- Anon. "Jiangshan meiren meizi dangtou" ("An Empress and the Warriors: Beauty is the Word") 佚名, 《江山美人》美字当头. Accessed 11 August. 2009.  
<http://bjyouth.ynet.com/view.jsp?oid=28806297>
- Anon. "Maizuo zhi wang: xianggang dianying linian piaofang guanjun1969-2006" ("The King of Box Office: Hong Kong Box Office Champions: 1969-2006"), *dianying shijie* (Movie World), No. 13/14 (July 2007). 佚名, “卖座之王：香港电影历年票房冠军：1969-2006, 《电影世界》, 2007 年第 13/14 期。
- Anon. "mancheng jindai huangjinjia: huayu dianying lishi xin yi ye" ("Curse of the Golden Flower: a New Phase of the History of Chinese Language Films"), 佚名, 《满城尽带

- 黄金甲》华语电影历史新一页”。 Accessed 20 December 2009.  
[http://www.yesasia.com/global/yumcha/0-0-0-arid.112-zh\\_CN/featured-article.html](http://www.yesasia.com/global/yumcha/0-0-0-arid.112-zh_CN/featured-article.html)
- Anon. “Baolu, luanlun, puzhang, guanzhong egao huangjinjia” (“Revealing, Incest, Extravagance: Audience’s Spoof of *Curse of the Golden Flower*”) 佚名, “暴露, 乱伦 铺张 观众恶搞《黄金甲》”。 Accessed 12 November 2009.  
<http://hk.epochtimes.com/6/12/22/37070.htm>.
- Anon. “yige hao baba” (“*Run Papa Run*”) 佚名, 《一个好爸爸》 Accessed 9 October 2009.  
<http://et.21cn.com/topic/star/ume/photo/2008/04/30/4667040.shtml>.
- Anon. “shipin: Feng Xiaogang jijiehao Nanjing xuanchuang meiti jianmian hui” (“Video News: *Assembly Press Conference in Nanjing*”) 视频: 冯小刚<集结号>南京宣传媒体见面会。 Accessed 19 October 2009.  
[http://v.youku.com/v\\_show/id\\_XMTQ4MjU3NjQ=.html](http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTQ4MjU3NjQ=.html).
- Anon. “Yige hao baba teying hui.” (“*Run Papa Run: Taiwan Premiere.*” 佚名, 电影《一个好爸爸》特映会。 Accessed 21 January 2011. <http://6.cn/watch/4553691.html>.
- Can, Ran, ed. *Nanren dong nan xi bei: Zhongguo nanren ziyuan de Linglei baogao* (Men from the East, West, South and the North: An Alternative Report on Man Resources). Guangzhou: Guangdong lüyou chubanshe, 2004. 粲然 (编), 《男人东南西北: 中国男人资源的另类报告》, 广州: 广东旅游出版社, 2004.
- CCTV 中央电视台官网 <http://cctvenchiridion.cctv.com/04/index.shtml>
- Chen Kun's Fan club*. 陈坤国际影友会. <http://www.dearchenkun.com/>
- Chen, Feibao. *Taiwan dianying shihua* (The History of Taiwan Cinema). Revised Edition. Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2008. 陈飞宝, 《台湾电影史话》(修订本) 北京: 中国电影出版社, 2008.
- Chen, Mo. *Zhongguo wuxia dianying shi* (The History of Chinese Martial Arts Films). Beijing: ZhongguoZhongguo Dianying chubanshe, 2005. 陈墨, 《中国武侠电影史》, 北京: 中国电影出版社, 2005
- Chen, Xihe. “Cong ‘International’ dao ‘National’: lun dangdai Zhongguo dianying zhong de fuqin xingxiang he wenhua jiangou.” (“From ‘International’ to National: On the Cultural Construction of Chinese Cinema since 1949). *Dangdai dianying* (Contemporary Cinema), No.5. (2005): 7-13. 陈犀禾, 从“International” 到

- “National”--论当代中国电影中的父亲形象和文化建构,《当代电影》,2005年第5期,7-13。
- Confucius. *Lunyu (The Analects)*. Translated by Arthur Waley, *Dashi Jingdian Wenku [World Classics]*. Beijing: Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe, 1998. Reprint, 5th print 2003. 孔子,《论语》,北京:外语教学与研究出版社,1998,2003年第5次印刷。
- Dai, Guiyu. “Mancheng jindai huangjinjia zhong panli de muqin xingxiang.” (“The Rebellious Mother Figure in *Curse of the Golden Flower*”). *Dianying pingjie* (Film Review), No.24, 2007: 46-47. 戴桂玉,“《满城尽带黄金甲》中叛离的母亲形象”,《电影评介》,2007年第24期:46-47。
- Dai, Jinhua. *Wuzhong fengjing: Zhongguo dianying wenhua 1978-1998* (View in the Mist: Chinese Movie Culture 1978 to 1998). Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000. 戴锦华,《雾中风景:中国电影文化1978-1998》,北京:北京大学出版社,2000。
- De, Mi. “Yige zitou de dansheng: xianggang daoyan 10 nian fushihui.” (“Portrait of Directors”). *Dianying shijie* (Movie World). No.13/14. (2007). 德米,“一个字头的诞生:香港导演10年浮世绘”,《电影世界》,2007年第13/14期。
- Ding, Xiaofeng. *Dianying zhege jianghu: Zhongguo xin dianying renwu shiji* (The World of Film: the Chronicle of auteur of Chinese cinema) (Wulan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 2008). 丁晓峰,《电影这个江湖:中国新电影人物史记》,武汉:湖北人民出版社,2008。
- Ding, Yaping. *Yingxiang shidai zhongguo dianying jianshi* (A Brief History of Chinese Cinema). Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 2008. 丁亚平,《影像时代中国电影简史》,北京:中国广播电视出版社,2008。
- Feng, Xiangang, et al. “Jijie hao” (“Assembly”). *Dangdai dianying* (Contemporary Cinema), No.2 (2008): 53-59. 冯小刚,郑洞天,王一川,陈墨,<集结号>,《当代电影》,2008年第2期:53-59。
- GQ. Accessed 10 September 2010. <http://www.gq.com.cn/special/20100908/2374.html>.
- Huang, Ailian. “Yige hao baba: zhang Aijia paide hen ‘nüren’” “*Run Papa Run*: Sylvia Chang Makes it in a Really Womanly Way.” 黄爱莲“《一个好爸爸》张艾嘉拍得很『女人』。” Accessed 23 September 2009. <http://stars.zaobao.com/pages6/zhangaijia080410.shtml>.

- Jia, Leilei and Zhang Baijing eds. *Zhongguo dangdai dianyin fazhan shi* (The Film History of Contemporary China). Volume 2. Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2006. 贾磊磊, 章柏青, 主编《中国当代电影发展史》下册。北京: 文化艺术出版社, 2006。
- Jia, Leilei. *Zhongguo wuxia dianying shi* (The History of Chinese Martial Arts Films). Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2005. 贾磊磊, 《中国武侠电影史》。北京: 文化艺术出版社, 2005。
- Ju, Chuanyou. "Mogong wenhua neihan de shenceng jiedu" ("An In-depth Reading of the Cultural Significance Embedded in A Battle of Wits"). *Dianying Pingjie* (Film Review, issue 2, No.35 (2009): 35. 巨传友, “《墨攻》文化内涵的深层解读”, 《电影评介》, 2009 年 02 期, 35。
- Li, Cheuk-to. "Mogong fuzi de yinyou" ("The Hidden Trouble of A Battle of Wits and After This Our Exile"). In *Chinese Language Films 2006*. Edited by Xiaoyi Yu. Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 2007. (李焯桃, <墨攻><父子>的隐忧), (虞晓毅 主编《华语电影 2006》广州: 花城出版社, 2007), 180-182。
- Li, Duoyu, ed. *Zhongguo dianying bainian: 1905-1976* (Hundred Years of Chinese Films: 1905-1976). Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 2005. 李多钰 主编, 中国电影百年: 1905-1976, 北京: 中国广播电视出版社, 2005。
- Liao, Hemin, "hui faliang de shitou doushi zhuan shi ma?" ("Are All Shinning Stones Diamonds?") In *New Good Men: Transformations and New Tendencies of Taiwanese Men*. Edited by Xin Dai. 廖和敏, “会发亮的石头都是钻石吗?” 心岱主编, 《新好男人: 台湾男人的变貌与趋势》, 台北: 时报出版, 1995。
- Liu, Shaolin. *Xianggang de zhimindi youling: cong zhimindi jingyan kan jintian de xianggang chujing* (The Colonial Phantom of Hong Kong: Contemporary Hong Kong from its colonial experience). Hong Kong: Shoucong she, 2005. 刘绍麟, 《香港的殖民地幽灵: 从殖民地经验看今天的香港处境》, 香港: 守冲社, 2005。
- Liu, Yan. "Gu Tianle 'chu wei renfu: yige hao baba isyue quanqiu shouying'" "Louie Koo as a First Time Father: the Premiere of *Run Papa Run*", 刘岩, “古天乐“初为人父”<一个好爸爸>四月全球首映”。Accessed 11 August 2009.  
<http://ent.cctv.com/20080211/100450.shtml>.

- Liu, Yan. "Assembly: the New Milestone of Chinese War Epics" 刘岩, "电影时评<集结号>: 称中国战争大片的新里程碑". Accessed 19 October 2009.  
[http://ent.cctv.com/20071225/100443\\_1.shtml](http://ent.cctv.com/20071225/100443_1.shtml).
- Lu Taihong, et al. *Zhongguo Xiaofeizhe Xingwei Baogao* (Chinese Consumer Behaviour). Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2005. 卢泰宏等主编, 《中国消费者行为报告》。北京: 中国社会科学出版社, 2005。
- Lu, Xun. *Lu Xun Quan Ji* (The Complete Works of Lu Xun), vol.1 "Fen, Refeng and nahan" (Grave, hot wind and call to arms) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2005. 鲁迅, 《鲁迅全集》第一卷, 北京: 人民文学出版社, 2005。
- Men's Uno*. <http://www.mensuno.com.tw/>
- Meng, Ke. *Meng Zi* (Mencius). Edited by Li Jian and Liu Daoying, *Zhonghua Chuanshi Mingzhu Jingpin Wenku* (Elite Classics of Chinese Ancient Works). Xi'ning: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 2002. 孟轲, 《孟子》, 李剑, 刘道英 主编, 中华传世名著精品文库, 西宁市: 青海人民出版社, 2002。
- Mozi. 《墨子》 Chinese Text Project. Accessed 28 May 2009.  
<http://chinese.dsurgeon.net/text.pl?node=101&if=en&remap=gb>.
- Qiao, Yaqiong and Ding Lilei, "zhangzheng zhong de renxing zunyan: kan yingpian jiejihao" ("Humane Dignity in Wars: On Assembly"). *Dianying pingjie* (Film Review), No. 10, (2008): 39. 乔亚琼, 丁立磊, "战争中的人性尊严——看影片《集结号》"。《电影评介》, 2008 年第 10 期, 39。
- State Administration of Radio Film and Television*. 国家广播电影电视总局,  
<http://www.chinasarft.gov.cn>
- Su, Yu. *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* (Interpretation of Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992. 苏舆, 《春秋繁露义正》, 北京: 中华书局出版, 1992。
- Sun, Guangde. *Xianqin Lianghan Yin-Yang Wuxing Shuo De Zhengzhi Sixiang* (The Yin-Yang Wuxing Political Ideology of Pre-Qin and Han Dynasties). second ed. Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshu Ju, 1993. Reprint, 1994. 孙广德, 《先秦汉阴阳五行说的政治思想》, 台北: 台湾商务印书局, 1993 年第一版, 1994 年第二版。
- Sun, Lng-Kee. *Wei Duannai De Minzu* (A People That yet to Be Weaned). Taipei: Juliu tushu gongsi, 1995. 孙隆基, 《未断奶的民族》, 台北: 巨流图书公司, 1995。

- Sun, Lung-kee. *Zhongguo wenhua de shenceng jiegou* (The Deep Structure of Chinese Culture) Hong Kong: Jixian She, 1983. Reprint, 1992. 孙隆基, 《中国文化的深层结构》, 香港: 集贤社, 1983, 1992 年修订版。
- Sun, Yuan. "Wong Jing's Latest Film *Spy Dad*: A 007 Parody." 孙源, "王晶新作《神勇铁金刚》全剧情: 国产搞笑版 007". Accessed 7 October 2009.  
<http://www.people.com.cn/BIG5/yule/1080/2138903.html>.
- Wang, Jin. "Jiangshan meiren shangying bei pi: mutou meiren pei banlao yingxiong" (The "Bombardment" of *An Empress and the Warriors*: a Marionette Beauty for a Semi-senile Warrior). 王谨, 《江山美人》上映 被批: 木头美人配半老英雄. Accessed 11 August 2009. <http://bjyouth.ynet.com/view.jsp?oid=28874636>.
- Wang, Xiaoyu, "Dujia pandian: 2008 nian quanqiu dianying piaofang paihangbang" ("Exclusive Report: The 2008 Box-office of the Global Cinema") 王孝瑜"独家盘点: 2008 年全球电影票房排行榜" Accessed from 24 September  
<http://indus.chinafilm.com/200901/1953998.html>.
- Wang, Yichuan. "Zhu Xuanlu Yingpian De Ruxue Hua Zhuanxiang: ("The Confucian Turn in the Master-Cantus Film"). *Dangdai dianying* (Contemporary Cinema) 142, No. 1 (2008): 15-20. 王一川, "主旋律影片的儒学化转向", 《当代电影》2008 年第一期, 总第 142 期, 15-20。
- Wei, Xidi, ed. 2005 *Huayu Dianying* (Chinese Language Films 2005). Guilin: Guangxi shifan chubanshe 2006. 卫西谛主编 《2005 年华语电影》桂林: 广西师范大学出版社, 2006。
- Wen, Changqin. "mancheng jindai huangjinjie: yibu xiayu hujian de yingpian" ("*Curse of the Golden Flower*: A Good Film mixed with Faults"). *Film Review*, issue 13 (2007): 27-28. 温长青, "《满城尽带黄金甲》: 一部瑕瑜互见的影片" 《电影评介》, 2007 年 13 期 27-28 页。
- Xie, Pengxiong, "Nanren de meixue?" ("Male Aesthetics?") In *New Good Men: Transformations and New Tendencies of Taiwanese Men*, edited by Xin Dai. 谢鹏雄, "男人的美学?" 心岱主编, 《新好男人: 台湾男人的变貌与趋势》, 台北: 时报出版, 1995, 第 41 页
- Xin, Dai, ed. *Xin Hao Nanren: Taiwan Nanren De Biaomao Yu Qushi* (New Good Men: Transformations and New Tendencies of Taiwanese Men). Guides for Life. Taipei:

- Shibao wenhua chuban qiye youxian gongsi, 1995. 心岱 主编 《新好男人:台湾男人的变貌与趋势》 (人生顾问 24), 台北市: 时报文化出版企业有限公司 1995.
- Xu, Shen. *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Jin Shi* (Chinese Etymology). Edited by Tang Kejing. 3 vols. Vol. 1. Changsha: Yuelu shushe chubanshe, 1997. 许慎, 《说文解字今释》, 汤可敬撰, 长沙: 岳麓书社出版社, 1997.
- Yan, Yunfei. "Zhang Aijia jiangshu nanren gushi, Gu Tianle yanyi yige hao baba" "Sylvia Chang Tells a Man's Story; Louie Koo Play *a Good Papa*" 阎云飞"张艾嘉讲述男人故事 古天乐演绎《一个好爸爸》" Accessed 11 August 2009.  
<http://ent.sina.com.cn/m/c/2008-03-21/02501955875.shtml>.
- Yang, Zi. "Zhang Aijia yige hao baba fabuhui, shoupai nanren huati yingpian" ("Run Papa Run News Conference: Sylvia Chang as a First-timer on Male Themes") 杨子, "张艾嘉《一个好爸爸》发布会 首拍男人话题影片". Accessed 9 October, 2009.  
<http://www.chinanews.com.cn/yl/dyzz/news/2008/03-21/1198770.shtml>
- Yi, Zhongtian. *Pin sanguo (On Three Kingdoms)*. Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2006. 易中天, 《品三国》, 上海: 上海文艺出版社, 2006
- Yi, Zhongtian. *Zhongguo de nanren he nüren (Chinese Men and Women)*. third ed, *Appreciation of Chinese Books*. Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1999. Reprint, 2006. 易中天, 《中国的男人和女人》, 上海: 上海文艺出版社, 1999, 2006年第三版。
- Yin, Hong and Zhan Qingshen, "2007 Zhongguo dianying chanye beiwang" ("The Memorandum of Chinese Film Industry 2007"). *Dianying yishu (Film Arts)*, No.2, (2008):13-21 尹鸿, 詹庆生, "2007 中国电影产业备忘", 《电影艺术》 2008 年第 2 期:13-21。
- Youtube. "A Retrospection of the Major Events of 2003." 2003 年大事回顾. Accessed 22 January 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rf1eIKV2vYY&feature=related>.
- Yu, Shu. "'Huahua xingjing dazao linglei jingcha, chenkun Yu Wenle shuaiqi nengda'" ("Playboy Cops: off-beat policemen in the making; handsome actors in action.") "余姝《花花型警》打造另类警察, 陈坤余文乐帅气能打". Accessed 4 November 2009. <http://ent.sina.com.cn/m/c/2008-02-19/14391916341.shtml>.



- Yu, Xiaoyi, ed. *Huayu Dianyng 2006 (Chinese Language Films 2006)*. Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 2007. 虞晓毅 主编 《华语电影 2006》广州：花城出版社，2007。
- Yue, Shawn. facebook. <http://www.facebook.com/sy>
- Zhang Weixiong, “Cheng Xiaodong, Xi Zhongwen de ‘shengman tonghua’ ” (“Ching Siu-tung and Yee Chung man’s Fairy Tale of Female Surpassing the Male”). *Xianggang dianying (Hong Kong Film*, issue 6, (08 April 2008): 104. 张伟雄, “程小东、奚仲文的‘胜男童话’”, 《香港电影》, 2008年4月8日, 第6期, 104页。
- Zhang, Chencheng. “Mogong: mo jia cheng shou sixiang de yinmu tixian” (“A Battle of Wits: The Screen Representation of Mohist’s Defence Tactics”). *Dianying pingjie (Film Review)* issue 10, No. 24 (2007): 24. 张陈呈, “《墨攻》——墨家城守思想的银幕体现”, 《电影评介》2007年第10期, 24。
- Zhang, Huijun ed. *Xingshi zuisuo yu shijue chuanguo: Zhang Yimou dianying chuanguo yanjiu (Style Pursuit and Visual Production: On Film Works by Zhang Yimou)*. Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2008. 张会军 主编, 《形式追索与视觉创造:张艺谋电影创作研究》, 北京:中国电影出版社, 2008。
- Zhang, Tongdao, etc. “Beijing qingnian nüxing shiye zhong de dianshi yule jiemu diaocha baogao”. (“The Television Entertainment Programme in the Eyes of Beijing Female Audience”). *Dangdai dianying (Contemporary Cinema)*, issue 3 (2001): 92-112. 张同道等 “北京青年女性视野中的电视娱乐节目调查报告”, 《当代电影》, 2001年第5期, 总102期, 92-112。
- Zhou, Jianyu. *Caizi jiaren xiaoshuo yanjiu (Studies on Scholar-Beauty Novels)*. Taipei: Wen shi zhe chubanshe, 1998. 周建渝 《才子佳人小说研究》, 台北市: 文史哲出版社, 1998。
- Zhou, Xing. *Zhongguo dianying yishu shi (Art History of Chinese Film)*. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2005. 周星, 《中国电影艺术史》北京: 北京大学出版社, 2005。
- Zhu, Huayu. “Nanquan wenhua yu nanquan xushi: xingbei shijiao xia de mancheng jiadai huangjinjia” (“Phallus-centred Culture and Phallus-centred Narrative: Curse of Golden Flower from a Gender Perspective”). *Zhida xuebao (The Press of The Polytechnic Institute)* No. 1 (2008): 131. 朱华煜, “男权文化与男权叙事——性

---

别视角下的《满城尽带黄金甲》”，《职大学报》（中国包头），2008 年第一期，131。

Zhuangzi. *Zhangzi Yi Gu*. Edited by Liuqiao Yang, [*Zhonghua Guji Yizhu Ye Shu*]. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991. Reprint, 1994, second reprinting. 庄子，庄子译诂，杨柳桥 撰，中华古籍译注业集，上海：上海古籍出版社，1991。

---

## Filmography—Chinese Language Films

NB: S = scriptwriter, d = director, c =cinematographer

1905

- ***Ding jun Mountain*** (Dingjun shan 定军山)
  - d. Ren Jingfeng
  - Fengtai Photo Shop

1924

- ***Jade Pear Spirit*** (aka The Death of Yuli, Yu li hun 玉梨魂)
  - d. Zhang Shichuan and Xu Hu
  - Mingxing gongsi

1928

- ***The Burning of the Red Lotus Temple*** (Huoshao hongliansi 火烧红莲寺系列 1-18)
  - d. Zhang Shichuan, s. Zheng Zhengqiu; c. Dong Keyi
  - Mingxing gongsi

1949

- ***Daughters of China*** (Zhonghua nüer 中华女儿)
  - d. Ling Zifeng ; s. Yan Yiyan; c. Qian Jiang
  - Northeast Film Studio
- ***The True Story of Huang Feihong: Whiplash Snuffs the Candle Flame*** (Huang Feihong zhuan: bianfeng miezhu 黄飞鸿传：鞭风灭烛)
  - d. Hu Peng; c. Wu Yixiao
  - Yongrao yingye gongsi

1952

- ***From Victory to Victory*** (Nanzheng beizhen 南征北战)
  - d. Tang Xiaodan & Cheng Yin; s. Shen Ximeng et al; c. Zhu Jinming and Gu Wenhou
  - Shanghai Film Studio

1959

- ***The Kingdom and the Beauty*** (Jiangshan meiren 江山美人)
  - d. Li Han Hsiang; s. Wang Yueting
  - Shaw Brothers

1961

➤ ***Love without End*** (*Bu liao qing* 不了情)

- d.& s Doe Ching; c. Dong Shaoyong
- Shaw Brothers

1965

➤ ***Tunnel Warfare*** (*Didaozhan* 地道战)

- d. Ren Xudong
- Bayi Film Studio

1966

➤ ***The Blue and the Black*** (*Han yu hei* 蓝与黑)

- d. & s. Doe Ching; c. Dong Shaoyong et al
- Shaw Brothers
- Shaw Brothers

1967

➤ ***The One-armed Swordsman*** (*Du bi dao* 独臂刀)

- d. Chang Cheh; s. Chang Cheh & Ni Kuang; c. Yuan Chen San
- Shaw Brothers

1971

➤ ***Deadly Duo*** (*Shuang xiao* 双侠)

- d. Chang Cheh; s. Ni Kuang; c. Gong Muze
- Shaw Brothers

1972

➤ ***The Way of the Dragon*** (*Menglong guojiang* 猛龙过江)

- D. & s. Bruce Lee; c. Tadashi Nishimoto
- Golden Harvest

➤ ***The White-haired Girl*** (*Baimao nü* 白毛女)

- d. & s. Sang Hu; c. Shen Xiling
- Shanghai Film Studio

1980

➤ ***Dangerous Encounter: First Kind*** (*Di yi lei xing weixian* 第一类型危险)

- D. Tsui Hark; s. Chek-Hon Szeto and Tsui Hark; c. David Chung.
- Fotocine Film Production Ltd.

1984

➤ ***Long Arm of the Law*** (*Shanggang qibing* 省港旗兵)

- d. Johnny Mak; s. Philip Chan; c. Johnnie Koo
- Johnny Mak Productions

1985

➤ ***Police Story*** (*Jingcha gushi* 警察故事)

- d. Jackie Chan; s. Edward Tang; c. Cheung Yiu-Tsou
- Golden Way Films and Paragon Films

1986

➤ ***A Better Tomorrow*** (*Yingxiong bense* 英雄本色)

- d. John Woo; s. Suk-Wah Leung, John Woo & Chan Hing-Ka; c. Wong Wing Hang
- Cinema City & Film Workshop

1987

➤ ***A Chinese Ghost Story*** (*Qiannü youlun* 倩女幽魂)

- d. Ching Siu Tung; s. Yuen Kai Chi; c. Wong Wing Hang et al.
- Cinema City & Film Workshop

➤ ***Red Sorghum*** (*Hong gaoliang* 红高粱)

- d. Zhang Yimou; s. Mo Yan, Chen Jianyu, Zhu Wei; c. Gu Changwei
- Xi'an Film Studio

1988

➤ ***Rouge*** (*Yanzhi kou* 胭脂扣)

- d. Stanley Kwan; s. Lilian Lee & Tai An-Ping Chiu; c. Bill Wong
- Golden Harvest

1989

➤ ***The Killer*** (*Diexue shuangxiong* 喋血双雄)

- d. & s. John Woo; c. Wong Wing Hang & Peter Pao
- Golden Princess Film Production

1990

➤ ***Ju Dou*** (菊豆)

- d. Zhang Yimou
- Tokuma Shoten Publishing Co., Tokuma Communications Co., China Film Co-production and Xi'an Film Studio

---

1991

- *Once Upon a Time in China* (*Huang Feihong* 黄飞鸿)
  - d. Tsui Hark
  - Golden Harvest and Film Workshop
- *Raise of the Red Lanterns* (*Dahong denglong gaogao gua* 大红灯笼高高挂)
  - d. Zhang Yimou
  - Era International (HK) Ltd and China Film Co-production Corporation

## 1992

- *Once Upon a Time in China II* (*Huang Feihong zhi er naner dang ziqiang* 黄飞鸿之二男儿当自强)
  - d. Tsui Hark
  - Golden Harvest and Film Workshop

## 1993

- *Blue Kite* (*Lan fengzheng* 蓝风筝)
  - d. Tian Zhuangzhuang; s. Xiao Mao; c. Hou Yong
  - Beijing Film Studio, Longwick Film
- *Once Upon a Time in China III* (*Huang Feihong zhe shi wang zhengba* 黄飞鸿之师王争霸)
  - d. Tsui Hark; s. Tsui Hark, Cheung Tan, Tin-suen Chan; c. Andrew Lau
  - Golden Harvest

## 1994

- *A Chinese Odyssey Part II: Cinderella* (*Dahua xiyou zhi xianlü qiyuan* 大话西游之仙履奇缘)
  - d. & s. Jeffrey Lau
  - Xi'an Film Studio
- *Chung King Express* (*Chongqing senlin* 重庆森林)
  - d. & s. Wong Kar Wai; c. Christopher Doyle and Andrew Lau
  - Jet Tone Production
- *In the Heat of the Sun* (*Yangguang canlan de rizi* 阳光灿烂的日子)
  - d. Jiang Wen
  - China Film Distributions and Production Co and Hong Kong Ganglong Film Entertainment

## 1996

- ***East Palace, West Palace*** (*Donggongxigong* 东宫西宫)
  - d. Zhang Yuan; .s. Wang Xiaobo, Zhang Yuan; c. Zhang Jian
  - Mazon Entertainment Ltd, Ocean Films, Quelqu'un D'Autre Production
- ***Yang ± Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema*** (*Nansheng nǚxiang: Zhongguo dianying zhi xingbie* 男生女相: 中国电影之性别)
  - d. Stanley Kwan
  - British Film Institute
- ***Young and Dangerous I*** (*Guhuozaizhi ren zai jianghu* 古惑仔之人在江湖)
  - d. Andrew Lau; s. Manfred Wong; c. Andrew Lau
  - Jing's Production Ltd and Art Top Movie Productions
- ***Young and Dangerous II*** (*Guhuozaizhi menglong guojiang* 古惑仔 2 之猛龙过江)
  - d. Andrew Lau ; s. Manfred Wong; c. Andrew Lau
  - BOB & Partners Company Ltd
- ***Young and Dangerous III*** (*Guhuozaizhi zhishou zhetian* 古惑仔 3 之只手遮天)
  - d. Andrew Lau; s. Manfred Wong; c. Andrew Lau
  - BOB & Partners Company Ltd and Golden Harvest

## 1997

- ***Happy Together*** (*Chunguang zhaxie* 春光乍泄)
  - d. & s. Wong Kar Wai; c. Christopher Doyle and Andrew Lau
  - Block 2 Pictures, Jet Tone Production, Prenom H Co. Ltd and Seowoo Film Company
- ***Red River Valley*** (*Hong he gu* 红河谷)
  - d. Feng Xiaomning
  - Shanghai Film Studio
- ***Red River Valley*** (*Hong he gu* 红河谷)
  - d. Feng Xiaomning
  - Shanghai Film Studio
- ***Too Many Ways to be number one*** (*Yige zitou de dansheng* 一个字头的诞生)
  - d. Wai Ka-Fai; s. Szeto Kam-Yuen; c. Wong Wing Hung
  - Golden Harvest and Milkyway Image
- ***Xiao Wu*** (小武)

- d. Jia Zhangke
- Hu Tong Communication and Radiant Advertising
- ***Young and Dangerous IV*** (*Guhuozeai 4 zhizhan wu bu sheng* 古惑仔 4 之战无不胜)
  - d. Andrew Lau ; s. Manfred Wong; c. Andrew Lau
  - Golden Harvest , BOB & Partners Company Ltd and Everwide (H.K) Ltd

## 1998

- ***Portland Street Blues*** (*Guhuozeai qingyi pian zhi hongxing shishanmei* 古惑仔情义篇之洪兴十三妹)
  - d. Raymond Yip Wai Man
  - Everwide (H.K) ltd, Bob & Partners Co., Ltd
- ***Young and Dangerous V*** (*Guhuozeai 5 zhi longzheng hudou* 古惑仔 5 之龙争虎斗)
  - d. Andrew Lau; s. Manfred Wong
  - Golden Harvest, BOB & Partners Company Ltd; Everwide (H.K) Ltd
- ***Young and Dangerous: The Prequel*** (*Xin guhuozeai zhi shaonian jidou pian* 新古惑仔之少年激斗篇)
  - d. Andrew Lau ; s. Manfred Wong
  - Golden Harvest and BOB & Partners Company Ltd; Everwide (H.K) Ltd

## 1999

- ***A Lover's Grief over the Yellow River*** (*Huanghe jue lian* 黄河绝恋)
  - d./ s./ c. Feng Xiaoning
  - Shanghai Yong Le Films and Television Corporation
- ***A Time to Remember*** (*Hongse lianren* 红色恋人)
  - d. Ye Daying
  - Forbidden City Film
- ***The Mission*** (*Qianghuo* 枪火)
  - d. Johnnie To
  - Milkyway Image
- ***Running out of Time*** (*An zhan* 暗战)
  - d. Johnnie To
  - Win's Entertainment and Milkyway Image
- ***Shower*** (*Xizao* 洗澡)
  - d. Zhang Yang



- Xi'an Film Studio

**2000**

- ***Born to Be King*** (*Shengzhe wei wang* 胜者为王)
  - d. Andrew Lau
  - Golden Harvest and Artwell Productions Ltd
- ***Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*** (*Wohu canglong* 卧虎藏龙)
  - d. Ang Lee; s. Wang Hui Ling, James Schamus, and Tsai Kuo Jung; c. Peter Pao
  - Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia, Sony Pictures Classics, Good Maschine International, Edko Films, Zoom Hunt International, China Film Co-Production Coop., and Asian Union Film and Entertainment.
- ***Needing You*** (*Gunan guanü* 孤男寡女)
  - d. Johnnie To
  - One Hundred Years of Film Company
- ***Platform*** (*Zhantai* 站台)
  - d. Jia Zhangke
  - Hu Tong Communication (HK), T-Mark Inc (Japan), Artcam International (France)
- ***Those Were the Days*** (*Youqing suiyue zhi shanji gushi* 友情岁月之山鸡故事)
  - d. Raymond Yip
  - FBI IV and Film Group Company and Yu Man Entertainment Company
- ***Lan Yu*** (蓝宇)
  - d. Stanley Kwan
  - Yongning Creative Workshop

**2001**

- ***Love on a Diet*** (*Shoushen nannü* 瘦身男女)
  - d. Johnnie To; s. Wai Ka-Fai & Yau Nai Hoi; c. Cheng Siu-Keung
  - China Star Entertainment Group, One Hundred Year Films, Milkyway Image (HK) Ltd Production

**2002**

- ***The Best of Times*** (*Meili shiguang* 美丽时光)
  - d. & s. Chang Tso-chi; c. Chang Yiming

- Chang Tso Chi Film Studio, NHK Enterprises
- ***Hero*** (*Yingxiong* 英雄)
  - d. Zhang Yimou
  - Beijing New Picture Film Co. Ltd , Elite Groop Enterprises Inc, China Film-Co-production Corporation, and Sil-Metropole Organization
- ***Unknown Pleasure*** (*Ren xiao yao* 任逍遥)
  - d. Jia Zhangke
  - Office Kitano, Lumen Films and E-Pictures, Hu Tong Communication (HK), T-Mark Inc (Japan)

**2003**

- ***The Incredible Special Agent*** (aka *Spy Dad*; *Shenyong tiejingang* 神勇铁金刚)
  - d. & s. Wong Jing; c. Edmond Fung Yuen-Man
  - Choreographer: Adam Chan Chung-Tai
  - Widsom Entertainment, China Film Co-Production
- ***Twins Effect*** (*Qian ji bian: zhengjiu weicheng* 千机变:拯救危城)
  - d. Dante Lam and Donnie Yen; s. Chan Hing Kai and Jack Ng; c. Cheung Man Po
  - Emperor Multimedia Group

**2004**

- ***House of Flying Daggers*** (*Shi mian mai fu* 十面埋伏)
  - d. Zhang Yimou; s. Zhang Yimou, Li Feng and Wang Bin; c. Zhao Xiaoding
  - Elite Group (2003) Enterprises Inc., Edko Film, Zhang Yimou Studio, and Beijing New Picture Film Co. Ltd.
- ***Kung Fu Hustle*** (*Gongfu* 功夫 )
  - d. dir. Stephen Chow
  - The Star Overseas Ltd, Beijing Film Studio, Huayi Brothers and Taihe Film Investment
- ***Triad Underworld*** (*Jianghu* 江湖)
  - d. Wong Ching-Po
  - Anytime Pictures Company Ltd, et al.
- ***West Town Girls*** (*Zhong ji xi men* 终极西门)
  - d. Alice Wang; s. Alice Wang and Xu Yuhua; c. Lee Yi Hsu

- Core Image Productions Co.

## 2005

- *A Chinese Tall Story* (*Qingdian dasheng* 情癡大聖)
  - d. & s Jeffrey Lau, c. Peter Ngor Chi-Kwan
  - Choreographer: Corey Yuen;
  - Emperor Classic Films, Western Media Group, Xi'an Film Studio, and Huayi Brothers film Investment Co. Ltd
- *Election* (*Heishehui* 黑社会)
  - d. Johnnie To; s. Yao Nai-hoi and Yip Tin-Shing; c. Cheng Siu-Keung
  - China Star Entertainment, Milkyway Image and One Hundred Years of Film Company

## 2006

- *A Battle of Wits* (*Mo Gong* 墨攻)
  - d. & s. Jacob Chueng; c. Andy Lam etc.
  - Choreographer: Tung Wai
  - Sundream Motion ictures Ltd and Huayi Brothers pictures Co., Ltd
- *Curse of Golden Flower* (*Mancheng jindan huangjinjia* 滿城盡帶黃金甲)
  - d. & s. Zhang Yimou; c. Zhao Xiaoding
  - Choreographer: Ching Siu-Tung
  - Film Partner international Inc, Edko Film Limited and Beijing New Picture film Co, Ltd
- *Exiled* (*Fangzhu* 放逐)
  - d. Johnnie To; s. Szeto Kam-Yuen, Yip Tin-Shing, Milkyway Creative Team; c. Cheng Siu Keung
  - Choreographer: Wong Chi Wai, Ling Chun Pong
  - Milkyway Image (HK) Ltd, Media Asia Films
- *The Knot* (*Yun shui yao* 云水瑤)
  - d. Yin Li; s. Liu Heng; c. Wang Xiaolie
  - China Film China Film Group Corporation, Emperor Group (Hong Kong ) and Long Shong (Taiwan)
- *My Kung Fu Sweetheart* (*Yeman miji* 野蛮秘笈)
  - d. Wong Jing

- Wong Jing's Workshop, Tianjin Film Studio, Beijing New China
- ***Rob-B-Hood*** (*Baobei jihua* 宝贝计划)
  - d. Benny Chan; s. Benny Chan and Jackie Chan
  - Emperor Motion Pictures (Hong Kong), JCE Movie and Huayi Brothers
- ***Still Life*** (*Sanxia haoren* 三峡好人)
  - d. Jia Zhangke
  - Xstream Pictures, Shanghai Film Corporation and Shanghai Film Studio
- ***Walking on the Wild Side*** (*Lai xiaozi* 赖小子)
  - d. & s. Han Jie; c. Li Hong Jian, Xu Wei
  - Xstream Pictures, Les Petites Lumieres, Fonds Sud Cinema

## 2007

- ***Assembly*** (*Jijie hao* 集结号)
  - d. Feng Xiaogang; s. Liu Heng; c. Lu Yue
  - Huayi Brother Media & Co Ltd, Media Asai Films Ltd, Shanghai Film Group Corporation, and Zhejianag Media Group & Co.Ltd

## 2008

- ***An Empress and the Warriors*** (*Jiangshan meiren* 江山美人)
  - d. Ching Siu-Tung; s. James Yuen Sai-Sang, Charcoal Tan and Chun Tin-Nam; c. Zhao Xiaoding
  - Choreographer: Ching Siu-Tung
  - Poly Bona Film Distribution Co. Ltd , United Filmmakers Organisation, Big Pictures Ltd
- ***Butterfly Lovers*** (*Wuxia liangzhu* 武侠梁祝)
  - d. Jingle Ma
  - Brilliant Idea Group (BIG) Ltd; China Film Co-Production, Xi'an Mei Ah Culture Communication Ltd
- ***Cave No. 7*** (*Haijiao 7 hao* 海角 7 号)
  - d.& s. Wei Te-Sheng
  - ARS Film Production
- ***CJ 7*** (*Changjiang 7 hao* 长江 7 号)
  - d. Stephen Chow

- The Star Overseas Ltd and China Film Group Corporation
- ***Ip Man*** (*Ye Wen* 叶问)
  - d. Wilson Yip; s. Edmond Wong
  - TimeAntaeus Media Group & Mandarin Films Distribution Co.
- ***Playboy Cops*** (*Huahua xingjing* 花花型警)
  - d. Jingle Ma; s. Jingle Ma and William Wong; c. Jingle Ma & Chan Kwok Hung
  - Choreographer: Tung Wai
  - China Film Co-Production Corporation, Big Pictures Ltd and Beijing Time Entertainment International Co., Ltd
- ***Red Cliff*** (*Chibi* 赤壁)
  - d. John Woo; s. John Woo, Chan Khan, Kuo Cheng and Sheng Heyu; c. Lu Yue and Zhang Li
  - Choreographer: Corey Yuen
  - Beijing Film studio, China Film Group Corporation, Lion Rock Production, et al.
- ***Run Papa Run*** (*Yige hao baba* 一个好爸爸)
  - d. Sylvia Chang; s. Susan Chan Suk Yin), Sylvia Chang, Mathias Woo; c. Chan Chi Ying
  - Choreographer: Li Chung Chi
  - Emperor Motion Pictures , JCE Movies Limited and Red on Red

## 2009

- ***Bodyguards and Assassins*** (*Shiyue weicheng* 十月围城)
  - dir. Teddy Chan
  - China Film Group, et al.
- ***How Are You, Dad?*** (*Ba, nihao ma?* 爸, 你好吗?)
  - d. Chang Tso-chi
  - Chang Tso Chi Film Studio
- ***Overheard*** (*Qieting fengyun* 窃听风云)
  - d. Alan Mak , Felix Chong
  - Il-Metropole Organisation (Hong Kong), Polybona Entertainment

---

2010

- ***Ip Man 2*** (*Ye Wen 2* 叶问 2)
  - d. Wilson Yip; s. Edmond Wong
  - Mandarin Films Ltd, He Nan Movie Group Ltd, Beijing Shengshi Huarui Film Investment & Management Ltd, Desen International Media Co Ltd.
- ***The Legend Is Born: Ip Man*** (*Ye Wen qianzhuan*, 叶问前传)
  - d. Herman Yau; s. Erica Li, Lee Sing; c. Joe Chan
  - National Arts Films Production Ltd, Zhejiang Hengdian Workd Studio Co. Ltd
- ***Let the Bullets Fly*** (*Rang zidan fei* 让子弹飞)
  - Dir. Jiang Wen
  - China Film Group et al.
- ***Monga*** (*Mengjia* 艋舺)
  - d. Doze Cheng-tse Niu;
  - One Production Film
- ***The Stool Pigeon*** (*Xian ren*, 线人)
  - d. Dante Lam; s. Ng Wai Lun; c. Kenny Tse
  - Emperor Motion Picture, Huayi Brothers and Sil-Metropole Organisation

---

**Filmography—Chinese Language Films by English Titles**

- A Battle of Wits* (2006)  
*A Better Tomorrow* (1986)  
*A Better Tomorrow III: Love and Death in Saigon* (1989)  
*A Chinese Ghost Story* (1987)  
*A Chinese Odyssey Part II: Cinderella* (1994)  
*A Chinese Tall Story* (2005)  
*A Lover's Grief over the Yellow River* (1999)  
*A Time to Remember* (1999)  
*An Empress and the Warriors* (2008)  
*Assembly* (2007)  
*The Best of Times* (2002)  
*The Blue and the Black* (1966)  
*Blue Kite* (1993)  
*Body Guards and Assassins* (2009)  
*Born to Be King* (2000)  
*Burning of the Red Lotus Temple The* (1928)  
*Butterfly Lovers* (2008)  
*Cave No. 7* (2008)  
*Chung King Express* (1994)  
*CJ 7* (2008)  
*Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* (2000)  
*Curse of Golden Flower* (2006)  
*Dangerous Encounter: First Kind* (1980)  
*Daughters of China* (1949)  
*Deadly Duo* (1971)  
*Ding jun Mountain* (1905)  
*East Palace, West Palace* (1996)  
*Election* (2005)  
*Exiled* (2006)  
*From Victory to Victory* (1952)  
*Happy Together* (1997)

---

*Hero* (2002)  
*House of Flying Daggers* (2004)  
*How Are You, Dad?* (*Ba, nihao ma?* 2009)  
*The Incredible Special Agent* (aka *Spy Dad* 2003)  
*In the Heat of the Sun* (1994)  
*Ip Man* (2008)  
*Ip Man 2* (2010)  
*Jade Pear Spirit* (1924)  
*Ju Dou* (1990)  
*The Killer* (1989)  
*The Kingdom and the Beauty* (1959)  
*The Knot* (2006)  
*Kung Fu Hustle* (2004 )  
*Lan Yu* (2000)  
*Legend Is Born: Ip Man (The)* (2010)  
*Let the Bullets Fly* (2010)  
*Long Arm of the Law* (1984)  
*Love without End* (1961)  
*Mission (The)* (1999)  
*Monga* (2010)  
*My Kung Fu Sweetheart* (2006)  
*Once Upon a Time in China I* (1991)  
*Once Upon a Time in China II* (1992)  
*Once Upon a Time in China III* (1993)  
*The One-armed Swordsman* (1967)  
*Overheard* (2009)  
*Platform* (2000)  
*Playboy Cops* (2008)  
*Police Story* (1985)  
*Portland Street Blues* (1998)  
*Raise of the Red Lanterns* (1991)  
*Red Cliff* (2008)  
*Red River Valley* (1997)  
*Red Sorghum* (1987)



---

*Rob-B-Hood* (2006)  
*Rouge* (1988)  
*Run Papa Run* (2008)  
*Running out of Time* (1999)  
*Shower* (1999)  
*Spring River Flows East* (1946)  
*Still Life* (2006)  
*The Stool Pigeon* (2010)  
*Those Were the Days* (2000)  
*Too Many Ways to be number one* (1997)  
*Triad Underworld* (2004)  
*True Story of Huang Feihong: Whiplash Snuffs the Candle Flame The* (1949)  
*Twins Effect* (2003)  
*Tunnel Warfare* (1965)  
*Unknown Pleasure* (2002)  
*Walking on the Wild Side* (2006)  
*Way of the Dragon (The)* (1972)  
*West Town Girls* (2004)  
*Xiao Wu* (1997)  
*Yang ± Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema* (1996)  
*Young and Dangerous I* (1996)  
*Young and Dangerous II* (1996)  
*Young and Dangerous III* (1996)  
*Young and Dangerous IV* (1997)  
*Young and Dangerous V* (1998)  
*Young and Dangerous: The Prequel* (1998)

---

## Other Films and Television Series

### 1982

- *First Blood*
  - d. Ted Kotcheff
  - Anabasis N.V and Elcajo Productions

### 1987

- *The Last Emperor*
  - d. Bernardo Bettolucci
  - Recorded Picture Company, Hemdale Film

### 1991

- *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*
  - d. James Cameron
  - Carolco Pictures, Pacific Western, Lightstorm Entertainment and Canal

### 1993

- *The Fugitive*
  - d. Andrew Davis
  - Warner Brothers Pictures
- *Hard Target*
  - d. John Woo
  - Universal Pictures

### 1994

- *Forrest Gump*
  - d. Robert Zemeckis
  - Paramount Pictures

### 1997

- *Stuart Hall, Representation and the Media*
  - d. Sut Jhally
  - The Media Education Foundations

### 1998

- *Saving Private Ryan*
  - d. Steven Spielberg
  - Dreamwork SKG, Paramount Pictures, Amblin Entertainment and Mutual Film

---

Company**1999**➤ *Matrix*

- d. Andy and Lana Wachowski
- Warner Brothers, Village Roadshow Pictures, Groupcho II Film Partnership and Silver Picture

**2001**➤ *The Lord of the Rings trilogy*

- d. Peter Jackson
- New Line Cinema

**2006**➤ *Brokeback Mountain*

- d. Ang Lee
- Alberta Film Entainment, Focus Features, Good Machine, Paramount Pictures and River Road

**2008**➤ *The Forbidden Kingdom* (功夫之王)

- d. Rob Minkoff
- Casey Silver Productions; China Film Co-Production, Huayi Brothers and Relativity Media

**2009**➤ *New Moon*

- d. Chris Weitz
- Imprint Entertainment, Summit Entertainment, Sunswept Entertainment and Temple Hill Entertainment

**2010**➤ *The Expendables*

- d. Sylvester Stallone
- Millennium Films

## TV series:

**2000**➤ *The Young Detective* (*Shaonian baoqiantian* 少年包青天)

- d. Hu Mingkai, Zeng Jin
- Oriental Pearl Media Co., Ltd

**2001**

- *Meteor Garden (Liuxing huayuan 流星花园)*
  - d. Tsai Yueh-Hsun
  - Chinese Television System (CTS)

**2002**

- *Jade Goddess (Yu guanyin 玉观音)*
  - d. Ding Hei
  - Beijing Television Station

**2003**

- *The Story of a Noble Family (Jinfen shijia 金粉世家)*
  - Liu Guoquan and Li Dawei
  - China Central Television (CCTV)

**2007**

- *Struggle (Fendou 奋斗)*
  - d. Zhao Baogang

**2008**

- *Endless Love (Xin bu liao qing 新不了情)*
  - d. Derek Yee 尔东升
  - Sino Vision